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CIVIL SOCIETY IN RUSSIA: CURRENT TRENDS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The article deals with the analysis of the condition and dynamics of the development of civil society in Russia based on the materials of monitoring researches which were conducted at the Laboratory of socio-political researches of Tula State University in 2017-2019. The peculiarities of participation of citizens and public organizations in socio-political life, their needs and contentment with an interaction in the system “authority – society” are single out. The perspectives of improving the existing mechanisms of the non-for-profit sector development are determined in the context of the regional specificity. The authors’ objective was to study the demands and contentment with an interaction “authority – society” in order to work out recommendations on improvement of the existing mechanisms of the non-for-profit sector development.

Key Words

Civil society – Citizen participation – The third sector

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Introduction

The third sector as a fully developed form of organization and regulation of social life ensures a fulfillment of the functions which are of vital importance for the society and includes a complex of links, norms and roles, which in practice are realized through the activity of certain voluntary associations of citizens. The local authorities and public associations pursue one strategic aim consisting in improving citizens' living conditions, creating a positive environment for the population's life-sustaining activity in a municipal entity. However, the role of these organizations in the socio-economic system is ambiguous. On one hand, public organizations are limited in their business activities by their statutory purposes and by a principal of non-distribution of profits. On the other hand, using their competitive advantages, they fight for consumers with other providers of the analogous services, offering necessary social services irrespective of a profit-making principal.

Besides, in the conditions of the contemporary Russian society the activity of public organizations are accompanied by some difficulties which are typical for all public associations and which have a negative impact on sustainability of these organizations, and consequently, on the process of their institutionalization in local self-government: an insufficient level of financial security of public associations, which doesn't allow them to meet the needs of the population of municipal entities at the optimal level or work on socio-economic development of corresponding territories forcing them to solve the issues of their own survival; insufficient competence of employees of public associations in the matters concerning economic management; unqualified management of public associations; difficulties in forming material resources of public associations; limited dissemination of technologies aiming at involving volunteers in the activities of public associations; a wide range of latent sources of conflicts in public associations.

Among the problems hindering the institutionalization of public associations, the following issues can be singled out: an absence of institutional structures insuring a dialogue between public associations and local authorities in a wide range of issues of local importance; an absence of a productive procedure of independent public expertise to ensure participation of public associations in preparation and control of a budgeting process and a realization of socio-economic and other programs of municipalities; uncertainty of the criteria for a degree of realization of the right to information awareness about activities and decisions of local authorities; a low level of elaboration of technologies ensuring financial support for socially important programs carried out by public associations; a distrust of some government officials towards public associations, perception of the members of public associations as merely petitioners or competitors; a distrust of public associations towards local authorities based on the lack of information or on prejudices connected with the previous negative experience.

The aforementioned problems will have manifestations and consequences in the short-term as well as in the long-term perspective giving a negative impact on the achievements of the goals set by local authorities. The drawbacks in this sphere hinder both disseminating a positive experience and forming new institutional forms of social partnership to solve the problems of the city.

The problems connected with functioning of public associations (territorial public self-government bodies) are structural elements of the concepts of local governance bodies. The variety of the problems under consideration may be classified in the following

way: the researches devoted to the study of the nature of local governance¹.

The analysis of scientific development of the problem enabled the authors to come to the conclusion that a predominant trend in the development of local governance theories is a synthesis of various approaches, including a transformation of an institutional basis, an enlargement of the centralized control in legal and financial spheres with maintaining a certain autonomy of local self-government within its own competence, a usage of more effective management technologies in organization of a service industry. Local governance should be viewed as a form of self-organization of the society and in this capacity as an integral part of civil society. The differentiating features of this social phenomenon are, on one hand, its public character which assumes citizens' engagement in a collective decision making process, and, on the other hand, an existence of a market component as related to rendering services to the representatives of the local community and coordinating an economic activity.

The actuality and the degree of scientific development of the problem presupposed the necessity of conducting a study on participation of citizens and public associations in

¹ Kh. Arendt, *Vita activa, or about Active Life* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2000); D. L. Koen y E. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Moscow: Publishing house "Ves Mir", 2003); A. B. Doktorovich, "Social Potential: Social Interactions and Relations", *Bulletin MU. Series 18. Sociology and Political Science*, num 4 (2008): 35–46; B. G. Kapuskin, *Citizenship and Civil Society* (Moscow: Publishing House – HSE, 2011); A. Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies", *American Sociological Review*, Vol: 51 num 4 (1986): 278 – 281; M. Zald y R. Ash. "Social movement organizations", *Soc. Forces*, num 44 (1966); M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997); R. A. Dal, *Problems of Civic Competence*, (1997). Available at: URL: <http://old.russ.ru/antolog/predely/1/dem2-3.htm>; T. N. Klyuchenkova, "Social Participation as Institutional Basis for Transformation of Local Governance", *Middle Russian Bulletin of Social Sciences*, num 2 (2010): 49-56; I. A. Khaliy, *Civil Society Institutions in Contemporary Russia. To the Methodology of the Research. Russia Reforming. Annals*, 6 (Moscu: Institute of Sociology RAS, 2007). Available at: <http://www.civisbook.ru/publ.html?id=265>; R. Koopmans, *Democracy from Below. New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany* (Boulder, 1995); A. Etzioni, *The active society* (New York: Free Press, 1968); A. Giddens, *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979); R. Dalton, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies* (Chatham, 1988); P. K. Eisinger, "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities", *American Political Science Review*, num 67 (1973); Y. Johansson, *Civic Engagement in Change — the Role of Internet*. Paper prepared for The Changing Media and Civil Society workshop. European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) (Edinburgh, UK, 2003); H. Kriesi, "The Political Opportunity Structure of the Dutch Peace Movement", *West European Politics*, num 12 (1989); T. Vorozheikina, "Self-defense as the First Step to", *Pro et Contra*, num 2-3 (41) 2008; E. N. Zaborova, *City on the Verge of Centuries* (Yekaterinburg: Publishing House of Ural State Econ. Uni., 2007); S. V. Patrushev, *A Civic Action as a Factor of Political Institutional Transformation. World Crisis and Political Changes. Political Science: Annals – 2009* (Moscu: ROSSPEN, 2010); S. V. Patrushev, *Confidence, Sympathy and Empathy: Russian Behavior in Russian Environment. Institutional Politology: Contemporary Institutionalism and Political Transformation of Russia* (Moscow: 2006); S. V. Patrushev; S. G. Aivazova y P. V. Panov, *Citizens and Political Practices in Contemporary Russia: Reproduction and Transformation of Institutional Order* (Moscu: Russian Association of Political Science (RAPS); Russian Political Encyclopedia (ROSSPEN), 2011); P. Fairbrother, *Changing Patterns of Union Organization? Representation and Participation: What is happening in Anglo-American Trade Union Movements?* Paper presented at 18th Annual International Labour Process Conference (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, 2000); M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge: 1965) y H. Kriesi; R. Koopmans; J. Duyvendak y M. Giugni, *New Social Movements in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1995).

solving social problems. This research aimed at studying the needs and the contentment with an interaction in the system “authority – society” in order to work out recommendations for improving the existing mechanisms of the development of a non-profit sector in the context of the regional peculiarities.

The research aimed at proving the following hypothesis – within the context of the general crisis of legitimacy of socio-political institutions, a low level of population’s information awareness of public associations’ activities leads to a situation when a social potential (first of all, recourse and functional potentials) of public associations seems to be limited in the local community’s consciousness.

Methods

Mass and expert surveys were used as data acquisition methods. The mass and expert surveys were conducted with the help of a questionnaire. The acquired experience in conducting similar researches devoted to the issues in question presupposed a predominant usage of closed questions among the employed analytical tools, which were intended for evaluating an assurance level, a degree of agreement and disagreement with previously stated positions of the respondents. This kind of survey was distinguished by the following: a high degree of formalization of a questionnaire; a high level of directivity of survey strategies; a maximum unification of the parameters within a certain research.

