Changing Societies & Personalities

Founder and Publisher:

Journal contact information:

Aims and Scope:

Changing Societies & Personalities is an international, peer-reviewed quarterly journal, published in English by the Ural Federal University. *CS&P* examines how rapid societal-level changes are reshaping individual-level beliefs, motivations and values – and how these individual-level changes in turn are reshaping societies. The interplay of personality traits and sociocultural factors in defining motivation, deliberation, action and reflection of individuals requires a combination of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Since an interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the causes and consequences of the contemporary world's changing socio-political institutions, moral values, and religious beliefs, the journal welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions from a wide range of perspectives in the context of value pluralism and social heterogeneity of (post)modern society.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to

- value implications of interactions between socio-political transformations and personal self-identity;
- changes in value orientations, materialist and post-materialist values;
- moral reasoning and behavior;
- variability and continuity in the election of styles of moral regime and/or religious identity;
- the moral bases of political preferences and their elimination;
- social exclusion and inclusion;
- post-secular religious individualism;
- tolerance and merely "tolerating": their meanings, varieties and fundamental bases;
- ideologies of gender and age as variables in political, moral, religious and social change;
- educational strategies as training for specific social competences;
- social and existential security.

The journal publishes original research articles, forum discussions, review articles and book reviews.

https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/index

CONTENTS

What Drives Us to Do the Things We Do?

Elena A. Stepanova
Institute for Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Yekaterinburg, Russia

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, Vasilii 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.

For more information, please visit our journal web-site: https://changing-sp.com/

ARTICLE

The Phenomenon of Fishing in the Context of Human–Northern Nature Interaction: Network, Vitality, Communication

Andrei M. Sergeev
Murmansk Arctic University, Murmansk, Russia, St. Petersburg State University,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Vasilii M. Voronov
Murmansk Arctic University, Murmansk, Russia

Konstantin Ya. Kotkin
Murmansk Arctic University, Murmansk, Russia; Murmansk Regional Museum of Local Lore,
Murmansk, Russia; Center for Arctic and Siberian Studies of the Sociological Institute of the
Russian Academy of Sciences—Branch of the Federal Research Sociological Center of the
Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russia

Veronika V. Simonova
Murmansk Arctic University, Murmansk, Russia; Center for Arctic and Siberian Studies
of the Sociological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences—Branch of the Federal
Research Sociological Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the fishing phenomenon in the context of interaction
between people and Northern nature. An attempt is made to move away
from a purely social aspect of considering the phenomenon and come
to a broader, namely, network-related context of its understanding. The
theoretical and methodological approach (theoretical framework) of
the research team is based on: (a) the actor-network theory of French
sociologist Bruno Latour and his conceptual studies on the history of
understanding of "nature" that serve, directly or indirectly, as the basis
for the modern Western ecological discourse; (b) Vladimir V. Bibikhin's
phenomenological reception of the Aristotelian understanding of living
nature as a kind of perfect automaton, i.e., self-moving order of living
matter change; (c) Yan V. Chesnov's conceptual understanding of the
phenomenon of "vitality" as part of the development of Nikolay A. Nosov's
virtual paradigm. At the empirical level, the research used the method of

in-depth and expert interviews. A total of 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted in the spring and fall of 2022 in the Murmansk region. All the respondents were directly or indirectly connected with fishing practice: fishermen of the Murmansk region, including those who systematically violate fishing rules for the Northern Fishery Basin, employees of the territorial department of *Rosrybolovstvo* [Russian Federal Fisheries Agency], employees of *Poliarnyi nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut morskogo rybnogo khoziaistva i okeanografii (PINRO)* [Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography] named after N. M. Knipovich, representatives of local administration in the Tersky, Kola, and Kandalaksha districts of the Murmansk region, representatives of the tourist branch, etc. The interviews became the empirical basis of the research. This paper considers the popularity of informal fishing practices in the Murmansk region as an expression of existential and mental craving in response to the stimulating appeal, or even "challenge", of nature. Accordingly, the researchers link the inherent desire of fishermen to catch fish for food, refreshment, and sale not so much with the sociocultural context, as with the natural (vital) desire to fulfill oneself as a natural being. The work understands the natural not as being in opposition to the social order, but as underlying and permeating that order.

KEYWORDS

northern nature, informal fishing in the Murmansk region, actor-network theory, existential grounds of fishing, natural grounds of fishing, vitality

Introduction

The history of modern fisheries can be traced back to the three most ancient forms of life activity of the natural species Homo sapiens: hunting, gathering, and fishing. The earliest forms of human activity rely entirely on nature and depend on it, unlike other, in the evolutionary sense newer, forms of life activity, where humans tend to rely more and more on those sociocultural "preferences" and "constructs" that come from them.

In terms of the classification of economic-cultural types proposed by M. G. Levin and N. N. Cheboksarov (Cheboksarov & Cheboksarova, 1971), fishing is associated with the first (most ancient) group: hunting, gathering, and fishing. Quite notable, according to the indirect data of a recent archaeological study, we can assume the emergence

of fishing in archanthropes, one of the most ancient human species. The authors of the abovementioned book describe the archaeological remains associated with the site of the archanthropes Gesher Bnot Ya'akov in Israel; thus, the interpretation of the archaeological evidence allows us to talk about fire cooking fish and its eating 780,000 years ago, i.e., long before the appearance of modern humans (neoanthropes). The authors use only indirect evidence associated with an increase in crystal structures on the teeth of carps' fossil, which were exposed to relatively low burning temperatures (+500°C and below) (Zohar et al., 2022). This is obviously indirect single data that seriously lengthens the time of the supposed beginning of fish consumption, and also involves such a complex and debated archaeological issue as the time when controlled fire was first used as a means of cooking. Archaeological evidence for the antiquity of fishing is found in the Late Paleolithic, which is related to the activities of modern humans (neoanthropes). As the most ancient evidence of fishing practices, we can cite the discovery of sinkers that were made about 29,000 years ago in South Korea (Cast from the past, 2023). On the basis of the archaeological data, it is reasonable to say that fishing was one of the main human occupations for the carriers of the Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic archaeological cultures (Cheboksarov & Cheboksarova, 1971, pp. 184–193).

As M. Merleau-Ponty aptly claims in his preparatory notes to one of his courses, "nature is distinct from man, it is not instituted by him, it is the opposite of custom, of discourse," "nature is primary, that is, uninstructed, uninstituted" (as cited in Viveiros de Castro, 2014, pp. 62–63). But then "reading" the actions inherent in fishing in the perspective of understanding it as a social practice including the cultural and legal component does not fully reveal their meaning. According to the authors, informal fishing is based on the specific human–nature relationship. Humans are forced to reckon with this relationship as well as to identify themselves in line with it, as it is primary and irreducible condition.

The form of interaction (communication) between "human being" and "nature" as a communicative perspective of considering informal fishing practice determines the relevance and theoretical novelty of the article. At the empirical level, our research is limited to the specifics of communication between people and Northern nature in the context of fishing practices of Murmansk region residents.

The very topic of informal extraction of biological resources, probably due to the complexity and specificity of the field, does not often attract researchers' attention. Meanwhile, methodological guidelines of researchers in the majority of cases suggest consideration of the issues in the socio-economic and socio-legal field, thus causing a certain change in the phenomenon. In the language game of the researchers themselves, for this reason, the concepts of illegal mining, criminal economic activity, illegal bioresources market are used (Ermolin et al., 2022). The specificity of our theoretical "optics" lies in exploring these practices within the context of human–nature communication first and foremost, and not exclusively in the context of human-to-human relations. In the Russian Arctic, fishing practices have previously been considered primarily in the context of traditional fishing and the impact that environmental change has had on these practices (Konnov et al., 2022).

The modern Western ecological and near-ecological academic discourse goes beyond the strictly environmentalist approach, which is methodologically close to the

main tenets of our study. In this discourse, these are the theories of B. Latour (1987, 1993) that we consider the most essential and fundamental. Also, those of particular interest for our study are the project of "dark ecology" and the concept of hyper-objects by T. Morton (2013, 2018), object-oriented ontology (Harman, 2016), ontological multi-naturalism (Viveiros de Castro, 2014), the project of self-ecology (Kohn, 2013), the concept of assemblage (DeLanda, 2006), and the critique of the classical distinction between nature and culture (Descola, 2013).

In a narrow sense (only the area of the Murmansk region), the closest to our research at the regional level are the studies of Bulgarian social anthropologist Yu. Konstantinov (2005, 2015), who has been engaged in field research in the northeastern and central parts of the Kola Peninsula since the mid-1990s, noting some peculiarities of poaching practices (mainly related to venison harvesting). The life peculiarities of indigenous people of the Kola North in modern conditions and survival practices in remote settlements of the region (on the example of the village of Krasnoschelye) related to informal fishing were analyzed on the basis of V. R. Tsylev's own field research (Tsylev, 2013, 2014). It is noteworthy that we don't know of any specific sociological studies of informal fishing in the region prior to the work of the author's team. It is also important that the field research was conducted in the framework of the presented theoretical "optics." Thus, in the study itself we can distinguish two levels: theoretical/methodological and empirical (interviews).

Ontological Understanding of Nature as an Opportunity to Understand the Existential and Psychological Foundations of Fishing Practices

The theoretical drift towards the practices of linking the natural and the social, relying on the understanding of human nature as a natural automaton[1] that acts on its own, allows us to deploy a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Despite significant and, in perspective, any changes of technical and technological nature, the first forms of human activity (hunting, gathering, fishing) were connected with the natural, i.e., non-constructed basis of life, which allowed and still allows us to avoid emerging social and cultural identifications, changing any private interests and cases of human connection with nature.

A key point in understanding the human being's relation to nature is the notion of response: humans always find themselves responding to nature's capture (embracing) of them, they always respond to nature's capture (embracing) with their capture (embracing). The situation when humans always find themselves responding is "unfixable." [2]

---

[1] The multidimensional understanding of the Aristotelian automaton in comparison with the New European understanding of it is shown by V. V. Bibikhin in his course "Les (hyle)," read by him at the Moscow State University in 1997–1998, which was published in St. Petersburg in 2011 (Bibikhin, 2011; Sergeev, 2021, pp. 54–59, 94–101, 163–164; Sergeev, 2022, pp. 106–121).

[2] The idea of human being's relationship with nature as a human response to the capture of nature was also elaborated by Bibikhin in the above-mentioned course "Forest (hyle)" (Bibikhin, 2011). Bibikhin's approach finds its basis in the work of M. Heidegger, in particular, in his understanding of the human being's relation to Being, where a person is a being who always responds to the preceding capture of their being by their own reciprocal capture.

Andrei M. Sergeev, Vasilii M. Voronov,
Konstantin Ya. Kotkin, Veronika V. Simonova

The human being's ontological position is predetermined by nature that is interpreted not only as a set of natural factors, with each of which interaction is possible and entirely defined by the optics of subject-object relations where one perceives oneself as a subject setting rules, criteria, and measure, a certain factor, considered within this optics an analyzed, controlled, calculated, predictable, and projected object. On the contrary, a phenomenon that is more meaningful and irreducible to an object form is nature itself, which is perceived as a force in whose response and in relation to which a human being's power, manifested among other things in their strength of character and their strength of personality, is also capable of being revealed.

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. Everyone who enters and engages in such a direct relationship with nature, whether one desires it or not, is necessarily in the position of responding to nature, whatever form one takes. It is the openness of the one who responds to the challenge of nature that is a significant factor, conscious or unconscious, in the formation of the core of their natural selfhood. The need to discover and find oneself, in the process of responding directly to the challenges of nature, "drives" people to the road, urges them to go "to the river," "to the lake," and "to the seashore".[3]

We can probably speak of a periodically manifested existential need that a person has to "test" their strength in the face of nature, when it is extremely important for them to understand what they are worth, as well as who they are, finding themselves in situations of an apparent weakening of the sociocultural and civilizational foundations of their life. The desire to be alone with nature turns into a meeting with oneself; with oneself as one is regardless of one's perceptions and social and cultural identifications. A person's ideas of themselves turn out to be nothing more than projections of sociocultural expectations, covering up their individual-personal framework rather than exposing and revealing it.

The theoretical "optics" that allows us to consider a human being in the context of their interaction with nature and to talk about the "test" of a human being in exposing them to the challenges of nature can be considered not only in the individual-personal dimension. We are also talking about the test of the natural species Homo sapiens in its relationship with other natural species and with nature as a whole. By the way, not every species survives such a "test": in the course of evolution the number of natural species has noticeably decreased.[4] It is indicative that outside such a "test," when any

---

[3] Of course, in the history and practice of human life it is possible to distinguish more radical in its intensity and intensity attempts to respond to the challenges of nature. It is especially manifested in the specific conditions of existence of "native" tribes of Indians in the Amazon (Kohn, 2013). However, periodic "shake-ups" of man facing the action of the natural automaton also take place in more "civilized" societies. The specificity of informal fishing practices is that it is not a variable, but a constant: fishing has been a reality throughout the history of human existence and retains its significance even today. At least, it is a constant for a number of modern regions of the Russian Federation, including the Murmansk region.

[4] Thus, Bibikhin (2011) focuses on the fact that "the million registered species of living beings on Earth is only 10 or at most 30 percent of all creatures on Earth" (p. 316). He further notes that there were about one billion natural species on Earth, and now there are only one million (pp. 353, 369–370).

natural species is forced to penetrate into its essence at the extremity of its being and at the edge of its existence, it loses its definiteness with all the ensuing consequences up to non-existence.

It is necessary to draw attention to the existential and psychological foundations of informal fishing practices as an irreplaceable factor in the long-term existence of the natural human species. This in no way suggests that other ways of understanding this phenomenon, related to technological, economic, and legal components, are unnecessary and insignificant. However, if the latter factors demonstrate their substantial variability throughout history and turn into many different manifestations of one phenomenon, the phenomenon of informal fishing practices, then the phenomenon itself turns out to be an irreducible singular factor. The human response to nature, in the form of the oldest ways of life, which are still practiced today, is not so much a "historical," "social," or "cultural" construction, but an ontological given that requires attention and understanding.

Understanding Fishing Practices as a Manifestation of the Human Vitality

As such a human response to the challenge (appeal) of nature, we can consider the development of space by representatives of local communities, for which the possibility of catching fish is seen as a "natural" occupation. Here it is possible to speak about fishery as a kind of vital place development. The imposed legal restrictions are considered as restrictions of natural process and restrictions of the acting natural automaton, whereas the possibility to catch fish points to the vitality of the local inhabitant, their "suitability" and aptitude, according to the concepts of V. V. Bibikhin. In relation to fishing, a mismatch between formal (legal) and informal (moral) rights in the minds of local communities has been observed by various researchers at the empirical level. In particular, it is possible to refer to research of Emma Wilson who studied fishing on Sakhalin in 1990s (Wilson, 2002, pp. 149–150). We assume that the direct communication of a person with nature does not coincide with the indirect one. Direct communication of humans with nature is expressed in the practice of fishing and the associated system of traditional beliefs, while the indirect one appears in the normative-legal regulation of fishing.

Within the framework of Ya. V. Chesnov's development of N. A. Nosov's virtual paradigm, this "direct" "natural" aspect of informal catch can be called vital (from Latin *vita*—life), when vitality itself is understood as a virtual (from Latin *virtualis*—possible) stimulus state, which is described by manifestations like "I can" or "I have an opportunity" (Chesnov, 2007). Accordingly, restrictions of fishing are explicitly or implicitly understood by fishermen themselves as that which limits the self-affirming vital beginning of the person through restriction of realization of the possibilities to catch fish. The very significance of catching fish for food, treats, or sale may or may not be comparable to the costs, risks, and efforts invested by the fisherman. There is an interesting comparison of salmon fishing, which is considered by the fishermen of the Murmansk region the most valuable fish, with the irresistible craving for the ring of omnipotence from J. R. R. Tolkien's novels, mentioned in one of the interviews we took:

Interviewer (I): Is it like a gold rush?

Respondent (R): Yes, something like this. Salmon is meat, it's a beautiful fish, it's currency, it's just the kind of value that if you see it, it's like a gold rush. Like in The Hobbit.

I: The ring?

R: Yes, he sees, my dear. On the Ura river, when we were there, we were unloading fish there, or we could just clean the trap. And a glass bottle swam in. And we picked it up and threw it in the boat. Some guy comes running in, and says, "Give me the fish. Can you give me a fish tail? What kind of fish? Well, *fish*[5] [emphasis added], you got the fish". (2022, Murmansk, Interview 1, a man)

According to V. V. Bibikhin's conceptual understanding of the specificity of the human being as a special kind of living, fishing technique can be understood in a broad sense, including a set of devices for catching, transport, catching skills, and many other things that reflect this specificity. Here we can recall Bibikhin's philosophical interpretation of K. Lorentz's experiments, when a box moved by an orangutan and used as a way to get a banana is compared with modern technology (Bibikhin, 2011, pp. 401–404). The technical human being's impact on nature can be considered as a manifestation of the specificity of human vitality, i.e., vitality, naturalness. An example from interview respondents describing situations with illegal salmon fishing during the Soviet times, when it was forbidden for private individuals to catch salmon and the punishment was confiscation of property, is illustrative:

I: Was there such poaching in the Soviet Union?

R: That didn't happen, of course. First of all, the guards were in other numbers. It was difficult to do it on the river, with a spinning rod. But in Soviet times you could always catch a fish with a spinning rod in 15–20 minutes.

I: Soviet newspapers covered the topic about the local population. That the fish inspectors themselves fished. This have appeared in the newspapers.

R: Everything happened. But back then there was confiscation of property regardless of the fish caught. You were caught with a fish, there was confiscation of property.

I: Yes, the risks were incomparable.

R: And you know how many people I know here who were deprived. There were no privatized apartments back then. They lost their cars, they took out their carpets. One stool was left in the house.

I: In Soviet times?

R: Yes. That was happening because of the law.

I: And why did not they avoid the risks? What pushed a person?

---

[5] Here the emphasis conveys the emotional and semantic accent made by the respondent when he was telling this story, showing the emotional state of the local resident asking him for the allegedly caught salmon. Hereinafter, the interviews are quoted with preservation of the specifics of the respondents' live oral speech, including sometimes with violation of the norms of literary language.

R: Somebody allegedly *took* [emphasis added] a fish for themselves.[6] Different concepts. Someone there *to have* [emphasis added] this barrel. And they traded a little bit too. But there was no such thing under the Soviet Union. (2022, Tersky district, Murmansk region, Interview 3, a man)

What was significant for the person was that he "had" this fish and that he could "take" it. It is important that the respondent fishermen most often used the verbs "to take" and "to grab" to describe the very action of fishing, especially in those cases when the catch volume significant for the respondent or valuable fish was mentioned. It seems that this form of response to the challenge, the challenge of nature should be characteristic of the creature, which has a hand as a special specific organ. Returning to Bibikhin's previously mentioned interpretation of K. Lorenz's experiments when comparing the specificity of man as a living being with the specificity of birds as living beings, we can refer to the following words: "A human, on the contrary, will touch a box and set everything in motion with their hand, which a bird does not have" (Bibikhin, 2011, p. 403, trans. by the authors). It is worth saying that the human being taken as a natural species cannot but move the conditional "box" in order to get a conditional "banana," simply because they can do it, responding with their action to a virtual incentive motive. In Bibikhin's language, we can say that a human being cannot but respond to the challenge of nature's perfect automaton by creating their own automata in a broad sense: by creating boats, nets, motors, machines, hooks, fishing rods, refrigerating and smoking devices, etc. This, of course, does not cancel out the fact that a single individual of the species Homo sapiens can be deaf to nature's appeal precisely in the form of fishing. The actualization or de-actualization of the practice of informal fishing, of course, depends on specific social conditions, but it is based on a specific human way of reacting to the challenges of nature.

At present, when force is often mentioned in terms of an external comparison between one thing and another, and when force is mainly understood as a potential rather than an actual quantity, we can speak of "force" only in the situation of its manifestation. Force reveals itself precisely in testing and encountering, while any potential discourse about force always deceives us in some way and conceals something. What is important and significant is the very phenomenon of testing something for strength, when a kind of force is revealed, which turns into energy, passion, the ultimate emotion, a thought impulse, or both. The understanding of force becomes a *topos* in terms of which "something" is defined, and, as B. Latour aptly notes, an object is then "attributed" to the point of such force (Latour, 1993). He further clarifies that everything distinguished by a human being, distinguished from the rest, is not only connected with the human being as a subject, but also opposes them. If everything were limited to connection, it would be impossible to distinguish "something," and only a certain opposition allows one to notice "something." In other words, "something" is noticed in resistance.

All of the above is applicable to a person as well, who periodically experiences an inner need to encounter another living species, different from themselves, which

---

[6] The emphasis shows the semantic points that are important for our analysis.

creates resistance to the human being as such. In terms of such a confrontation, he encounters the strength of resistance, when such an encounter with the strength of the individual living and the strength of the natural species to which it belongs can only give and does give strength to a person. People notice only that which is strong, and only those forces that are comparable to them in their resistance. This (ontological and existential) need to encounter the opposing force of the living just happened to be enshrined in the first modes of human activity, including fishing. In the modern social environment of an ordinary person, the number of such encounters is minimal due to the "verification" of the modern dimension of life and its "correction" by culture. And if somewhere else there is a force coming from resistance to the sociocultural, it occurs in situations of direct human contact with nature.

The human being has long focused on the socio-technical and cultural dimensions of their life, separating themselves from nature, while assuming that the natural region of their existence is primarily identified with the necessary, and therefore dependent and unfree, relation of the human being to their nature. There is now a rethinking of this state of affairs, and there is a necessity to pay attention to the belonging of each living individual to a particular natural species and even to the natural sociality that manifests itself in different ways. It is becoming increasingly clear that each individual's situation is significantly affected by one's understanding or misunderstanding of one's connection to the natural definiteness of Homo sapiens, which is accompanied by the interaction of such a species with other natural species and nature in general. Today, the pendulum that defines the contemporary human condition has swung towards nature, with a rediscovery of nature's "participation" in human life.

Human–Nature Interaction and the Network Principle

The modern appeal to the traditional ways of life, including fishing, and the growing trend towards this kind of appeal are related to the asymmetry of the natural and human in the "composition" of today's human life activity. Experiencing this asymmetry, a person seeks to rectify it. As Latour notes, from the perspective of directed time, "the asymmetry between nature and culture then turns out to be an asymmetry between the past and the future," when "the past was represented by mixing of things and people," and the future by something that "will no longer mix them" (Latour, 1993, p. 71). Remarkable is that by the very act of becoming part of nature, the human being not only joins themselves to the traditional past, but also withdraws themselves from the established asymmetry of past and future, as their present now has an open character.

A person "finds" and "discovers" in themselves the natural in a new way, whereas only recently, since the early Modern period, they firmly identified their essence mainly with the "social" and "cultural" principles. One's experience of naturalness is not a degradation into the "new barbarism" but an understanding of the difficulty of the human being's ontological position and their contradictory character associated with the retention of their two principles, both "natural" and "social and cultural," as the key components of their essence. The human situation is conditioned by the connection and contradiction of these two coordinates, when a person is always the product of

both, being a "bridge" between them. In fact, this is captured by Latour in the following words: "Nature and society are no longer explanatory terms, but rather something that requires a conjoined explanation" (Latour, 1993, p. 81).

The tendency of the Northern fishermen to establish specific communications with the natural environment in a number of the interviews we conducted is noteworthy. In particular, it is possible to quote the following fragment:

> R: And I don't just throw out *the waste* [emphasis added], I have it stored away and then *it goes to nature*. I knew *Misha* [a bear] *who was this place owner and who lived next door to me* [emphasis added]. I *used to bring the waste* [emphasis added], and then he gobbled it up. He walked by, he passed by, he rolled it up, he threw it down, and that was it. He *was busy and important* [emphasis added].
> I: This is the interaction with bears.
> R: Yes. And there's no *scandal* [emphasis added]. So, Misha has changed. (2022, Murmansk, Interview 4, a man)

It is noteworthy that the fisherman interviewed correlates their repeated presence in a certain place with the task of integrating themselves into a certain natural order. The fisherman represents this aspect both through a reference to nature in general ("the waste goes to nature") and through the specification of this nature in the bear figure as a neighbor and territory owner, who becomes something of an accomplice to the ongoing process of fishing. The bear in this case appears to be "involved" and there is no "scandal" with it. The behavior of the respondent is fundamentally different from the simple tourist desire to feed the bear, without thinking about the consequences, and from following the recommendations for tourists and travelers not to feed the bear, in order not to provoke the formation of a reflexive chain "human being–food". The bear is perceived not as a wild animal, which is on the opposite side to a human, but rather as an accomplice or co-actor in the ongoing process of informal catching of fish.

Giving a theoretical and methodological interpretation of such a model of communication, it is necessary to say that the key point of the new understanding of the human–nature relation is the reference to the concept of network. This reference is possible at different levels, for example, it is possible to focus on the network principle of human body organization: neural networks, networks of blood vessels, networks of skin, facial networks. Moreover, the relationship of a human and people to things is defined not only by the domination of some over others, but on the contrary, it reveals a diversity of very different relationships between them. In the field of sociological thought, perhaps, this point is best reflected in the framework of the actor-network theory of B. Latour. In our case, the phenomenon of fishing itself can be represented in the form of network constructions, when inside each of such networks a person is not its main coordinator, but only an element of the network, along with its other elements. The way of preservation and development of each such element, included in the network, is the maintenance of activity of the network itself, when it is important not that a person receives certain material, property and financial resources, but their participation in the network and in its development.

The main thing in networks is the action of linking all the nodes of the network. In terms of fishing-related network, the person is not the subject, but an element of the network, along with its other elements, one of which is, for example, the time of "appearance" and "disappearance" of fish and tying it to the calendar. Other network elements are the legal regulations of fishing. The third nodes of the fishing network are fishing gear and vehicles, etc. Even the figure of the fisherman as such turns out to be only one of the network nodes and depends on other network nodes just as the result of fishing turns out to be a derivative of a multitude of network sections and the generation of various effects of such a network.

In order to become elements of the network, the various phenomena included in the network must become connected to each other. The network makes it possible to equate one thing with another and to translate one into another. As a result, the qualitative status of everything that can be regarded solely as "natural", "social" or "cultural" is now determined only by their ability or inability to become part of a network. It is also important that the original connotation of an emphasis on the singular and disposable nature of anything is replaced by the connotation of connecting and relating one to another within the network and the understanding that within the network one becomes an extension of another.

Within the boundaries of hierarchical (vertical), but not network (horizontal) understanding, considered by J. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1987) on the basis of the opposition of tree-like/rhizomatic nature, the natural appears as a transcendent principle in contrast to the sociocultural principle arising from the human being.[7] However, in terms of the network the "natural" is compared and opposed to the "sociocultural," while the network itself turns out to be a transcendent principle (in relation to the human being) since it is the network that can "retrain" and change the status of everything that gets into it and becomes network content. In this respect, any phenomenon viewed outside the network as a "natural," "social," or "cultural" code, once inside the network, is recoded so much that even "non-human" entities are already perceived as selves who behave and act somehow, while individual "human" qualities, by contrast, can be perceived as impersonal constructs.

The transcendent nature of the network in relation to both the "natural" and the "sociocultural" aspects of human life is the only possible way of explaining the actual situation with the Modern European understanding of nature. Therefore, it is possible and necessary to talk about the nature of all things: the nature of the network itself, the nature of culture, the nature of society, and even the nature of nature itself. In view of that understanding, the "natural" itself turns out to be an irreducible transcendence inherent in everything and everyone, where any existing is predetermined by the fact that it arises, lives, and disappears. Nature is the inner form of all that exists, turning

---

[7] The image of a "tree," identified by Deleuze and Guattari as a hierarchical order stemming from a single beginning, is contrasted with the image of a "rhizome," which has many beginnings. And if in "tree-like" constructions everything is determined by the place of an element within the general hierarchical structure, in the "rhizome" all elements of the network are equal to each other and therefore interchangeable. The significance of any element in rhizomatic, i.e., network constructions, is determined by its state, i.e., by itself as part of the rhizomatic network. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the image of a "rhizome" is actually identical to the movement of a "line," which has neither beginning nor end (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

out to be a transcendence revealing itself in the transcendental experience "above" the existing, which cannot be as something present in the world, but whose presence one encounters as the boundary of something. This is the primary ancient Greek understanding of nature, expressed in the word *φύσις* [physis], radically diverging from the Modern European concept of *natura* ("human nature") (Akhutin, 1988). This understanding of nature is reducible neither to "natural" and "sociocultural" objects, nor to any subjects.

Fishing, gathering, and hunting turned out to be the first forms, inside which not only the first practical skills of life were formed, but also the first forms of contemplative, i.e., theoretical attitude, on the basis of which the initial ways of human mental and reflexive involvement into human life, its connection with other forms of living and understanding life in general were formed. Even later, especially from the early Modern period, the naturalness of nature gives way to a multitude of different positions proceeding both from the primacy of "nature" as "essence" and "being" and from "the human being," "society," "culture," and "discourse." On the basis of each such position many scenarios of "understanding" the world are being formed, the common feature of which is a fundamentally partial understanding. Latour calls such scenarios "myths" and assumes that there are hundreds of them. In fact, we are talking about a multitude of "replacements, displacements, translations" that become "reference points" that allow differentiation of "mediators" and stabilization of "entities" (Latour, 1993). As Latour himself notes, "naturalization, socialization, discursivization, divinization, ontologization—all these '-izations' are equally impossible," and "none of them forms a common basis on which collectives, thus rendered comparable, might repose" (Latour, 1993, p. 128). The unconditionality of nature turned out to be blurred by the multitude of conditional ways of individual and collective attitude to nature, and each of these, moreover, is influenced by private interests.

Representations of "Order" in the "Fishermen–Northern Nature" Interaction and Unspoken Rules of Informal Catch

Nature is the form of every life, including human life, whereas the natural species is the formal beginning of life. Therefore, along with the fact that every life is revealed in a set of different contents, the essence of life cannot be revealed in a substantial way and must reveal itself formally. In this connection, the importance of those modes of our life activity that would enable a person to encounter the presence of the principles of life, i.e., the transcendent character of life and its boundary, which is what happens in direct and immediate interaction with the life of other natural species, increases dramatically. The phenomenon of life is such a large form, in which all beginnings and ends, introduced into life already by the human being, are "hidden" (Sergeev, 2022, pp. 88–89). Taking this into account it requires solving the problems of philosophical, cultural, and social anthropology. Thus, the phenomenon of fishing is considered by social anthropologists mainly as a practice dependent on such categories as "individualism, commitment to the community, globalization, and class" (McCormack & Forde, 2020), i.e., predominantly in the traditional social anthropological context,

rather than in the context of its understanding as a form of communication between people and nature.

