



EDITORIAL

What Drives Us to Do the Things We Do?

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It would be quite trivial to say that the actions that human beings undertake are the sole and foremost source of sociocultural transformations. But what causes us to act in a particular way? What underlies the decisions we make? Questions that intend to discover reasons for action and the nature of such reasons are among those that philosophers, social psychologists, cognitivists, biologists, etc., continue to seek to respond. In the history of philosophy, attempts to unearth reasons which could not only explain human actions, but also justify them, have been made by thinkers from Plato and Aristotle via Hume and Kant to the 20th century authors like Sigmund Freud or Kurt Levin. For instance, Hume's popular theory of motivation, which remains relevant today, states that desires are individually necessary conditions for agents to be motivated to act. Hume's theory could be interpreted in metaphysical terms, namely, that the motives for actions are always conditioned by a certain concept of the reality; however, the psychological turn in the study of motives has become a major research focus in the 20th century and further.

From a psychological perspective, motivation is generally defined as a stimulus that moves a person to act. Needs and desires are viewed as internal motives, while rewards or punishments—as the ones derived from external sources. There are numerous competing psychological theories of motivation, including Maslow's theory of hierarchical needs, Vroom's expectancy theory, McClelland's acquired-needs theory, etc. In most cases, however, the task of elucidating the causes of human actions and their motives can hardly be solved with the help of either highly specialized or overly metaphysical theories. Thus, in the current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities*, the authors seek to explain the following problems: What is fishing for the inhabitants of northern coastal territories? Why do people participate in volunteer activities? What circumstances help migrants decide whether to go home, stay, or return? What life situations in the past and present become incentives for oocyte donation? Reflections on these and other topics can be found on the pages below.

The ARTICLE *The Phenomenon of Fishing in the Context of Human-Northern Nature Interaction: Network, Vitality, Communication* by Andrei M. Sergeev, Vasili M. Voronov, Konstantin Ya. Kotkin, and Veronika V. Simonova draw the reader's attention to the informal extraction of biological resources, namely, fishing practice as a form of interaction of a human being and nature. The research is based on the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour as the basis of contemporary Western ecological discourse. The authors insist that "it is this aspect of a person's direct and unconditioned juxtaposition with nature and their certain confrontation with nature, which is ultimately predetermined by a person's indispensability to respond to nature's challenge that is significant for the oldest forms of human activity, including the action of fishing." They see fishing not just as an ordinary practice for everyday needs, but rather as "a periodically manifested existential need that a person has to 'test' their strength in the face of nature." At the empirical level, the article is based on 27 expert interviews conducted in 2022 to investigate fishing practices of Murmansk region residents.

Konstantin N. Obukhov in the ARTICLE *Resource Potential of Volunteers With Professional Knowledge for the Development of Regional Socially Oriented Non-Profit Organizations in Russia*, along with many researchers in social studies, poses an inquiry concerning the reasons that cause people to spend time and effort on voluntary services, especially when volunteers apply their professional skills in an organized activity. The author underlines the value of the theory of social capital, which provides an opportunity to develop research that focuses on solidarity, trust, and mutual assistance in a volunteer environment. He turns to the volunteer activity in Russia and notes that "in the current socio-economic and political situation, it tends to have organized forms within the framework of the activities in the non-profit sector or numerous volunteer centers with a significant level of state participation." Aiming at determining the place of professional volunteering in the activities of socially oriented non-profit organizations, the research is based on a series of semi-structured online interviews with leaders of socially oriented non-profit organizations (SO NPO) conducted in 2022–2023 in 17 Russian regions.

In the ARTICLE *Contradictions in the Development of the Welfare Non-Profit Sector in Russia* Olga I. Borodkina, Alevtina V. Starshinova, and Maksim A. Borodkin concentrate on the issue of relations between the non-governmental sector and the state. They define contradictions "as the discrepancy between the interests of the key actors in the process of providing public goods: government authorities, non-profit organizations, and citizens." In the analysis of the legacy of Soviet system of social security, the authors stress that the long-term perception of the state as an agent responsible for resolving social issues has resulted in deeply rooted paternalistic relations between the state and its citizens. Starting from the 1990s, the formation of the non-profit sector of social services, on the one hand, have occurred along initiatives coming from the top; on the other, this process is associated with civil initiatives, which often conflict with the position of the authorities. The research involved 35 interviews conducted in 2019–2020 with heads and employees of social services organizations in 15 Russian regions. The authors identified the following contradiction: "Despite the prescribed equality between the state and the non-state organizations concerning

the provision of services de facto dictated by the law, in practice, state organizations continually prevail”; thus, the dominant welfare patterns are still based on the vertical of power and paternalistic attitudes of the population of Russia.

Tamara K. Rostovskaya, Vera I. Skorobogatova, and Veronika N. Kholina in the ARTICLE *Problems and Prospects of the Online Model for Exporting Russian Education in the Context of Digital Inequality* underline the role of internationalization of Russian universities in transcending institutional boundaries, which includes the provision of digital services in the educational processes for international foreign students located outside of Russia. At the same time, the extension of online education has revealed problems with the digital divide, including challenges in accessing distance learning. The authors intend “to analyze existing global experiences and recommendations for crafting an optimal model for educational engagement with foreign students in the context of digitalization” by studying four groups of sources: statistical data from international and national organizations, various printed materials, Russian regulatory legal documents, and online information. The digital inequality between countries resulted in limited Internet access, low technical capabilities of Internet service providers, insufficient bit rate for live video and audio translations, restrictions on using public domain software, etc. The authors conclude that, when designing online educational programs by Russian universities, it is important to consider national specifics, taking into account factors like disparities in time zones, alignment with the national economic context, digital development index, and level of digital maturity.