The empiric object of the research included the population over 18 years old (for the mass survey); leaders and members of public associations; representatives of the local authorities who are responsible for organizing an interaction in the system “authority – society” (for the expert survey).

In the mass survey framework a multistage stratified cluster sampling was used. At the first stage, a sample population was divided into groups in accordance with a type of the region they belonged to. A cluster sampling (in accordance with the population number) was carried out at the next stage. At the third stage, a quota selection was held inside a «cluster», which allowed the authors to create sample reflecting socio-demographic characteristics of the local communities. The observation units were selected with the help of a simple random sampling without replacement (the probability to be included in a sampling was the same for all potential respondents without limitations). A sampling error didn’t exceed 3 %, that allowed the researchers to consider the conclusions to be relatively reliable.

In the expert survey framework a multistage stratified cluster sampling was also used. At the first stage, the sampling population was divided into groups in accordance with a type of the region they belonged to. At the next stage, a cluster-based selection was carried out (in accordance with the number of population). At the third stage, a quota selection was realized within a “cluster”, which enabled the researchers to create a sample reflecting characteristics of the expert society of the region.

At the stage of empiric data processing, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Base 17.0) Software was used. The basic module included all the processes of data input, data processing and data correction and as well as the majority statistical methods offered by SPSS. The simple methods of a statistical analysis such as a frequency analysis, a statistical characteristics calculation, contingency tables, correlation tables, a construction of charts were used for data processing.

The specificity of a data input method was taken under account when information processing methods were defined. Since the technique of mass and expert surveys presupposed the usage of predominantly closed questions at the stage of data processing, the following results were received: general distribution tables; contingency tables on such socio-demographic parameters as sex, age, level of education, professional status; correlation dependences tables; graphic data interpretation (charts, diagrams of key dependencies).

The principal results

The main factor of a civil society development is an opportunity for citizens to influence the current socio-political processes in the country. The degree of the population's engagement in solving the problems of the country depends, in many ways, on the nature of interests in socio-political life.

The research results showed that the majority of the respondents (48,4 %) estimated their level of interest in socio-political life as average. The comparative analysis of the results of various empiric researches enabled the authors to record a predominantly positive vector direction of the engagement in socio-political processes, although the vector indication is slightly lower in comparison with the parameters of the previous years. This fact attests to a presence of a stable trend of decreasing the intensity of interest in socio-political life of the country in the junior age groups. The observed regularity is typical for many contemporary countries: young people more often demonstrate a relatively low-level engagement in a political life.

The multivariate analysis of the research results showed that in the older age group, a degree of interest in socio-political life is increasing. Besides, the level of education influences this degree of interest (the higher level of education is, the higher is a degree of interest), and a status of the respondents also has a great impact on a degree of interest (a greater interest is demonstrated by representatives of state and municipal government bodies and pensioners).

The expert evaluations coincided with citizens' self-assessment: the experts consider the population to be well informed on socio-political processes taking place in Russia while a level of citizens' interest in socio-political life is average. A positive orientation of the vector of engagement in socio-political processes is stated against the background of a descending trend.

The main forms of interest manifestation (by citizens' evaluation) are the following: watching TV programs (49,9 %), electoral practices (41,4 %), monitoring socio-political news in Internet (32,8 %), discussing socio-political events with an immediate circle (24,6 %), participating in public events (18,0 %), reading newspapers (16,2 %). A segment of citizens who are oriented on traditional mass media such as press and television is decreasing. At the same time, the number of people who are oriented on a direct horizontal interaction (in the frame of political activities, discussions and self-organization) and a direct vertical interaction (by means of appealing to governmental authorities in order to solve problems of local communities) is increasing. From this point of view, participation in voting and public events which presuppose some obligatory elements is not already viewed as a certain routine practice which is not connected with a demonstration of a civic position, but becomes the basis for a real political activity of mass groups.

The comparative analysis of the results of the expert and mass surveys showed an existence of a general trend in describing citizens' engagement in socio-political processes as an observant involvement which doesn't require any considerable efforts. However, the dynamics of the expert opinion doesn't reflect the changes which can be observed in a perception of political participation by average citizens. A certain differentiation can be stated in evaluating various ways of participation in political life which is connected with age characteristics of the respondents. Thus, the people of the older generation prefer television, while the representatives of the young generation more often refer to Internet resources (Figure 1). No differences can be traced in other positions.

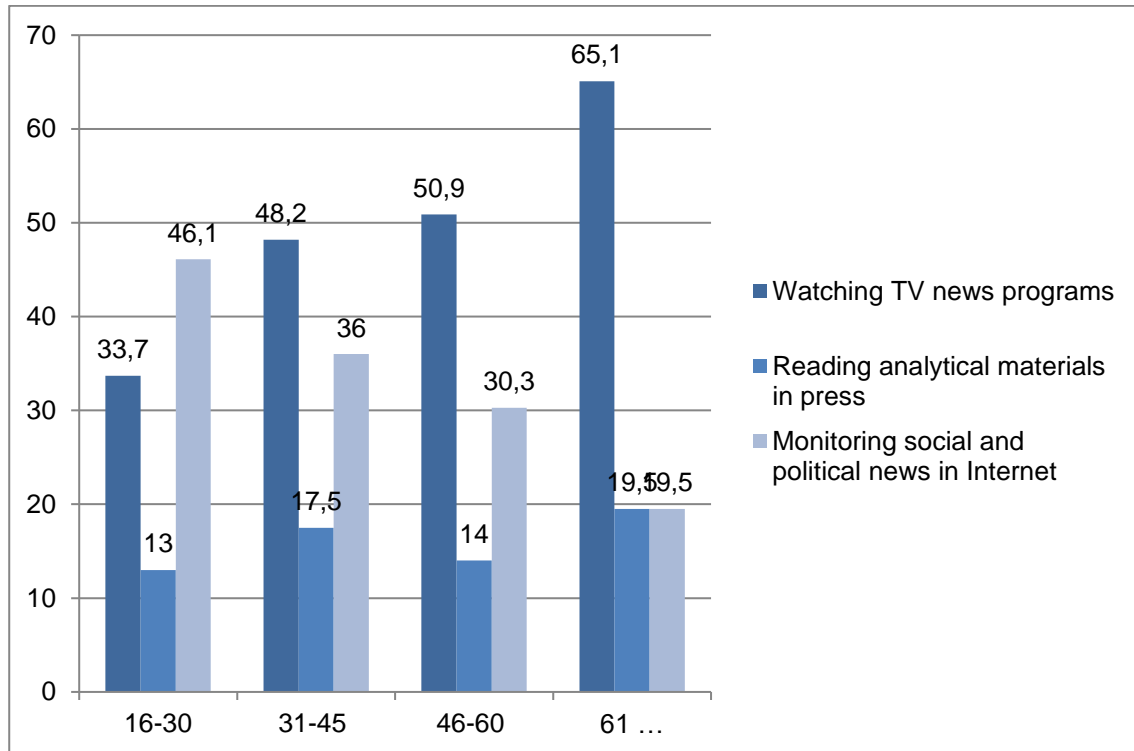


Figure 1

Forms of manifestation of interest in a political life: age distribution
 Participation in socio-political life of the country for you is, first of all, (It is allowed to choose no more than three answer variants), % of the segment

On the whole, the respondents considered themselves to be well-informed on the life of the country and the region, also it was stated that the number of the informed people who considered themselves well-informed, had reduced. A considerable data correlation testifies to stability of the above mentioned segments. The cross-analysis didn't let the authors enucleate a dependence between such variables as "level of information awareness about the life in the country", "level of information awareness about the life in the region" and socio-demographical characteristics as well as also a territorial distribution of the respondents.