As an example of understanding informal fishing in terms of building the order of human communication with other living species, the cases of building certain unspoken rules of informal fishing recorded in the interviews are interesting. These unspoken rules are connected, at least in words, with a problem of resources conservation and even with a claim to a kind of self-organizing ecological oversight. In particular, the discourse of informal fishermen uses the concepts "to fish," "to empty," and "to make fishless" a pond, and these, at least in the interviews conducted by our research group, are perceived negatively. It is appropriate to quote here a fragment of the interview where the respondent represents his experience and talks about his perception of the fishermen prevailing mood in one of the Murmansk region districts.

> R: Many people do not allow themselves *to empty* [emphasis added] lakes, but there are such people who just come and empty lakes. They just trawl out all the fish that are there, including fry, and the lake *is empty of fish* [emphasis added] for several years, up to a dozen years. It remains uninhabited, remains fishless. That's what *I don't understand* [emphasis added], and many people don't understand. *Most people have an understanding.* ... And in favor of nets all seasoned fishermen say that our fathers, our grandfathers always caught fish with nets, and there was always fish. ... But to block the whole lake flows and fish it out in such a barbaric way, I've never heard of it. This is condemned. I know it's done that way. *Everybody wants to catch and punish people who do it* [emphasis added]. Even the locals, even the seasoned poachers who do not accept any other way of catching fish.[8]
> I: There is a peculiar understanding.
> R: Of course, yes. We are robbing nature. Of course, *but we rob carefully. That's why there is a generation left over, that's why we can come back next time. People understand it, almost all of them* [emphasis added]. There are some law-breakers, and I wish we could catch these citizens and tell them about consciousness. It is a collective dream of every fisherman of Pechenga district ... (2022, Pechenga district, Murmansk region, Interview 1, a man)

In addition to the reference to the real or imaginary order of catching, which supposedly existed for a long time ("our fathers, our grandfathers always caught fish with nets, and always had fish") and allowed us to preserve fish, we also see an indication of the desire to punish those who "empty" a pond completely. Accordingly, representations of the practice of informal fishing for food, refreshment, and sale show its perception not only as an aspect of the informal economy,[9] but also in the context of general interaction between humans and nature. By analogy with the informal economy, here we can talk about informal ecology. Certainly, it is very difficult to estimate a degree of efficiency of

---

[8] We are talking about fishermen who, as a matter of principle, only fish with nets, but are negatively disposed against those who "empty of fish" or "empty" a body of water.

[9] The concept of informal economy was introduced and developed primarily by K. Hart (2006).

such informal self-limitations, especially in a situation when there is no clearly visible criterion within the practice, that is a catch of a small water body. In particular, according to A. A. Lukin's research, the number of Arctic charr (Salvelinus alpinus L.) in Lake Imandra, the largest lake in the Murmansk region, continued to decline in 2000s after ecological conditions improved due to the reduction of technogenic impact on the lake because of uncontrolled fishing (Lukin, 2013).

In terms of this informal ecological attitude towards the resource, nature, and their communication with nature, we can note the respondents' negative perception of fishermen who can be ironically called "alcoholic" poachers. We are talking about cases when a group of friends that go fishing spreads quite a large number of nets several kilometers long, but then the nets may not be checked for several days due to the fact that the fishermen are permanently drunk at this time. In this sense both the fishermen, who fish in the pond and the fishermen, who spread nets and forget about them being drunk, are perceived by other fishermen (who themselves violate the normative regulations) as obvious violators of a certain order of communication of a human being as a representative of one species living with nature. The existence of order is associated with the existence of fish, while no order means no fish. In particular, it is possible to refer to the interview of one of the former poachers:

I: How did I catch fish before? Pretty easy. You couldn't make a fortune on it, but if you did everything wisely, it was possible to earn at least some money. And now there's no fish left. *A certain order used to be in the river* [emphasis added].
R: In the Kola?
I: In any river. All the rivers that one may find along the Murmansk coast, there were villages, collective farm. You don't have to go far ... (2022, Murmansk, Interview 9, a man)

This connection "order means existence of fish" in the thinking and language games of fishermen is often intertwined with a sense of nostalgia for the past, when there was fish in ponds, with anxiety for the present situation and for the future, in which there is no order and as a consequence no fish. The fishermen's "tale" manifested in the intensities of their naming, the choice of words and semantic certainty of sentences used by the participants of fishing becomes a response to the challenge, the challenge of nature, a response to what was revealed to a person in the natural "show." Referring to the interview quoted above, we can cite the following fragment of it:

My heart aches for the Kola most of all. It's my childhood river. In fact, there aren't any fish left at all. Instead of sitting here with you, I'd have been on the river. Now there are no salmon any more, the autumn herd on the Kola was completely killed off. Autumn herd used to be bigger than spring one. You spread a net, wait for half an hour, 40 minutes, and catch fish. The net was removed and they left. I know no one would come here, no one would be here. There was an order. Although they used to catch, and some then were put in jail, or got suspended sentences. Everything was done within reasonable limits, everything was ok, and everybody was satisfied. (2022, Murmansk, Interview 9, a man)

It is noteworthy that in addition to the fishermen themselves (poachers?), the elements of such order here are lure, and places, and, even the control and supervisory authorities. Formal regulatory rules may be perceived by fishermen as limiting or distorting the order that the human–nature relationship should be. In particular, a common pattern is the request for increased scope and for at least partial authorization of the net way of catching. References to real or fictitious but better conditions for fishermen in other regions, and certain questions about the catching opportunities for certain ethnic groups in the local population are also popular. In particular, the fishermen of the Kandalaksha district of the Murmansk region appeal to the possibilities of legally setting nets with the residents of some districts of the Republic of Karelia, and the fishermen of the Tersky district appeal to the possibilities of the residents of some districts of the Arkhangelsk region.

Another interesting aspect of this topic is the correlation of opportunities for non-indigenous fishermen with permits for the latter. Such opportunities are often regarded as unfair concerning other local inhabitants. It is not a question of banning such preferences, but rather a sense of injustice, which can be expressed in the question, "Why can't we (I)?" If within a purely sociocultural consideration of the problem, on which the state policy and legal regulations are based, the privileged allocation of certain groups of the local population regarding fishing opportunities ("indigenous small peoples of the North," "indigenous people") has grounds, then within the perception of Murmansk fishermen of themselves as local residents engaged in "natural" occupation (fishing) these grounds are not obvious. They are unobvious against the background of absence of any privileges for those Northern fishermen who do not belong to the number of "indigenous and numerically small," but live in the same area, sometimes in several generations. Regarding the Murmansk region, this can be seen in language games when comparing opportunities open to the Sami and closed to local residents of other nationalities (Komi, Nenets, Russians, etc.). These opportunities allowed to others are exaggerated in the context of the lack of permission for those who do not belong to this category:

> I: They began to allow local Sami to fish ... approximately three tons to five tons.
> R: Three to five tons per community or artel?
> I: *No, per person*[10] [emphasis added]. They spread the nets without a problem. Of course, everyone else is offended. They get up three tons each, and they sell it.
> R: Officially?
> I: Yes. But *you can't sell, buy, and catch even 10 kg of fish …* [emphasis added] (2022, Murmansk, Interview 2, a man)

Another case is often cooperation, when Murmansk fishermen use the moment of communication with the familiar Sami with their permit to use this license as a kind of cover:

---

[10] The norms are exaggerated. Perhaps, the actual catch under these permits is represented, which is perceived as legally allowed.

I: And what about net catch?

R: We spread nets, yes. I even have a friend, he's an ethnic Lapp, he received a permit. Yes, there is some kind of quota, it was introduced about five years ago, I think. But it takes him half a winter to collect the documents, all that stuff. It's all limited there, it's clear that we try to abide the law. But we didn't get caught either. He got caught. He says that the fishing inspectorate doesn't bother him with all those Sami papers. The only thing they could do is a harmless rebuke. (2022, Murmansk, Interview 3, a man)

In a number of interviews, the problem of aversion to the regulatory order is revealed in terms of contrasting the figure of the fisherman, whose actions are strictly limited, with the unlimited possibilities of the state and/or capital.

Our interpretation of this language game of the Northern fishermen, which follows from our theoretical position, is that in this case we are not simply dealing with a variant of the discourse of social justice. In this respect, the situation with the discourse on the possibility of catching fish in inland waters is quite different from, for example, discussions about the nationalization of the oil and gas or other fossil resource industries. Modern high-tech mining involves organization, industrial exploration, supply chains and infrastructure, etc., i.e., those processes in which the various resources of both the state and big capital have been incorporated to some extent. To a certain extent, the possibility of discussions about the legal form of production organization and about income distribution patterns is thus justified. Fishing on inland waters is a "natural" occupation available to the common person that can also have economic significance for specific individuals, families, and local communities. For this reason, informal catching does not seem to be something wrong in the eyes of fishermen themselves, and sometimes it even acquires features of a peculiar restoration of the natural order within the communicative human–nature network.

Conclusion

In the form of fishing, the human being experiences nature in a state of differentiation: both as "their own" and as "foreign"; as something they can have and use, and as something with which they have to reckon. Fishing becomes a phenomenon that, when encountered, gives a person the opportunity to experience a direct identification with the natural automaton operating within them, thus penetrating their own natural norm.

Fishing is a form of direct interaction between humans and nature, when one confronts oneself as a natural automaton and the natural automaton of the species to which one belongs, when their strength, aptitude, and suitability are determined in opposition to, and comparison with the perfect automaton of nature. Discovering the natural automaton acting on its own, a person "rediscovers" and in a certain way corrects their ontology related, among other things, to the creation of their automata. In the example of interaction between Murmansk fishermen and Northern nature, we can see how the natural automaton of a person and the natural automaton of the

Homo sapiens species respond to the perfect automaton of nature. Such a response is expressed in the form of existing informal fishing practices on inland water bodies of the Murmansk region, and is revealed in the peculiar language games of Northern fishermen. The peculiarity of their discourse is associated with the emphasis on communicative moments of the interaction between humans and nature, with a partial opposition of informal economic and, partly, informal ecological order to formal regulation, and with a claim to a kind of natural justice of the open possibility to fish.

The natural understanding of fishing allows us to consider it as a network, which, like any network, is supported by actions aimed at the establishment of connections of all nodes of the network. Thus, the participant of fishing is considered as an element of a network, along with its other elements. Any element of the network becomes network content, which is recoded and may not be perceived as it was before entering the network. In this sense, fishermen themselves, fish protection officers, vehicles, fishing gears, ponds, landscapes, supply chains, etc. act as nodes of this network linking nature and the human individual as a natural being. The notions about the normal functioning of this network are expressed in the language games of Murmansk fishermen in the image of a certain natural order, which is different from the legal regulations. Fishing is a practice of the vital development of a place, which is evident from the study of informal fishing practices in the Murmansk region. Restrictions on fishing could therefore be perceived, from the perspective of the direct participants, as limitations on such a vital human beginning. In some cases, it legitimizes their violation in the eyes of fishermen, when it is the opportunities to catch only that way, or only in that place, or only at that time, which do not coincide with the legal regulations that encourage the fisherman to violate.

The unspoken rules disclosed in the language games of Murmansk fishermen indicate a certain specific ethics (Sergeev et al., 2022; Voronov et al., 2022), and also about self-limitation and self-organization in fish catch volume in the water body. Accordingly, it is rather a question not of total denial of formal regulations, but of their recoding, violations as necessary, which is thought as natural, and also of their use for their own purposes.

References

Akhutin, A. V. (1988). *Poniatie "priroda" v antichnosti i v Novoe vremia ("fiusis" i "natura")* [The concept of "nature" in antiquity and Modern times ("fusis" and "nature")]. Nauka.

Bibikhin, V. V. (2011). *Les (hyle)* [Forest (hyle)]. Nauka.

Cast from the past: World's oldest fishing net sinkers found in South Korea. (2018, August 7). Phys.org. https://phys.org/news/2018-08-world-oldest-fishing-net-sinkers.html

Cheboksarov, N. N., & Cheboksarova, I. A. (1971). *Narody, rasy, kul'tury* [Peoples, races, cultures]. Nauka.

Chesnov, Ya. V. (2007). *Telesnost' cheloveka: Filosofsko-antropologicheskoe ponimanie* [Human corporality: Philosophical and anthropological understanding]. Institut Filosofii RAN.

DeLanda, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. Continuum.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press.

Descola, F. (2013). *Beyond nature and culture*. University of Chicago Press.

Ermolin, I., Svolkinas, L., Suvorkov, P., Holmes, G., & Goodman, S. J. (2022). *Metodologicheskie vyzovy polevykh issledovanii nelegal'nogo rynka bioresursov* [Fieldwork challenges stemming from doing studies in illegal wildlife trade (IWT)]. *Journal of Economic Sociology*, *23*(1), 125–153. https://doi.org/10.17323/1726-3247-2022-1-125-153

Harman, G. (2016). *Immaterialism: Objects and social theory*. Polity Press.

Hart, K. (2006). Bureaucratic form and the informal economy. In B. Guha-Khasnobis, R. Kanbur, & E. Ostrom (Eds.), *Linking the formal and informal economy: Concepts and policies* (pp. 21–35). Oxford University Press.

Kohn, E. (2013). *How forests think: Toward an anthropology beyond the human*. University of California Press.

Konnov, A., Khmelnitskaya, Ya., Dugina, M., Borzenko, T., & Tysiachniouk, M. S. (2022). Traditional livelihood, unstable environment: Adaptation of traditional fishing and reindeer herding to environmental change in the Russian Arctic. *Sustainability*, *14*(19), Article 12640. https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912640

Konstantinov, Yu. (2005). *Reindeer herders: Field-notes from the Kola peninsula (1994–95).* Uppsala Universitet.

Konstantinov, Yu. (2015). Tourist hegemonies of outside powers: The case of salmon-fishing safari-camps in territories of traditional land-use (Kola Peninsula). In G. V. Zhigunova (Ed.), *Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Chelovek i obshchestvo: Opyt i perspektivy sotsiologicheskikh issledovanii", March 12–13, 2015, Murmansk* (pp. 53–69). Murmansk State Arctic University.

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Harvard University Press.

Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern* (C. Porter, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Originally published in French 1991)

Lukin, A. A. (2013). The present state of an Arctic charr (Salvelinus alpinus L.) population in Lake Imandra subjected to over-fishing. *Journal of Ichthyology*, *53*(10), 804–808. https://doi.org/10.1134/S0032945213100056

McCormack, F., & Forde, J. (2020, May 29). Fishing. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.183

Morton, T. (2013). *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and ecology after the end of the world*. University of Minnesota Press.

Morton, T. (2018). *Being ecological*. Pelican.

Sergeev, A. M. (2021). *Chelovek i mir. Iazyk—myshlenie—soznanie* [The human and the world. Language—thinking—consciousness]. Vladimir Dal'.

Sergeev, A. M. (2022). *Nachala i kontsy* [The beginnings and the ends]. Vladimir Dal'.

Sergeev, A. M., Kotkin, K. Ya., Voronov, V. M., & Simonova, V. V. (2022). Rybolovstvo kak neformal'naia sotsial'naia praktika skvoz' prizmu kontseptsii "iazykovykh igr" L. Vitgenshteina [Fishing as an informal social practice through the prism of L. Wittgenstein's concept of language games]. *Science. Society. State*, *10*(3), 111–118. https://doi.org/10.21685/2307-9525-2022-10-3-12

Tsylev, V. R. (2013). Osobennosti zhizni malykh narodov Kol'skogo Severa v sovremennykh usloviiakh (na primere sela Krasnoshchelye) [Specifics of present-day life of small-numbered peoples in the North of the Kola Peninsula (case study of the rural locality Krasnoshchelye)]. *Problems of Territory's Development*, *4*, 74–82.

Tsylev, V. R. (2014). Praktiki vyzhivaniia zhitelei otdalennykh poselkov Severa v sovremennykh usloviiakh (na primere sela Krasnoshchelye Murmanskoi oblasti) [Survival practices of residents of remote villages of the North in modern conditions (on the example of the village of Krasnoshchelye, Murmansk region)]. In O. N. Kolesnikova & E. A. Popov (Eds.), *Sotsiologiia v sovremennom mire: Nauka, obrazovanie, tvorchestvo* [Sociology in the modern world: Science, education, creativity] (Vol. 6, pp. 304–308).

Viveiros de Castro, E. (2014). *Cannibal metaphysics* (P. Skafish, Ed. & Trans.). Univocal. (Originally published in French 2011)

Voronov, V. M., Sergeev, A. M., Kotkin, K. Ya., & Simonova, V. V. (2022). Eticheskoe izmerenie problemy rybolovnogo brakon'erstva (na materiale iazykovykh igr rybakov Murmanskoi oblasti) [Ethical dimension of the fishing poaching problem (Based on the material of fishermen's language games in the Murmansk region)]. *Society: Philosophy, History, Culture*, *10*, 13–19. https://doi.org/10.24158/fik.2022.10.1

Wilson, E. (2002). Est' zakon, est' i svoi zakony: Legal and moral entitlements to the fish resources of Nyski Bay, north-eastern Sakhalin. In E. Kasten (Ed.), *People and the land: Pathways to reform in Post-Soviet Siberia* (pp. 149–168). Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Zohar, I., Alperson-Afil, N., Goren-Inbar, N., Prévost, M., Tütken, T., Sisma-Ventura, G., Hershkovitz, I., & Najorka, J. (2022). Evidence for the cooking of fish 780,000 years ago at Gesher Benot Ya'aqov, Israel. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, *6*(12), 2016–2028. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-022-01910-z

Resource Potential of Volunteers With Professional Knowledge for the Development of Regional Socially Oriented Non-Profit Organizations in Russia

Konstantin N. Obukhov
National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the work models that have arisen in the non-profit sector of Russian regions, including those that involve volunteers with specialized professional knowledge and skills. The socio-economic situation is currently leading to a general lack of resources, especially in the socially oriented non-profit organizations of the regions. One of the channels for additional capacity attraction for SO NPOs is the appeal for free assistance to professional volunteers in certain areas. In this regard, it is important to find ways to attract and work with such professionals, since simple financial motivation is excluded from the process of functioning. Accordingly, this article focuses on the issue of finding effective models to organize the activities of volunteers with professional skills in regional SO NPOs. Materials obtained in a series of 29 semi-structured interviews with the managers of regional SO NPOs show that the main models of work with volunteers have been developed in Russia. As a result of attracting volunteers on a gratuitous basis, organizations manage to cover the demand for rare specialists, quickly solve the arising problems that go beyond the specialization of SO NPOs, and gain access to innovative technologies for their activities.

Introduction

Volunteering today is quite an appeal that is actively used in the social sphere and in the field of human resource management around the world (Wilson, 2000). This idea covers various forms of social interaction, and most of them refer to voluntary and gratuitous assistance of various types (Wilson, 2012). From the research point of view, specialists in the social and humanitarian field are primarily interested in identification of the reasons that cause people to spend time and effort on gratuitous assistance. This issue becomes particularly important when volunteers apply their professional skills in an organized activity, since there is no obvious financial incentive to perform (essentially) labor functions. The study of such practices allows identifying the non-financial, organizational, and social foundations for the implementation of professional activities.

Involvement of professionals in volunteer activities is studied on the example of Europe and the USA (Lukka, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Volunteering in the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe has attracted less attention. This particularly concerns the practice of gratuitous provision of professional assistance (Dekker & Halman, 2003). However, the accumulated material demonstrates the discrepancies in the mechanisms for volunteers' participation in the provision of social assistance in different countries: in some cases, personal contact and direct trust to organized activities are important; in many countries, preference is given to understandable organized structures with clearly defined rules (Wilson, 2012).

Similar research in Russia has focused on the study of general issues of volunteering (Sukharkova, 2022) without reference to the application of professional skills in a volunteer environment or an environment of socially oriented non-profit organizations. Even if there is such a perspective, organizations and volunteers of specific information platforms, megacities, and large cities (National Council on Corporate Volunteering et al., 2017), or individual professional groups (lawyers, doctors, translators) (Kazun, 2015) are subject to study.

This article focuses on the organizational forms of volunteer work that requires professional skills and knowledge currently existing in the socially oriented non-profit organizations (SO NPOs) of the Russian regions. Studying general mechanisms of work with volunteers in a non-profit environment will help determine the context for work with professional volunteers that currently exists in the Russian regions. The search for and description of successful practices that involve professionals in the provision of gratuitous assistance within the scope of organized activities allows registering the non-economic foundations of labor activities of SO NPOs. In the future, the identified interaction models may serve as a resource for the development of non-profit organizations attracting highly specialized professionals or people with specialists with particular professional skills.

Sociological Approach to Volunteering Study

There are diverse approaches toward defining the phenomenon of volunteering (Hustinx et al., 2010). The research focused on the study of volunteer participation typically describes the volunteer experience based on a variety of simple, empirical, and recordable indicators (Wilson, 2012) without reference to a well-defined theoretical framework. Such a situation has developed in sociology either. This is partly because volunteering is a broad category used in the daily practice of organization management and interactions in a wide variety of countries and socio-economic environments (Wilson, 2000). Accordingly, the very content of this notion and its typical forms of interaction may change over time in different contexts (regarding Russia, the discussion continues on applicability of terms related to "volunteering" and the adequacy of its correlation with the Russian equivalent stemming from the word combination *dobraia volia* [free will] (Oberemko, 2016).

For social scientists, volunteering is not a traditional or historically established object of study. However, certain aspects related to volunteering can be found in classical sociological works (Pevnaya, 2016). In the sociological study of volunteering, theories related to the study of social capital, or the theory of exchange have become quite popular. However, these theories have some limitations. The main one is an internal gravitation toward economic and super-rational models of individuals' behavior, when social alternatives do not replace but only mask the focus on economic forms of interaction. Despite these limitations, the theory of social capital further provides an opportunity to develop research that focuses on solidarity, trust, and mutual assistance in a volunteer environment.

Today, sociological research is more associated with receiving definitions from related fields or analyzing social problems. If we exclude the "negative" ways of defining volunteering activity, which proceed from the designation of what is not volunteering, then we can distinguish several steadily reproducing components in the existing definitions. First, volunteering is associated to some extent with activities that are socially mediated in nature, even if they are not directly aimed at helping other people (Hustinx et al., 2010). Second, volunteering takes time and develops over time. Accordingly, the most universal and simple definition of volunteering is *"gratuitous assistance provided to another person, who is not a family member"* [emphasis added] (Verduzco, 2010, p. 49). All other elements of volunteering remain debated, modified, and transformed in accordance with the period and area of study, the disciplinary framework, and the problem underlying the study. In particular, the debates continue around including the term of "organized participation" in the definition of volunteering and the availability of specialized skills for volunteers to provide assistance.

Studies of volunteering show that the organized nature of activities within a particular legal entity or public organization is not the same for every country, type of assistance provided, and social group (Verduzco, 2010). Existence of formal organizations is more typical for Western countries with a long history of volunteerism and countries with "non-democratic" regimes. In addition, organized participation is more common among middle- and high-income groups in Western countries

(Taniguchi, 2011). At the same time, the countries of Latin America, some Eastern European and Asian countries demonstrate a lower level of formal organization of volunteering and a greater importance of interpersonal connections forming networks outside of mutual assistance within a family (Wilson, 2012). In Russia, volunteer activity has been changing over time. 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 (Skokova et al., 2018). However, the significance of volunteering in organizations is increasing, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Researchers of Western Europe and the USA actively explore the issue of how volunteers perceive and react to the environment created for them in organizations in the non-profit sector (Englert, 2019). In general, the studies show that the most long-term and productive relationships between volunteers arise in organizations under the following conditions:

- if the mission of the organization coincides with the personal values and views of volunteers;
- if the organization has a curator, who facilitates "soft" and free forms of volunteers' participation;
- if there is a flexible but structured approach to time spent;
- if volunteers receive support from the organization (if required);
- if volunteer work is related to the knowledge and skills that a volunteer possesses or to the goals of their participation in volunteer activities.

The activities of volunteers in NPOs can contribute to the development of the organization by introducing new social contacts and connections, the necessary (missing) skills to help beneficiaries, and expanding the scale of the organization's activities. The key motives underlying volunteer involvement in the activities of the organization (Clary et al., 1998) are to help others, build up new relationships, improve self-esteem, distract from personal problems, accumulate knowledge and skills, and enhance career opportunities. In a situation of successful integration into the organization, volunteers get a sense of satisfaction with their work/activity, expand their personal network of contacts, and gain new knowledge, skills, and experience.

Another controversial point in the study of volunteering is whether a volunteer needs special skills. Organized activity itself, regardless of what it is aimed at, requires the participants in the process to have a certain level of coordination and social skills development (Englert et al., 2020). With the growth of NPOs' specialization, the demand for specific skills that are necessary to assist beneficiaries also increases. This is especially true in the situation of project activities organizing within the framework of socially oriented non-profit organizations (Holavins, 2020), when the allocated funding is intermittent, and the specifics of project work may require a change of skills from those involved in the implementation of activities. When certain professional skills are included in the study of volunteering, the problem of distinguishing between volunteering and paid work arises. Meanwhile, the sociological perspective of the study becomes more considerable through registration outside the economic interaction of people based on organized and specialized activities. From

this point of view, a key element in the definition of volunteering is free will and the absence of direct forms of payment for the time spent. Thus, Snyder & Omoto (2008) defined volunteering as *"freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time, are engaged in without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations"* [emphasis added] (p. 5).

Studies of volunteer activity in Russia focus less on the use of special professional skills. Most of this research is centered around "pro bono volunteering" practices in the fields of law, medicine, and social work, "intellectual volunteering" or more generally "corporate volunteering" (National Council on Corporate Volunteering et al., 2017). This shows that there is a problem of distinguishing these concepts, both among volunteerism researchers and representatives of the social sphere. What creates additional difficulties when studying the participation of professionals in volunteering is the fact that unpaid participation of professionals may not be identified as volunteering or may be identified using different categories. In my research, professional participation is associated with the voluntary application of professional skills and abilities in volunteer work without the expectation of direct financial reward.

Research Methodology

The analyzed data were obtained during a study aimed at determining the place of professional volunteering in the activities of socially oriented non-profit organizations operating in the regions of Russia. A series of semi-structured online interviews were conducted from 23 February 2022 to 2 February 2023 with leaders of SO NPOs from Russian regions other than Moscow, the Moscow region, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region. These regions were excluded due to their higher development level both in terms of volunteering infrastructure and non-profit field as such (Skokova & Rybnikova, 2022). A combined respondent selection strategy was used, that is targeted selection combined with the "snowball" method. At the initial stage, participants and winners of competitions held by major donor funds (Presidential Grants Foundation, Potanin Foundation, Prokhorov Foundation, Timchenko Foundation) and resource centers of Russian regions were selected. At the second stage, the managers of SO NPOs included in the study recommended organizations that they considered significant either in their own or other regions. During the selection process, the level of the differentiation of organizations by federal district, size, and the area of work was monitored. The focus was on SO NPOs engaged in helping other people.

Representatives of organizations were asked questions on the following topics: the history of the organization creation, the peculiarities of the organization's employees work, interaction with the beneficiaries of the organization, interaction with volunteers, interaction with donors and regulators, and informational openness of the organization. Based on the results of the analysis, the broader context of the interview allows making a number of hypotheses regarding the specifics of organizing volunteer activities, which require professional skills, in Russian SO NPOs. In total, 29 interviews were held; their time was from 42 to 125 minutes. Geographically, they covered all federal districts, 20 locations from 17 regions. The managers of the

following organizational and legal forms participated in the study: autonomous non-profit organizations, public organizations, foundations, non-profit partnerships. The profile of socially oriented organizations included the following activities: education and support for the elderly, support for the homeless, support for children and adults with disabilities, support for rural residents, support for young people and adults in difficult life situations, support for orphans (including adoption), and support for local communities. The organizations included in the study have been operating from one to 29 years. Most of the organizations worked mainly within the boundaries of their region, only three organizations worked in several regions at the same time, five more organizations were associated with large federal network structures. The approximate staffing of organizations ranged from one to 25 employees.

The study proceeded from the basic hypothesis that the managers of SO NPOs organize their work with volunteers having professional skills in special ways. In some cases, they can identify professionals through categories other than "volunteer". The analysis of volunteering is seen in all blocks of interviews, and the criteria for inclusion in volunteering are set as broadly as possible: the lack of direct financial motivation to help the organization or beneficiaries. The interview transcripts are analyzed through open coding. The resulting codes coincide with the main topics of the empirical results of the study.

Volunteering Models in Regional SO NPOs

Appeals of SO NPO managers to professionals should be considered in the context of the general models of interaction with volunteers. Representatives of the organizations that participated in the research did not clearly perceive the needs of their institutions for volunteering in general. Some managers indicated that currently interaction with volunteers is not a priority for their organization. However, out of those some would like to organize such cooperation in the future: "No. Not now. We have, as you said, a special sphere. Not everyone can, of course. You can't just recruit anyone, you can't just take volunteers" (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with up to five employees).

The refusal to involve volunteers is related to the lack of need for volunteers, the impossibility for volunteers to participate due to the specifics of the organization's activities (providing specialized medical, psychological assistance or assistance in accompanying seriously ill patients), negative experience of recruiting in the past, or lack of resources (in this case there is a general realization that "volunteers are not a free resource"). The intentions to turn to volunteers' assistance in the future are typical for organizations and managers, who have been working in the social or non-profit sphere for less than three years. In cases where the respondent is aware of the resource intensity of volunteering, they may declare the need to create conditions for working and attracting people (primarily in the form of having a professional employee responsible for volunteering, a clearer formulation of a set of tasks, building an incentive system, channels of attraction). When forming and launching their activities, managers often prefer to concentrate their efforts on key areas of work and form the main team. Some respondents directly proceed from the "free" nature of the volunteer

resource and are more eager to cooperate with volunteer centers in the future. In all these cases, they never mention the possibility of contacting volunteers with some professional skills and abilities.