In the ARTICLE *Inclusion Problems in the Russian General Education System*, Tatiana S. Soloveva and Veronika A. Sokolova stress the importance of education in promoting the inclusion idea, and rightly note that “the perception of a child with disabilities as a full member of the society depends largely on the mainstream ideology, the level of cultural development and tolerance.” They review domestic and foreign scientific literature on the issue and argue that there is no single interpretation of the term “inclusive education” at the moment. The authors interpret inclusion in general education as a “process of including children with special educational needs in the educational space of the school, aimed at all students in general, and involving the formation of comfortable conditions that meet the characteristics and needs of all students.” For the purpose of evaluation of the current situation in the field of inclusive education in Russia, the authors use the statistical data of the Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service], which reflects the growing number of children with disabilities.

Galina A. Barysheva, Elena I. Klemasheva, Elmira R. Kashapova, Thang Chien Nguyen, and Ngoc Thi Bich Tran in the ARTICLE *Assessing the Impact of Innovative Technologies on the Life Satisfaction of Older Adults in Russia and Vietnam* focus on older adults as not just consumers of innovative technologies, which have become an essential part of daily life, but active players in shaping, adapting, and even creating new technological solutions. The authors assume that the extent to which older adults engage with these technologies depends on factors such as age, economic status, social needs, and physical abilities, all of which contribute to their overall life satisfaction. The primary objective of their study is “to examine the interaction between individuals and material media of innovative technologies, particularly their

role in shaping the techno-logical landscape in a given region,” as well as to estimate the connection between the subjective well-being of individuals from different age groups (life satisfaction) and the material aspects of innovative technologies. The article is based on two sociological surveys: the first was conducted in Tomsk region (234 participants); the second—in 27 Vietnam provinces and cities including rural and urban areas (362 participants). For both surveys, the lower age limit was 60 years. The research results show a significant disparity in older people’s inclination to adopt innovative technologies, as well as the low and heterogeneous level of older generations’ engagement with the contemporary regional technological space.

In the ARTICLE *Return Migration From Russia to Kyrgyzstan: Dynamics, Causes, and Structure*, Galina I. Osadchaya, Tatyana N. Yudina, Olga A. Volkova, and Egor Yu. Kireev highlight factors that influence the return migration of Kyrgyz individuals and formulate several objections: to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent and drivers of return migration of Kyrgyz citizens; to delineate the profile of return migrants, including their social, professional, demographic, and family-related aspects; to evaluate the prospects and strategies of spatial mobility; to explore the reasons and conditions influencing the decision to return to Russia; to evaluate what Kyrgyz migrants expect from the Russian government in case of returning to Russia again. According to the authors, the research is based “on the concept that return is not merely the termination of the migration cycle; rather, it is an element of a circular system of socio-economic relations and exchanges.” A questionnaire survey of 515 return migrants and focused in-depth interviews of 37 return migrants were conducted in Kyrgyzstan in 2022; a questionnaire survey of 425 labor migrants and focused in-depth interviews of 52 labor migrants were conducted in Moscow in 2022–2023.

Natalya B. Gramatchikova and Irina G. Polyakova in the ARTICLE *Refining Methodological Reflection: Exploring the Interviewing Experience of Oocyte Donors* investigate the approaches to selecting and preparing egg donors in the rapidly growing field of reproductive donation and oocyte donation. The research involved 21 semi-structured 1.5-hour interviews with women who expressed the desire to become oocyte donors and met health requirements, which was conducted in 2022. The authors raised several research questions, including designing the structure of the interview guide and the possibility of interpreting women’s statements as a means of understanding the driving motives of donation and their connection with the donor’s life situation. Due to its specific design, the interview turns into an autobiographical narrative, which become a subject of philological reflection. The authors identify three thematic areas of the guide: the situation in the donor’s parental family, the woman’s current family situation, and some possible future scenarios. Each area corresponds to one of the three temporal modalities: the past (childhood experience), the present (“myself now, myself today”), and the future.

In the ARTICLE *Sustainable Energy Transition in Russia and Ghana Within a Multi-Level Perspective*, Pius Siakwah, Yulia V. Ermolaeva, Polina O. Ermolaeva, and Boadi Agyekum view the idea of energy transition as the fundamental sustainable energy pillars, although having social and cultural specifics in different circumstances. The authors underline that the main direction of renewable energy development is

“the transition from a hierarchical structure (centralized) to a horizontal arrangement of economic and energy management,” which requires cooperation between various institutions. The authors use the methodological lenses of a multi-level perspective (MLP) in order to investigate how ideas of landscape, regime, and niche are suitable for analyzing change in the sustainable energy transition systems, and raise the question as to what extent the MLP approach is applicable in describing change in emerging economies.

The BOOK REVIEW section includes a review by Denis V. Slepchenko of Renata Summa’s book *Everyday Boundaries, Borders and Post Conflict Societies*, 2021. The book under review, as the author notes, explores the “dual nature of borders in society, considering them both as abstract and practical concepts and thus providing a fresh perspective on matters concerning territorial disputes, violence, and interethnic conflicts.”

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections, or book reviews.

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