The quality of citizen participation is determined by a motivation. The analysis of such variables as "success-oriented motives for actions" and "failure avoidance motives for actions" showed that the latter variable is a dominating one, and more that 74 % of the respondents adhere to these motives. At the same time, an avoidance of sanctions

imposed by the state serves as the main regulator of political activity: 62,6 % of the respondents who participated in the life of the country while giving an answer to the question “*What first and foremost caused your desire to take an active part in the political life of the country?*” chose the following indicator – “this is my civic duty”. An inconsiderable number of the respondents who regard citizen participation to be a method of self-realization was detected (17,3 %). Citizen participation is not associated with a prestige, or with a way to influence the other people, or with a sphere of communicative opportunities. Thus, an engagement in socio-political processes is not viewed as a means of achieving actual results in substantive work (only one third of the respondents adhere to the opposite opinion).

It should be noted, that the distribution of the experts’ answers attested to a different motivation perception of citizen participation in the elite and mass groups: the most widespread answer variant - “citizens’ desire to participate in solving the current problems” (58,0 %) – has a rational nature. At the same time, the experts agreed that citizen participation was not associated with a prestige or a means of influencing other people in the consciousness of the local community.

Among the adherers of absenteeism, 23,9 % of them point out to the following indicator as a reason for their refusal - “there is no sense in participating”; 39,2 % refer to their personal incompetence in this matter; 20,3 % proclaim their unwillingness to commit themselves to additional responsibilities. A segment of the respondents (24,3 %) who name the external barriers as a reason for their refusal to demonstrate an active citizenship is relatively stable. It can testify that the political system is perceived as being not sufficiently open.

It is worth paying attention to a considerable reduction of a segment of “pessimists” among the experts, who presume that the population lacks sufficient political competence in order to be included in socio-political life. Simultaneously, the number of those respondents, who think that average citizens are not sure enough of their participation effectiveness and who are afraid of assuming responsibilities, has increased.

Citizens rather actively give their preference to the orthodox forms of civic participation oriented on a reproduction of the present political system which is justified by the positive indexes of participation (table 1). The forms, which correspond to such criterion as “collectiveness”, predominantly enjoy popularity. It can be explained, on one hand, by an opportunity to increase their effectiveness on account of a consolidated action; on the other hand, by preservation of anonymity thus relieving citizens of individual responsibilities for making decisions. Besides, the abovementioned participation practices don’t require particular efforts on the part of citizens with the exception of initiative groups. Comparing with data from previous years, the potential of mass media as an intermediary in the interaction system “authority – society” has grown, and it confirms the abovementioned conclusion about the need for an expansion of a communication net.

However, in comparison with the results of the previous year, a rise of a fragmentariness level of perception of various civic practices can be observed. If in 2017, among the orthodox forms, the greatest potential belonged to meetings with political leaders and signing collective letters, petitions, then in 2019 their social base continues diminishing. The stated trend concerns all constructively directed political actions. Among non-orthodox forms of political activity, the greatest negativism is roused by picketing. This fact can be explained, on one hand, by a lack of knowledge about this form of self-

realization in a socio-political sphere; on the other hand, by a stereotyped perception of this sphere as non-civic (sometimes forcible). That's why single-person picketings, which are used by various political forces in the framework of an electoral campaign during the electoral period of 2019, didn't have a desired result even, if those picketings were connected with socially important issues. It should be stated, that there is a rise of a level of intolerance to destructive formats, and it is connected with a fear of distorting the political system.

Forms of participation	Year	Participation		
		Civic		Non-civic
		Orthodox	Non-orthodox	
Election campaigning	2017	28,7		
	2018	37,8		
	2019	26,5		
Signing joint letters to the authorities	2017	40,2		
	2018	36,4		
	2019	36,1		
Participation in authorized demonstrations	2017		14,8	
	2018		1,9	
	2019		1,8	
Participation in unauthorized demonstrations	2017			-74,8
	2018			-67
	2019			-73,5
Refusal to pay taxes	2017			-56,4
	2018			-48,4
	2019			-54,6
Picketing	2017		-57,8	
	2018		-50,8	
	2019		-53,7	
Refusal to pay communal services fees	2017			-43,3
	2018			-37,8
	2019			-48,7
Participation in social programs	2017	44		
	2018	40,3		
	2019	48,2		
Meeting with political leaders	2017	51,8		
	2018	46,2		
	2019	36,9		
Creating initiative groups to solve local problems	2017		34,1	
	2018		29,9	
	2019		30,5	

Preparing appeals to mass media	2017	8,4		
	2018	10		
	2019	15,3		
Participation in the activities of local authorities	2017	23,4		
	2018	20,6		
	2019	17,3		
Participation in public hearings	2017	28,1		
	2018	26,8		
	2019	26,6		
Average number	2017	32,1	-2,9	-58,1
	2018	31,2	-6,3	-51,0
	2019	29,5	-7,1	-58,9

Table 1
Direction of social and political actions: indexological indicator

The analysis of the data received from the surveys enabled the authors to single out an interdependence between the variables revealing various types of participation. Acceptance of the certain kinds of activity within one type (subtype) ensures a probability of sympathy to the other. If in accordance with 2017-2018 data, public hearings possessed the greatest accumulating potential of orthodox and non-orthodox forms of citizen participation (although public hearings pertain to the most frequently chosen position), then in 2019, meetings with political leaders and appealing to mass media began to possess the same characteristic. Taking under account the fact that the potential of the latter is increasing, they may become the basis for a constructive dialogue and partnership relations in the system “authority – society”. The results of the monitoring allowed the authors to certify that the positions of local government bodies as forms of political participation had strengthened. (table 2).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1	0,22 9	0,34 1	0,17 2	0	0,19 5	0,15 1	0,34 8	0,44 2	0,39 9	0,36 0	0,50 6	0,43 2
2	0,22 9	1	0,30 6	0,14 2	- 0,02 3	0,15 2	0,13 2	0,25 4	0,28 5	0,30 8	0,30 6	0,19 8	0,19 7
3	0,34 1	0,30 6	1	0,24 9	- 0,05 6	0,25 6	0,2	0,27 9	0,44 8	0,39 2	0,35 5	0,29 5	0,33 4
4	0,17 2	0,14 2	0,24 9	1	0,04 3	0,55 1	0,39 1	0,11 2	0,07 9	0,16 8	0,25 8	0,23 4	0,08 4
5	0	- 0,02 3	- 0,05 6	0,04 3	1	0,04 2	- 0,08 1	- 0,03 3	- 0,04 4	- 0,05 2	- 0,55	- 0,54	- 0,54
6	0,19 5	0,15 2	0,25 6	0,55 1	0,04 2	1	0,36 2	0,12 7	0,19 8	0,26 8	0,32 8	0,23 3	0,18 3
7	0,15 1	0,13 2	0,2	0,39 1	- 0,08	0,36 2	1	0,15 9	0,08 0	0,17 3	0,19 8	0,19 4	0,09 6

					1								
8	0,34 8	0,25 4	0,27 9	0,11 2	- 0,03 3	0,12 7	0,15 9	1	0,47 3	0,44 0	0,35 8	0,41 1	0,38 3
9	0,44 2	0,28 5	0,44 8	0,07 9	- 0,04 4	0,19 8	0,08 0	0,47 3	1	0,56 2	0,49 9	0,53 3	0,54 5
10	0,39 9	0,30 8	0,39 2	0,16 8	- 0,05 2	0,26 8	0,17 3	0,44 0	0,56 2	1	0,57 8	0,52 7	0,54 4
11	0,36 0	0,30 6	0,35 5	0,25 8	- 0,55	0,32 8	0,19 8	0,35 8	0,49 9	0,57 8	1	0,53 8	0,50 8
12	0,50 6	0,19 8	0,29 5	0,23 4	- 0,54	0,23 3	0,19 4	0,41 1	0,52 7	0,53 8	0,53 8	1	0,64 6
13	0,43 2	0,19 7	0,33 4	0,08 4	- 0,54	0,18 3	0,09 6	0,38 3	0,54 4	0,50 8	0,50 8	0,64 6	1