Not all managers are inclined to describe volunteers' work using the volunteer category (in addition to the traditional category of "voluntary aid," the category "like-minded" can be used, and the importance of ideological involvement in the work of the organization can be emphasized):

> We try, in fact, to do without them [volunteers]. Because volunteers … well, I'm not sure if I can call them volunteers … you can say that some of our guys are volunteers, they are just ideological volunteers. I can't call them literally volunteers. (A man, the organization exists from five to ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

This situation is related to the underlying problem of using certain terminology for the designation of free labor or assistance. Some SO NPO managers explicitly adhere to the Russian tradition of calling volunteers *dobrovolets* [voluntary aid]. Although the use of this or that name for gratuitous aid is not a frequently articulated problem, several respondents tried to consciously use the term "voluntary aid" based on an ideological setting.

From the analysis of interview transcripts, I identified several possible models of work with volunteers within the socially oriented non-profit sector of Russian regions. The first model is associated with the appeal of organizations to existing volunteer or resource centers in the region (including those based on educational institutions):

> Well, we turn to the volunteer corps … we write, draw up an application, what we need, how many volunteers, what work to do. Well, they send us information about volunteers, as a rule we contact the curator of volunteers … we discuss all the details, everything. They already come either to the event itself, or we meet the day before, once again we discuss everything that needs to be done. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In the situation of applying for help to established organized structures, the respondents generally spoke about saving the main resources associated with the organization of the work of volunteers. However, even in this case, they directly stated that volunteer resources were not free. Volunteers are most often supervised by employees, who benefit from volunteer activities. The problems of interaction with resource centers are partially indicated: high bureaucratization of the application process, a formal approach to the selection of volunteers, frequent lack of interest of volunteers in the work performed, and the need to provide "reciprocal services".

The second model assumes the existence of own volunteer network, which is formed over time:

Well, we don't attract volunteers an masse, yes, that's right, yes, we use probably targeted help, when we need volunteers, or when we … I already said that these volunteers can be either from a pedagogical institute, right, someone who's going to be a clinical psychologist, or future social work specialists, because this is their activity in the future, and therefore we take people only in this category. We do not take just anyone. Well, that is, these are people, who will be professionals, or, well, this may be within the scope of their practical assignments. … Then this is exactly their specific task. Then we also use the work of the guys, yes, that is, for example, they can conduct some classes, events, or they can attend our events. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

The interview materials show that such volunteer networks arise in a situation of poor development of volunteer centers in the region (or simply their absence) or in a situation where volunteers need to specialize in a certain type of activity (helping and living together with someone who needs assistance, working with children with disabilities). For some respondents, the need to create their own volunteer network was associated with general dissatisfaction with the formal attitude to help provided by the volunteers of specialized centers.

The third model is mixed; it involves a combination of own volunteer network and appeals to volunteer centers:

Well, everything went super cool when we hired part-time volunteer coordinator. This is a person who knows where to look for them and knows how to support them. But you still feel such a small, well, sometimes such a desynchronization between different volunteer teams, our main one and those from the centers. They are more formal, more for events. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees)

SO NPOs' own volunteer network is becoming more specialized in terms of the volunteer skills that are in demand. Organization managers perceive it as more disciplined, reliable, and open to new proposals and projects. Moreover, within their own networks, they identify high motivation to help and develop the organization as a whole.

Basic models of interaction with volunteers have been developed in regional Russian SO NPOs. Based on the interview materials, I can assume that new organizations that are at the initial stage of their formation prefer turning to existing volunteer networks or do not allocate their limited resources to interact with volunteers. If SO NPOs need general assistance and support, without special requirements for the quality of work performed or assistance, then managers tend to resort to the help of resource centers. In a situation where the resource centers of the region are underdeveloped, there is negative experience of interaction with volunteers, or specific assistance is required, SO NPO managers tend to form their own volunteer networks, supplementing them with resource support from specialized volunteer groups.

Volunteering of Professionals in Regional SO NPOs as Perceived by Managers of Organizations

In the presented models of work with volunteers, the general role of volunteers having professional skills is ambiguous. Not all managers of organizations identify professional volunteers through the "volunteer" category. Along with the category of "pro bono volunteer" or "like-minded person", such categories as "(good) friend of the organization", "partners of the organization", "assistants" are distinguished. Interns, trainees, and beneficiaries have a problematic status in terms of being classified as volunteers: some managers call them volunteers, since their work is not paid; but the other part (this also applies to beneficiaries or members of their families) considers them as potential employees, who are on probation or receive relevant professional experience:

> At the initial stage, he becomes a coach for the kids for free, they want to attend the workouts themselves, everyone is interested. If we understand that a person is doing well, I mean if he shows good results, we say, "Well done!" If we have a project, if it is possible to allocate 5–10 thousand rubles (about $75–150) a month, we hire him, but then again, as soon as he is our employee, he has some duties. That is, in fact, our offer to a person. He may continue working for free, but we are not very interested in the free format of visits. (A man, the organization exists from five to ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In all the cases under consideration, professional skills are associated exclusively with work and the performance of labor functions rather than just help.

There are two main models of appealing to professional volunteering, which are irregular appeal and continuous, developed interaction with professional volunteers (or organizations). Irregular appeal stems from the temporary need of the organization for a narrow specialist, which arises unexpectedly or is associated with a side activity for the organization within a specific project:

> We didn't have a website for the organization; we only had social media accounts. Therefore, of course, we resolved this issue by asking for help, and they started a website free for us. Of course, now we maintain it ourselves. But they helped us for free. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

In this case, they look for a volunteer through a network of personal and professional contacts of the organization (through employees, beneficiaries, donors, contractors of the organization, employees of other NPOs in the region, erratic and permanent volunteers without professional skills, those who follow the organization on various information resources) or by contacting IT platforms that have databases of volunteers with the necessary skills.

In case of a situational search, the general strategy of attraction is built by indicating a clear (and one-time) contribution to the provision of assistance to specific

beneficiaries or the activities of the organization as a whole. Sometimes such information is supplemented by an explanation of the reasons for the need. In this case, a volunteer is selected mostly based on the feedback of the partners of the organization or the availability of a portfolio. The SO NPO managers assess the experience of one-time participation rather positively, without subsequent refusal to re-engage professionals in such projects. At the same time, managers indicate the following negative situations that they encountered when working with professionals: failure to meet deadlines, excessive departure from the terms of reference, disappearance of a specialist in the process of work performing, and the need to find another professional. They mention that before starting work, it is necessary to set up clear communication between the professional and the employees of the organization, who are responsible for the corresponding area of work.

Constant seamless interaction with professionals in the area of interest to the organization is more complex. The difficulties in distinguishing between the formats of volunteering and professional development, which were described above, are clearly indicated. In addition, the problem of distinguishing between corporate, pro bono volunteering, and intellectual volunteering arises. The managers of the organization ask themselves a question about the distinction between concepts and the basic criteria for classifying specialists as volunteers, which they have individually developed in practice. The continuity of the rhetoric and concepts used can be traced based on the practice of interaction between the managers of the organization and certain donors and foundations, which directly refers us to the spread of certain managerial models of volunteering among regional SO NPOs. The constant development of cooperation with professionals in certain fields is typical for organizations that build their own networks of volunteers or use a mixed model of volunteer participation. The interview materials allow identifying additional strategies for long-term interacting with potential professional volunteers.

The first strategy involves introducing a specialist as a volunteer employee into a resource-intensive project or a new project without resources:

> Well, if a specialist is important to me, if it is important to develop a new area, then maybe it will go in parallel. And if a specialist is ready to try to be a volunteer first, then it is possible that at first the specialist will be a volunteer, and then we will look for an opportunity to decide together with the specialist how to find funding for this activity. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

A volunteer will be considered as a potential employee if funding is found to pay for their work and if their competencies meet the requirements of the organization. The manager or coordinator of such a specialist may or may not voice the prospect of further employment to them. The materials of the interview indicate that in any case, organizations still have to create favorable conditions for such a volunteer: prepare for interaction with beneficiaries (including support for activities), ensure additional training, provide the necessary material resources or jointly search for them, carefully consider

the proposals of a specialist to improve activities in the organization, and provide mandatory symbolic encouragement (directly from employees and managers of SO NPOs, stimulate encouragement from beneficiaries). Volunteers are attracted through universities, employees of the organization, employees of other SO NPOs, ordinary volunteers, beneficiaries and their relatives, and media platforms of the organization.

In order to hire such a volunteer as an employee, the specialist has to be willing to develop, actively participate in all the activities of the organization, and match the values and emotional patterns of behavior with the representatives of the main team:

> Well, you mentioned a lawyer, yes, we tried to work with a lawyer pro bono, and a young man helped us for almost a year. Now we have an opportunity to hire him as an outsourced specialist. He helps us with some things. He has been friends with us for almost a year, so to speak, and then he got such a perk. We became very good friends, we got used to it. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

Within the framework of this strategy, the most frequently encountered problems are the distinction between the concepts of "intern", "trainee", and "pro bono volunteer". Situations associated with the negative experience of professionals' engagement are more common: some of them do not cope with the amount of work, do not demonstrate the required level of qualification, cannot "work well" with other employees of the organization, people's life strategies change, or people are generally unprepared to work on a project at a different level:

> As a project manager, I was also shocked by the fact that when we began to somehow become more institutionalized, people, who were ready to get involved in the project as volunteers and invest their resources and energy, said no, this does not suit me. I have other plans for life. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees)

The second strategy of working with professionals involves constant turning to them for help:

> Yes, we used the pro bono practice, and now we use it very often … sometimes we lack experts. Unfortunately, I believe that each work should be paid, but sometimes we do not have the opportunity in all programs to allocate payments to experts, so we engage experts as volunteers. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

Cooperation can be built through formal interaction with the manager of the organization employing a professional, directly with a professional engaged in the activities of a certain organization or company, self-employed, individual entrepreneurs, or temporarily unemployed people. In cases where interaction is built with large firms, respondents tend to use the term "corporate volunteering":

This is corporate volunteering. They are already accustomed to working with us, they see that we continue working too; they see that we are doing real things, although their managers change. Therefore, they somehow react. Yes, at first it was probably difficult, because nothing was set up. It was about 5 or 6 years ago … In the process of interaction, we showed that they might be interested in it too. We showed our audience, we showed the aspects that interested them, they looked, "Really, this comes from the people, we didn't come up with it." (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In all other cases of assistance, "pro bono volunteering" or simply "gratuitous assistance" appears. Volunteers of this type are found among the organization's subcontractors, major donors, and partners through the organization's main information resources or commercial networking and through specialized platforms.

It is noteworthy that among SO NPOs, which adhere to a policy of information openness and have been working in the region for a long time, there are cases when professionals initiated contacts with the organizations expressing a desire to help them: "Contacts with them started because they showed initiative; they said exactly how to do it. What advice we need. Showed the best way to implement it. They found us" (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees).

Both personal professional resource and professional resources of the entire organization of the employee (business owner) could be offered as assistance. Strong ties form "automatically"; often the respondents do not have to make additional efforts to retain such a volunteer. A major part of the necessary work could be carried out not on the SO NPOs' side. If the work is carried out directly in a socially oriented organization, then managers try to create the most comfortable conditions for the employee, including the aspect of their interaction with other team members. A number of managers emphasize that some employees of external organizations continue working as volunteers, despite the increased workload, due to the "special climate" and style of communication in SO NPOs, the opportunity to observe the effect of socially useful work, and try new and nonstandard methods of work:

For example, we have much more young specialists than very experienced specialists. So, probably, in this case, communication [with volunteers with professional skills] is about what you can try, how you can learn, how you can quickly develop. Here, rather, we are talking about these advantages. Plus, from what we see, people are tired of excessive regulation, tired of the inability to show initiative, but with us it is possible. Rather, that's the point. (A woman, the organization exists from five to ten years, more than 20 employees in the organization)

In the situations where volunteers are associated with large firms and organizations, interaction can be built in a complex formalized way. The managers of large commercial organizations find the professionals they need and provide them with the necessary resources:

These are employees of the organization, who were released by the HR[1] in order to work with us. They may have some corporate bonuses for this. They would come here or there and arrange something. We had repairs to do … A guy arrived and fixed everything in two hours, for example. Well, there are different stories. (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with up to five employees)

Certain difficulties are highlighted in interaction with such volunteers: the turnover of people, a more complex structure of communication, possible inconsistencies in the corporate culture, an increase in the burden on the volunteers and their rapid "burnout", the need to constantly search for personal contact both with the managers of a third-party organization, and with employees, who are involved as volunteers. In addition, the risks associated with changes in the financial and economic situation in the region make such cooperation unpredictable, since in a situation of economic contraction, cooperation may be limited, suspended, or terminated. Some of SO NPO managers say that activities in the commercial sphere are only a little more stable than activities in the non-profit sector, and corporate forms of volunteering divert the organizational resources of SO NPOs and require constant attention, including proper media support.

Conclusion

All of the above shows that in the regional socially oriented non-profit sector of Russia, basic models of interaction with volunteers having specific professional skills and abilities have developed. Based on the interview materials, I can assume that they spread primarily in those organizations that have developed a system of work with volunteers. In many ways, these models require following certain strategies to manage volunteering, which are distributed in the process of implementing educational programs of donor funds and because of the interaction between various SO NPO managers and specialists.

In the models presented, the involvement of a professional volunteer can be associated both with situational problems that have arisen for the managers or employees of SO NPOs and with the integration of professional volunteers into the processes of the organization's core activities. The set of skills that are in demand among organizations is quite wide, depending on the profile of their activities and the current situation in the labor market of a particular region. Conversations with the SO NPO managers reveal that situational support is in demand in the following areas or types of work: legal, accounting, financial, or other expert support, assistance in the development of IT projects, and communication systems in the organization. Permanent support is more closely related to the profile of the organization. Most often, these are such kinds of support as psychological and pedagogical, medical, specialized legal, household, information, and management support.

In a situation of successful experience in attracting volunteers with professional skills, SO NPO managers realize that they need to compensate for the specialists' expended resources and need to make a kind of "exchange." Creative freedom is

---

[1] Human Resource Department.

offered during the implementation of the project, symbolic stimulation of participation, comfortable interaction with the team and beneficiaries, the opportunity to develop professional skills, information support for cooperation (advertising), and support for the initiatives of specialists. The managers of some SO NPOs perceive "pro bono volunteers" as a resource for the development of the organization through obtaining not only certain experience, knowledge, and professional skills that may be in short supply on the labor market but also through the social connections of volunteers. Professional volunteers are perceived as specialists, who require an individual approach to communication development. I have to mention the need to disseminate successful practices for involving specialists into volunteer activities of SO NPOs. The managers speak about the need to coordinate standard tasks for specialists, educate people about the corporate volunteering practices, and provide general information about the SO NPOs' demand for volunteers with special skills and abilities.

Based on the results obtained, some hypotheses can be put forward that need to be confirmed based on quantitative research. It is necessary to clarify the level of relationship between the dissemination of specific models of work with volunteers and models of interaction with volunteers having professional skills. The analysis reveals associations between the duration of the organization existence and models of volunteering, which requires further detail and confirmation. An important point that emerged in the course of the study is the ambiguous perception and attitude of SO NPO managers toward corporate forms of volunteering, which Western research represents as having the highest priority in terms of developing NPOs' resource potential. It is noteworthy that in the array of interviews, the most successful and clearly structured practices of working with volunteers having professional knowledge are associated with SO NPOs that adhere to policies of information openness and transparency. All these hypotheses can be tested based on quantitative studies. A quantitative study will allow overcoming several limitations of this research: information was obtained from the managers of organizations that were not always directly involved in working with volunteers; there was no detailed verification of the data received verbally from the managers; the sampled information was focused on regional diversity and general work with volunteers, while professional skills were mentioned in only a third of the interviews.

References

Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., Haugen, J., & Miene, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*(6), 1516–1530. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1516

Dekker, P., & Halman, L. (Eds.). (2003). *The values of volunteering: Cross-cultural perspectives*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0145-9

Englert, B. (2019). *Personalmanagement in Nonprofit-Organisationen: Zur Rolle des Person–Environment Fit* [Human resource management in nonprofit organizations: On the role of person–environment fit]. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-24976-2

Englert, B., Thaler, J., & Helmig, B. (2020). Fit themes in volunteering: How do volunteers perceive person–environment fit? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *49*(2), 336–356. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764019872005

Holavins, A. (2020). "Pirozhki dlia babushki": Kriticheskii vzgliad na proektnoe myshlenie NKO [Little Red Riding Hood and a critique of "project thinking" among NGOs]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *18*(3), 461–474. https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2020-18-3-461-474

Hustinx, L., Cnaan, R. A., & Handy, F. (2010). Navigating theories of volunteering: A hybrid map for a complex phenomenon. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *40*(4), 410–434. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2010.00439.x

Kazun, A. (2015). Sotsial'naia otvetstvennost' rossiiskikh advokatov: Faktory okazaniia besplatnoi iuridicheskoi pomoshchi po naznacheniiu i pro bono [Social responsibility among Russian attorneys: Factors behind the provision of free legal assistance both by court appointment and pro bono]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *13*(4), 563–578. https://jsps.hse.ru/article/view/3300

Lukka, P. (2000). *Employee volunteering: A literature review*. The Institute of Volunteering Research.

National Council on Corporate Volunteering, Public Opinion Foundation, RUSAL, & Association of Managers of Russia. (2017). *Pro bono: Rossiiskie praktiki i vektor razvitiia: analiticheskii otchet po rezul'tatam issledovatel'skogo proekta* [Pro bono: Russian practices and vector of development: analytical report on the results of the research project]. https://fcsp.ru/press/files/165546/

Oberemko, O. A. (2016). Volonter ili dobrovolets: Elementarnye ob'iasneniia dlia samoopredeleniia [Elementary explanations for the volunteering in Russian context and Russian language]. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, *6*, 94–101.

Pearce, J. L. (1993). *Volunteers: The organizational behavior of unpaid workers*. Routledge.

Pevnaya, M. V. (2016). Upravlenie rossiiskim volonterstvom: Sushchnost' i protivorechiia [Managing Russian volunteers' efforts: Essence and contradictions]. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, *12*, 69–77.

Skokova, Yu., Pape, U., & Krasnopolskaya, I. (2018). The non-profit sector in today's Russia: Between confrontation and co-optation. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *70*(4), 531–563. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1447089

Skokova, Yu., & Rybnikova, M. (2022). Razmer nekommercheskogo sektora v regionakh Rossii: Faktory razlichii [The size of nonprofit sector in Russian regions: Differentiating factors]. *The Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, *25*(1), 70–102. https://doi.org/10.31119/jssa.2022.25.1.3

Snyder, M., & Omoto, A. M. (2008). Volunteerism: Social issues perspectives and social policy implications. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *2*(1), 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2008.00009.x

Sukharkova, M. P. (2022). Organizatsionnye aspekty raboty volonterov na sotsial'nykh predpriiatiiakh v Rossii i Indii [Organizational aspects of volunteer work in social enterprises in Russia and India]. *Science. Culture. Society*, *28*(2), 112–123. https://doi.org/10.19181/nko.2022.28.2.9

Taniguchi, H. (2011). The determinants of formal and informal volunteering: Evidence from the American Time Use Survey. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *23*(4), 920–939. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-011-9236-y

Verduzco, G. (2010). Graphic "Acts of solidarity in Mexico" (Analysis of the national survey on solidarity and volunteer action). In J. Butcher (Ed.), *Mexican solidarity* (pp. 33–69). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1078-3_2

Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*, 215–240. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.215

Wilson, J. (2012). Volunteerism research: A review essay. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *41*(2), 176–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764011434558

ARTICLE

Contradictions in the Development of the Welfare Non-Profit Sector in Russia

Olga I. Borodkina
St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia

Alevtina V. Starshinova
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Maksim A. Borodkin
St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the core contradictions within the development of the social non-profit sector in Russia. The empirical basis of the study comprises statistical data, legal documents regulating the social services' sphere, research data from previous studies conducted in Russia, as well as qualitative data collected for this study. The introduction provides background information on the stages of reforming the social service system in Russia. The first part is devoted to the contradictions between international trends and Russian patterns. In line with a neoliberal approach, non-profit NGOs play a significant role as key actors in social work providing social services for different client groups. At the same time, they are not independent and Russian civil society is not yet strong enough to realize social rights of citizens. In the next section, some of the key issues of interaction between the government and NGOs are discussed. An analysis of the current situation demonstrates that while a social partnership between the state and NGOs is affirmed by authorities on official level, in practice, the state still dominates the social sector. The article then focuses on how Russian NGOs have reoriented their efforts toward financial sustainability through government support.

KEYWORDS

Russia social services system, NGO, civil society, non-profit sector, funding, social mission

oiborodkina@gmail.com, a.v.starshinova@urfu.ru, maksim.a.borodkin@gmail.com

Introduction

Changes are taking place in the Russian social sphere aimed at "denationalization," accompanied by the emergence of non-state producers of social benefits, where non-profit organizations play a significant role. An analysis of these processes suggests that the social security sector is still subject to the influence of the "legacy" inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Features of the Soviet system remain despite nearly thirty years of development in the Russian social sector that gives rise to a set of contradictions, which we consider in this article. The overarching research question of this study is "What are the contradictions inherent in the development of the non-profit welfare sector in Russia?" We 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. The above question is related to others, more specific ones:

1. How far are the global trends in the development of the welfare state associated with increased personal responsibility, managerialism, and competitive relations compatible with the paternalistic expectations of the majority of Russian citizens that developed during the long-term period of dominance of the state?

2. What are the relations between the non-governmental sector and the state?

3. What goals are the main drivers of the activities of Russian non-governmental organizations in modern conditions?

These questions allow us to identify conditionally the following contradictions: international trends vs Russian patterns, state dominance vs social partnership, social mission vs financial stability.

Social Context of the Formation of a Modern Social Service System

The Soviet system of social security was characterized, first and foremost, by the domination of the state, which not only guaranteed social protection of citizens, but occupied a monopoly. Moreover, the Soviet state guaranteed citizens such social rights as the provision of free housing, medical care, education, including free higher education, the right to employment, and free social security in old age or upon the onset of disability. However, gradually the social security system became increasingly archaic, perfunctory, declarative, and ascentic due to the minimal size of benefits and services, a decrease in their quality, and the low material base of social state institutions, due to the state's limited resources.

The result of the Soviet state's longstanding domination in the sphere of social security has led to the establishment of deeply rooted paternalistic relations

between the state and its citizens. For almost seventy years, the public has expected the state to resolve social issues (Salmina, 2015). In many ways, such perceptions were reinforced by the dominant communist ideology, which discouraged Western institutions like charity. The government not only discouraged, but even prohibited the independent initiatives of citizens to create public organizations that ensured the social rights of citizens. The lack of entrenched democratic relations between the state and its citizens was a continuation of the historically established sociocultural characteristics of relations between the state and society, which maintained the tradition of the "top-down power".

The ongoing transformation of the Russian social support and social assistance system follows international trends associated with neoliberal ideology and the privatization of social service systems. Yet, there are some specific features in the Russian transformation that merit in-depth scientific reflection. It is worth noting that over the past few years the development of the non-profit sector has grown to be the subject of discussion not only in Russian literature, but also in international discourse (Borodkina, 2015; Fröhlich & Skokova, 2020; Iarskaia-Smirnova & Lyons, 2018; Tarasenko, 2018).

Starting in the 1990s, the process of reconstructing the free market and private property rights restoration did not affect the social sphere at the beginning. In other words, "social issues" were not among the high priorities of various government reform programs in Russia. During the 1990s, the choice between the need to develop a liberal model of market relations or effective social protection of the population tilted toward the former, leading to a number of contradictions that influenced the subsequent formation of emerging social policy (Auzan, 2004, p. 19). Russia experienced a unique transformation in the early 1990s associated with radical economic reforms. In the early 2000s, there was a turn in the power structures toward the restoration of "vertical power" in response to attempts by reformers to create horizontal relations between the state and society during the period of "perestroika" by developing the structures of civil society. Despite this shift in power structures, the understanding that a modern state remains strong only by being focused on the well-being of its citizens was not a prevalent ideology among the new political elite. The "benevolent non-interference" (Jakobson & Sanovich, 2010) of the liberal reformers' government toward NGOs was replaced by increasing control over their activity and a number of significant restrictions placed on non-profit organizations with regard to the funding they received from abroad. There was significant mistrust of society and government toward NGOs as long as some NGOs had compromised themselves by financial abuse earlier in the 1990s (Ljubownikow & Crotty, 2014).

The restored hierarchical power was supported by persistently paternalistic attitudes of the population toward the state (Grigoryeva, 2017), which contradicted the neoliberal approach in social policy focused on the citizens' own activity. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, the authorities continued to define the social rights of citizens' as well as their responsibility to implement them, disregarding the ability of Russians to self-organize. In a scientific discussion on the basic values of Russian citizens, the inability of Russian citizens to self-organize and collaborate in order to build horizontal ties was

seen in their over-individualization combined with the commitment of power structures to traditionalism, which presented the main obstacles for the Russian reforms of the late 20th century (Riabov & Kurbangaleeva, 2003). There was no consensus on how to resolve these identified problems in the course of academic and public discussions, and almost ten years later a solution was proposed following the established tradition "from above" by federal government bodies. Changes in the role of the state, the emergence of non-profit organizations and social entrepreneurs in the field of social security were not so much the result of initiatives coming from civil society in response to public inquiries, but rather the result of decisions taken by the highest authorities. In this approach, there was initially a contradiction between the interest of the state in reducing spending on social security and the need for partnership with representatives of civil society when choosing ways to achieve a new level of welfare of citizens.

Driven by the Russian government, a set of regulatory, organizational, and managerial measures have been taken in the last decade by the Russian government aimed at including non-profit organizations into the social sphere, specifically the social services sector (Toepler, Pape, & Benevolenski, 2020). Since Federal Law No. 442-FZ *Ob osnovakh sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia grazhdan v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Basics of Social Services for Citizens of the Russian Federation] (2013) entered into force in 2015, socially oriented non-profit organizations have been considered as a key social institution of civil society. NGOs were represented as providers of social services, which opened up the opportunity to receive a special status, namely socially oriented non-profit organizations (SO NPOs), with appropriate forms of state support to ensure the participation of organizations in the market of social services. Changes in the policy of the Russian state on social investment policy, development of the non-profit sector, and intersectoral partnership equate Russian social policy to the past experience of Western welfare states (Benevolenski & Toepler, 2017; Hemerijck, 2013). The measures proposed by Western European governments were largely a result of the population's dissatisfaction with the low quality and high cost of social services provided under state programs (Gugushvili et al., 2021; Salamon, 2002). The influence of the "pressure" factor from service consumers was intensified by the need to move to new ways of solving the "social issue", based on market approaches and minimizing public expenditures (Cook, 2007).

In Russia, the process of reforming the social sphere acquire certain characteristics due to the strong legacy of the Soviet social security system. The welfare state in the 1990s was based on the principles of minimizing social security expenditures, which, in fact, persist at the present, making their further reduction impossible. By involving new participants as producers of social benefits, the state seeks to share the burden of social expenditures, while simultaneously solving such diversification goals of the social service system as expanding the range and improving the quality of services (Sidorina, 2010, p. 125). Russian citizens' expectations of the state have been characterized for a long time by paternalism and an expectation of access to free social benefits, combined with citizens' lack of ability to self-organize. These aspects can hinder the consistent reform of the social sphere from the standpoint of a noisy liberal perspective. Thus, in Russia the non-profit sector of social

services formation, on the one hand, is based on the initiatives "from the bottom up", on the other hand, it is associated with civil initiatives, which often conflict with the authorities' position. This situation gives rise to a set of specific contradictions.

Thus, in Russia, the formation of the non-profit sector of social services, on the one hand, occurs along initiative coming from the top, on the other hand, is associated with civil initiatives, which often conflict with the position of the authorities, creating a set of contradictions. The relevance and necessity of studying the emerging contradictions is that not only do we gain awareness about the risks of reforming the social services system, but we can also identify and evaluate our own resources for the development of the non-profit sector, granting this sector the ability to respond and adapt in the face of the challenges of the ongoing transformation.

Theoretical Background

The transformation of welfare states has been associated with the expansion of actors in the production of welfare and varying their configurations (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Hemerijck, 2013; Newman & Clarke, 2009; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2020) that accompanied by the rising non-state/private social service providers such as NGOs, the community and volunteer associations (Clarke, 2007), the increasing role of the family and citizen in welfare production (Lewis et al., 2008; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2020), and the developing social investment, despite the statement of the ambivalence of its consequences (Cantillon, 2011; Leoni, 2016). The ongoing processes have led to the formation of a welfare mix and numerous attempts to comprehend this phenomenon.

The general trend, that researchers emphasize, is associated with reducing the role of the state in the process of producing welfare services and a corresponding greater role for NGOs, families, and other actors (Ascoli & Ranci, 2002; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2020).

Discussion over the complexity of welfare state configurations and welfare provision are relevant for most countries. In many respects, similar processes characterize changes in social welfare in the countries of the post-socialist and post-Soviet space (Aidukaite, 2009; Deacon, 2000). In Russia, NGOs as providers of social services become more and more significant objects of the state social investment policy due to the state's interest in transferring some of its powers to non-state social service providers (Benevolenski & Toepler, 2017; Rao, 1996). At present, Russian dissatisfaction with the welfare system is determined not so much by the communist legacy, but by a significant reduction in the social welfare system in the course of economic reforms (Gugushvili et al., 2021; Orenstein, 2008). Most Russian citizens, who are in difficult socio-economic situation, expect great social benefits that could significantly affect the change in the economic situation of people (van Oorschot & Gugushvili, 2019). At the same time, researchers argue the difference between social benefits and services of the welfare state designed to deal with the traditional risks of industrial society (for example, pensions, unemployment benefits) and new risks of modern society associated with the changing labor market, epidemiological risks (e.g., COVID-19), digitalization, changing family patterns, etc. (Fossati, 2018; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2020). At a conceptual level, the welfare mix addresses new social risks (Powell

& Barrientos, 2004), and it tries to take into account the diversity of the modern society, both in terms of personal needs and welfare regimes, including multifaceted variations of social actors, among which non-profit organizations occupy a special place.