1 - election campaigning; 2 – signing joint letters to the authorities; 3 – participation in authorized demonstrations; 4 – participation in unauthorized demonstrations; 5 – refusal to pay taxes; 6 – participation in picketing; 7 – refusal to pay communal services fees; 8 – participation in social programs (for example, «People’s Budget»); 9 – participation in the meetings with political leaders; 10 – participation in creating initiative groups to solve local problems (Home Unit Company, site improvement, etc.); 11 – participation in preparing appeals to mass media; 12 – participation in the work of local self-governing authorities; 13 – participation in public hearings

Table 2
Correlation analysis of citizen participation forms

The only exception is such a form as picketing. Being a non-orthodox form of civic activity it is connected with non-civic actions such as a refusal to pay taxes and participation in unauthorized demonstrations. Thus, it confirms the abovementioned conclusion which refers to a specific conceptual interpretation of the category by the respondents and to attributing an unambiguously conflict nature to this category, and also to an absence of its legitimization. It should be stated, that using conventional forms the respondents to a greater extent were oriented on a non-civic content-wise participation which is testified by the correlation analysis of the variables, singled out in the framework of the analysis “direction of actions” (table 3). A choice of higher-priority collective actions is predominantly connected with an orientation on a realization of first of all private interests. From the point of view of the development of civil society only three forms are considered to be the most perspective: “election campaigning” (correlation coefficient $K=0,215$), “preparing appeals to mass media” ($K=0,216$), “participation in the work of local self-governing authorities” ($K=0,209$). The reference of the first form to citizen participation is rather sketchy (it is more likely to have a political nature). The other suggested practices cannot be viewed as constituents of a civil society, because the functioning of a civil society presupposes “exiting” beyond the narrow individual interests, thus anti-social individualism takes place.

Forms of participation	2017	2018	2019
Election campaigning	0,232	0,171	0,215
Signing joint letters to the authorities	0,193	0,151	0,091
Participation in authorized demonstrations	0,231	0,169	0,123
Participation in unauthorized demonstrations	0,062	0,019	0,065
Refusal to pay taxes	0,100	0,034	-0,018
Picketing	0,135	0,086	0,091
Refusal to pay communal services fees	0,073	-0,007	-0,021
Participation in social programs	0,257	0,181	0,148
Meeting with political leaders	0,306	0,208	0,198
Creating initiative groups to solve local problems	0,329	0,172	0,172
Preparing appeals to mass media	0,272	0,116	0,216
Participation in the work of local self-governing authorities	0,305	0,201	0,209
Participation in public hearings	0,311	0,189	0,165

Table 3

The nature of interests realized in the framework of various citizen participation forms: correlation analysis bases on the variable «interests»

The stability of the revealed trends is testified by a coincidence of definitions of more often chosen answers and average figures (at level 3) in position “Interests of the country are my own interests”.

Psychological contentment with an engagement in a socio-political process is an important factor for the positive dynamics of the socio-political participation development. An imbalance between a personal potential evaluation and a level of its realization in the frame of socio-political participation has remained.

In many ways, satisfaction with citizen participation opportunities and with a level of their realization depends on an availability of resources for actions. In the respondents' opinion, the greatest importance is attributed to the competence indexes (such as level of education and occupation/profession), although in comparison with 2017 data these indexes are considerably lesser expressed. Against the backdrop of a decreasing trend of the importance of other resources, the role of membership in socio-political organizations has increased. It can be explained by awareness of functionality of these organizations in socio-political process.

A certain instability of the perceptions regarding the necessary and sufficient resource bases was singled out. It can be confirmed by the comparative analysis of the respondents' answer distribution to the question: “What retrains your participation in a socio-political activity?”. With each passing year these perceptions are less visible.

It should be noted, that the specificity of age as a resource for citizen participation lies in ambiguousness of perception. On one hand, age is considered to be an obstacle for the respondents own participation in a political process. On the other hand, age is not viewed as a barrier for political activity when it comes to participation of the other people (figure 2).

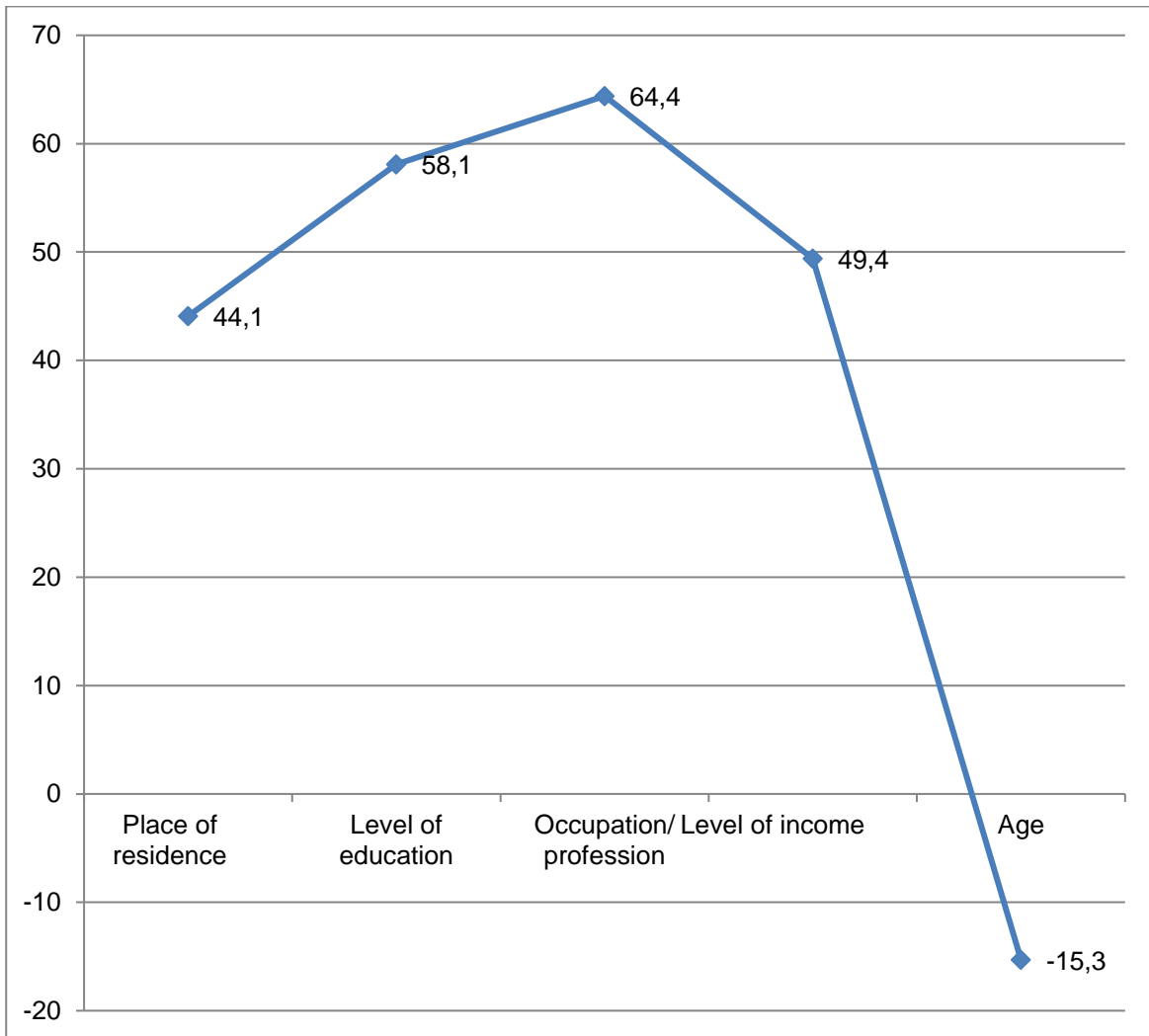


Figure 2

Resource limitations of a socio-political activity

“What restrains your participation in a socio-political activity?” (A choice of variants is not limited), Do you think, an opportunity to influence making socio-political decisions depends on the following characteristics of a participant? Indexological indicator

According to self-assessment a vivid deficit of a professional resource can be felt (predominantly for the respondents at the age from 31 to 45); besides, age is a considerable restriction (for the older age group) (figure 3).