Research Methods

This is a study of the issues of such a complex area as welfare state in Russia that is actively discussed in the academic community, but at the same time, the problems of the development of NGOs from the standpoint of employees of these organizations have received so far insufficient attention from researchers. We use a qualitative approach to the study of contradictions in the development of the non-state sector of social services. Interviews with NGOs' leaders promise to provide important and detailed material on the problems, barriers, prospects of the specific NGOs, as well as the third sector in general. In 2019–2020, 35 interviews were conducted with heads and employees of social services organizations in 15 regions of Russia. The interviews were done in the face-to-face format, lasting from 40 to 90 minutes. The geography of the sample of experts is an important methodological point, since Russia, being one of the largest countries, has significant internal regional differences in terms of socio-economic development. For this reason, the study involved welfare related NGOs that represented all the main regional and administrative units of Russia: St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novorossiysk, Kazan, Penza, Perm, Tyumen, Surgut, Krasnoyarsk, Yakutsk, Khabarovsk, Stavropol Kray, Rostov-on-Don, Leningrad Oblast, Vladivostok, with the distribution across regions almost even (2–3 interviews per region).

Another important point is that organizations working with different target groups (the elderly, adults with disabilities, children with autism disorder, children with special needs, people living with HIV infection, homeless people) were selected. Furthermore, the respondents represented the organizations that have been operating in the social services market for over five years and were widely recognized in their regions. The primary thematic segments of the interview covered questions about the establishment and growth of the organization, ongoing programs, financing management, including grants and subsidies, interactions with local authorities, and the organization's future development prospects.

All experts gave their informed consent, and consented to the audio recording of the interviews. Written transcripts of expert interviews were analyzed using the framework analysis (Ritchie et al., 2003) that is one of the most common qualitative techniques. This is the process of identifying the main attitudinal themes in relation to each topic and then examining their relationship in the research questions. Seven nodes were used in coding to identify attitudes related to the research points: social responsibility/paternalism, government/regional authorities, market/private sector, individuals/family, funding/grants/subsidies, and goals/missions. Analysis of the data showed that there are no significant differences in relation to the regions in the target client groups on the issues discussed. Therefore, these aspects (regions and clients) are not highlighted in the research results.

International Trends vs Russian Patterns

In line with neoliberal views in Russia (Borodkina, 2020; Tarasenko, 2018), it is growing an approach to non-profit organizations as to key actors involved in the production of public goods and thereby in ensuring the social needs of citizens. Socially oriented NGOs became engaged in political processes that leads to the formation of a "new governance" and the development of mutual social responsibility of the authorities and citizens for social well-being (Borodkina, 2020; Lewis, 2014; Pestoff et al., 2012; Salamon, 2011). An analysis of socially oriented non-profit organizations' activity in a number of Russia's regions shows that they are beginning to influence changes in government policy toward socially vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and children (Kulmala et al., 2017; Kulmala & Tarasenko, 2016)

The development of the contemporary social services within non-profit sector represents an integral direction of the Russian state's policy (Benevolenski & Toepler, 2017; Borodkina, 2020; Starshinova & Borodkina, 2020). The involvement of NGOs in the social service system follows international trends. Simultaneously, researchers admit that "the new model of relations, conceived by the state, is not yet stable and free of problems" (Soldatkin & Blackburn, 2020). The ongoing transformation of the state's dominant role in social services production encompasses opportunities for developing new ways of interaction with non-profit social services producers (Cook et al., 2021). State financial support measures for SO NPOs included a federal program aimed at encouraging local governments to develop the non-profit sector of social services and interact with potential social partners. Thus, the federal authorities deviated from the tradition of a strong power hierarchy, delegated part of its powers and responsibility to the regional level, obviously counting on forming new management approaches in the regions while the authorities interact with civil society, in particular with NGOs (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Crotty & Ljubownikow, 2020).

At the same time, state authorities expected that non-profit organizations, formed in the interests of their target groups, would take on a mediating role between state and target groups (Evers, 1995) reducing the factor of "pressure" on power structures from the population. Consequently, the current approaches to non-profit organizations open up new opportunities for developing a social service and social work system, as proposed reactions to public discontent related to the limited low-quality services, which for a long time in Russia have been monopolized by state institutions (Bindman, 2015).

The state has legislatively defined the legal status of socially oriented NGOs, excluding any political activity, thereby singling out these organizations from numerous NGOs that are counting on partnerships in implementing social policy with this particular part of civil society. As drivers of social innovation, the non-profit sector is considered the core of civil society (Krasnopolskaya & Mersianova, 2015, pp. 34–35). NGOs have the following strengths: the ability to meet the specific needs of certain social groups, the lack of interest in benefits making them the more reliable service providers (Borzaga & Tortia, 2010), the sensitivity to the population's needs, and the ability to promptly respond to the growing social needs of citizens. In Russia, SO NPO is legally empowered to receive additional resources with the purpose of achieving certain social goals (Mersianova & Benevolenski, 2016). In addition, Russian SO NPOs can use their

advantages in the emerging competitive relations with state suppliers, provided that the state creates equal opportunities for all participants (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

A specific feature of the Russian case is that the local authorities have to support the federal government efforts when it comes to developing the non-profit sector, at the same time supporting the sustainability of the state social services activity under their jurisdiction. Otherwise, there appears a risk of destabilizing the existing state system of social services that emerged in the late 1990s, which currently holds a monopolist position in the regions. Concurrently, the poor preparation of SO NGOs raises the question of their competency (Jakobson & Sanovich, 2010; Salamon et al., 2017), as they are established on the initiative of the authorities, rather than on the basis of civic activism. This leads to them not being fully apt in playing the role of service providers efficiently, in becoming relevant competitors of state social services organizations, in meeting the requirements of regional standards for service delivery as well as those for competitive selection of service providers. Furthermore, there is a significant issue related to how a welfare NGO could be able to maintain the necessary decision-making discretion as an actor of civil society, while demonstrating innovative approaches in social work. This position is supported by the leaders of public organizations.

> We have a long history of creation: we are 19 years old. Now we are called Autonomous non-profit organization of social assistance to families, children, and citizens in difficult life situations. And it is convenient because ... We are independent. We don't have a membership; we have fewer checks. Transparency, accountability—we perform this. The mission is to create a system of caring for children together with state institutions. (Head of NGO, a woman)

Fulfilling the social mission of NGOs is hampered not only by the limited materials and human resources, but also by the new conditions of their functioning while the institutional role of the state is changing. Remaining the guarantor of the social rights of citizens, the state is now taking on the functions of the services customer, significantly strengthening the control over the activity of SO NGOs, if compared to the 1990s, expecting them to be more open and transparent (Brown et al., 2003; Ebrahim, 2003).

In the changing conditions, civil society is expected to become one of the actors in implementing state social policy, confirming its ability to self-organize and remain active; there are the factors that have recently been questioned. The continuing paternalistic attitudes of a large part of the population may be an unfavorable factor that hinders the participation of citizens in such forms of civic activism as partaking in social projects, volunteering, engaging into charity, allowing investing personal resources in solving common social problems. Therefore, the question of how much the paternalistic attitudes of Russian citizens is a subject to change requires further academic study.

State Domination vs Social Partnership
Federal Law No. 442-FZ *Ob osnovakh sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia grazhdan v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Basics of Social Services for Citizens of the Russian Federation] (2013) marked the establishment of specific mechanisms of social services

participation in the service market: there appeared registries of SO NPOs, service providers, responsible executors of socially useful services, and enlisting criteria. There has been formulated a procedure for funding the services provided to population by NPOs, there has been developed a system of grants as a form of state subsidies for implementing social projects of NPOs, what's more, requirements for the competitive selection of service providers at the expense of budget funds have been approved. Assessment of regional management structures and officials' efficiency has been based on indicators showing the increase dynamic for the number of SO NPOs in the regions. The analysis of service providers registered in various regions of the country shows the miniscule amount of non-state suppliers and the predominance of the state-owned ones. The only exceptions are the regions experiencing a mass re-registration of former state social institutions fully funded from the state budget as non-profit organizations (Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Perm Kray, etc.). De facto, this process is the creation of quasi-NGOs that hold the legal status of a non-governmental organization. The re-registration procedure was incited by the regional authorities as the means of accelerating the increment in performance indicators of non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations, which initially emerged as socially oriented NGOs, have perceived such initiative of the governing bodies as an artificially fostered inequality that they would be experiencing in comparison to the re-registered organizations. Non-profit organizations that left state institutions retained the premises, in which they worked, the equipment, the professionally trained personnel, as well service recipients, followed by the budget funding. When conducting tenders for supplier selection in regard to providing services at the expense of budgetary funds, these organizations remain among the competition winners, since they hold a number of advantages such as being stronger prepared for this selection and better meeting the criteria for selecting suppliers.

The social service market is another inequality aspect of non-governmental organizations' position if compared to the standing of state service institutions. While for government institutions budget funding is retained in the same amount, providing for all costs associated with the operation of premises, utilities, etc., the SO NPOs must cover such expenses independently, which further increases their financial instability. Here is cited an evaluation of the situation by an NPO leader, whose organization's mission has been providing services to families and children for 17 years:

> They[1] are provided with 16 million rubles from budgetary funds for maintenance, for land, for communications, for all salaries of forty people, for all depreciation, a little for children[2]. The state gave them everything in one piece … And I have invested into all of this myself, and I'd do it again … the question is, how do I pay myself back … We must be on an equal footing, on an equal footing. (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a woman)

It must be noted that the situation is aggravated by low tariffs on social services for the population, which proves unprofitable for SO NPOs as service providers.

---

[1] [state social institutions].

[2] [of service recipients].

Service fees are set by regional governments striving to ensure that the cost of services remains relatively low, thus ensuring the accessibility of services for low-income groups of the population. The cost level of services and the provision of subsidies only for their amount, excluding time-based costs when providing them to recipients, makes it economically unprofitable to provide the vast majority of social services altogether, while generating unreasonable difficulties for NPOs and large-scale reporting when reimbursing financial costs from the budget.

Formally speaking, service fees are supposed to be evenly balanced between all service providers; however, state providers are in a better position since funding from regional budgets covers all of the operating costs of such state institutions. This situation is largely explained by the fact that only a small number of non-governmental organizations seek to enter the regional registries of social service providers. Moreover, even when they are registered in the registry as social service providers, non-profit organizations do not seek to participate in tenders for subsidies.

The high organizational barriers that hinder non-profit organizations' access to budget funding are also manifested in the service delivery approved standards. Service providers do not possess the right to assign services to their recipients and to determine the required number of services. Regional governments approve a standard set of services that officials assign to beneficiaries by inserting a set of services (a "package", something provided in bulk) into the individual recipient program, regardless of individual requests. Providing services by the "package" approved by the governing bodies does not correspond to the specifics of welfare NPOs activity initially devised to provide unique, isolated "piece" services. Both the lack of specialized services on the market and the prevalence of complex service structures reduce their quality. The current order indicates that officials are crucially lacking the basic understanding of SO NPOs advantages associated with their ability to deliver innovative services to the consumer groups in whose interests they are essentially created.

The intention of implementing the government's plan for developing the non-profit sector of social services, thus, demonstrates that for regional authorities, the priority is rather set on reaching certain indicators of development than on achieving real and feasible results in expanding the range and quality of social services in the interest of citizens. There can be spotted a definitive contradiction within the reforms initiated "from above"; it lies in the mismatch between the declared goals and the operational procedures designed to achieve them on the regional level. The tradition of prioritizing vertical interactions within government structures when making managerial decisions hinders the formation of "horizontal" relations with SO NPOs as key representatives of civil society (Aasland et al., 2016; Toepler, Zimmer, et al., 2020). In this regard, the reflections to the question of how the state manages to turn the non-profit sector into its partner for intersectoral interaction in solving social problems remain as follows: most representatives of SO NPOs who participated in the interview believe that it is yet premature to talk about partnerships with the state at the moment entirely. Similarly, they are convinced that non-profit organizations are to cooperate with the state: "Everywhere around the world, NGOs are funded by the state. It is fundamentally strategically important for NGOs to work with the state" (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a woman).

While such statements remain present, the informants point out versatile obstacles to forming such relationships: "I tried and I saw the dynamics, yes,[3] are developing, but at some stage they 'got me.' We just stopped participating[4]" (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a woman).

One of the key difficulties, according to our informants, is the "strict" control over the activity of SO NPOs that provide services at the expense of budgetary funds; these control mechanisms are implemented by the regional management bodies. "They[5] do not simply check the use of the subsidy …; you 'run into' all … possible checks. Prosecutor's Office, Accounts Chamber, to name a few" (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a man).

Unjustifiably excessive control excludes the slightest initiative, attempting to regulate the activity of NPOs entirely:

> They[6] will torture us with these reports. If you've bought a pen, and not a pencil, they will simply destroy you and throw you to the blacklist; if there are three kopecks out of the estimate, here or there, or if we happened to add something. (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a woman)

Regional authorities build relationships with NGOs in the form of specifications and requirements. For example, when announcing tenders for conducting social events for groups in need of support, officials do not expect SO NPOs to offer real suggestions on event planning, prompting them to select the best-fit candidate; they purely demand strict implementation of the measures as prescribed by the officials themselves in the so-called "terms of reference". As a result, the methods of interaction with non-profit organizations put forward by the regional authorities, contrary to the principles of social partnership, lead to the exact opposite results, which essentially have been focused on the said reforms originating from the federal center. Even NPOs with significant experience end up losing their autonomy and independence concerning decision-making and providing of social services.

> Everyone is content hearing about the sums of money and the number of NPOs receiving[7] in the region and the overall amount of [funding], and so on. But the bottom line is that we have been tamed, so to say, we now fit into what we have here[8] and now we strictly report to them. (Head of a regional non-profit organization, a woman)

The formalistic approach and the lack of interest on government officials' part in building authentic partnerships with non-governmental organizations impedes the development of the sector; it does not motivate or encourage them to become real social service providers capable of devising an innovative approach to solving social problems.

---

[3] [relations].

[4] [in competitions for subsidies from the budget].

[5] [officials].

[6] [officials].

[7] [subsidies].

[8] [into the state system of social institutions].

They[9] treat us as if we do not exist ... and believe that support is indeed provided to us very well through the provision of subsidies, that's all. There is lack of information, there is no unified information center … We pass information to each other solely at the level of our NPO community … Just people we know who work there, call and say that they are announcing a tender ... there's some event held with the participation of NPOs … the leaders are invited. (Head of a regional public organization, a man)

Despite the impressive scale of state financial support, the difficulties in interacting with regional authorities were quite expressively formulated as follows:

When I entered the registry, I believed that the Ministry of Social Policy would support suppliers, because we sell what is beneficial for them, what they need. So far, throughout the year, you know, I have been swimming against the tide, and the tide is the Ministry that is trying to drown me. (Non-state provider of social services, included in the regional register of providers, a woman)

The analysis of the obtained data allows us to identify the contradictions summarized below. 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. In a number of Russian regions, there exists a widespread practice of creating quasi-NGOs, whose activity is fully overseen and controlled by state bodies. In fact, NGOs, with the exception of the aforementioned quasi-organizations, are in a discriminatory position when compared to the state ones, primarily in terms of infrastructure development. Many non-profit NGOs remain unlisted in the registry of social service providers, thereby foregoing the potential opportunity to receive public funding, in fact mainly evading the registry due to the excessive state control and the low cost of social services determined by the state at the range that does not correspond to the market value and often does not cover the costs of the provided social services. On top of that, the maneuver space for obtaining the funding for NPOs is constantly narrowing. The latter is due to the tightening of legislation regarding foreign funding, which essentially cuts Russia's NPOs off from any international assistance completely, including but not limited to the format of grants.

The Russian government uses tools similar to the concepts of new governance that have come to dominate Western public discourse (Toepler, Pape, & Benevolenski, 2020). However, there are contradictory relations between the governing bodies and socially oriented non-profit organizations in the regions (Skokova & Fröhlich, 2022) that is manifested in two conflicting government strategies in relation to NGOs: suppression of the independence and co-optation of those organizations that function in accordance with government priorities (Skokova et al., 2018). Such a policy may have a negative impact on the development of the non-profit sector of social services, hindering its internal consolidation. At the same time, it should be noted that the efforts of the state aimed at the formation of a non-profit sector of social services.

---

[9] [regional authorities].

Social Mission vs Financial Stability

The public funding of NGOs contributes to the fulfillment of the social mission of these organizations. In most countries, including Russia, there is a clear relationship between federal and local funding and the size of the non-profit sectors, and vice versa, which confirms the theory of the interdependence of these factors (Bae & Sohn, 2018). Permanent public funding can gradually crowd out other sources of income (De Wit et al., 2017), at the same time it can also attract various financial flows, as organizations try to intensify their efforts and diversify sources of income, including by increasing their openness and reputation (Mikołajczak, 2018; Mosley, 2011). However, in order to ensure financial stability and survival in the social services market, Russian NGOs are faced with the problem of to diversify income and the ability to combine various financial strategies, so their interests today are increasingly shifting toward the profit activities that create the risks of commercialization of not-profit organizations.

The leaders of socially oriented NPOs, which appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s, provide two main reasons for their establishment. The first reason lies in the desire to work in a non-governmental organization in order to be more independent in choosing strategies for solving social problems of the social groups in whose interests they began to work. The second reason is related to personal motivation: the need to help their loved ones experiencing hardships. Typically, a solution to such hardships had not been found by public social institutions, and this impulse prompts the creation of NPOs that further on act in the interests of many people with similar issues, so people do empower themselves.

> A certain problem has boiled up among parents: we started seeing more and more children with autism. It became necessary for these people to organize the sources of help, and to somehow pull themselves out of the dark. Several organizations emerged at once. (NGO' Vice-President, a woman)

The respondents from the pool of state experts believe that fulfilling the social mission of organizations that emerged during this time as providers of social services was a leading factor in their overall development. Nonetheless, NGOs that have emerged over the past five years appear more interested in receiving budget funding than in solving social issues: "They see the budget as a source of financial development of their organizations … and this is the key" (Head of the social services' municipal department, a woman).

Searching for funding sources is a constant concern of the SO NGOs leaders; additionally, the high organizational barriers to accessing the budget funding increase the interest of NGO leaders to income-generating activities: "If an adult individual systematically works in this field, they should receive a decent salary. Otherwise, they will either do the job carelessly, or will be forced to make a living doing something else" (NGO' Vice President, a woman).

Leaders have repeatedly emphasized the growing risk of losing experienced NPO employees, who may leave for commercial structures with more attractive pay and work conditions.

Adjusting to the difficulties associated with the financial instability of NPOs results in intensified activity aiming at attracting charitable funds and at searching for new sources of funding:

> We've set a goal to diversify our funding sources and to move away from the main financial source in the form of grants. This is how we began to develop and attract private donations … Now, let's say, the third largest source in our budget is private donations … Now we are thinking of creating endowment capital and running our own social business, which has already begun to make a profit … We are planning to introduce information technologies into our work, as we've realized that this is the future. (Head of the public organization, a woman)

Under such conditions, NPOs compete with each other and with state institutions not so much at the service market level as for financial resources. In the context of the financial support sources reduction, largely appearing as a result of cutting off international funds and foreign social programs, many NPOs are forced to either stop their activity entirely or to limit their work in the areas that are poorly supported by the state (for example, social work with drug users, migrants, with representatives of sexual minorities). The state's interest in the qualitative development of socially oriented non-profit organizations, expanding the segment of NGOs' participation in social services is determined by the ability to promptly respond to new social challenges and realize the innovative technologies to solve problems of socially vulnerable groups. In this regard, the amount of grant support provided by the state is increasing and currently the Presidential Grants Foundation became the major grant operator for non-governmental sector (Starshinova & Borodkina, 2022).

Conclusion

The development of the social services system in Russia is taking place in accordance with the international trend of neoliberal politics. However, the dominant welfare patterns are based on the vertical of power and paternalistic attitudes of the population of Russia that is the first key contradiction of developing non-profit sector in Russia.

The second group of the reviewed contradictions is related to the fact that in the process of developing of the non-profit sector of social services, the federal government remains within the established tradition of vertical relations. By initiating changes, authorities are primarily interested in optimizing expenditures on social needs of citizens. The regional authorities are concerned with solving the tasks set forward by the federal authorities; hence, they do not seek new approaches to management, and follow the one-way communication pattern with NPOs matching the prevailing norms within the public sector. Therefore, at the regional level, the risks for emerging relations of social partnership can clearly be seen. The traditional nature of interactions between governments and NPOs in the regions deprives them of the necessary autonomy and independence in an effort to form "apolitical helpers" (Kulmala, 2016, p. 200), which does not motivate NPOs to become truly invested providers of social services. Thus, in present-day Russia, contradictions are clearly conveyed between the goals of social reform in the sphere of social welfare aimed at

developing the third sector of social services and the methods of implementing them at the level of regional government.

The third group of contradictions is associated with the social mission of NPOs and the need to reformulate their activity to support financial stability. Developing the non-profit sector of social services, the Russian government has been focusing on redistributing the substantial budget, which had previously financed the state service organizations. The selected approach, along with minimizing the cost of social services while simultaneously limiting the recipients of state-guaranteed services, as well as the requirements for comprehensive provision of services to the detriment of individual needs, significantly limit the ability of non-profit organizations to showcase their advantages as producers of social benefits.

High organizational barriers to NPO's access to budget funding violate the principle of participant equality in the emerging service market, creating the risk of distorting the non-profit organizations' activity. The need to provide financial support for their activity remains the primary task for all NPOs. The current situation seemingly contains the risks of commercializing the NPOs activity. The need for NPOs to focus on income-generating activities can be viewed as a kind of adjustment to the conditions that have occurred, allowing them to implement true innovation in achieving social goals. What has become an additional response to the current conditions is the activity of NPOs targeting the attraction of charitable funds, donations, and volunteer resources (Sätre et al., 2020). While this path is still limited for the lack of mass support of NPOs activity from the population, it is largely rooted in existing distrust. Regional practices demonstrate alternative trends in the emerging relations between regional NPOs and the authorities in Russian regions, opening perspectives for more constructive relations in the emerging social partnership aiming to achieve well-being of Russian citizens. Despite the shared sentiment of the participants in our study about the regional authorities demonstrating solely two main ways of interacting with NPOs, which is control or disregard, one should take into account the strong willingness of SO NPOs to cooperate with the authorities. This fact proves to be a powerful resource for the further development of regional NPOs.

Furthermore, the future prospects of interaction between non-profit organizations and regional authorities are associated with the policy of social investment (Borodkina et al., 2022). The transformation of social policy toward social investment, that entails achieving social goals in conjunction with economic outcomes, will lead to the further development of the non-governmental sector of social services and its connection with the state, which currently stands as one of the key investors in social projects.

References

Aasland, A., Berg-Nordlie, M., & Bogdanova, E. (2016). Encouraged but controlled: Governance networks in Russian regions. *East European Politics*, *32*(2), 148–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2016.1167042

Agranoff, R., & McGuire, M. (2003). *Collaborative public management: New strategies for local government*. Georgetown University Press.

Aidukaite, J. (2009). Old welfare state theories and new welfare regimes in Eastern Europe: Challenges and implications. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *42*(1), 23–39. https://doi:10.1016/j.postcomstud.2009.02.004

Ascoli, U., & Ranci, C. (Ed.). (2002). *Dilemmas of the welfare mix: The new structure of welfare in an era of privatization*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-4992-2

Auzan, A. A. (2004). Krizis ozhidanii i varianty sotsial'nogo kontrakta [The crisis of expectations and options for the social contract]. *Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost*, *5*, 16–23.

Bae, K. B., & Sohn, H. (2018). Factors contributing to the size of nonprofit sector: Tests of government failure, interdependence, and social capital theory. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization, 29*(3), 470–480. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-017-9888-3

Benevolenski, V., & Toepler, S. (2017). Modernizing social service delivery in Russia: Evolving government support for non-profit organizations. *Development in Practice*, *27*(1), 64–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2017.1259392

Bindman, E. (2015). The state, civil society and social rights in contemporary Russia. *East European Politics*, *31*(3), 342–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2015.1063488

Borodkina, O. (2015). International trends in Russian social work. *European Journal of Social Work*, *18*(4), 631–644. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2015.1049588

Borodkina, O. I. (2020). Social work transformation—National and international dimensions: The case of Russia. In S. S. M., R. Baikady, Ch. Sheng-Li, & H. Sakaguchi (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of global social work education* (pp. 657–669). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39966-5_41

Borodkina, O. I., Starshinova, A. V., & Arkhipova, E. B. (2022). Sotsial'noe investirovanie: Problemy i strategii razvitiia [Social investment: Problems and development strategies]. *Terra Economicus*, *20*(2), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.18522/2073-6606-2022-20-2-99-110

Borzaga, C., & Tortia, E. (2010). The economics of social enterprises: An interpretative framework. In C. Borzaga & L. Becchetti (Eds.), *The economics of social responsibility: The world of social enterprises* (pp. 15–33). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203851029

Brown, D. L., Moore, M. H., & Honan, J. (2003). Building strategic accountability systems for international NGOs. *AccountAbility Forum: Insight in Practice*, *2*, 31–43.

Cantillon, B. (2011). The paradox of the social investment state: Growth, employment and poverty in the Lisbon era. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *21*(5), 432–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928711418856

Clarke, J. (2007). Unsettled connections: Citizen, consumers, and the reform of public services. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *7*(2), 159–178. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540507077671

Cook, L. (2007). Negotiating welfare in postcommunist states. *Comparative Politics*, *40*(1), 41–62. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041507X12911361134398

Cook, L. J., Iarskaia-Smirnova, E., & Tarasenko, A. (2021). Outsourcing social services to NGOs in Russia: Federal policy and regional responses. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *37*(2), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2020.1853454

Crotty, J., & Ljubownikow, S. (2020). Creating organisational strength from operationalising restrictions: Welfare non-profit organisations in the Russian Federation*. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *31*(6), 1148–1158. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00271-0

De Wit, A., Bekkers, R., & van Groenou, M. B. (2017). Heterogeneity in crowding-out: When are charitable donations responsive to government support? *European Sociological Review*, *33*(1), 59–71. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw048

Deacon, B. (2000). Eastern European welfare states: The impact of the politics of globalization. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *10*(2), 146–161. https://doi.org/10.1177/a012487

Ebrahim, A. (2003). Accountability in practice: Mechanisms for NGOs. *World Development*, *31*(5), 813–829. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(03)00014-7

Esping-Andersen, G. (Ed.). (2002). *Why we need a new welfare state.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0199256438.001.0001

Evers, A. (1995). Part of the welfare mix: The third sector as an intermediate area. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *6*(2), 159–182. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02353995

Fossati, F. (2018). Who wants demanding active labour market policies? Public attitudes towards policies that put pressure on the unemployed. *Journal of Social Policy*, *47*(1), 77–97. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000216

Fröhlich, C., & Skokova, Yu. (2020). Two for one: Public welfare and regime legitimacy through state funding for CSOs in Russia. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *31*(4), 698–709. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00203-y

Grigoryeva, I. A. (2017). Sto let transformatsii sotsial'noi politiki v Rossii [One hundred years of social policy transformation in Russia]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *15*(4), 497–514. https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2017-15-4-497-514

Gugushvili, D., Lukac, M., & van Oorschot, W. (2021). Perceived welfare deservingness of needy people in transition countries: Comparative evidence from the Life in Transition Survey 2016. *Global Social Policy*, *21*(2), 234–257. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468018121989520

Hemerijck, A. (2013). *Changing welfare states.* Oxford University Press.

Iarskaia-Smirnova, E., & Lyons, K. (2018). Social work in FSU countries: Mapping the progress of "the professional project." *European Journal of Social Work*, *21*(1), 114–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2016.1255926

Jakobson, L., & Sanovich, S. (2010). The changing models of the Russian third sector: Import substitution phase. *Journal of Civil Society*, *6*(3), 279–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2010.528951

Krasnopolskaya, I. I., & Mersianova, I. V. (2015). Transformatsiia upravleniia sotsial'noi sferoi: Zapros na sotsial'nye innovatsii [Transformation of the social sphere administration: Demand for social innovations]. *Public Administration Issues*, *2*, 29–52.

Kulmala, M. (2016). Post-Soviet ''political''?: ''Social'' and ''political'' in the work of Russian socially oriented CSOs. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, *24*(2), 199–224.

Kulmala, M., Rasell, M., & Chernova, Z. (2017). Overhauling Russia's child welfare system: Institutional and ideational factors behind the paradigm shift. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *15*(3), 353–366. https://doi.org/10.7323/727-0634-2017-15-3-353-366

Kulmala, M., & Tarasenko, A. (2016). Interest representation and social policy making: Russian veterans' organisations as brokers between the state and society. *Europe–Asia Studies*, *68*(1), 138–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2015.1124842

Leoni, T. (2016). Social investment: A guiding principle for welfare state adjustment after the crisis? *Empirica*, *43*(4), 831–858. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10663-016-9348-0

Lewis, D. (2014). *Non-governmental organizations, management and development* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Lewis, J., Knijn, T., Martin, C., & Ostner, I. (2008). Patterns of development in work/family reconciliation policies for parents in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK in the 2000s. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, *15*(3), 261–286. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxn016

Ljubownikow, S., & Crotty, J. (2014). Civil society in a transitional context: The response of health and educational NGOs to legislative changes in Russia's industrialized regions. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *43*(4), 759–776. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013482396

Mersianova, I. V., & Benevolenski, V. B. (2016). Preimushchestva NKO kak postavshchikov sotsial'nykh uslug: Aprobatsiia v rossiiskikh usloviiakh [The comparative advantages of NPOs as social welfare services providers: An examination in the Russian context]. *Public Administration Issues*, *4*, 7–26.

Mikołajczak, P. (2018). The impact of the diversification of revenues on NGOs' commercialization: Evidence from Poland. *Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy*, *13*(4), 761–779. https://doi.org/10. 24136/eq.2018.037

Mosley, J. E. (2011). Institutionalization, privatization, and political opportunity: What tactical choices reveal about the policy advocacy of human service nonprofits. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *40*(3), 435–457. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764009346335

Newman, J., & Clarke, J. (2009). *Publics, politics and power: Remaking the public in public services.* Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446216651

Ob osnovakh sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia grazhdan v Rossiiskoi Federatsii [On the basics of social services for citizens of the Russian Federation]. Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 442-FZ (2013, December 28). http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102170561

Orenstein, M. A. (2008). Postcommunist welfare states. *Journal of Democracy*, *19*(4), 80–94. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0038

Pestoff, V., Brandsen, T., & Verschuere, B. (Eds.). (2012). *New public governance, the third sector, and co-production*. Routledge.

Powell, M., & Barrientos, A. (2004). Welfare regimes and the welfare mix. *European Journal of Political Research*, *43*(1), 83–105. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2004.00146.x

Rao, N. (1996). *Towards welfare pluralism: Public services in a time of change.* Dartmouth.

Riabov, A. V., & Kurbangaleeva, E. Sh. (Eds.). (2003). *Bazovye tsennosti rossiian: Sotsial'nye ustanovki. Zhiznennye strategii. Simvoly. Mify* [The basic values of Russians. Social attitudes. Life strategies. Symbols. Myths]. Dom intellektual'noi knigi.

Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., & O'Conner, W. (2003). Carrying out qualitative analysis. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 219–262). SAGE.

Salamon, L. M. (Ed.). (2002). *The tools of government: A guide to the new governance*. Oxford University Press.

Salamon, L. (2011). The new governance and the tools of public action: An introduction. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, *28*(5), 1611–1674.

Salamon, L. M., Sokolowski, S. W., & Haddock, M. A. (2017). *Explaining civil society development: A social origins approach*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Salmina, A. A. (2015). Ustanovki naseleniia po otnosheniiu k sotsial'noi roli gosudarstva v Rossii i Germanii [Social attitudes of the population towards the social role of the state in Russia and Germany]. *Vlast*, *10*, 171–181.

Sätre, A.-M., Varyzgina, A., & Granberg, L. (2020). The adaptation of local civic organizations in Russia to change: a case study of NGOS with a focus on social problems. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *18*(3), 509–522. https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2020-18-3-509-522

Sidorina, T. Yu. (2010). Partnerstvo gosudarstva i institutov samoorganizatsii grazhdan v realizatsii sotsial'noi politiki (teoreticheskii aspekt) [Partnership of the state and institutions of self-organization of citizens in the implementation of social policy (theoretical aspect)]. *Terra Economicus*, *8*(1), 117–129.

Skokova, Yu., & Fröhlich, C. (2022). Domestic funding for civil society in a non-democratic context: The example of the Presidential Grants in Russia. In Z. Kravchenko, L. Kings, & K. Jezierska (Eds.), *Resourceful civil society: Navigating the changing landscapes of civil society organizations* (pp. 67–91). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99007-7_3

Skokova, Yu., Pape, U., & Krasnopolskaya, I. (2018). The non-profit sector in today's Russia: Between confrontation and co-optation. *Europe–Asia Studies*, *70*(4), 531-563. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1447089

Smith, S. R., & Lipsky, M. (1993). *Nonprofits for hire: The welfare state in the age of contracting.* Harvard University Press.

Soldatkin, A., & Blackburn, M. (2020). Institutional changes in state authorities collaborating with NGOs. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *18*(3), 523–538. https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2020-18-3-523-538

Starshinova, A. V., & Borodkina, O. I. (2020). Deiatel'nost' NKO v sfere sotsial'nykh uslug: Obshchestvennye ozhidaniia i regional'nye praktiki [NGOS' activities in social services: Public expectations and regional practices]. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *18*(3), 411–428. https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2020-18-3-411-428

Starshinova, A. V., & Borodkina, O. I. (2022). Sustainability strategies of socially oriented NPOs: Grant support mechanism. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, *15*(5), 221–236. https://doi.org/10.15838/esc.2022.5.83.12

Tarasenko, A. (2018). Russian non-profit organisations in service delivery: Neoliberal and statist social policy principles intertwined. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *70*(4), 514–530. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1463357

Taylor-Gooby, P., Heuer, J.-O., Chung, H., Leruth, B., Mau, S., & Zimmermann, K. (2020). Regimes, social risks and the welfare mix: Unpacking attitudes to pensions and childcare in Germany and the UK through deliberative forums. *Journal of Social Policy*, *49*(1), 61–79. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004727941800079X

Toepler, S., Pape, U., & Benevolenski, V. (2020). Subnational variations in government-nonprofit relations: A comparative analysis of regional differences within Russia. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, *22*(1), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2019.1584446

Toepler, S., Zimmer, A., Fröhlich, C., & Obuch, K. (2020). The changing space for NGOs: Civil society in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *31*(4), 649–662. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00240-7

van Oorschot, W., & Gugushvili, D. (2019). Retrenched, but still desired? Perceptions regarding the social legitimacy of the welfare state in Russia compared with EU countries. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *71*(3), 345–364, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1583316

Problems and Prospects of the Online Model for Exporting Russian Education in the Context of Digital Inequality

Tamara K. Rostovskaya
Institute for Demographic Research of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
Peoples Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

Vera I. Skorobogatova
Presidential Academy (RANEPA), Moscow, Russia
Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow, Russia

Veronika N. Kholina
Peoples Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

ABSTRACT

Russia has historically been a favored destination for international students, a trend continuing through 2020–2022 despite pandemic challenges, quarantine measures, remote learning adaptations, and evolving geopolitical dynamics. The pandemic prompted significant digital transformations in universities, revealing varying digital readiness among Russian institutions for the abrupt shift to online education. This led to the emergence of a novel "digital didactics" methodology. Russian universities adopted digitalization not only for education but also for supporting digital students' socio-psychological adaptation and devising recruitment strategies via social networks. In these circumstances, digital inequality emerged as a critical concern. This issue is not only evident at a global level but also across various stages of foreign students' education, spanning from virtual admissions to final certification. This study analyzes the global experiences and recommendations for crafting an optimal model for online educational engagement with foreign students and categorizes Russian universities based on their digital readiness for education export and identifies challenges in engaging foreign students and attracting applicants.

rostovskaya.tamara@mail.ru, skorobogatova_ve@mail.ru, kholina-vn@rudn.ru

KEYWORDS

online model of education export, digitalization of education, online courses, digital tools, digital divide, institutional (legal) factors, export of education

Introduction

The Russian government's initiatives and the endeavors of Russian universities had brought about a noteworthy rise in the count of foreign students and revenue from educational exports by 2022. The total number of foreign students in Russia increased from 298,000 in 2019 to 315,000 in 2020, 324,000 in 2021, and further to 354,000 in 2022 (V vuzy Rossii, 2022). The recovery of the international educational market began in 2022 with the lifting of quarantine restrictions and the opening of borders and air traffic. In Russia, the notable rise in foreign student enrollment owed much to the streamlined migration procedures or their absence, alongside the high proficiency of universities' international admission services. A substantial contribution came from the measures introduced under the federal project *Eksport obrazovaniia* [Education Export], which adapted regulatory support for foreign student admissions, eliminating the need for original diplomas and recognition confirmations (in the case of distance learning) (Ob osobennostiakh priema, 2020, 2021).

In 2022, however, the growth of Russian educational exports was hurdled by the sanctions imposed by Western countries, which resulted in severed humanitarian ties with "unfriendly nations," transportation disruptions due to flight cancellations, financial obstacles in money transfers, social network restrictions, and a substantial information campaign (Rostovskaya & Skorobogatova, 2022, p. 107).

Furthermore, as digitalization takes center stage within Russian universities, fostering both educational and psychological well-being for digital students, it's notable that certain countries, like China, have extended their reliance on remote learning due to ongoing quarantine measures, as evidenced by their continued adoption of distance learning throughout the 2022–2023 academic year.

Analysis of global practices reveals that educational institutions adopted a pivotal strategy to attract and retain students by offering diverse models of distance learning. As Mr. Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems at UNESCO, explained, "effectiveness hinges on four levels of readiness: technical, content, pedagogical, and monitoring and evaluation" (UNESCO, 2023). These dimensions encompass access to remote learning options, the availability of online content aligned with national curricula, the pedagogical readiness of educators as well as parents and caregivers, and the monitoring of student progress.

The use of online education has revealed problems with the digital divide, including challenges in accessing distance learning, assessing knowledge fairly, and training teachers. Hence, the primary goal of this study is to identify challenges arising from the digital divide when integrating digital technologies into different phases of foreign students' educational journey. We intend to analyze existing global experiences and recommendations for crafting an optimal model for educational engagement with foreign students in the context of digitalization.

Literature Review

As part of the Russian government's priority project *Razvitie eksportnogo potentsiala rossiiskoi sistemy obrazovaniia* [Development of the Export Potential of the Russian Education System] (2017–2018), and in alignment with the four service supply modes recognized by the World Trade Organization, five key models of educational export have been defined: internal internationalization, collaborative educational programs, establishment of Russian educational institutions abroad, online education, and network universities (Krasnova, 2021).

The concept of "education export" has emerged relatively recently, driven by the rapid increase in the number of foreign students and intentional state policies. Authors like A. L. Aref'ev (2017), M. Yu. Makhotaeva et al. (2019), and V. I. Skorobogatova (2021) have delved into the phenomenon of education export, exploring various aspects, from marketing characteristics to the creation of appealing educational programs. Additionally, the Russian International Affairs Council's annual study, *Elektronnaia internatsionalizatsiia: Angloiazychnye internet-resursy rossiiskikh universitetov* [Electronic Internationalization: English-Language Internet Resources of Russian Universities] (2015–2022), centers on promoting Russian education through university English websites (Russian International Affairs Council, n.d.). The potential of virtual learning for education export capitalizes on the benefits of education digitalization in today's universally virtualized society (Shapovalov, 2014).

The comprehensive analysis of e-learning in Russia and globally, encompassing stages, classifications, and key development factors has been performed by G. A. Krasnova and G. V. Mozhaeva (2019). Their study identifies challenges in Russian universities' digital learning, including legislative regulation gaps, lack of systematic online education development monitoring, and digital inequalities.

There has been increased scholarly interest in the notion of digital inequality (Ragnedda, 2018; Ragnedda & Kreitem, 2018; van Dijk, 2013; Vartanova, 2002). J. van Dijk (2013) identifies three tiers of digital inequality: the initial tier pertains to physical access to infrastructure, the second involves digital skills and competencies, and the third encompasses the benefits accrued while utilizing the Internet fully (p. 28).

International insights into digital transformation are articulated through analytical reports and publications, including those addressing universities in the context of COVID-19. Works such as *COVID-19 Impact on International Higher Education: Studies & Forecasts* (German Academic Exchange Service, 2020), "Digitalization in Education: Challenges, Trends and Transformative Potential" (Schmidt & Tang, 2020), and materials

from the 12th International Conference on Technology, Education, and Development (Gómez Chova et al., 2018) provide a platform for these perspectives. A recurring theme in these publications is that "digital transformation in higher education transcends mere technology. It aims to introduce novel methods that sustain user-centered services amidst shifts in technology, competition, audience needs, and behavior" (Seres et al., 2018). However, concerning foreign students, this task appears to be more challenging, requiring both regulatory and organizational changes for its resolution.

Materials and Methods

The article draws upon various sources divided into four groups. The first group comprises studies from international and national organizations, including statistical data. The second group consists of monographs, articles by Russian and foreign researchers, analytical reports, and materials from international and Russian conferences. The third group encompasses Russian regulatory legal documents, acts pertaining to education, migration policy, and digitalization of education. Lastly, the fourth group includes websites, online platforms, and Internet portals.

In its annual reports, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019) published materials on student migration flows. These reports draw on statistical data from various international organizations, including UNESCO and the International Organization for Migration. The empirical foundation of this study rests on official Russian and international educational statistics, content analysis of relevant documents from foreign and domestic educational systems, and conclusions drawn by the authors at several conferences held between 2020 and 2022. The research employs analytical, methodological, comparative legal, and classification methods to achieve its objectives.

Results and Discussion

The rise of the online model of educational export in Russian practice can be attributed to the widespread adoption of mass open online courses (MOOCs) and online learning as a form of distance education. This approach involves active synchronous interaction between teachers and students through e-learning tools on the Internet.

Following the transition of the entire educational process to a remote format in 2020–2021, the distinct boundaries of Russian universities' target models for exporting educational offerings became increasingly blurred. These models shifted substantially toward a hybrid format, each of them incorporating online learning as a significant component.

Mobile learning is considered a pivotal strategy for educational development. According to UNESCO's definition, "mobile learning implies the use of mobile technology, both separately and in conjunction with other information and communication technologies (ICTs), to organize the educational process, regardless of the place and time of training. Learning can take many forms: with the help of mobile devices, students can access educational resources, connect with other users, and

create content in and out of the classroom" (UNESCO, 2013). During the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference held in November 2019, the Recommendations on Open Educational Resources[1] were endorsed to advance the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Among these goals, open educational e-courses have been cited as a highly accessible tool within the realm of higher education.

Initially introduced in prestigious American universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard, and Stanford in 2011, the concept of MOOC gained traction with the launch of the Coursera[2] online platform. Over the span of a decade, by 2021, the global count of online course participants had reached 113 million, with Russia ranking 7th and having a total of 2.4 million participants (Coursera, 2021).

Comprehensive online educational programs, allowing individuals to earn bachelor's, master's, or PhD degrees without the need to be physically present at an educational institution, have been established on online platforms such as Coursera, Udacity[3], and EdX[4].

The first online platforms, Lectorium[5] and Universarium[6], appeared in Russia in 2012. During the same period, several Russian universities, including the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, St. Petersburg State University, and Tyumen State University, joined the online platform Coursera, which had previously only offered courses from foreign universities. Leading the way in terms of online course offerings until February 2022 was the Higher School of Economics. Furthermore, in 2020, Russia launched its first English-language online *Master in Data Science* program (Sidhu, 2019). English-language courses on global platforms primarily catered to foreign students who, by selecting courses from a specific university, were often inclined to continue their studies at a familiar institution.

In today's evolving geopolitical landscape, the sanctions imposed on Russia, among other things, include restrictions on access to educational resources for political reasons. In March 2022, Coursera introduced the following limitations on its platform: "We are taking the following action in regards to business in Russia: We are suspending all content from Russian university and industry partners including courses, specializations, and degrees. Content from Russian partners will no longer be discoverable or available on Coursera's platform for new enrollments. We believe access to education is a human right. As such, Coursera will remain available in all regions where there is not a government sanction" (Maggioncalda, 2022). It is noteworthy that Coursera acknowledges education as a fundamental human right.

The removal of Russian universities from international educational platforms like Coursera and EdX created the need to explore alternative digital solutions. On September 5, 2022, *Kontseptsiia gumanitarnoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii za rubezhom* [The Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation

---

[1] https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer

[2] https://www.coursera.org

[3] https://www.udacity.com

[4] https://www.edx.org

[5] https://www.lektorium.tv/mooc

[6] https://www.universarium.org

Abroad] was approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 611 (Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii, 2022). It clearly outlines the core values that the Russian Federation presents on the global platform, seeking better understanding and recognition. Education is presented as a key driver of this effort. Moreover, in the updated version of *Kontseptsiia gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v sfere sodeistviia mezhdunarodnomu razvitiiu* [The Concept of International Development Assistance], a central aspect of Russia's involvement in global development is described as the empowerment of human potential in recipient nations. In the updated version of this document, for the first time, the prime focus of Russia's engagement in international development is linked to providing citizens of recipient nations with the opportunity for tuition-free education in Russian universities and colleges (O vnesenii izmenenii, 2023). This reaffirms the significance of educational migration and emphasizes the importance of promoting Russian education as a constituent element of foreign policy.

The rise of online learning across different educational levels can be attributed to changing preferences among applicants and the increasing demand for online degree programs and courses. This shift is well illustrated by the growing number of Russian students engaging with the Coursera platform.

Since 2019, an important criterion for assessing the international activities of Russian universities was the information on online courses published on open educational platforms, provided as part of monitoring the international activities of educational organizations of higher education (O provedenii monitoringa, 2019). An open educational platform is defined as a platform that collaborates with three or more Russian and/or foreign higher education institutions, offering a diverse range of students the chance to enroll in specific online courses from any location worldwide (Metodicheskie rekomendatsii, 2019).

In 2021, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia initiated an effort to connect universities to the Modern Digital Educational Environment in the Russian Federation platform (O gosudarstvennoi informatsionnoi sisteme, 2020).

Universities' experiences with online education have highlighted, however, various issues of digital inequality when organizing educational processes for foreign students located outside of Russia. These problems range from limited Internet access to varying technical capabilities of Internet service providers in different countries such as differing Internet access channel speeds, insufficient bit rate for live video and audio translations, and restrictions on using public domain software. These challenges, in turn, hinder the seamless delivery of high-quality electronic educational resources (Rostovskaya et al., 2021). In essence, one of the fundamental issues in digital interaction lies in technical and access-related problems, constituting the first level of digital inequality.

As indicated in the latest Global Digital 2023 report, there are currently 5.16 billion Internet users in the world, accounting for 64.4% of the global population. Over the past year there has been a 1.9% growth in the number of Internet users (Kemp, 2023). Regrettably, there is a notable lack of analysis concerning Internet usage for educational purposes even though Internet access plays an important role in facilitating the export of education to priority regions.

In the current landscape, the Russian Federation designates certain regions as priority areas, focusing on "friendly" and "neutral" nations, which includes BRICS member countries, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation members, CIS countries, and members of the Eurasian Economic Union. Strengthening comprehensive partnerships with African nations also remains a significant focus of Russia's foreign policy. During the Plenary Session of the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum in July 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin highlighted this trajectory, stating:

> Nearly 35,000 African students are studying at Russian universities, and this number is growing every year. The quota for African students financed from the federal budget has increased by 150 percent over the past three years and will exceed 4,700 people in the next academic year. (Plenary session, 2023)

The recruitment of African students, along with the digital promotion of Russian educational programs and fostering educational engagement with foreign students, poses significant challenges for universities due to the fact that Internet usage levels in Africa remain the lowest among major regions. Only 43.2% of the population in African countries has access to the Internet, underscoring the profound issue of digital inequality in this context (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Internet World Penetration Rates by Geographic Regions, 2022

Note. Source: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
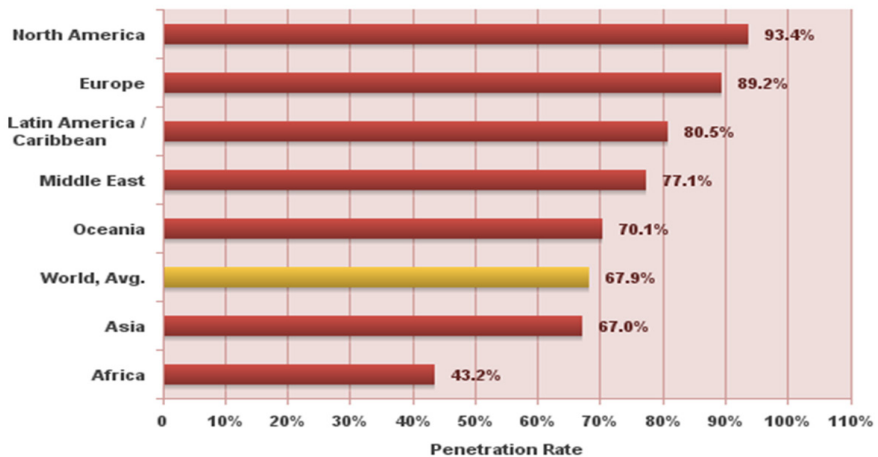
Figure 1 illustrates the global distribution of Internet users by regions, showcasing an average worldwide Internet penetration rate of 67.9%, with the highest rate at 93.4% in North America.

Given these statistics, it becomes worthwhile to analyze the trend of attracting foreign students from African countries to Russia. Notably, over the past three years, this growth has doubled, signaling the increasing popularity of Russian education.

The percentage of Internet users in a specific country plays a pivotal role in shaping the marketing and educational strategies of universities (Table 1).

Table 1

The Number of Foreign Students From African Countries in Russia and the Level of Internet Access in These Countries (%)

Country	Number of students		Percentage of Internet users, %
	for the year 2018	for the year 2021	
Algeria	613	1,224	70.9
Benin	232	281	34.0
Botswana	126	175	73.5
Burkina Faso	15	59	22.0
Burundi	116	98	10.2
The Gambia	20	37	33.0
Guinea	181	384	34.7
Guinea-Bissau	298	406	35.2
Egypt	2,342	12,355	72.2
Zambia	626	637	21.2
Zimbabwe	435	488	34.8
Cape Verde	22	30	69.8
Cameroon	581	769	45.6
Congo	745	818	22.0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	365	481	22.9
Côte d'Ivoire	563	682	45.4
Mali	110	127	34.5
Morocco	2,380	3,132	84.1
Mozambique	134	153	20.7
Nigeria	1,398	1,684	55.4
Rwanda	37	143	30.5
Senegal	104	213	58.1
Somalia	73	105	9.8
Sudan	263	381	28.4
Sierra Leone	44	86	21.2
United Republic of Tanzania	73	106	31.6
Togo	18	42	35.0
Uganda	53	75	24.6
Central African Republic	11	26	10.6
Chad	206	310	17.9
Eswatini	70	78	30.3
Ethiopia	39	75	16.7
Republic of South Africa	575	638	72.3
Total	12,868	26,298	–

Note. Source: The table was compiled by the authors based on the data of the annual monitoring of the international activities of the Ministry of Education and Science Russian Federation, the data resulting from statistical observations and taken from the Global Digital Report 2023 (Kemp, 2023).

In a broader context, it is noteworthy that there has been a substantial increase in Internet users across African countries over the past five years. There is, however, a considerable disparity in the degree of digitalization among African nations. Countries exhibiting elevated digitalization levels, according to the metrics such as the number of Internet users, social media engagement, and digital tool utilization, include North African countries like Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt. Conversely, Sub-Saharan countries have markedly low levels of Internet accessibility, evident in the rankings for Internet access in countries like Burundi, Zambia, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Chad.

While it may be challenging to draw a direct correlation between the surge in the number of African applicants and the extent of Internet users, it would make sense for universities to consider this indicator both when recruiting foreign students and when planning the learning process. Prospective students' choice of a destination to study is influenced by a multitude of factors, including a university's standing in global rankings, the testimonials of current students, educational quality, and post-graduation employment prospects. A significant hurdle for African students seeking Russian education lies in mastering the Russian language, navigating cultural differences, and achieving sociocultural adaptation. To surmount these barriers, fostering remote interaction through digital resources becomes pivotal.

Consequently, for numerous universities, a central objective during the pandemic was to establish remote preparatory departments to facilitate Russian language instruction and to retain prospective students. Some Russian universities have effectively addressed the challenge of bridging the digital divide through the adept application of digital technologies: for instance, the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN) and Don State Technical University have implemented the Distance Preparatory Department initiative to provide Russian language training for aspiring international students.

When designing educational processes, it's 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.

At Don State Technical University, the entire educational process is conducted through the digital platform *SKIF.Mezhdunarodnyi* [SKIF.INTERNATIONAL]. Here, e-courses created by instructors from the International Department are posted in a module format, which contributes to a more flexible learning experience for students (Novikova, 2020).

The Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia also emphasizes the use of ICT technologies to attract foreign students at the school level. They have developed a system of Olympiads in school subjects and the Russian language for school children from abroad. Additionally, specialized classes have been established in developing countries (with their number reaching 41 in 2023), where RUDN teachers provide advanced-level instruction in school subjects. These classes are conducted both in-person and online.

The Volga Research Medical University relies heavily on its distance education website[7] as a key platform for knowledge integration and feedback. This website

---

[7] https://sdo.pimunn.net/

supports a system of network provision of students with materials for self-study, as well as intermediate and final control of knowledge (Levanov et al., 2020). This system enables students to engage with presentations, online video lectures, and undertake intermediate and final assessments (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Structure of Distance Learning (the Case of the Volga Research Medical University)
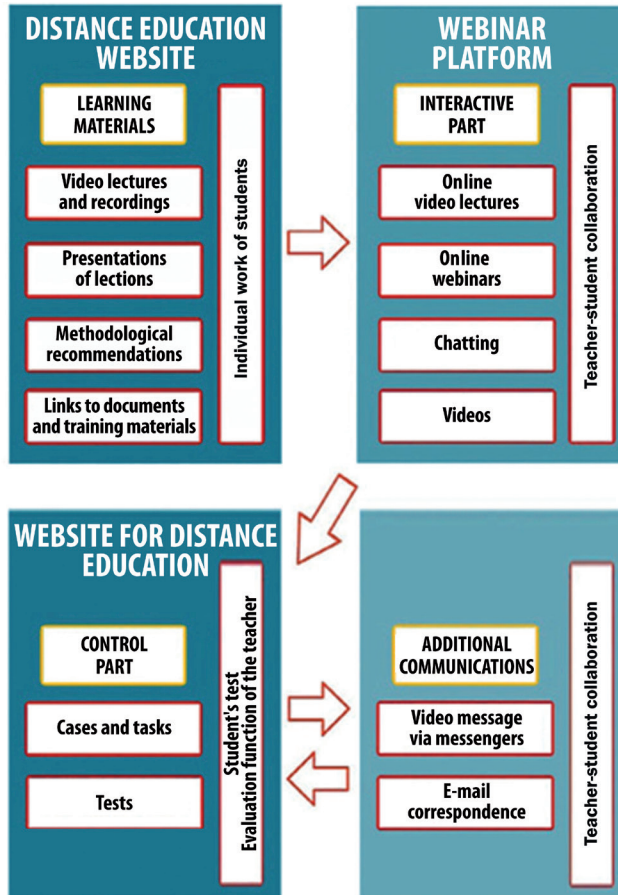
Note. Source: Levanov et al., 2020; trans. by T. Rostovskaya, V. Skorobogatova, & V. Kholina.

Figure 2 demonstrates that the distance learning system comprises four modules: a training module, an interactive module for seminars and discussions, a control module, and a communication module.

In the current landscape, universities exhibit varying degrees of implementation of digital technologies when engaging with foreign students. Several universities, primarily regional ones, utilize conventional software platforms like Moodle[8] for

---

[8] https://moodle.org/

organizing their educational processes. In contrast, other regional institutions, such as Togliatti State University, have responded to intense competition by creating their own digital ecosystem known as the Rosdistant University.[9] This ecosystem comprises eight subsystems, including a subsystem for data integrity control, four databases (for teachers, students, digital footprint, and content), as well as the requisite IT infrastructure for their successful functioning. The implementation of this system has yielded significant results, including notable increases in student enrollment and geographical coverage. The number of foreign students has surged twelvefold, from 190 people in 2014 to 2.3 thousand people from 23 countries in 2022 (Krishtal et al., 2022).

Leading universities in the country, such as Tomsk State University (TSU), are adopting a versatile hybrid learning format known as HyFlex. This format involves designing and implementing educational programs for three distinct student groups, each following one of the three possible paths: traditional classroom learning, synchronous remote learning through videoconferencing, and asynchronous independent learning utilizing online content in an electronic training course via a Learning Management System (LMS). A state-of-the-art hardware and software setup at TSU has facilitated the establishment of 45 classrooms capable of accommodating 2,500 students in-person and over 4,500 students online simultaneously (Shepel et al., 2022). As such, student needs and capabilities are maximally taken into consideration.

If we look at the way Russian universities use digital tools, we can divide them into three groups. The first group employs traditional digital tools to engage with foreign applicants and students; however, these tools lack integration, often resulting in what is termed "patchwork" informatization. Universities of the second group have established digital ecosystems that encompass all operational processes and an educational environment integrating modern digital tools for teaching and assessment. The third group consists of advanced universities that, in addition to digital ecosystems, possess university management structures and innovative educational technologies enabling the creation of personalized learning paths (e.g., Tomsk State University, Tyumen State University).

The primary challenges in optimizing digital tools for education export can be classified as follows:

• Establishing a digital environment, which involves addressing technical hurdles;

• Implementing digital learning technologies, which includes the creation and dissemination of high-quality educational content in foreign languages;

• Formulating digital models for process organization, such as digital marketing, designing international service digital interfaces, and implementing digital document management.

Developing a digital environment involves various aspects of a university's operations beyond international activities, yet specific challenges and solutions arise when it comes to generating digital content and engaging with foreign students.

Considering the restrictions for Russian universities to publish in international educational platforms, there is a need to intensify efforts towards establishing online

---

[9] https://www.rosdistant.ru/

platforms that aggregate various educational modules and open educational resources in foreign languages. However, the active use of online courses by universities brings forth the challenge of integrating these institutions in the creation of comprehensive educational content. Therefore, it is necessary to develop and enrich the national platform *Otkrytoe obrazovanie* [Open Education],[10] which, as of August 1, 2023, comprises 1,122 courses exclusively in the Russian language. The suggestion to consider leveraging this national platform for foreign students by supplementing it with online courses in foreign languages or creating a unified user-friendly aggregator platform for international students is discussed by Rostovskaya et al. (2021, p. 35).

In the field of education export, a significant challenge often stems from regulatory requirements and restrictions imposed by migration laws, which may include mandates for submitting original documents, extensive notarization demands, and so on. The use of electronic documents could significantly ease many of the challenges faced during the admissions process for foreign students. The experience of the 2020–2021 admissions cycle showed that the delayed provision of original documents did not result in significant adverse effects. For instance, starting from 2022, Armenia and later Uzbekistan have transitioned to electronic forms of education certificates with QR codes for verification.

The existing educational regulatory framework lacks provisions for electronic document management, necessitating the introduction of electronic documents into legislation. This aligns with broader trends in digitalization, including international practices. Digital repositories of educational records are actively utilized not only in individual countries but also by international bodies. For example, the West African Examinations Council[11] (WAEC) conducts exams and certifies educational achievements in English-speaking West African countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia).

Rostovskaya et al. (2021) suppose that in light of the expanding digital repositories for educational documents and qualifications, it is advisable to progressively eliminate the requirement for submitting documents in physical paper format, provided that digital data can be authenticated. Given the escalating competition for each foreign student and the concurrent pursuit of political influence, we would recommend to reconsider legal obstacles such as document legalization or original document submission, particularly when reliable information databases affirm the authenticity of educational records. Acknowledging that educational migration stands as a preferred form of migration and attracting foreign students yields both migration growth and economic benefits, it is important to prioritize the digitalization of migration registration procedures and entry-exit protocols for foreign students (Skorobogatova, 2022).

Conclusion

In today's geopolitical context, there is a clear strategic need to attract foreign students from priority regions and countries. University internationalization serves as

---

[10] https://openedu.ru/

[11] https://www.waecgh.org/

a pervasive agenda transcending institutional boundaries. The optimal provision of digital services tailored to international students' needs is seen as a pivotal factor for the success of education export.

During the enrollment phase, universities face the need to create international marketing strategies, establish regulations for electronic internationalization, utilize Customer Relationship Management systems to manage large databases of participants in educational fairs and potential applicants, and enhance the use of online recruitment tools such as social media networks, website landing pages, and comprehensive program information dissemination.