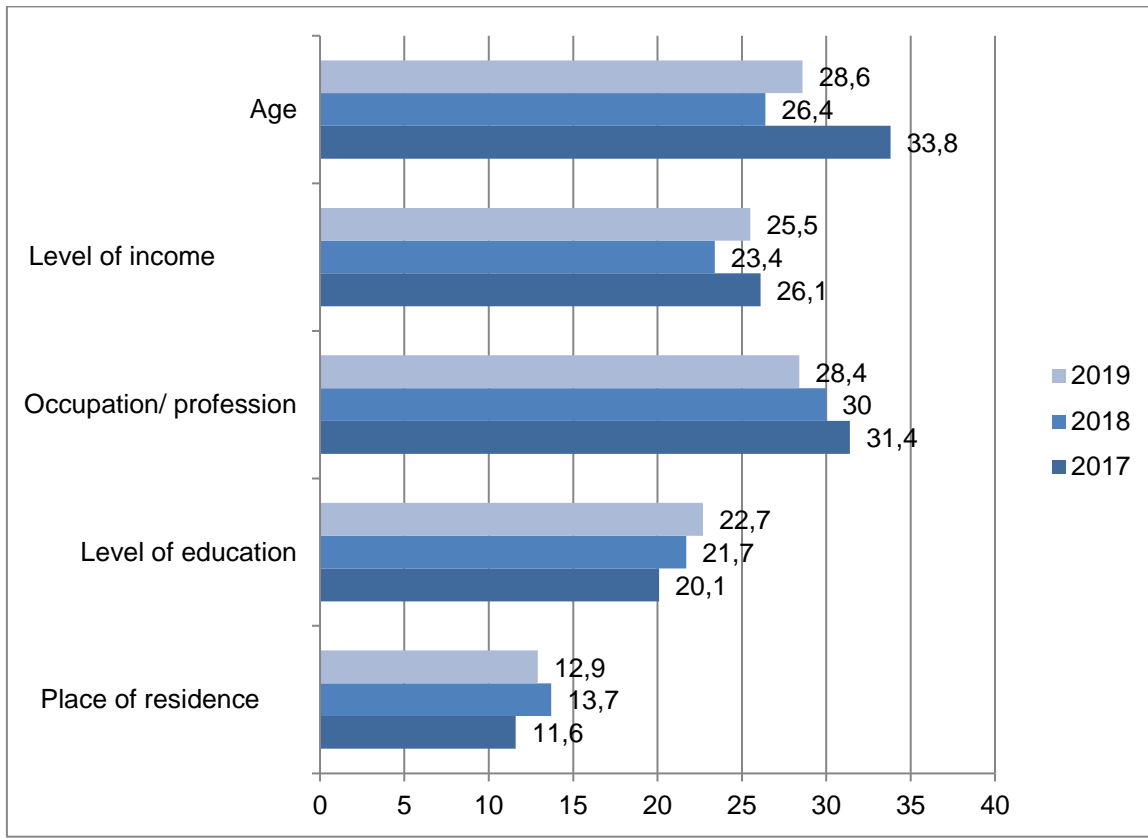


Figure 3

Resource limitations of citizen participation

What restrains your participation in a socio-political activity? (A choice of answer variants is not limited), % of the general number of the respondents

With a general direction of evaluations, an imbalance between essential and sufficient recourse volumes can be observed only in the position “level of education” (figure 4). Comparing with the results of the researches conducted in 2017-2018, the resource evaluations in the position “level of income” coincided, and that coincidence has remained for several years and that attests to a stability of perception of this resource from the point of view of individual participation and also from the point of view of group forms.

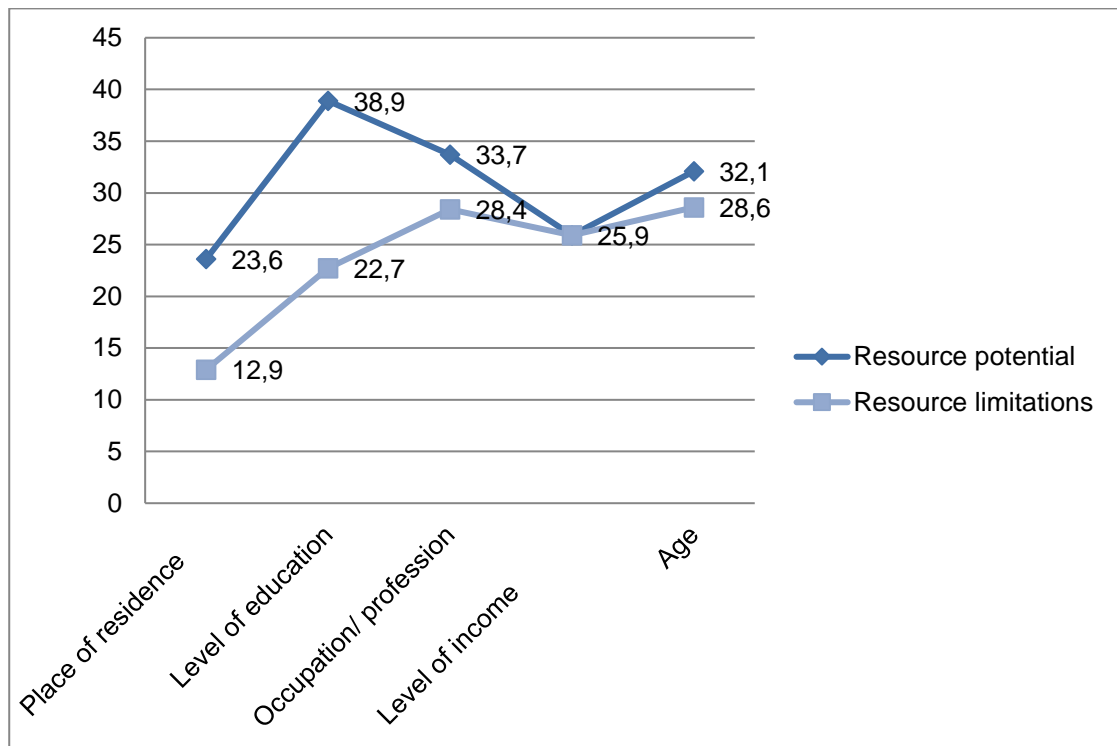


Figure 4

Correspondence of essential and sufficient resource volumes of socio-political participation
 What restrains your participation in a socio-political activity? (A choice of answer variants is not limited), % of the general number of the respondents).

Do you think a possibility to influence socio-political decisions making depends on the following characteristics of a participant?, % of the general number of the respondents in "Yes" position.

Thus, such positions as "age" and "income level" are not recognized by the public as dominating ones with determine a degree of influence on socio-political decisions making, and at the same time they act as the most important restrictions on political participation. The problem zone is a "level of education" because, pointing out to its priority in the resource system, the survey respondents rather skeptically view a personal educational status. This situation reflects the world view which is based on the ideas of elitism of the authorities, which also means a high educational level, and it hinders a mass involvement of citizens in a socio-political decision making process.

The last conclusion is confirmed by an average citizens' obscuration of responsibilities for the events happening in the country (only 15,4 % of the respondents chose "Yes" indicator to the question "Do you think the average citizens are responsible for the events happening in our country? (according to 2017 data – 15,8 %, 2018 – 15,1 %)). Denying their responsibilities, the respondents also pointed to insufficient effectiveness of the state (figure 5), that attests to a low level of reciprocity.

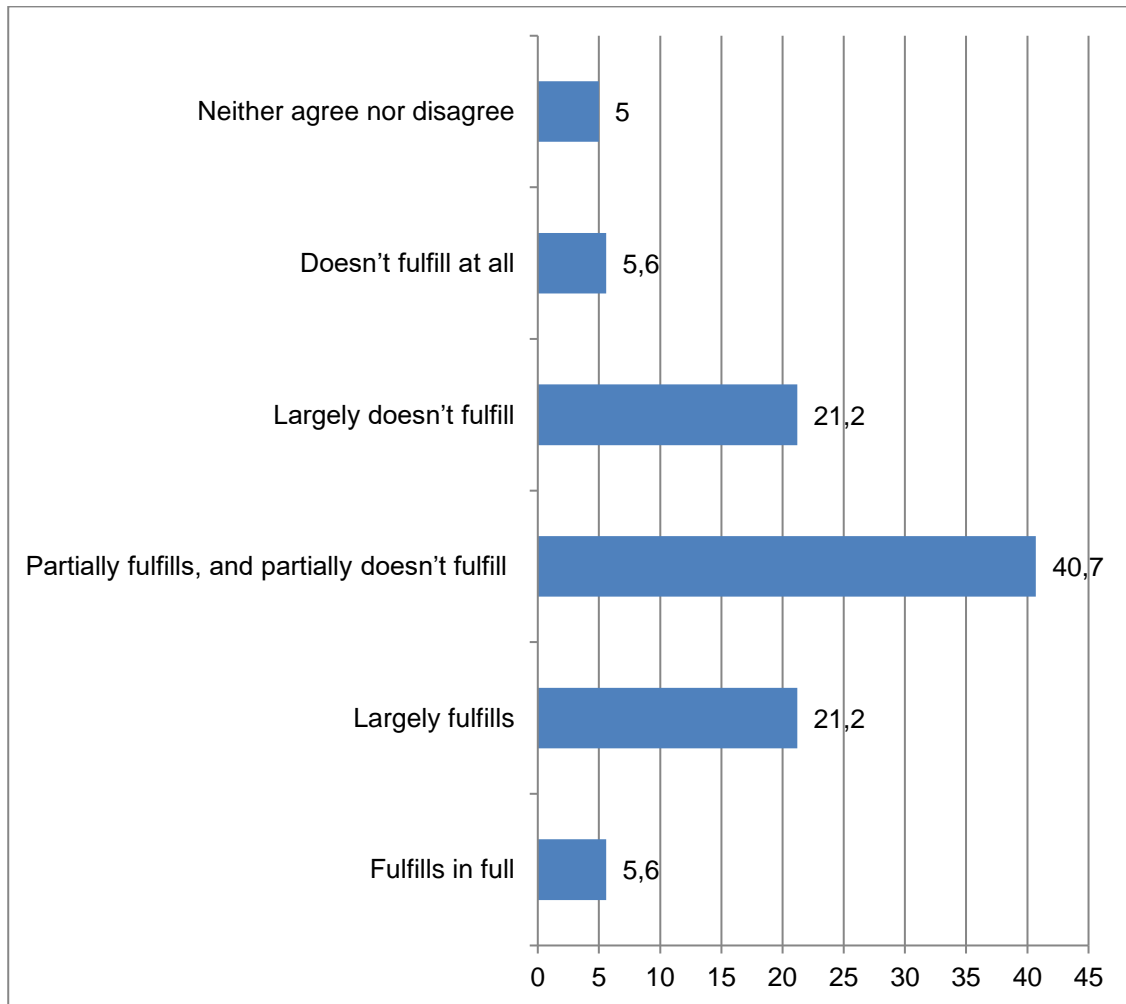


Figure 5
 Level of fulfillment of its responsibilities by the state
 Do you think the state fulfills its responsibilities towards its citizens?,
 % of the general number of the respondents

The results of the expert survey demonstrate a slightly different situation: evaluating an opportunity of citizens to influence a social situation, 49,8 % of the experts chose the indicators “Yes” and “More likely Yes, than No” to the given question. They are inclined to view the state as an effective institution from the point of view of carrying out its responsibilities. It speaks for evaluating the relations in the system “authority – society” as reciprocal and points out to a positive perception of the responsibility level of the authorities (figure 6). At the same time, during the last year a reduction of the number of optimists among the expert society has been observed, a certain shift in the respondents’ answers towards averaging the assessments and a refusal from categorical positive/negative positions have been traced.

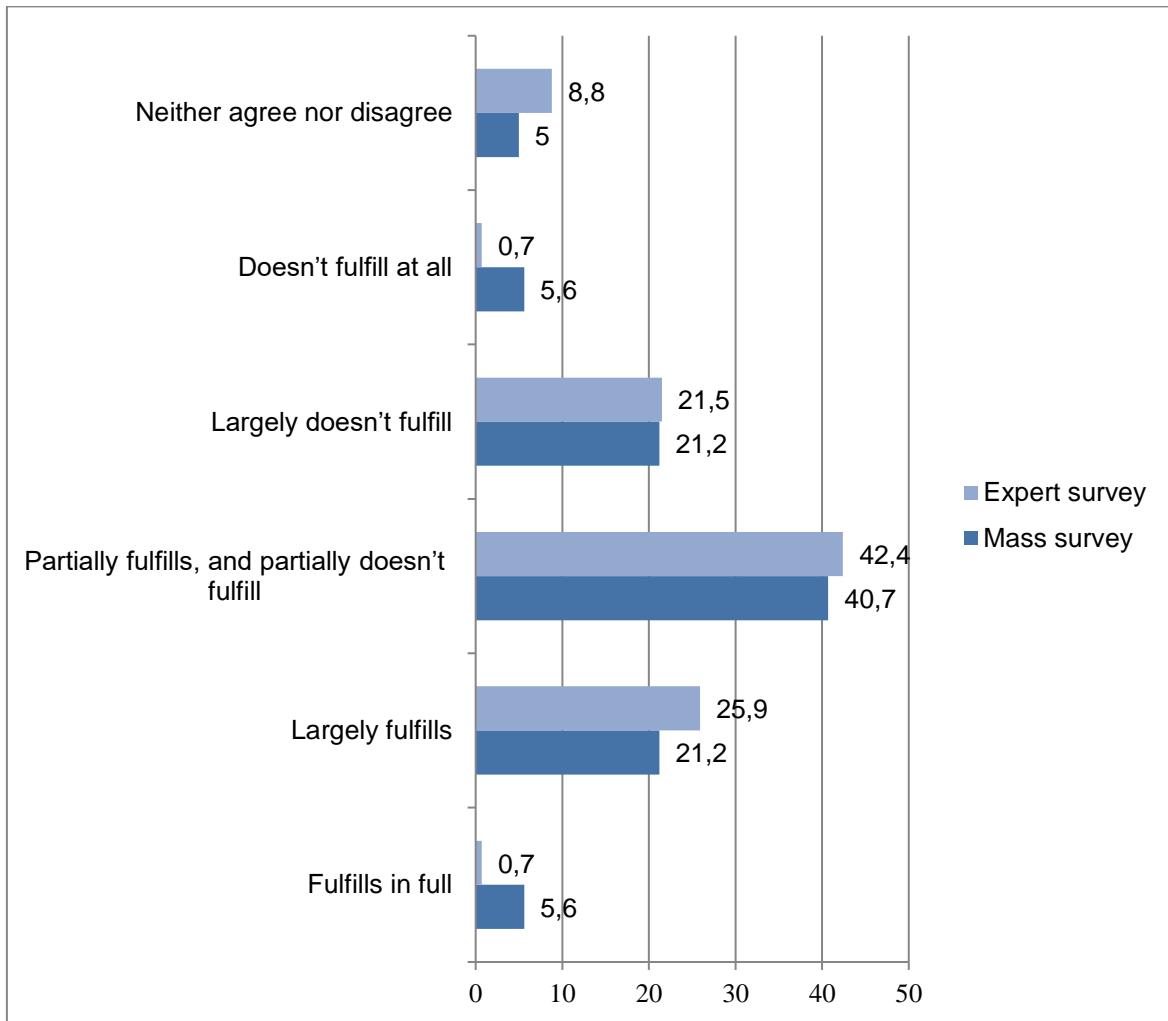


Figure 6
 Level of fulfillment of its responsibilities by the state:
 Comparative analysis of the results of the mass and expert surveys
 Do you think the state fulfills its responsibilities towards its citizens?,
 % of the general number of the respondents

A level of realization and a regularity of political actions are two indicators of engagement in a socio-political activity. According to these criteria, the majority of the respondents demonstrate an apolitical position and sometimes act as “occasional politicians” (according to Max Weber): the direction of opinions shows that the greatest intensity appears in the pole “Rather Yes”, this position has an observant nature and is limited in instrumentality. Moreover, a portion of those, who think that active participation in politics is very time-consuming (19,5 % in 2019 against 15,0 % in 2017), has grown.