The creation of a platform to host educational resources in foreign languages, potentially achieved through a consortium or association of leading universities engaged in Russian education export, is a necessity. The replication of best practices and the pursuit of optimal financial mechanisms for deploying software products and digital services already developed and validated by most universities remain crucial.

Equally important is for the government to focus on fostering a common understanding of terms related to digitalization in education. This entails amending educational legislation, establishing national platforms hosting open foreign-language educational resources that can be used and accredited as part of university educational programs, permitting the validation of education and qualification documents through digital means, and streamlining the recognition process.

The challenge of digital inequality is a pressing concern in the socio-economic advancement of nations and their regions. In the context of the Concept of International Development Assistance, attention should be directed towards helping countries to bridge the digital divide, which could involve the establishment of Internet access centers or leveraging satellite technologies. As this understanding of the digital divide is undergoing transformation, it could potentially acquire political dimensions. Russia should be poised to navigate these dynamics.

References

Aref'ev, A. L. (Ed.). (2017). *Eksport rossiiskikh obrazovatel'nykh uslug: Statisticheskii sbornik* [Export of Russian educational services: Statistical collection]. Sotsiotsentr.

Coursera. (2021). *2021 Impact report: Serving the world through learning*. https://about.coursera.org/press/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-Coursera-Impact-Report.pdf

German Academic Exchange Service. (2020). *COVID-19 impact on international higher education: Studies & forecasts*. https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/centre-of-competence/covid-19-impact-on-international-higher-education-studies-and-forecasts/

Gómez Chova, L., López Martínez, A., & Candel Torres, I. (Eds.). (2018). *INTED2018 Proceedings. 12th International Technology, Education and*

Development Conference, March 5–7, 2018, Valencia, Spain. IATED Academy. https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2018

Kemp, S. (2023, January 26). *Digital 2023: Global overview report*. Data Reportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report

Krasnova, G. A. (2021). *Osnovy eksportnoi deiatel'nosti v sfere obrazovaniia* [Fundamentals of export activities in the field of education]. Prospect. https://doi.org/10.31085/9785392329090-2021-160

Krasnova, G. A., & Mozhaeva, G. V. (2019). *Elektronnoe obrazovanie v epokhu tsifrovoi transformatsii* [Electronic education in the era of digital transformation]. Publishing House of Tomsk State University.

Krishtal, M. M., Boyur, R. V., Baboshina, E. S., Kutuzov, A. I., Sokolova, T. A., & Denisova, O. P. (2022). Sistema vysshego obrazovaniia onlain kak instrument internatsionalizatsii obrazovaniia (na primere proekta Rosdistant) [Online higher education system as a tool for the internationalization of education (the case of the Rosdistant project)]. In *Proceedings of the 5th International Educational Forum "Altai— Aziia 2022: Evraziiskoe obrazovatel'noe prostranstvo—novye vyzovy i luchshie praktiki", September 15–17, 2022, Barnaul—Belokurikha* (pp. 40–48). Publishing House of Altai State University.

Levanov, V. M., Perevezentsev, E. A., & Gavrilova, A. N. (2020). Distantsionnoe obrazovanie v meditsinskom vuze v period pandemii COVID-19: Pervyi opyt glazami studentov [Distance education in medical school during the COVID-19 pandemic: The first experience through the eyes of students]. *Journal of Telemedicine and E-Health*, *2*, 3–9. https://doi.org/10.29188/2542-2413-2020-6-2-3-9

Maggioncalda, J. (2022, March 4)*.* Coursera's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. *Coursera Blog*. https://blog.coursera.org/coursera-response-to-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-ukraine

Makhotaeva, M. Yu., Bakumenko, O. A., & Varlamov, G. V. (2019). *Eksport obrazovatel'nykh uslug vs internatsionalizatsiia universiteta* [Export of educational services vs internationalization of the university]. Pskov State University.

Metodicheskie rekomendatsii po zapolneniiu obrazovatel'nymi organizatsiiami vysshego obrazovaniia formy monitoringa mezhdunarodnoi deiatel'nosti [The guidelines for filling in the form for monitoring the international activities of educational organizations of higher education]. (2019). https://miccedu.ru/static/monitoring-vo.html

Novikova, N. V. (2020). Primenenie distantsionnykh obrazovatel'nykh tekhnologii pri obuchenii inostrannykh grazhdan v usloviiakh rasprostraneniia novoi koronavirusnoi infektsii COVID-19 (opyt Donskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta) [The use of distance learning technologies in teaching foreign citizens in the context of the spread of a new coronavirus infection COVID-19 (experience of Don State Technical University)]. In E. Y. Zolochevskaya &

A. V. Skidan (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Regional Conference "Inostrannye studenty v vuzakh Iuga Rossii: Problemy, perspektivy i luchshie praktiki privlecheniia, obucheniia, trudoustroistva" [International students at universities in the south of Russia: Problems, prospects and best practices in attracting, training and employment]*, October 30, 2020, Rostov-on-Don, Russia (pp. 52–53). South-Russian Institute of Management of RANEPA.

O gosudarstvennoi informatsionnoi sisteme "Sovremennaia tsifrovaia obrazovatel'naia sreda" [On the state information system "Modern digital educational environment"]. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1836. (2020, November 16). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202011190005

O provedenii monitoringa mezhdunarodnoi deiatel'nosti [On monitoring the international activities]. Letter of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation No. MN-1193/MB. (2019, July 1). https://miccedu.ru/static/monitoring-vo.html

O vnesenii izmenenii v Kontseptsiiu gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v sfere sodeistviia mezhdunarodnomu razvitiiu, utverzhdennuiu Ukazom Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 20 aprelia 2014 g. No. 259 [On amendments to the Concept of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the field of assistance to international development, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of April 20, 2014 No. 259]. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 161. (2023, March 13). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202303130003

Ob osobennostiakh priema na obuchenie po obrazovatel'nym programmam vysshego obrazovaniia—programmam bakalavriata, programmam spetsialiteta, programmam magistratury, programmam podgotovki nauchno-pedagogicheskikh kadrov v aspiranture na 2020/21 uchebnyi god [On the peculiarities of admission to educational programs of higher education—bachelor's programs, specialty programs, master's programs, postgraduate training programs for scientific and pedagogical personnel for the 2020/21 academic year]. Order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation No. 726. (2020, June 15). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202006180038

Ob osobennostiakh priema na obuchenie po obrazovatel'nym programmam vysshego obrazovaniia—programmam bakalavriata, programmam spetsialiteta, programmam magistratury, programmam podgotovki nauchno-pedagogicheskikh kadrov v aspiranture na 2021/22 uchebnyi god [On the peculiarities of admission to educational programs of higher education—bachelor's programs, specialty programs, master's programs, postgraduate training programs for scientific and pedagogical personnel for the 2020/21 academic year]. Order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation No. 226. (2021, April 1). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202104290039

Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii gumanitarnoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii za rubezhom [On approval of the Concept of humanitarian policy of the Russian

Federation abroad]. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 611. (2022, September 5). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202209050019

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/19991487

Plenary session of the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum. (2023, July 27). Kremlin.ru. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/71814

Ragnedda, M. (2018). Conceptualizing digital capital. *Telematics and Informatics*, *35*(8), 2366–2375. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.10.006

Ragnedda, M., & Kreitem, H. (2018). The three levels of digital divide in East EU countries. *World of Media*. *Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, *4*, 5–27. https://doi.org/10.30547/worldofmedia.4.2018.1

Rostovskaya, T. K., & Skorobogatova, V. I. (2022). Vyzovy obrazovatel'noi migratsii na sovremennom etape [Challenges of educational migration at the present stage]. *University Management: Practice and Analysis*, *26*(2), 105–113. https://doi.org/10.15826/umpa.2022.02.016

Rostovskaya, T. K., Skorobogatova, V. I., & Lukyanets, A. S. (2021). Osobennosti obrazovatel'noi migratsii v kontekste tsifrovizatsii [Features of educational migration in the context of digitalization]. *Informatsionnoe obshchestvo*, *3*, 32–40. https://doi.org/10.52605/16059921_2021_03_32

Russian International Affairs Council. (n.d.). *Elektronnaia internatsionalizatsiia rossiiskikh universitetov* [Digital internationalisation of Russian universities]. https://russiancouncil.ru/projects/functional/aplusstandard/

Schmidt, J. T., & Tang, M. (2020). Digitalization in education: Challenges, trends and transformative potential. In M. Harwardt, P. J. Niermann, A. Schmutte, & A. Steuernagel (Eds.), *Führen und Managen in der digitalen Transformation: Trends, Best Practices und Herausforderungen* [Leading and managing in the digital transformation: Trends, best practices and challenges] (pp. 287–312). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-28670-5_16

Seres, L., Pavlicevic, V., & Tumbas, P. (2018). Digital transformation of higher education: Competing on analytics. In L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez & I. Candel Torres (Eds.), *INTED2018 Proceedings. 12th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, March 5–7, 2018, Valencia, Spain* (pp. 9491–9497). IATED Academy. https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2018.2348

Shapovalov, A. S. (2014). Ot "e-learning" k "e-learning 2.0" i "massive open online courses": Razvitie onlain obucheniia [From "e-learning" to "e-learning 2.0" and "massive open online courses": The development of online learning]. *Mezhdunarodnyi zhurnal eksperimental'nogo obrazovaniia*, *7*(part 2), 52–55.

Shepel, M. O., Veledinskaya, S. B., Maslova, D. A., & Iakovleva, K. I. (2022). Realizatsiia gibridnoi modeli obucheniia, osnovannoi na sovremennykh edtech

resheniiakh, kak otvet na global'nye izmeneniia sotsial'nogo landshafta: Opyt Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta [Implementation of a hybrid learning model based on modern edtech solutions as a response to global changes in the social landscape: The experience of Tomsk state university]. In *Proceedings of the 5ᵗʰ International Educational Forum "Altai—Aziia 2022: Evraziiskoe obrazovatel'noe prostranstvo—novye vyzovy i luchshie praktiki", September 15–17, 2022, Barnaul—Belokurikha* (pp. 210–214). Publishing House of Altai State University.

Sidhu, D. (2019, October 10). HSE and Coursera announce Russia's first top-tier online master's in data science. *Coursera Blog*. https://blog.coursera.org/hse-and-coursera-announce-russias-first-top-tier-online-masters-in-data-science/

Skorobogatova, V. I. (2021). *Migratsionnaia politika Rossii v kontekste eksporta obrazovaniia: Konstitutsionno-pravovye osnovy i perspektivy razvitiia* [Migration policy of Russia in the context of export of education: Constitutional and legal foundations and development prospects]. Perspektiva. https://doi.org/10.51285/migpol2020

Skorobogatova, V. I. (2022). Pravovye aspekty internatsionalizatsii obrazovaniia v usloviiakh COVID-19 [Legal aspects of the internationalization of education in the context of COVID-19]. In *"Aktual'nye problemy sravnitel'nogo pravovedeniia i iuridicheskoi lingvistiki" [Actual problems of comparative jurisprudence and legal linguistics]: Proceedings of the 5ᵗʰ International Conference, December 9–10, 2021, Moscow, Russia* (pp. 203–212). Moscow State Linguistic University.

UNESCO. (2013). *UNESCO policy guidelines for mobile learning*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219641

UNESCO. (2023, April 20). *Dealing with obstacles to distance learning*. https://en.unesco.org/news/dealing-obstacles-distance-learning

V vuzy Rossii v 2022 godu zachislili bolee 21 tys. Inostrantsev [More than 21 thousand foreigners were enrolled in Russian universities in 2022]. (2022, August 24). TASS. https://tass.ru/obschestvo/15547143

van Dijk, J. A. G. M. (2013). A theory of the digital divide. In M. Ragnedda & G. W. Muschert (Eds.), *The digital divide: The Internet and social inequality in international perspective* (pp. 29–51). Routledge.

Vartanova, E. (2002). The digital divide and the changing political/media environment of post-socialist Europe. *International Communication Gazette*, *64*(5), 449–465. https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485020640050501

ARTICLE

Inclusion Problems in the Russian General Education System

Tatiana S. Soloveva
Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Vologda, Russia

Veronika A. Sokolova
Vologda State University, Vologda, Russia

ABSTRACT

The research examines the problem of implementing the principle of inclusion in the Russian education system as contributing to the development of inclusive society. The system and actor approaches were used to consider educational inclusion from the perspective of a wide range of actors. The study analyzes the main indicators characterizing the state and development of an inclusive education system taking into account certain barriers to its development. The main problems of implementing educational inclusion into the Russian system of general education are investigated. These include the definition of the object of inclusion, staffing, physical accessibility of educational institutions, adaptation of educational programs, funding, and willingness of different actors of the educational process to inclusion. The main positive changes and difficulties that arise during the implementation of inclusion in the Russian general education system are outlined. Key measures that should be taken to lift existing barriers and promote inclusion are proposed.

KEYWORDS

integration, inclusion, inclusive education, general education, perception stereotypes, educational policy

Introduction

The fundamental principle of modern society is the principle of equality of rights and freedoms, which manifests itself in the formation of an inclusive society. Such a society recognizes the existing differences between people and implies the possibility of including all individuals in social relations. Of particular importance

is the inclusion of people with disabilities in social processes, since this population category is one of the most vulnerable social groups in any society. Various aspects of effective socialization of the disabled are in the focus of research of many scientific disciplines, including pedagogy, psychology, economics, sociology, medicine, etc.

In recent years, the concept of inclusion as a direction of education humanization has received increased attention in connection with the need to more actively involve the disabled people into the social life. The education system is an important element in establishing an inclusive society and a promoter of the inclusion idea. Since education plays an important role in the reproduction and/or transformation of social inequality and exclusion, inclusive education should be treated as an important component of a social inclusion strategy. The inclusiveness of education is often seen as the possibility of realizing human rights, thus underpinning social justice.

Research into the problems of education inclusion is acquiring greater relevance due to the growing number of children having certain health problems; active migration processes and the respective increase in the number of migrant children in educational organizations; heterogeneity of students with their learning abilities, which requires special approaches to the implementation of the educational process. Social engagement of vulnerable children categories is seen as a priority direction in the Decree of the Russian Federation Government No. 122-p *Ob utverzhdenii plana osnovnykh meropriiatii, provodimykh v ramkakh Desiatiletiia detstva, na period do 2027 goda* [On the Approval of the Plan of the Main Activities Carried out Within the Framework of the Decade of Childhood for the Period up to 2027] (2021).

In this article, we set out to examine the main problems associated with introducing inclusion in the context of the Russian general education system.

Conceptual Framework

The review of domestic and foreign scientific literature shows that there is no single interpretation of the term "inclusive education" at the moment. Besides, the definitions of the concept may differ and emphasize the importance of creating an educational environment to smooth the differences or focus on forming certain inclusion values. For example, Grim-Farrell, Bain, and McDonagh (2011) discuss school-wide concern and work on integrating special and general education to provide efficient and quality education for all students. According to D'Alessio (2011), inclusive education is an educational principle aimed at restructuring the education systems and creating more equitable societies for all children's participation in the learning process, regardless of their state of health, socio-economic, and ethnic origin. As for the Russian scientists, they consider several different interpretations. Sigal (2017) views the concept of "inclusive education" rather multidimensional, based on the recognition of the uniqueness, values, and diversity of children, and the exclusion of any form of their discrimination. In addition, the inclusion and participation of children in the general education system is emphasized, which contributes to their socialization. According to Alekhina (2013), inclusion in education is characterized not only by the inclusion of children with disabilities in a school's educational process, but also by the transformation of the entire educational system to ensure the educational needs of all children. Still, many specialists follow the

most universal definition of UNESCO (2009), where inclusive education is viewed as a comprehensive phenomenon, and is understood as providing equal opportunities of obtaining quality education for all children without exception.

Some researchers distinguish between interpretations of inclusion in both narrow and broad senses (Ainscow et al., 2006). The first one means promoting the inclusion of a particular group of students, mainly having a disability and learning difficulties in the so-called ordinary educational organizations. The second one states that the concept of inclusion is extended to the entire diversity of learners and the way schools respond to the differences between students and members of the school community. As noted by Mitchell (2005) and Ferguson (2008), now inclusive education goes beyond its traditionally narrow understanding and refers to all possible forms of exclusion (gender, material well-being, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, etc.). These provisions are reflected in the definition of inclusion in international legal papers. We are of the opinion that the broad interpretation of the term under consideration is urgent, since inclusion involves all categories of the population in social processes. Still, in this study the discussion centers on the educational inclusion of children with disabilities. This is due to the greater immediacy of the problem in Russia (in particular, the increase in the number of such children), compared to other groups of children with special educational needs. And in a broader scope, the concept of inclusion is compliant with the vision of Education for All by UNESCO (United Nations, 2000), with no judging by the category of "special education".

The process of educating children with special needs was largely determined by the attitude of society towards such social groups. This depended upon both the development level of productive forces, production relations and political and cultural factors. In general, the development of inclusive education can be divided into several stages within the scope of medical and social models.

The medical model is represented by the following stages:
- intolerance—the need for caring (since ancient past to 12th century);
- exclusion—recognizing opportunities of education in special institutions (from 12th to 18th centuries);
- segregation (from 18th century to mid of the 20th century);

The social model covers the following periods:
- mainstreaming/integration (the second half of the 20th century to 1980s);
- inclusion (1980s till the present time).

In the ancient and medieval times, there existed a concept in relation to children with non-normative development implying their exclusion, isolation, and ostracism up to physical destruction. By the 12th century, the governors of states started creating shelters for the disabled and proving their understanding the necessity to support them. In Russia, the stage lasted since the adoption of Christianity until the 18th century. At that time, secular orphanages were being built during the Europeanization carried out by Peter the Great (Malofeev, 2018b). Since the 12th century, when humanism ideas and new charity models were developed, there was a transition from individual education to understanding the possibility of teaching children with disabilities. Cultural and socio-economic processes of the 18th–19th centuries in Russia and

abroad humanized the position of the society and contributed to developing a network of special institutions for children with disabilities, thus predetermining the spread of the segregation approach. A number of countries (France, Belgium, England, etc.) adopted laws on the introduction of special education.

One of the first practical attempts to integrated coeducation of children with disabilities and children with normative development was first carried out in the 17th–18th centuries in Germany (Ellger-Rüttgardt, 2008). Still, the medical model dominated until 1960s, which manifested in the segregation and social isolation of children with disabilities, as they were sent to special educational institutions and boarding schools. In the second half of the 20th century, the mainstream was developing in the USA, being the system of various programs focused mainly on expanding social communication rather than having educational goals (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007; Terzi, 2008).

In the 1970s, an alternative to the medical model appeared in the Nordic countries. It was the concept of "normalization" (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980; Nirje, 1969), a component of which was the integration and inclusion in education. Thus, integration was associated with the possibility of teaching small groups of children with special educational needs. However, such a narrow interpretation left out aspects of the quality of the education provided, as integration was seen as a mechanical placement of the disabled children in the school environment. Still, that shifted the focus of the problem from the child to the educational system, and the social model of understanding disability confirmed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, n.d.) replaced the medical approach.

Since then, the inclusive education concept began developing rapidly. The need to develop a network of inclusive schools was embodied in many international instruments: Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), Luxembourg Charter 1996 (European Commission, 1996), the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 (European Communities, 1997), the Madrid Declaration of 2002 (European Congress on Disability, 2002), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 (United Nations, n.d.).

The segregation approach dominated in Russia till the 1990s, and some elements of integration were introduced as a rare experiment. For quite a long time, children with disabilities in boarding schools had to master a compulsory program intended for children with normative development in the USSR. That led to the development of defectology[1] in the country. At that time there were five types of special schools functioning, depending on the type of health disorder. In 1990s the practice of integration was extended to creating remedial classes in comprehensive schools. The inclusion vector in Russian education was set in 2012, the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contributing to it. The fundamentals of state policy on inclusive education are legislated in the Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012)[2] and *Natsional'naia strategiia deistvii v interesakh detei na 2012–2017 gody* [National Strategy of Action for

---

[1] In Russian psychology, the field concerned with the education of children with sensory, physical, cognitive, or neurological impairment (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

[2] Inclusive education means ensuring equal access to education for all taking into account the diversity of special educational needs and individual abilities (Ob obrazovanii, 2012 ; trans. by T. Soloveva & V. Sokolova [T. S. & V. S.]).

Children for 2012–2017] (O Natsional'noi strategii, 2012). Currently, there are several options for the education of children with special educational needs in Russia, namely special education; integrated training (temporary, partial, full integration); distance, home-based, family and inclusive education.

Federal'nye gosudarstvennye obrazovatel'nye standarty (FGOS) [Federal State Educational Standards (FSES)] (Ob utverzhdenii federal'nogo, 2014) for learners with disabilities represent the most significant documents in the sphere of Russian inclusive education, based on the variability of individual educational directions and programs. They were introduced with the first school grades in 2016, and the idea was to include the next stages step by step. Right now, there are no regular FSES for senior learners, but attempts are taken to introduce inclusive education at this level that reveals a number of difficulties. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation adopted the *Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po voprosam organizatsii inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia* [Comprehensive Plan on Organizing Inclusive Education] for the periods of 2016–2017 (pre-school and general education) and 2018–2020 (general and additional education) (Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan, 2016, 2018), providing the development of teaching materials, curriculum adapted guidelines, professional standards for special education teachers and tutors, as well as monitoring the creation of necessary conditions for the inclusion process. The Russian Ministry of Education has also drafted the *Strategiia razvitiia obrazovaniia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia i detei s invalidnost'iu v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2030 goda* [Strategy for the Development of Education for Children With Disabilities and Handicapped Children in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030] (Strategiia razvitiia, n.d.), targeted at enhancing the quality and accessibility of education for children with disabilities.

Some foreign researchers regard the inclusive education concept with criticism and claim that under normal conditions teachers may not have the proper education and training on inclusive education. There may also be insufficient material and financial resources; the curriculum for ordinary classes may not be suitable for children with special educational needs and/or persons with disabilities; children may be deprived of the same age peers with similar educational needs and/or disabilities (Hornby, 2012).

According to experts (Balashov et al., 2020; Zinevich et al., 2016), such criticism is based on the idea that existing institutions are unable to achieve the goal of inclusion due to the historical approach to disability, which in foreign science is interpreted as the problem of the social citizenship of people with disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Prince, 2016). At the same time, there is a reasonable opinion in the national science that it is impossible to create full-fledged environment for obtaining quality education by children with special educational needs under conditions of the general school. This is due to the developmental characteristics, as many of such children have shortcomings of perception and memory preventing them from mastering knowledge and skills within the framework of inclusion (Lubovskii, 2016).

Thus, inclusion in general education is the 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, the socialization, and development of tolerance and humanism.

Materials and Methods

Approaches to the study of the inclusive education problems are closely connected with certain interrelated concepts (social exclusion, social integration, social justice, etc.), since these theories are considered within the context of the general concept of equality in modern conditions. Thus, with regard to social justice, no child should be excluded from the education system, but they should be integrated into it according to their abilities. This study is based on the social approach, which assumes it is the society and the imperfection of the education system in particular that create barriers to the education of children with disabilities. In this respect, the attempt was made to identify the main problems of inclusion in the Russian general education.

Inclusive education is considered as one of the subsystems of the national educational system within the system approach, and its implementation is carried out at every level. The focus of our current study is inclusive education in Russia at the school level, thus it views inclusive policy issues, inclusive practice, and inclusive culture questions. Such aspects as substantive, psychological, pedagogical, socio-cultural, economic, philosophical, political, ideological, and others are presented.

The actor approach was applied to consider the positions of various subjects of educational inclusion. The analysis of normative legal documents and statistical data contributed to a more complete description of the current situation in the field of inclusive education. In addition, in order to achieve the research objectives, generalization methods, comparative and descriptive analysis were used as well.

The research is based on legal acts, which relate to the education of children with disabilities, both international, i.e., Salamanca Statement 1994, Madrid Declaration 2002, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, etc. and Russian, i.e., Desiatiletie detstva na period do 2027 goda [Decade of Childhood for the period up to 2027] (Ob utverzhdenii plana, 2021), Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po organizatsii inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia [Comprehensive Plan on Organizing Inclusive Education] (Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan, 2016, 2018), the state program of the Russian Federation Dostupnaia sreda [Accessible Environment] (Ob utverzhdenii gosudarstvennoi programmy, 2015), etc. To evaluate the current situation in the field of inclusive education in Russia, the statistical data of the Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service] (2022) was used to reflect the growing number of children with disabilities and their general education coverage. Key problems of introducing inclusion into the system of Russian general education are identified through the analysis of the data and the research results obtained by Russian and foreign scientists on the subject matter. The scientific literature was selected using the Scopus[3], WoS[4], and RSCI[5] databases by keywords. During the abstracts analysis, the publications that directly focus on the subject of the

---

[3] https://www.scopus.com

[4] Web of Science, https://www.webofscience.com

[5] Russian Science Citation Index, https://www.rsci.ru

study (*N* = 55) were reviewed. The publications concern specific aspects in accordance with the approach adopted, namely the object of inclusion, staffing, physical accessibility, adaptation of educational programs, financing, attitude to the problem and readiness of parents, teachers, children, and society as a whole. Methods of generalization, comparative and descriptive analysis were used to achieve the goals of the research.

Discussion

In order to further modernize education in Russia based on the principles of humanization and individualization, an integrated approach should be applied to the content and nature of care for children with disabilities in the context of general education (Popov & Soloveva, 2015), which is taking on increasing importance due to a fairly high level of disability among children[6] (Table 1).

Table 1

The Number of Children With Disabilities in Russia Aged up to 18, Thousand People

Country	2001	2006	2010	2015	2017	2019	2021	2021 to 2001, %
Russian Federation	675	593	519	605	636	670	704	104.3

Note. Source: Rosstat, 2022.

The number of children with disabilities under the age of 18 reduced by 23% in the first decade of the 20th century, with the indicator's growth by 36% for the period 2010–2021, and that was close to 2001 level. At the same time, the number of children with limited ability to self-service and learning increased the most, by 36% and 16% respectively (Rosstat, 2022).

As shown in Table 2, the number of students enrolled in general education institutions for disabled children have increased in recent years.

Table 2

The Main Indicators Characterizing the Condition and Development Opportunities of Inclusion in Russian General Education

Indicators	2011/ 2012	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020
The proportion of general education institutions that created learning environment for disabled children in the total number of general education institutions, %	2.5	21.4	22.4	23.8	24.1	24.5
The proportion of disabled children enrolled in general education institutions, in the total number of students in general education institutions, %	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	4.02
The proportion of disabled children attending educational institutions for preschool education, in total number of students in general education institutions, child-minding %	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1

Note. Source: Rosstat, 2019.

---

[6] The present study uses the information on the children with disabilities as statistics concerning the fact that this is exactly what the official statistics deals with. It also should be noted that the qualitative identification of the so-called categories children with special educational needs and children with disabilities is very difficult due to the character of the official statistics.

Meanwhile, the number of schools creating conditions for unhindered access for people with disabilities is increasing (nearly five times as much for the period of 2011–2020) to meet the targets of a number of state programs. In this regard, the percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in general education organizations is also growing. However, the percentage of children with disabilities studying at an ordinary school has slightly changed for the period 2011–2020 being 4.02% of the total number of students in general education institutions in 2020. The same situation concerns children with disabilities who attend kindergartens, as an instance, their proportion in the total number of children attending preschool educational organizations increased by just 0.4 percentage points for the period 2011–2020. As stated in the survey titled *Vyborochnoe nabliudenie kachestva i dostupnosti uslug v sfere obrazovaniia, zdravookhraneniia i sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia, sodeistviia zaniatosti naseleniia* [Sample Survey of the Quality and Accessibility of Services in the Spheres of Education], as well as health care and social services, employment promotion for the year 2019, 42.3% among children with disabilities aged 3–8 years do not attend preschool and general educational organizations, and 80% do not attend extracurricular activities to develop their abilities (Rosstat, 2019). At the same time, merely 50% of parents are fully satisfied with the school environment for students with disabilities.

Thus, the general education system in Russia in the context of the growing number of children with disabilities is gradually beginning to adapt to the inclusion of this category of children in the school's educational environment. Still, there remain some barriers to further advancement of inclusion practices as small numbers of children with disabilities study in general education organizations. In this regard, the main issues and problems related to the development of inclusion in the Russian general education are considered below.

Inclusive education has a number of positive aspects related to the expansion of learning opportunities and the development of social skills for children with special educational needs, the cultivation of humanity culture and tolerance in children with normative development, the acquisition of positive social experience, etc. However, some issues on the topic are still controversial. We will consider these in more detail below.

The Object of Inclusion

Thus, Kulagina (2013) notes that the definition of "students with disabilities" as recipients of inclusive education, as stated in the Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012), leaves this category of children outside the legislation framework as "children with disabilities without mental or significant physical disabilities" because they do not pass the psychological, medical, and pedagogical commission (PMPC), and thus they cannot get the status of children with disabilities. Then, according to the experts (Alekhina, 2016), the definition of the term "a student with disabilities" in Russian legislative practice does not correlate with the social concept of inclusion, as a result many categories of children are excluded from the process (migrants, gifted children, religious, linguistic, and ethnic minorities, children with learning difficulties, etc.). In order to avoid methodological contradictions, it would seem more correct to use the definition of "a student with special educational needs."

Staffing of Inclusive Education

The professional standard of an educator obliges the teacher to master technologies of inclusive education. In addition, Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012) prescribes the demand for tutor support of the educational process. In case of assistants and tutors unavailable, the school teachers are responsible for teaching children with disabilities. Therefore, at present, active retraining and advanced training of personnel in the field of inclusive education is conducted in general education organizations. Besides, according to FSES of primary general education, the support of the process of teaching children with disabilities should be carried out by special psychologists, speech pathologists, medical workers, etc. Even correctional institutions do not have special education teachers experienced enough in this field. The situation is further worsened by the fact that modern pedagogical universities do not provide in-depth training in the field of inclusive education, and the number of special education graduates (visual impairment specialists, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, etc.) is largely limited. Furthermore, there are no occupational standards for the sphere of special needs education (Rubtsov et al., 2020). In practice, teachers lack knowledge of characteristics of a child with disabilities, specifics of their family environment, specialized tools for pedagogical work, and the legal framework for inclusion (Hanssen & Erina, 2021; Kantor et al., 2023). The problem of personnel shortage is far from being the only one under consideration. For instance, the introduction of a teacher's efficient contract can promote the advancement of bureaucratic inclusion, since the activities of the teacher are mainly assessed by student performance, including the addition of bonuses to the base salary. As a result, all students should be certified regardless of their educational outcomes. Otherwise, this will negatively affect the performance of the teacher and the organization as a whole. There is a problem of insufficient motivation and financial incentives for teachers as well, since teachers do not receive relevant bonuses in many schools for working with children with disabilities (Kulagina, 2014).