Despite the fact that participation in socio-political organizations is viewed by the population as a significant resource of citizen participation, most of the respondents are not members of any socio-political organizations. Answering the question “Are you a member of any socio-political organizations?”, 73,8 % of the respondents stated that they had no affiliation to any, in 2018 this indicator showed 66,4 %.

Among those who are engaged in the activities of socio-political organizations, the majority respondents are rank-and-file members and voluntary assistants (43,7 %). To explain a low engagement in the activities of socio-political organizations (with the exception of political parties) a detailed analysis of citizens' perceptions of parametric characteristics of these structures was required.

In the research process a paradox was found. On the one hand, the great number of public associations is functioning, and the number of them increases every year, and their socially-relevant activities in the frame of the up-to-date directions of the socio-political development of local communities become more activated.

On the other hand, citizens' information awareness about their activities has decreased and it doesn't allow to use to the full extent their potential from the point of view of realizing their civil initiatives while their resource opportunities are acknowledged (in 2018 the average indexological value was $I_{11}=27,12$ with the absolute value 352,6 (the index was calculated by summation of positive answers and subtraction of negative ones).

The analysis of the indicator "potential of public organizations in solving social problems" enabled the authors to come to the conclusion about the existence of an imbalance between a hierarchy of current social problems and an assessment of opportunities of solving these problems with the help of public organizations, that can be also viewed as a barrier to citizen participation (figure 7).

This conclusion is confirmed, firstly, by a divergence in the list of the urban problems which require a priority attention, and an analogous list of problems which can be solved by citizens; secondly, by an existence of such intersection point as "municipal improvement"; thirdly, by a relatively great segment of citizens who are skeptical about potential evaluation of public organizations.

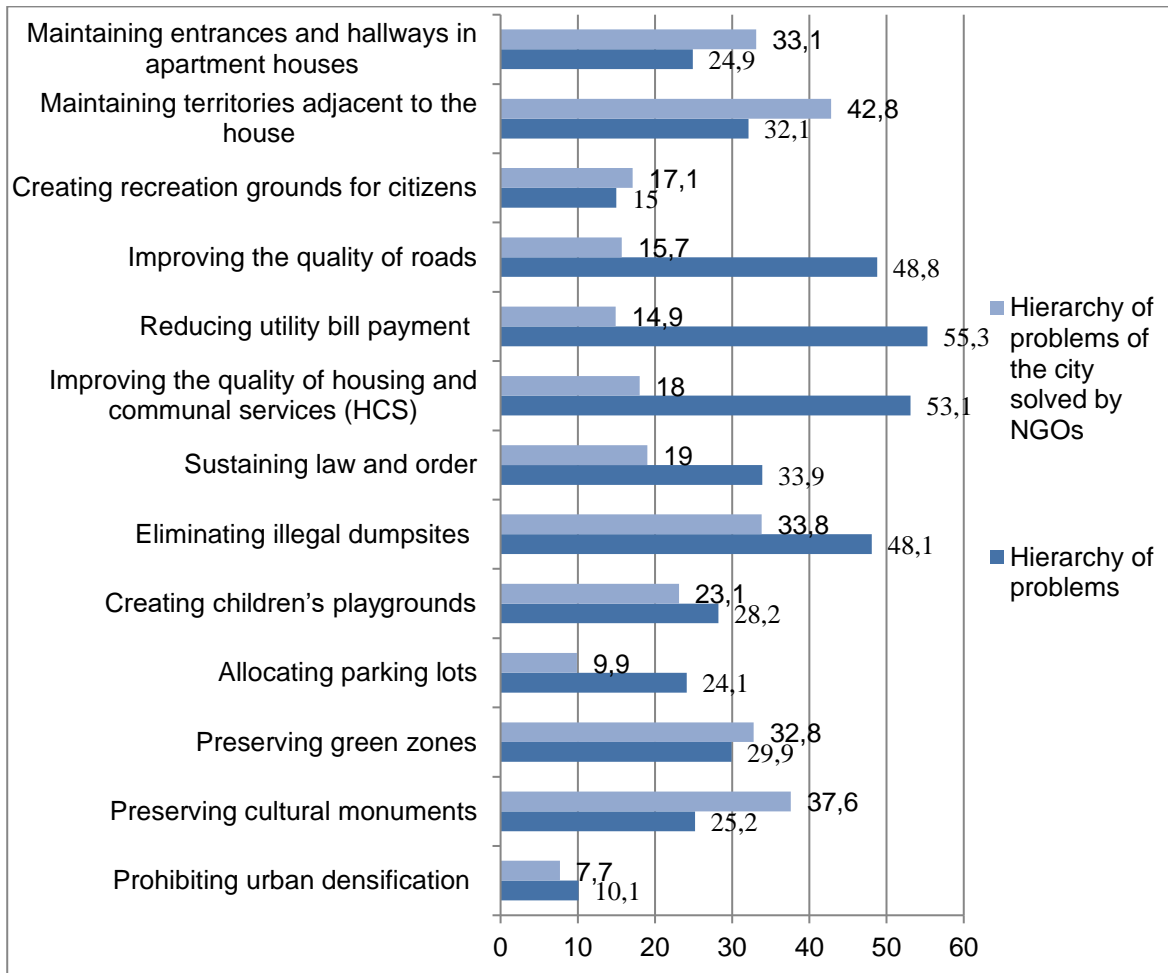


Figure 7

Potential of public organizations in solving social problems

What problems of the city, in your opinion, require an immediate reaction? What problems of the city do you think can be solved by public organizations? % of the general number of the respondents

The graphic interpretation of the research results enabled the authors to come to the conclusion about a considerable decline of public opinion intensity when the potential of public organizations was evaluated from the point of view of solving current social problems of the city (with the exception of the problems concerning municipal improvement: “preservation of cultural monuments”, “preservation of green zones”, “creating recreation grounds for citizens”, “maintaining territories adjacent to the house”, “maintaining entrances and hallways in apartment houses”). Besides, 15,3 % of the respondents failed to name a set of problems which can be solved by public organizations (herewith, this indicator has been stable for the last three years).

The comparative analysis of the expert and mass surveys showed a similarity of assessments of the potential of public organizations to solve social problems: there is an imbalance between a hierarchy of current social problems of the city and an estimation of possibilities for their solution by public organizations, and that confirms a validity of the conclusions based on the results of the mass survey (figure 8).

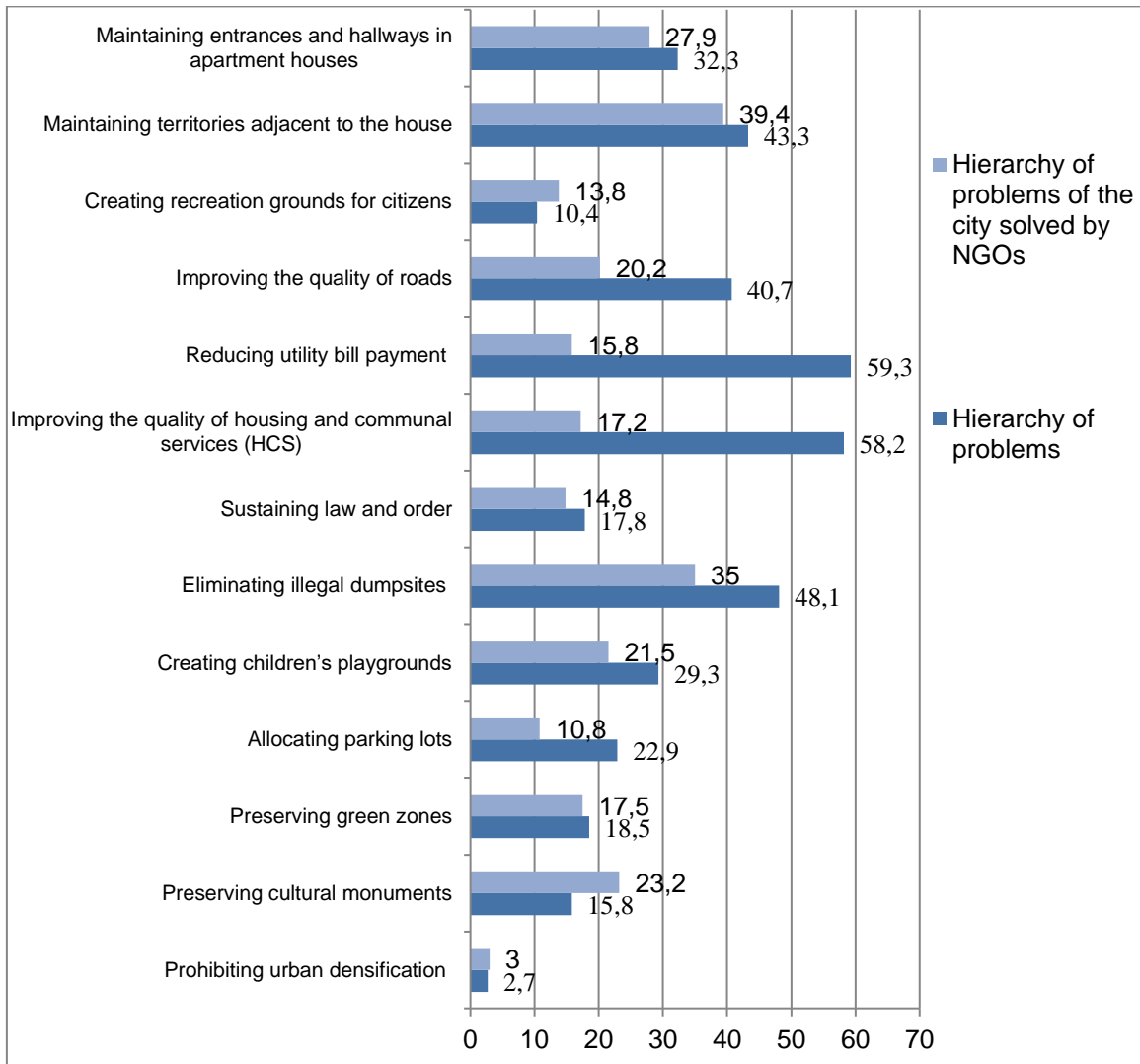


Figure 8

Potential of public organizations for solving social problems

What problems of the city, in your opinion, require an immediate reaction? What problems do you think may be solved by public organizations, % of the general number of the respondents

Defining an essential and sufficient resource base of public organizations, the survey respondents appealed first and for most to personal characteristics of the subjects of public activities (“high level of the activists’ professionalism” (46,0 %) and “experience in solving social problems” (44,7 %)) and opportunities of PR support (“established contacts with the authority representatives” (39,8 %), “sponsorship” (35,8 %), “established links with mass media” (33,3 %)). The analogous indicators with a greater intensity of opinions were also singled out according to the expert survey results. However, contrary to the average citizens’ opinion, the experts underlined a particular importance of a capability of public organizations to mobilize resources of the state and businesses, describing this resource as systemically important. It states a high competence level of this group of the respondents relating to a financial support mechanism of the activities of public organizations.

Discussion

During the research process the following trends in the civil society development in Russia were singled out.

Firstly, a predominantly positive vector direction of engagement in socio-political processes was stated. At the same time, with a considerably high level of information awareness of the population there is a concern about a decreasing interest in socio-political processes in the youth segment and a predominantly observant nature of engagement in the socio-political sphere, and it considerably limits a dynamic development of civil society.

Secondly, the Russian citizens give preference to traditional forms of citizen participation oriented on reproduction of the existing social and political society. Using conventional forms, the respondents to a greater extent are oriented on participation which is non-civic in content, and are connected with an orientation on realization of private interests first of all.

Thirdly, the degree of realization of the inner-personal potential in the framework of socio-political participation is average and mainly depends on the perception of well resourced actions. In the opponents' opinion, the competence indicators are of greater importance ("level of education" and "occupation/ profession"). At the same time, a certain instability of ideas relating to an essential and sufficient resource bases has been detected. Besides, according to self-assessments there is a vivid deficit of professional and economic resources.

Fourthly, during the analysis of the characteristics of the existing level of availability and effectiveness of the services offered by public organizations an imbalance between the hierarchy of current social problems of the city and an estimation of opportunities for their solution by public organizations, and it can be considered a barrier to citizen participation. A considerable decline of public opinion intensity was observed when the potential of public organizations for solving social problems of the city was evaluated. A lack of citizens' belief in a capability of public organizations to change the situation is named as one of the main reasons restraining the development of the public sector.

It seems advisable to make some amendments of organizational and technical nature in the interaction process in the system "authority – society". Some of these amendments will be of general nature, the others will reflect a specificity of certain interaction spheres.

Taking under consideration the fact, that every constructive initiative of citizens or public organizations, NGOs and their desire to contribute to the solution of the national problems are of great importance for the development of the civil society, it is necessary to expand opportunities for public organizations and local communities to chose the activities which are aimed at creating conditions for the development of public organizations and territorial public self-governance depending on the local specificity. Working in this direction will enable to overcome infrastructural limitations, to prepare the basis for a human resource mobilization and for a more effective application of the potential of the municipal entities.

The status of the parameters of civil society in a medium-term perspective, in many ways, is determined by a level of the development of professional and personal characteristics of the youth, and it presupposes an active interaction with this target public group. At present, a net of technical, engineering, creative centers and clubs for children is dynamically developing in the region. However, they are often in need of an additional material support. And here it is required to combine efforts of power structures, public organizations and business society within the program of social partnership which presupposes the following: a conclusion of agreements on collaboration between municipal authorities, public organizations, enterprises and entrepreneurs in conjunction with the regional authorities. Besides, in many municipal entities there is still a need of organizing centers of youth self-government as parts of cultural and leisure activities institutions. The aims of these centers are to popularize the ideas of self-government among the youth and to engage the young people to participate in socially useful activities. In the context of forming a personnel reserve for the governing bodies at all levels, the power structures should more actively participate in defining the guideline figures for admissions to the universities in such training areas which are in great demand in the region and in the municipal entities, and then the power structures should work with these educational establishments for the purpose of finding suitable candidates to fill vacancies in the management system.

On the whole, this is a need of reorientation of the policy of the municipal entities in compliance with the norms of participation culture, and it requires a transmission from a realization of the principle “population – service consumer of public organizations” to the principle “population – social service provider”. A monitoring of the situation in the context of creating an interaction system “authority – society” should be conducted annually to single out primary and secondary determinants of social partnership effectiveness.

Conclusion

The research results present a conceptualization of the modern social processes in Russia, an evaluation of their influence on an interaction in the system “authority – business – society”, a definition of effectiveness of such social partnership in the context of the current agenda, and that is a necessary condition for a productive dialogue between the state and its citizens. During the research process the hypothesis was partially confirmed. The research results may contribute to perfecting forms and methods of NGOs activities, to correcting the existing programs on development and support of a non-profit sector, to improving an interaction between authorities and public structures, to carrying out consistent people-centered work, to increasing an efficiency of implementation of the plans. The data received during the research process will enable to work out recommendations on improving participation of citizens and public organizations, territorial public self-governments in solving social problems of the contemporary society.

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