Physical Accessibility of Educational Organizations

The state program of the Russian Federation *Dostupnaia sreda* [Accessible Environment] (Ob utverzhdenii gosudarstvennoi programmy, 2015) regulates the increase in the proportion of general education organizations where a universal barrier-free environment for inclusive education of children with disabilities is developed, with up to 22.9% (25% at the outset) of the total number of general education organizations by 2020. In 2020, the value of this indicator was 24.5% (Dostupnaia sreda, 2021). The letter of the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Education and Science No. 01-50-174/07-1968 *O prieme na obuchenie lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia* [On Admission to Education for Persons With Disabilities] (2015) made it an obligation for educational organizations to provide special conditions for training of students with disabilities. Yet, it is necessary to realize the complexity and cost of creating a universal barrier-free environment for all children with disabilities, since students with hearing impairment, visual impairment, musculoskeletal disorders, etc. require different kinds of equipment for studying. Otherwise, shifting a child with

disabilities to a mainstream school without relevant staff and procurement has nothing to do with inclusive education that corresponds to the opportunities and special needs of the child (Malofeev, 2018a).

Adaptation of Educational Programs

We agree with the experts' opinion (Semago et al., 2011) that the process of inclusion should be guided by the principle of conformity to natural laws, i.e., when giving various tasks to children, their natural talents and abilities should be taken into account. In accordance with FSES of primary general education for children with disabilities there are four types of educational programs depending on the level of a child's development. One variant stipulates the possibility of co-education of children with normative development and children with disabilities in the same class with parental consent and the recommendations of PMPC. In this case, not all students with disabilities, particularly mental, can master an educational program, even an adapted one. However, according to the law, the school cannot refuse such children to be admitted.

Some parents go against the recommendations of the PMPC, insisting on their child's education in the general education school, which often does not benefit them. In such cases, the organization of formal inclusion does not give the necessary result. It is no accident that many experts state the necessity of adjustments to be introduced to the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 1082 *Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o psikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskoi komissii* [On Approval of the Regulations on the Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Commission] (2013), the Parental Responsibility Paragraph in particular, in case of non-compliance with the recommendations of the PMPC and on the mandatory implementation of the commission's conclusion in the absence of positive dynamics during the year of training (Beliavskii, 2017).

Teachers are required to develop adapted educational programs and individual curricula, which increases the already high "paper" burden of teachers. However, an inclusive approach to education requires that a special teaching methodology should be developed and the needs of all children should be taken into account (Belenkova, 2011). In that context, there appears a challenging idea to develop a different categorization of children with disabilities and health limitations, considering the dynamics and history of the child development (Karabanova & Malofeev, 2019). That allows to improve educational programs and differentiate the content of children education according to their development scenarios.

The problems of readiness of various subjects in the educational process for inclusive education to be introduced. Primarily, it is the schools' readiness to create the necessary conditions for learning. It is important to avoid a formal approach to inclusive education, when a child with special educational needs is admitted to a general school, but for some reasons is provided home or distance education, which does not allow to fully achieve the goals of inclusion.

The attitude of teachers towards the inclusion processes in the education system is generally positive. However, many people note a number of barriers that interfere with the process, mainly related to the limited resources of educational organizations

(financial, material, technical, staffing, etc.). At the same time, some studies indicate that the idea of joint learning is not always welcome by teachers. For example, according to a survey conducted in the Republic of Dagestan, 72% of primary school teachers disagree on the education of children with disabilities in a regular class (Fetalieva et al., 2016). Among the difficulties, teachers often pointed out the challenges of the educational process, the growth of methodological work, poor resource equipment (Goriainova & Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2020). However, the creation of relevant conditions for tutors and special education teachers increases the share of teachers who agree to implement inclusive education programs to 63%. Studies show that teachers doubt their abilities and experience the fear of working with children with disabilities. Young teachers clearly demonstrate it, not being able to find common language with such children. Teacher education students demonstrate similar feelings, establishing lack of knowledge and skills acquired (Kozlova, 2021). In addition, teachers draw attention to psychological tension as a result of regular parents' reproach for organizing the educational process (Panfilov, 2022). The first thing here is to understand and accept the idea of inclusion, the psychological readiness of the teacher to work with children with special educational needs, since this largely determines the success of social inclusion. In addition, an inclusive competence of the teacher becomes an important condition to be formed while obtaining the pedagogical education.

Parents are also an important link in the process of introducing inclusion. The success in teaching children with special educational needs largely depends on their parents' competence level. Nevertheless, parents are often unaware of the information about education options. An important aspect in this case is that they should be informed on time about the possibilities of developing children's educational directions, and be given the necessary help in building an individual educational route for the child. However, research shows that parents are not always ready for co-education of children with disabilities and children with normative development. Thus, a survey conducted in the Tomsk region showed that only 30% of parents consider co-education comfortable (Buravleva & Iglovskaia, 2012). Parents admit it is preferable for children with complex developmental disabilities to study in special schools or separately (Slusareva, 2020). At the same time, parents of children with disabilities having experience of inclusive education note that this contributes to improving the children's psychological state (Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). Meanwhile, sociological data indicates the level of parents' satisfaction with the inclusive education of their children being average. Such a situation demands further work in this direction (Bolshakov & Dolgova, 2022).

Russian and foreign studies show that the *attitude of children without disabilities* to their peers with disabilities can be characterized as estranged, and such co-education may not be entirely pleasant to both parties (Vlachou, 1997). Still, schoolchildren without disabilities perceive children with disabilities as requiring help, and, on the whole, demonstrate loyalty to their acceptance (Zaitsev & Selivanova, 2015). Besides, participation and acceptance are the most important characteristics of the inclusion process. Children with disabilities note the benefits of collaborative learning, motivating them to develop and communicate with peers (Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). Yet, the subjects of the educational process demonstrate the greatest tolerance for students with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, hearing,

vision, and the least tolerance for children with intellectual disabilities (Iarskaia-Smirnova & Loshakova, 2003; Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). In this regard, an important aspect is the students' awareness about various life spheres and problems faced by people with disabilities. Thus, well-informed schoolchildren show a more positive attitude towards people with disabilities and the implementation of inclusive education (Badaraev & Ukraintseva, 2023).

Readiness of the Society

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. This determines the differences in the time of implementing educational inclusion in different countries of the world to a great extent. Policy regarding persons with disabilities is closely related to the broader context, where such people are often excluded from life activities (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). According to experts, any political idea focused on increasing equality and reducing exclusion contains a contradiction, since it virtually sustains separating people with normative and non-normative development for the purposes of discussion (Magnússon, 2019). Studies show that at present the "defect-oriented approach" remains quite widespread in the Russian society (Nazarova, 2016), which focuses on the limitations of children's health (disabled people, sick people, children with disabilities, etc.). This consideration gives rise to the so-called perception stereotypes that are conveyed to teachers and children, e.g., barriers of incorrect installation of consciousness, barriers of negative emotions, etc.) (Sagitova, 2014; trans. by T. S. & V. S.). It is no coincidence that the surveys show the society is not ready for the integration of people with disabilities, educational inclusion among other things (Kondakova & Fakhradova, 2015; Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). It is necessary to shift the perception of people with disabilities known as "problematic" to their positive and resourceful opportunities, this regards children in the educational process as well (Usanova, 2021). The education system should expand opportunities of every member in the society (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2022), and antidiscrimination towards realizing the right of the child to education and getting it on an equal basis with peers should be considered the key value imperative. The philosophy of inclusive education involves organizing conditions that encourage awareness and acceptance of human diversity, integration of all individuals in the society and their fulfillment of key social roles.

Financing

The education of children with special educational needs is carried out according to the adapted educational programs, and their implementation is provided by special funding standards. Yet, according to the study conducted by the National Research University Higher School of Economics in 2016, only 18 out of 89 regions in Russia have adopted such standards for creating conditions for inclusive education at general education schools (Abankina et al., 2016). Population polls show that the allocated funding is sufficient for providing the simplest conditions, while many children with disabilities require more sophisticated equipment (Buravleva & Iglovskaia, 2012). In addition, with the introduction of tutor and teacher's assistant positions, additional financial resources will also be required.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to note the positive shifts in the development of inclusive education in Russia. They are recognized in the adoption of a number of significant normative and legal acts and federal state educational standards. At the same time, the process of introducing inclusion in practice faces a number of difficulties related to the achievement of the goals and requirements regulated by these documents (financial, infrastructural, cultural, social barriers, etc.). These problems are typical both for Russia and some other countries, Slovakia, for instance (Belková et al., 2021). On the one hand, this is the unavailability of educational organizations for inclusion in the absence of necessary conditions for inclusive education, lack of funding, etc. And a challenge here is training of teachers (including tutors and assistants) and improving their qualifications, as well as providing methodological and informational support. This aspect is of particular importance in view of the shortage of medical and pedagogical personnel (psychologists, special education teachers, social care teachers, etc.) due to optimization processes in education.

On the other hand, a serious barrier is social and psychological unpreparedness of subjects of the educational process for inclusion to be introduced, due to the perception stereotypes of people with disabilities. It is especially important to improve the inclusive culture of the educational environment, firstly in providing special conditions necessary to implement inclusion (external inclusive culture), and secondly in developing general inclusive values, comprising educational ones (internal inclusive culture) (Bagdueva et al., 2017). Changing stereotypes about children with special educational needs both by the educational process subjects, and by society as a whole is critically important. This will contribute to the realization of the social inclusion model. A significant role in this respect is played by the media, highlighting the problems of children with special educational needs.

Another area that contributes to the development of educational inclusion is the use of the social innovation and social entrepreneurship potential, which is widely used abroad to increase the equality of educational opportunities for all population categories. For inclusion to be successful, it is also important to develop a system of early detection and care for children with special educational needs. This direction is the vital one as stated in *Kontseptsiia razvitiia obrazovaniia obuchaiushchikhsia s invalidnost'iu i ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia do 2030 g.* [The concept for the development of education of students with disabilities and special needs until 2030] (Malofeev, 2019).

In addition, it is necessary to provide comprehensive support at all stages of the educational process, ensuring the selection of the optimal model for each child. The formal approach in organizing inclusion should be avoided. For example, for distance learning of children with disabilities, group methods of work should be used. It is essential to further improve the regulatory and legal framework for the development of inclusive education, in particular, the development and adoption of FSES for basic general and secondary general education, the Concept for the development of education of students with disabilities and special needs in the Russian Federation; regional programs for the development of inclusive education should be promoted as well.

The process of introducing inclusion is long-term, and the system of Russian education is at the initial stage of its development. At the same time, many reform initiatives in education (optimization of the educational network and its consequences including an increase in students' number per class and staff reduction at schools, as well as training and support stuff, an increase in the educational and "paper" burden of teachers, etc.) limit the possibilities of further inclusion development. While mass school focuses on results, success is not entirely consistent with the values of inclusive education, that first of all appreciates involving in the educational process and preparing for adult life in the future. This gives rise to value-based conflicts.

Besides, the focus on implementing targets to involve children with disabilities in the education creates the risks of a formal approach to the inclusive education implementation. As Malofeev (2018a) has repeatedly claimed, without the state support and readiness of society the declaration of unlimited rights causes the danger of replacing helpful inclusion with the formal deinstitutionalization of a student with special educational needs. This not only fails to improve, instead, this worsens their situation. It is necessary to adapt the assessment criteria of students' educational achievements within inclusive education. And the quality and effectiveness assessment of inclusive education should be carried out according to adapted indicators and norms.

Therefore, not only comprehensive, organizational, and technical changes in the education system are important, but also the transformation of the entire education philosophy involving its adaptiveness for the development, self-determination, and self-realization of children with special needs, their friendly interaction with children without disabilities peers, helpful for each of them. Likewise, important things are mindset changes in the public consciousness, acceptance of each person, and an emphasis on unity and opportunities rather that differences and problems. The lifting of existing barriers will promote the inclusion development in the Russian general education system.

References

Abankina, I. V., Alashkevich, M. Yu., Vinarik, V. A., Derkachev, P. V., Merkulov, M. V., Slavin, S. S., & Filatova, L. M. (2016). *Analiz normativnogo podushevogo finansirovaniia obshchego obrazovaniia v sub'ektakh Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Analysis of normative per capita financing of general education in the subjects of the Russian Federation]. NRU HSE.

Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. Routledge.

Alekhina, S. V. (2013). *Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie: Istoriia i sovremennost'* [Inclusive education: History and modernity]. Pedagogicheskii universitet "Pervoe sentiabria".

Alekhina, S. V. (2016). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie: Ot politiki k praktike [Inclusive education: From policy to practice]. *Psychological Science and Education*, *21*(1), 136–145. https://doi.org/10.17759/pse.2016210112

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Defectology. In *APA dictionary of psychology*. https://dictionary.apa.org/defectology

Badaraev, D. D., & Ukraintseva, I. D. (2023). Otnosheniia detei obshcheobrazovatel'nykh shkol Respubliki Buriatiia k inkliuzivnomu obrazovaniiu [Attitude to inclusive education among children in general education schools in the Republic of Buryatia]. *Theory and Practice of Social Development*, *1*, 15–24. https://doi.org/10.24158/tipor.2023.1.1

Bagdueva, K. G., Gadzhiev, I. A., & Gadzhieva, F. G. (2017). Inkliuzivnaia kul'tura obrazovatel'noi organizatsii: Teoretiko-metodologicheskie aspekty [Inclusive culture of educational organization: Theoretical and methodological aspects]. *Mir Nauki, Kul'tury, Obrazovaniya*, *1*, 111–113. http://amnko.ru/index.php/download_file/view/710/82/

Balashov, A. E., Krasnova, E. A., & Khristoforova, L. V. (2020). Pravovye bar'ery v sisteme vuzovskogo inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia [Legal barriers in the system of university inclusive education]. *The Education and Science Journal*, *22*(1), 59–83. https://doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2020-1-59-83

Bank-Mikkelsen, N. (1980). Denmark. In R. J. Flynn & K. E. Nitsch (Eds.), *Normalization, social integration and community services* (pp. 51–70). University Park Press.

Barnes, C., & Mercer, G. (2004). Theorising and researching disability from a social model perspective. In C. Barnes & G. Mercer (Eds.), *Implementing the social model of disability: Theory and research* (pp. 1–17). The Disability Press.

Belenkova, L. Yu. (2011). Innovatsionnye podkhody k obrazovaniiu detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia: Ot integratsii k inkliuzii [Innovative approaches to the education of children with disabilities: From integration to inclusion]. *Integration of Education*, *1*, 59–64.

Beliavskii, B. V. (2017). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie v Rossiiskoi Federatsii: Istoriia, sostoianie i riski [Inclusive education in the Russian Federation: History, condition, and risks]. *Inkliuziia v obrazovanii*, *1*(5), 20–38.

Belková, V., Zólyomiová, P., & Petrík, Š. (2021). Inclusive education in practice: Teachers' opinions and needs. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences, 14*(9), 1286–1298. https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-0819

Bolshakov, N. V., & Dolgova, E. M. (2022). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie v prostranstve postsotsializma: Sravnitel'nyi analiz roditel'skoi udovletvorennosti [Inclusive education in the post-socialist space: Comparative study of an assessment of parental satisfaction], *Educational Studies Moscow*, *1*, 54–74. https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2022-1-54-74

Buravleva, N. A., & Iglovskaia, N. V. (2012). Uroven' gotovnosti uchastnikov obrazovatel'nogo protsessa k inkliuzivnomu obucheniiu [Level of readiness of participants of educational process to inclusive educating]. *Science Vector of Togliatti State University. Series: Pedagogy, Psychology*, *1*, 70–73.

D'Alessio, S. (2011). *Inclusive education in Italy: A critical analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica*. Sense.

Dostupnaia sreda: Itogi gosudarstvennoi programmy za 2020 god i osnovnye meropriiatiia na 2021 god [Accessible environment: The results of the state program for 2020 and the main events for 2021]. (2021). *Analiticheskij vestnik*, *15*(775). http://council.gov.ru/activity/analytics/analytical_bulletins/127765/

Ellger-Rüttgardt, S. L. (2008). *Geschichte der Sonderpädagogik. Eine Einführung* [History of special education. An introduction]. Ernst Reinhardt.

Engelbrecht, P., & Green, L. (2007). An introduction of inclusive education. In P. Engelbrecht & L. Green (Eds.), *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in Southern Africa* (pp. 2–9). Van Schaik.

European Commission. (1996). *Charter of Luxembourg*. https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/CHARTER-of-LUXEMBOURG-November-1996.pdf

European Communities. (1997). *Treaty of Amsterdam amending the treaty on European Union, the treaties establishing the European communities and certain related acts*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/treaty/pdf/amst-en.pdf

European Congress on Disability. (2002). *The Madrid declaration "Non discrimination plus positive action results in social inclusion"*. https://download.kataweb.it/portale/superabile/it/madrid_en.pdf

Ferguson, D. L. (2008). International trends in inclusive education: The continuing challenge to teach each one and everyone. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *23*(2), 109–120. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250801946236

Fetalieva, L. P., Shikhalieva, S. H., & Karaeva, S. A. (2016). Istoricheskie etapy razvitiia inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia mladshikh shkol'nikov [Historical stages of development of inclusive education of younger school students]. *Herald of Chelyabinsk State Pedagogical University*, *2*, 94–99.

Goodley, D., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2011). Problematising policy: Conceptions of "child," "disabled" and "parents" in social policy in England. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *15*(1), 71–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2010.496197

Goriainova, A. R., & Iarskaia-Smirnova, E. R. (2020). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie: Obshchestvennoe mnenie i opyt insaiderov [Inclusive education: Public opinion and insiders' experience]. *Tomsk State University Journal*, *453*, 98–110. https://doi.org/10.17223/15617793/453/12

Grim-Farrell, C. R., Bain, A., & McDonagh, S. H. (2011). Bridging the research-to-practice gap: A review of the literature focusing on inclusive education. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, *35*(2), 117–136. https://doi.org/10.1375/ajse.35.2.117

Hanssen, N. B., & Erina, I. (2021). Parents' views on inclusive education for children with special educational needs in Russia. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *37*(5), 761–775. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1949092

Hernández-Torrano, D., Somerton, M., & Helmer, J. (2022). Mapping research on inclusive education since Salamanca Statement: A bibliometric review of the literature over 25 years. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *26*(9), 893–912, https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1747555

Hornby, G. (2012). Inclusive education for children with special educational needs: A critique of policy and practice in New Zealand. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, *1*(1), 52–60. https://doi.org/10.14425/00.36.40

Iarskaia-Smirnova, E. R., & Loshakova, I. I. (2003). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie detei-invalidov [Inclusive education of children with disabilities]. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, *5*, 100–106. https://paralife.narod.ru/1sociology/socis/Iarskaia-Smirnova_Loshakova_SR03.pdf

Kantor, V. Z., Proekt, Yu. L., Kondrakova, I. E., Litovchenko, O. V., & Zalautdinova, S. E. (2023). Praktika inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia: Realii kompetentnostnogo obespecheniia [The practice of inclusive education of children with disabilities: The quality of competence support]. *Integration of Education*, *27*(1), 82–99. https://doi.org/10.15507/1991-9468.110.027.202301.082-099

Karabanova, O. A., & Malofeev, N. N. (2019). Strategiia razvitiia obrazovaniia detei s OVZ: Po doroge k realizatsii kul'turno-istoricheskogo podkhoda [Education development strategy for children with disabilities: On the way to implementing a cultural-historical approach]. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *15*(4), 89–99. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2019150409

Kondakova, N. A., & Fakhradova, L. N. (2015). Otnoshenie naseleniia Vologodskoi oblasti k statusu invalida [Attitude of the Vologda Oblast population to the status of a disabled person]. *Territorial Development Issues*, *1*, Article 4. http://vtr.vscc.ac.ru/article/1470/full

Kozlova, M. A. (2021). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie v tsennostiakh i smyslakh potentsial'nykh aktorov [Inclusive education in the values and senses of potential actors]. *Tsennosti i Smysly*, *3*, 61–80. https://doi.org/10.24412/2071-6427-2021-3-61-80

Kulagina, E. V. (2013). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia: Tendentsii i usloviia razvitiia v Rossii [The Inclusive education of children with disabilities: Trends and conditions of development in Russia]. *Population*, *4*, 29–38. http://www.isesp-ras.ru/images/narodonaselenie/2013_4.pdf

Kulagina, E. V. (2014). *Obrazovanie detei-invalidov i detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii aspekt* [Education of children with disabilities and special needs children: Socio-economic aspect]. Delovye i iuridicheskie uslugi "LeksPraksis".

Lubovskii, V. I. (2016). Inkliuziia—Tupikovyi put' dlia obucheniia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami [Inclusion: A dead end for education of children with disabilities]. *Special Education*, *4*, 77–87.

Magnússon, G. (2019). An amalgam of ideals—Images of inclusion in the Salamanca Statement. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *23*(7–8), 677–690. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1622805

Malofeev, N. N. (2018a). Ot ravnykh prav k ravnym vozmozhnostiam, ot spetsial'noi shkoly k inkliuzii [From equal rights to equal opportunities, from special schools to inclusion]. *Izvestia: Herzen University Journal of Humanities & Sciences*, *190*, 8–15.

Malofeev, N. N. (2018b). *Spetsial'noe obrazovanie v meniaiushchemsia mire. Evropa* [Special education in a changing world. Europe: a textbook for students of pedagogical universities] (2nd ed.). Prosveshcheniye.

Malofeev, N. N. (Ed.). (2019). *Kontseptsiia razvitiia obrazovaniia obuchaiushchikhsia s invalidnost'iu i ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia do 2030 g.* [The concept for the development of education of students with disabilities and special needs until 2030]. ISE RAO.

Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po voprosam organizatsii inkliuzivnogo doshkol'nogo i obshchego obrazovaniia i sozdaniia spetsial'nykh uslovii dlia polucheniia obrazovaniia det'mi-invalidami i det'mi s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia na 2016–2017 gody [Interdepartmental comprehensive plan on the organization of inclusive pre-school and general education and the creation of special facilities for educational opportunities for the children with disabilities and handicapped children, 2016–2017]. No. 4491r-R8. (2016, June 27). https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420368479

Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po voprosam organizatsii inkliuzivnogo obshchego i dopolnitel'nogo obrazovaniia i sozdaniia spetsial'nykh uslovii dlia polucheniia obrazovaniia obuchaiushchimisia s invalidnost'iu i s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia na 2018–2020 gody [Interdepartmental comprehensive plan for the organization of inclusive general and additional education and the creation of special conditions for education for children with disabilities and handicapped children for 2018–2020 years]. No. 987r-R8. (2018, February 7). https://minobr.novreg.ru/np-includes/upload/2018/03/02/12706.pdf

Mitchell, D. (2005). Introduction: Sixteen propositions on the contexts of inclusive education. In D. Mitchell (Ed.), *Contextualising inclusive education: Evaluating old and new international perspectives* (pp. 1–21). Routledge.

Nazarova, N. M. (2016). Sistemno-deiatel'nostnyi podkhod v obuchenii detei s osobymi obrazovatel'nymi potrebnostiami [System and activity approach in teaching children with special educational needs]. *Permskii pedagogicheskii zhurnal*, *8*, 102–109.

Nirje, B. (1969). The normalization principle and its human management implications. In R. Kugel & W. Wolfensberger (Eds.), *Changing patterns in residential*

services for the mentally retarded (pp. 179–196). President's Committee on Mental Retardation.

O Natsional'noi strategii deistvii v interesakh detei na 2012–2017 gody [On the National strategy of action for children for 2012–2017]. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 761. (2012, June 1). https://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201206040004

O prieme na obuchenie lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia [On admission to education for persons with disabilities]. Letter from the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Education and Science No. 01-50-174/07-196816. (2015, April 16). https://obrnadzor.gov.ru/ron_doc/pismo-rosobrnadzora-ot-16-04-2015-%E2%84%9601-50-174-07-1968-o-prieme-na-obuchenie-licz-s-ogranichennymi-vozmozhnostyami-zdorovya/

Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii [On the education in the Russian Federation]. Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 273-FZ. (2012, December 29). https://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102162745

Ob utverzhdenii federal'nogo gosudarstvennogo obrazovatel'nogo standarta nachal'nogo obshchego obrazovaniia obuchaiushchikhsia s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia [On the approval of the federal state educational standard for the primary general education of students with disabilities]. Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 1598. (2014, December 19). https://fgos.ru/fgos/fgos-1598

Ob utverzhdenii gosudarstvennoi programmy Rossiiskoi Federatsii "Dostupnaia sreda" na 2011–2020 gody [On the approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" for 2011–2020 years]. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1297. (2015, December 1). http://static.government.ru/media/files/6kKpQJTEgR1Bmijjyqi6GWqpAoc6OmnC.pdf

Ob utverzhdenii plana osnovnykh meropriiatii, provodimykh v ramkakh Desiatiletiia detstva, na period do 2027 goda [On the approval of the Plan of the main activities carried out within the framework of the Decade of childhood for the period up to 2027]. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 122-p. (2021, January 23). https://docs.cntd.ru/document/573461456

Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o psikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskoi komissii [On approval of the Regulations on the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission]. Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 1082. (2013, September 20). https://docs.cntd.ru/document/499048913?marker=6520IM

Otnoshenie obshchestva k detiam s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia i detiam-invalidam [The attitude of society towards children with disabilities and handicapped children]. (2017). Fond podderzhki detei, nakhodiashchikhsia v trudnoi zhiznennoi situatsii.

Panfilov, M. S. (2022). Osnovnye problemy pedagogov v usloviiakh osushchestvleniia inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia na territorii Rossii [The main problems of teachers in the context of inclusive education in Russia]. *Science and School*, *5*, 153–161. https://doi.org/10.31862/1819-463X-2022-5-153-161

Popov, A. V., & Soloveva, T. S. (2015). Deti s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia v sisteme rossiiskogo obrazovaniia [Disabled children in the system of Russian education]. *Alma mater. Vestnik Vysshey Shkoly*, *2*, 43–51.

Prince, M. J. (2016). *Struggling for social citizenship: Disabled Canadians, income security, and prime ministerial eras*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service]. (2019). *Vyborochnoe nabliudenie kachestva i dostupnosti uslug v sferakh obrazovaniia, zdravookhraneniia i sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia, sodeistviia zaniatosti naseleniia* [Sample survey of the quality and accessibility of services in the spheres of education, health care and social services, employment promotion]. https://gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/GKS_KDU_2019/index.html

Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service]. (2022). *Polozhenie invalidov* [The situation of persons with disabilities]. https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13964

Rubtsov, V. V., Alekhina, S. V., Vikhristyuk, O. V., Voitas, S. A., Zabrodin, Yu. M., Zaretskii, V. K., Leonova, O. I., Margolis, A. A., Saitgalieva, G. G., Semya, G. V., Kholmogorova, A. B., & Sharikov, S. V. (2020). O problemakh professional'noi podgotovki spetsialistov sotsial'noi sfery dlia raboty s uiazvimymi kategoriiami naseleniia [On the problems of professional training of social sphere specialists to work with vulnerable categories of the population]. *Bulletin of Psychological Practice in Education*, *17*(2), 8–34. https://doi.org/10.17759/bppe.2020170201

Sagitova, V. R. (2014). Psikhologicheskie bar'ery v inkliuzivnom obrazovanii [Psychological barriers in inclusive education]. In N. M. Pruss & F. G. Mukhametzianova (Eds.), *Uchit'sia i zhit' vmeste: Sovremennye strategii obrazovaniia lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia: materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii IuNESKO, Kazan', 15–17 maia 2014 goda* [Learning and living together: modern strategies of education for persons with disabilities: Proceedings of the International Scientific-Practical Conference of UNESCO, Kazan, May 15–17, 2014] (pp. 174–180). Universitet upravleniia "TISBI".

Semago, M. M., Semago, N. Ya., Semenovich, M. L., Dmitrieva, T. P., & Averina, I. E. (2011). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie kak pervyi etap na puti k vkliuchaiushchemu obshchestvu [Inclusive education as a first step towards the inclusive society]. *Psychological Science and Education*, *16*(1), 51–59.

Sigal, N. G. (2017). *Inkliuziia segodnia: Za i protiv* [Inclusion today: For and against]. Otechestvo.

Slusareva, E. S. (2020). Psikhologicheskaia gotovnost' roditelei k inkliuzivnomu obrazovaniiu detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia [Psychological readiness of parents for inclusive education of children with disabilities]. *Problemy*

sovremennogo pedagogicheskogo obrazovaniia. Seriia "Pedagogika i psikhologiia", 67(2), 324–328.

Strategiia razvitiia obrazovaniia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia i detei s invalidnost'iu v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2030 goda (proekt) [Strategy for the development of education for children with disabilities and handicapped children in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 (draft)]. (n.d.). https://edu.admin-smolensk.ru/files/78/ts-957_071.pdf

Terzi, L. (2008). *Justice and equality in education: A capability perspective on disability and special educational needs*. Continuum.

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education (ED-94/WS/18).* https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

UNESCO. (2009). *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000177849

United Nations. (n.d.). *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD)*. https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd

United Nations. (2000, April 11). *World education forum in Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April to boost drive for education for all* (*Press Release SOC/4543)*. https://press.un.org/en/2000/20000411.soc4543.doc.html

Usanova, O. N. (2021). Sotsial'no-psikhologicheskii kontekst inkliuzivnogo obrazovaniia [Socio-psychological context of inclusive education]. *Special Education*, *1*, 85–99. https://doi.org/10.12345/1999-6993_2021_01_07

Vlachou, A. D. (1997). *Struggles for inclusive education: An ethnographic study*. Open University Press.

Zaitsev, D. V., & Selivanova, Yu. V. (2015). Dinamika sotsial'nogo otnosheniia k integrirovannomu obrazovaniiu v Rossii [The dynamics of social relations to inclusive education in Russia]. *Sovremennye problemy nauki i obrazovaniya*, *4*, 136. https://www.science-education.ru/ru/article/view?id=20819

Zinevich, O. V., Degtiareva, V. V., & Degtiareva, T. N. (2016). Inkliuzivnoe obrazovanie v rossiiskoi vysshei shkole: Sovremennye vyzovy [Inclusive education in the Russian Higher School: Modern challenges]. *Vlast'*, *5*, 61–67.

Assessing the Impact of Innovative Technologies on the Life Satisfaction of Older Adults in Russia and Vietnam

Galina A. Barysheva
National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk, Russia

Elena I. Klemasheva
National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk, Russia

Elmira R. Kashapova
National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk, Russia

Thang Chien Nguyen
Institute for European Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi, Vietnam

Ngoc Thi Bich Tran
Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Hanoi, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This study uses the concept of "technological space," a term that defines the interplay between the social and technological environment, extending our understanding of environmental factors in various scientific domains. We examine the significance of technological space by looking at how older adults interact with modern technologies in the regional contexts of Russia and Vietnam. This study is motivated by the need to integrate older adults into the regional technological landscape. Although older adults face various challenges that may prevent them from adopting modern technologies in their daily lives, embracing these high-tech products and services can greatly improve their overall happiness and well-being. The analysis draws upon the data gathered through a sociological study in Russia's Tomsk region and a parallel study conducted in Vietnam in 2022. The research outcomes show a noticeable contrast in older individuals' readiness to embrace

innovative technologies, highlighting their openness to adaptation under specific circumstances. Additionally, these findings underscore the limited and varied extent to which older generations engage with the contemporary regional technological space, as well as the constrained impact of innovative technology on their life satisfaction. These findings can be useful for regional policymakers seeking to enhance the adaptability of older adults in the face of socio-economic challenges.

Introduction

In the modern era, the digital transformation of socio-economic systems creates the need to align the economy and society with shifting demographics. These processes determine the need for scholarly investigation into the institutional changes that can help individuals maximize their potential across their lifespans. Increasing the efficiency of resource use in an aging society can help develop technology solutions to address the challenges of the silver economy in an evolving technological landscape. This, in turn, plays a vital role in maintaining the well-being of older individuals and unlocking their resourcefulness. Research in the field of social policy in developed nations consistently reflects the following paradigm shift: there is a growing realization that we should move beyond merely assisting the elderly and focus on effectively leveraging their resource potential.

The development and diffusion of convergent and end-to-end technologies have eliminated territorial boundaries (Biniok et al., 2016; Mazilov & Sakhanevich, 2020). Technological space is no longer limited by formal geographical, cultural, institutional, or demographic boundaries (Borgmann, 2010; Grasland, 1992; Kurtev et al., 2002).

In this study, we use the term "technological space" to describe a combination of technologies and innovations available in a specific region that can impact the well-being of the population. It encompasses industrial, organizational, institutional, and social technologies, along with regional infrastructure, and it serves the needs of individuals living in that area (Ivanov, 2011). Another approach considers new technologies within the framework of an innovation space (Danilova & Kilina, 2019).

This study approaches the concept of technological space not as being limited by administrative or territorial boundaries but as an environment where technologies are accessible through regional socio-economic infrastructure. The extent to which people, including 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. Importantly, this research recognizes that older adults are not just consumers of technology but they can also play a role in shaping, adapting, and even creating new technologies, especially in the context of digitalization processes (Peine & Neven, 2019; Vasileva & Mosina, 2014).

Modern technological solutions designed to streamline routine and monotonous tasks have significantly enhanced our quality of life. Research conducted by the Institute for Statistical Studies and the Economics of Knowledge at the Higher School of Economics (HSE University) in 1996–2020 indicates a positive shift in public attitudes toward science and technology, particularly in the context of living standards, health, and environmental factors (Abdrakhmanova et al., 2022; Polyakova & Iudin, 2022).

Furthermore, studies conducted by the International Research Lab for the Improvement of Wellbeing Technologies of Older Adults, National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (Barysheva et al., 2022; Casati et al., 2021; Pavlova et al., 2021) align with the findings made by the HSE team. There is evidence that new technologies enhance the daily convenience of older individuals and facilitate communication. However, these technologies may also have potential negative effects on the mental and cognitive faculties of older individuals. Some experts propose the use of these new technologies for managing overall life quality (Simakina, 2012).

Recent studies confirm that digitalization, as a socio-technical process, is increasingly impacting not only social and labor aspects but also various facets of older adults' daily lives (Shchekotin, 2022, p. 115). Innovative technologies have become an essential part of daily life, and it is becoming increasingly harder to tackle many everyday tasks without them. Moreover, numerous high-tech conveniences and services are no longer considered luxuries but rather necessary elements that enhance life satisfaction and living standards (Abdrakhmanova et al., 2021, p. 201). The increasing flow of information and the rise of digital technologies can make it challenging for older adults to fully embrace technology, leading to a generation gap in digital adoption, that is "digital gap" or "digital divide." It is evident that older adults are less engaged in the digital world, even though there are many services available and the Age-Tech Market is growing (Varlamova, 2022).

Research in this context predominantly focuses on the older population as the primary consumers of emerging markets related to gerontechnologies (Gomes et al., 2022). These technologies encompass a wide range of care-related technologies and services, health monitoring, robotic assistance, prevention of premature aging, and support for extended professional longevity (Bashkireva, 2016; de Oliveira Silva et al., 2012; Tarasenko & Ryzhkova, 2019). Over the past decade, there has been a notable trend in recognizing gerontology as a distinct category of innovative technology in aging societies.

Technologies aimed at preventing premature aging include widely adopted features such as "sensory rooms" for psychological rehabilitation, "virtual tourism," "adaptive physical education," "call-for-help systems" (telecare), "home medicine systems" (telehealth), "smart homes," and other ICT-based products and services designed to support older individuals in their homes (Rebko & Semutenko, 2016; Wright, 2009). These technologies enhance the efficiency of daily activities,

contributing to increased life satisfaction. Several studies emphasize the active role of older individuals in digital transformations, as they shape demand and actively engage in modifying digital technologies to compensate for age-related limitations, unlock their resource potential, foster social interactions, and create conditions for maintaining and enhancing their quality of life.

In the current context, the most pressing challenges are to encourage motivation and employ social technologies to support individuals in leading active and productive lives well into their retirement years. This includes promoting positive attitudes toward ongoing socio-economic participation. Additionally, it is important to address the digital gap between generations while enhancing the quality of life for older individuals.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the interaction between individuals and media of innovative technologies, particularly their role in shaping the technological landscape in a given region. We intend to assess how individuals from various age groups, particularly older generations, perceive and incorporate innovative devices like personal gadgets and elements of social infrastructure into their daily lives. This analysis, therefore, will focus on the following:

(a) the distribution of older people across various age groups in the regional technological space concerning innovative technologies;

(b) the involvement of the older generation in the operation and evolution of the regional technological space;

(c) the connection between the subjective well-being of individuals from different age groups (life satisfaction) and the material aspects of innovative technologies in the regional technological space.

The predisposition of individuals towards using innovative technologies is assessed through a questionnaire designed to gauge their interest in new home appliances, electronics, technical advancements, and elements of social infrastructure. The respondents were asked to evaluate various aspects of their technological environment and natural surroundings, including water and air quality, as well as the household appliances and electronic devices they use (such as personal vehicles, mobile phones, televisions, computers, refrigerators, and kitchen appliances). This evaluation also considered their willingness to upgrade these devices and their readiness to embrace technical innovations.

The study outlines the structure of the technological environment: older individuals are divided into age groups according to their participation in the regional technological ecosystem's functioning and advancement. To gain a better understanding of their subjective well-being, we employ questionnaires that measure respondents' life satisfaction and their appraisal of technology-related aspects in their daily lives. This examination relies on the data from two regions as illustrative examples.

The study focuses on various aspects of life that constitute the technological space, including the consumption of goods and services, diverse forms of communication, education, health and care, and housing arrangements. The rationale for this categorization aligns with the work of Klemasheva and Kashapova (2022).

We evaluate how different aspects of technological space affect life satisfaction, considering whether they have a positive or negative impact and how strong this impact

is. We intend to show that an individual's use of innovative technologies significantly influences their life satisfaction in older years. Moreover, the most pronounced impact of material components of the technological space on the life satisfaction of older individuals occurs when these individuals actively engage with technology, serving both as proponents of technological integration and as agents of its adaptation and evolution.

Theoretical Framework

The advent of digitalization in the economy has enabled older individuals to engage with new technologies (Chen & Schulz, 2016; Papa et al., 2017). However, there is evidence supporting the existence of an intergenerational digital divide (Iancu & Iancu, 2020; Varlamova, 2022; Vidiasova et al., 2022), which should be taken into account when designing and offering digital services for the older generation. Additionally, Östlund (2021) highlights a paradoxical situation characterized by substantial investments in advanced digital technologies for elderly care, which also needs to be further investigated.

Several scholars, including D. Rogozin, D. Leontiev, I. Grigorieva, P. Glucksman, K. Allen, L. Vidiasova, E. Kuznetsova, and E. Shchekotin, have examined the impact of digitalization and socio-economic transformations on the quality of life for older adults. Their work underscores the significance of integrating older individuals into the digital realm. While most conventional studies usually begin by identifying the needs and understanding of innovative processes among older adults, our study, in contrast, focuses on assessing how new technologies are practically used in their everyday lives and on their impact.

Our analysis of academic literature and Internet resources showed that several studies on the application of daily-use technologies by the older generation are incomplete. Consequently, we have identified several primary research goals to examine the elements of technological space in academic literature. Generally, the studies we reviewed addressed the following aspects. Information technologies have been explored in terms of their impact on citizens' quality of life, aiming to reduce living costs (Mishra & Chakraborty, 2020; Rybakova et al., 2019). The implementation of medical services through mobile devices (mHealth) has been studied in relation to older adults with cognitive impairments and its effect on health-related quality of life (HRQoL) (Christiansen et al., 2020). The use of smartphones and their influence on health and self-assessed quality of life have been analyzed (Ghahramani & Wang, 2020). The potential of "smart home" technologies and "telemedicine/telecare" to enhance the safety and integration of individuals with serious illnesses and special needs into society has been examined (Andone et al., 2020). Researchers have also explored the creation of a social work model to support safe and inclusive communities both online and offline and to promote human rights (Mathiyazhagan, 2022). Finally, access to information and communication technologies among the population has been studied by Sayed Umar et al. (2021) and Zubova (2022).

The primary focus of our research is to examine the impact of technological solutions on the living conditions of older adults and their perceived quality of life

resulting from the adoption of new technologies. We believe it is crucial to gain insights into the ongoing trend of increased life expectancy in Russia, which includes not only longer lifespans but also healthier aging. This trend offers unique opportunities to tackle urgent challenges and improve both overall quality of life and sustainable development.

In our study, we introduce a specific measurement termed the "life satisfaction indicator" to assess the quality of life and investigate how older adults perceive their use of technological solutions. This indicator serves as a valuable tool for understanding life satisfaction, encompassing an individual's assessment of their overall life as well as the specific conditions influenced by the technological environment. It is worth noting that similar approaches have been explored in the works of both Russian and international researchers (Andone et al., 2020; Averin & Sushko, 2019; Didino et al., 2018; George, 2006; Nekhoda et al., 2018; Sushko, 2021).

Research Methods and Materials

We verified our initial assumption by employing a combination of institutional and theoretical methods: reviewing pertinent academic literature, analyzing sociological survey data, and applying econometric techniques like correlation-regression analysis.

For the content analysis, we selected academic publications based on keywords such as "technological space," "elderly people," "older adults," "life satisfaction," and "technology." We then examined these selected publications in detail to estimate the current level of research on the subject.

To determine the scope and impact of elements of technological space, we conducted a sociological survey among older adults in Tomsk region in 2022. The survey involved 234 people and was carried out through standardized telephone interviews. We employed a combination of sampling methods, which included the random generation of telephone numbers and quota sampling based on respondents' area of residence, gender, and age. It should be noted at this point that there is no universally accepted definition of "older adults" in contemporary science and legislation. Researchers addressing issues related to aging use various approaches to define the boundaries of old age (Sinyavskaya et al., 2022). For the purposes of this study, we adopted the lower limit of 60 years, as suggested by several researchers and following the methodology of the World Health Organization (WHO) (Grigoryeva et al., 2019; Kalinkova & Orlikova, 2017; Kuvshinova, 2012).

As for respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, 28% were male and 72% were female. Of all the participants, 31% were aged 60–64; 46% were aged 65–74; and 23% were over 75 years old. Regarding their place of residence, the majority lived in urban areas, with 50% residing in Tomsk and 23% in small towns of the region. Additionally, 27% of the respondents lived in rural areas. In terms of education, the largest proportion (48%) had secondary education, while 28% had completed higher education.

We explored the use of high-technology items by examining such aspects as ownership of household appliances, the need for appliance upgrades, evaluation of product and service quality, assessment of environmental conditions, and income levels. Our assessment of respondents' life satisfaction and happiness was based on their

answers to the two key questions: "Considering all aspects of your life, how satisfied are you with it at the present moment?" (rated from 0 to 10, where 0 = *completely unsatisfied*, and 10 = *completely satisfied*) and "Given all aspects of your life, how happy are you?" (rated from 1 to 10, with 1 = *extremely unhappy* and 10 = *extremely happy*).

In 2022, as part of a collaborative project with Russian scholars, a similar sociological survey was conducted in Vietnam. The survey encompassed 27 provinces and cities, including both rural and urban areas. Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms, with a total of 362 participants. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, 44.2% of the respondents were male and 55.8%, female. As for age distribution, 25.4% were aged 60–64; 43.1% were aged 65–74; and 31.5% were over 75 years old. Rural residents constituted the majority (65.7%), while 34.3% lived in urban areas. As for education, 73.8% had attained secondary education or lower, and 26.2% held higher education degrees.

The survey data were processed with the help of Gretl and TIBCO Statistica® software packages for econometric modeling. Our analysis involved correlation analysis using Spearman's criteria and regression analysis, specifically linear regression. Additionally, we employed an interpretational method, elucidating the underlying meaning behind respondents' answers to the research questions posed.

Results and Discussion

Our survey results shed light on the demand for innovative technologies within the given age group and on the older generation's perceptions of the term "innovation." It should be noted that the prevailing perception of "innovation" leans toward the "improvement of existing products," as indicated by 48% of the respondents in Tomsk region. In the ranking of popular household technologies in this Russian region, "air pollution sensors" and "smart home" systems occupy the leading positions (30% and 29% of respondents respectively). "Functional nutrition" ranks third (26%). In Vietnam, the most popular technologies are the "remote doctor" (52%), "functional nutrition" (51.4%), and "household solar battery" (50.3%). In Tomsk region, relatively high levels of interest were observed regarding "garbage compactor," "remote doctor," and "voice assistant" (24–25%). In Vietnam, respondents displayed interest in "electric cars," "pollution sensors," and "smart home" technologies (22–32%).

As for the use of various robots, particularly assistant robots, 17% of respondents in Tomsk region and 19.4% in Vietnam expressed interest. These figures align with the findings published in *Tsifrovaia ekonomika: 2022: kratkii statisticheskii sbornik* [The digital economy: 2022: a statistical brief] (Abdrakhmanova et al., 2022, p. 38). However, it is worth noting that 27% of respondents in Russia showed no interest in the technologies presented in the survey.

There were 46% of respondents in Tomsk region and 56% in Vietnam who reported their interest in innovative food products. However, 9% and 12.5% respectively found it difficult to answer this question. A large number of older adults in Seversk (a town in Tomsk region) positively assessed the attractiveness of innovative food products (67%). Additionally, no significant correlation was found between responses from male

and female respondents in the 60 and older age group, indicating that both genders share a positive attitude toward innovative food products.

High-tech household appliances and electronics enjoy greater popularity compared to food products, with 58% of respondents in Russia expressing a positive attitude towards such technical innovations. This preference is particularly notable among residents of small towns, where 70% favor these innovations, compared to 58% in Tomsk, 56% in rural areas, and 50% in Seversk. Furthermore, if we look at different age groups, we see that the appeal of new household appliances and electronics diminishes with age. Specifically, only 43% of respondents in Russia aged 75 and older answered positively, while this figure reached 62% in the 65–74 age group and also 62% in the 60–64 age group.

To assess the impact of technological aspects on the life satisfaction of older adults, we evaluated their inclination towards technical innovations. Our findings were as follows. In Tomsk region, 36% of respondents indicated no need for new household appliances and electronics, whereas in Vietnam, this figure was 14.2%. In Tomsk region, 15% of respondents displayed a lack of enthusiasm for technical innovations, with 12% expressing a difficulty in understanding how to use new technologies and 3% feeling apprehensive about them. In Vietnam, 3.3% of respondents reported not understanding the concept of new home appliances and electronics, and 0.8% reported using them. However, 29% of respondents in Tomsk region expressed a desire to purchase new items when financially able, while 7% were entirely unwilling to pay for them. In contrast, in Vietnam, 56.2% of respondents expressed their intent to purchase new items if the opportunity arises while 10.6% were unwilling to pay for them.

Among the respondents aged 60–64, there is a notable interest in acquiring new household appliances and electronics. Specifically, 10% are willing to purchase them without hesitation, while 42% plan to do so when financially feasible. In the 65–74 age group, these percentages decrease to 6% and 31%, respectively. In the oldest age group, 75 years and above, the ratio changes, with 4% ready to buy these products under any circumstances and 17% intending to do so once they can. Meanwhile, the older group, 75 years and older, exhibits a growing reluctance towards buying new products, with 19% expressing a lack of understanding regarding new technologies and 8% feeling anxious about them.

When examining the willingness to adopt new household appliances and electronics, we have found the following. Of all the respondents, 7% in Tomsk, 8% in Seversk, 0% in small towns, and 10% in rural areas are eager to embrace new technology due to its potential to enhance their quality of life. The "I will buy if possible" sentiment is more prevalent in Seversk (38%), compared to Tomsk (32%), small towns (33%), and rural areas (26%).

Considering the regional needs of the older generation, who are viewed as a group capable of modifying and even creating technologies, we should also note that 17% of respondents in Tomsk region and 2.7% in Vietnam reported having experience in developing technical innovations for personal use more than five years ago. Additionally, 6% of respondents in Tomsk region have improved technical devices, while 3% have recently created new technical devices. In Vietnam, these figures stand at 23% and 3.3%, respectively.

Innovative activity is more common among men in Tomsk region, with 6% creating new devices and 8% improving existing ones. Conversely, among women, these percentages are 1% and 5%, respectively. In the 60–64 age group, individuals more frequently report having experience in improving technical devices (10% of respondents in this age group, compared to 6% in the 65–74 age group and 2% in the group aged 75 and above). In the oldest age group, 19% of respondents have experience in creating new devices or improving technical means, exceeding the group aged 60–64 and surpassing the group aged 65–74 (14%).

Among the respondents' motivations for engaging in innovative activities for personal use, the most frequently mentioned were the perceived high cost of devices (25% of the overall sample in Tomsk region), the desire to engage in hands-on creation (13%), and a scarcity of such devices (7%).

In Tomsk region, respondents who reported creating new devices or technical means were predominantly individuals with secondary specialized education (66.7%), followed by those with higher education (33.3%). Among those who reported improving existing technical means, 44.4% held higher education, while the second-largest group, at 40.7%, had secondary specialized education.

In the case of Vietnam, respondents who engaged in creating new technical devices mostly had secondary vocational education (50%), while those who reported enhancing existing technical devices were more likely to have secondary general education (41%).

Empirical Analysis of the Survey Data in Russia

Table 1 presents statistical data on individuals' self-assessment of the key elements of technological space and subjective indicators of life satisfaction.

Table 1

Sampling Description for Tomsk Region (N = 234)

Indicator	Average	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Quality assessment of drinking water	3.156	3.000	0.880	1	5
Quality assessment of the air	3.449	3.000	0.793	1	5
Quality assessment of household appliances	3.013	3.000	0.319	1	4
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	2.987	3.000	0.256	1	4
Quality assessment of the cell-phone	2.977	3.000	0.381	1	4
Quality assessment of mobile connection	2.907	3.000	0.443	1	4
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	2.907	3.000	0.500	1	4
Life satisfaction	7.680	8.000	2.703	1	11
Happiness level	7.103	8.000	2.555	0	10
Age	69.56	68.00	7.615	60	93
Average income	2.777	3.000	0.892	1	6

Our analysis shows that the respondents' levels of life satisfaction (7.680) and happiness rating (7.103) are above the average. Conversely, the quality of amenities, including household appliances (3.013), electronic technologies (2.987), cell phones (2.977), and personal vehicles (2.907), all received average ratings. To further investigate, we conducted correlation analysis between life satisfaction indicators and the quality assessment of the regional technological space to ascertain the relationship between these indicators and its nature (whether it is positive or negative) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Tomsk Region

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quality assessment of air	1.000									
Quality assessment of drinking water	.193	1.000								
Quality assessment of household appliances	.012	−.056	1.000							
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	−.036	.009	.392	1.000						
Quality assessment of the cell phone	.081	.117	.122	.237	1.000					
Quality assessment of mobile connection	.037	.128	.079	.148	.278	1.000				
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	.131	.244	.328	.572	.055	.111	1.000			
Life satisfaction	.165	.141	.228	.154	.088	.063	.511	1.000		
Happiness level	.176	−.014	.136	.043	−.008	.078	.173	.505	1.000	
Average monthly income per household member	−.012	.122	.090	.145	.148	.027	.236	.222	.141	1.000

The correlation analysis demonstrated a moderate correlation ($.5 < r < .7$) between the life satisfaction index and the quality assessment of personal vehicles (.511) for the 60 years and older age group. Conversely, when considering the remaining indicators for the quality assessment of the technological space, respondents in this group exhibited a low level of correlation (weak correlation $.1 < r < .3$) with life satisfaction. Despite the observed weak relationships between these indicators, their continued use in the ongoing analysis remains viable (Andreeva & Volkov, 2013).

To assess the impact (+/−) of individual elements of the technological space on the life satisfaction of older adults, we conducted a regression analysis.

Table 3

Linear Regressions (Ordinal and Interval Variables) With Dependent Variable, Life Satisfaction

Independent variables	Life satisfaction
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	$B = 2.456$, $p < .01$, $SE = .45$, $R = .261$
Quality assessment of household appliances	$B = 1.915$, $p < .01$, $SE = .55$, $R = .05$
Average income	$B = 0.660$, $p < .01$, $SE = .20$, $R = .048$
Quality assessment of the air	$B = 0.556$, $p < .01$, $SE = .22$, $R = .027$
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	$B = 1.605$, $p < .01$, $SE = .69$, $R = .023$
Quality assessment of drinking water	$B = 0.431$, $p < .01$, $SE = .20$, $R = .02$

Note: The following values are available for linear models: B = non-standardized factor; SE = standard errors; 95% confidence interval; R = R-squared.

As depicted in Table 3, the quality of personal vehicles has the most substantial positive impact on the life satisfaction of older adults ($B = 2.456$, $p < .01$, $R = .261$). This finding implies that as the quality of personal vehicles increases, there is a noteworthy 2.5-point improvement in life satisfaction. In contrast, the impact of other independent variables is either less significant or characterized by a lower R-squared level.

Empirical Analysis of Vietnam Survey Data

From the survey conducted in Vietnam, we obtained the following results: 14.2% of respondents do not perceive a need for new household appliances and electronics; 56.2% express reservations or are hesitant about technical innovations; 0.8% hold a negative view of technical innovations. Table 4 provides a description of the sample in Vietnam.

Table 4

Sampling Description for Vietnam

Indicator	Average	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Quality assessment of drinking water	3.55	4.00	0.723	1	5
Quality assessment of the air	3.43	3.00	0.872	1	5
Quality assessment of household appliances	3.66	4.00	0.549	1	4
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	3.61	4.00	0.548	1	4
Quality assessment of the cell-phone	3.45	4.00	0.633	1	4
Quality assessment of mobile connection	3.46	4.00	0.638	1	4
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	2.94	3.00	0.911	1	4
Life satisfaction	6.33	6.78	1.85	0	10
Happiness level	7.78	8.0	1.55	1	10
Age	70.8	70.0	8.12	60	96
Average income	5.47	6.00	2.32	0	10

Our analysis shows that the respondents assess their life satisfaction (6.33) and level of happiness (7.78) above the average.

Table 5

Correlation Matrix for Vietnam

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Quality assessment of air	1.000								
Quality assessment of drinking water	.398	1.000							
Quality assessment of household appliances	−.009	.159	1.000						
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	.057	.126	.498	1.000					
Quality assessment of the cell phone	−.073	.032	.365	.543	1.000				
Quality assessment of mobile connection	.009	.079	.334	.498	.540	1.000			
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	.051	.036	.167	.270	.322	.318	1.000		
Life satisfaction	.198	.262	.229	.299	.264	.269	.258	1.000	
Happiness level	.139	.294	.141	.232	.203	.212	.251	.525	1.000

The correlation analysis demonstrates a low level of correlation (weak correlation .1 < r < .3) between the indicators of life satisfaction and the quality assessment of technological space.

Table 6

Linear Regressions (Ordinal and Interval Variables) With Dependent Variable, Life Satisfaction Based on Data From Vietnam

Independent variables	Life satisfaction
Quality assessment of electronic technologies	B = 1.039, p < .01, SE = .19, R = .089
Quality assessment of mobile connection	B = 0.803, p < .01, SE = .17, R = .073
Quality assessment of the cell phone	B = 0.788, p < .01, SE = .17, R = .07
Quality assessment of the personal vehicle	B = 0.551, p < .01, SE = .13, R = .067
Quality assessment of household appliances	B = 0.783, p < .01, SE = .19, R = .052
Quality assessment of drinking water	B = 0.663, p < .01, SE = .13, R = .07
Quality assessment of the air	B = 0.421, p < .01, SE = .11, R = .039

Note: The following values are available for linear models: B = non-standardized factor; SE = standard errors; 95% confidence interval; R = R-squared.

The outcomes of the analysis conducted through linear regression show that the quality of electronic equipment (B = 1.039) has the most substantial positive impact on life satisfaction concerning the regional technological space (B = 1.039) in Vietnam, reaching statistical significance at p < .01, and explaining a variance of R = .089. In contrast, the other independent variables exhibit lower effect sizes or result in a lower R-squared value.

Conclusion

The development of technological space occurs in response to challenges in the digital economy and is a major trend in today's society, impacting people of all ages and backgrounds. Older individuals are no exception to this overarching trend: they clearly have a keen interest in embracing high-tech products and services and demonstrate a preference for innovative food products and technological advancements. Nevertheless, our research has revealed that the appeal of new household appliances and electronic technologies diminishes with age, even though the need for technological enhancements becomes increasingly vital as individuals grow older, contributing to their overall well-being. Consequently, society recognizes the necessity for older individuals to adopt new technologies as a means of integrating into the technological landscape. Sociological studies, however, indicate that older individuals exhibit minimal demand for this integration.

We found a striking contrast among small towns, regional centers, and rural areas, further amplified by the digital transformation of daily life. This divergence may largely stem from the relatively lower value assigned to technological goods or the challenges associated with adopting new technical solutions in advanced age. Older individuals may choose not to actively engage in social activities, opting for an alternative path (Manuilskaya et al., 2021, p. 13) and thereby retaining their autonomy from technologies as they age. Consequently, the mere existence of innovative technologies and the conditions for their use does not inherently boost life satisfaction unless they offer fresh opportunities to enhance the daily lives of older individuals and provide alternative choices in using new products and services. Additionally, financial constraints may hinder their access to technological innovations.

Our analysis showed a weak positive correlation between the elements of technological space and life satisfaction. This correlation is observed in relation to the functionality of social infrastructure, environmental factors, as well as the quality of technical appliances and electronics.

The link between subjective well-being, as measured through individuals' responses regarding their life satisfaction in Tomsk region, becomes evident when we examine the use of personal as an example. Our survey revealed that the evaluation of cars by the average older age citizen in this Russian region exhibits a much wider range of variations compared to the evaluation of services or electronic gadgets. Conversely, for Vietnamese citizens included in our research, electronic goods are the technological element most strongly correlated with life satisfaction.

Our research results show a significant disparity in older people's inclination to adopt innovative technologies, indicating their willingness to adapt and embrace these technologies under specific circumstances. Moreover, these findings demonstrate the low and heterogeneous level of older generations' engagement with the contemporary regional technological space, along with the limited impact of innovative technology usage on their life satisfaction.

Thus, the research hypothesis we initially proposed for the given regional technological spaces remains unconfirmed. This conclusion aligns with the results

obtained through a correlation-regression analysis of the national data for Russia (Klemasheva & Kashapova, 2022). It sheds light on the reasons behind the relative "detachment" of older individuals from digital products and the lack of value they perceive in certain technological offerings (Karapetyan et al., 2021, p. 317). Despite the revealed disparities, especially against the backdrop of limited older adult involvement in the regional technological space, these findings can be interpreted as evidence that there is an opportunity to enhance the quality of life for older individuals. Therefore, our findings can be used to formulate effective regional policies based on older adults' active participation in the region's technological landscape.

This finding prompts us to explore some important questions, for instance, why many technological products hold little value for the older generation (Karapetyan et al., 2021, p. 317). In the upcoming research involving different age groups in the region, including older individuals, it would be essential to consider the hypothesis that understanding of how new technology works and having experience of using it are key to people's integration into the technological space.

The results of our research carry practical significance in assessing and advancing the rapidly expanding regional market of digital goods and services, particularly in the Age-Tech segment tailored for older individuals. We anticipate that the number of users of digital services and technologies will increase from the current 4% to 10–15% by 2025 (Age-tech: Odna iz samykh, 2019).

Modern technological advancements play a crucial role in enhancing the life satisfaction and quality of life for older adults and are instrumental in shaping effective regional policies. In the face of ongoing demographic and socio-economic challenges, the integration of innovative technologies into daily life has become imperative. The adoption of information and communication technologies in daily routines has the potential to make life more comfortable, safer, healthier, engaging, and emotionally fulfilling for individuals in the older demographic. These technological solutions also enable older adults to maintain and extend their economic and personal activities, promoting independence, improving communication quality, and fostering greater community engagement.

References

Abdrakhmanova, G. I., Vasil'kovskii, S. A., Vishnevskiy, K. O., Gokhberg, L. M., Demidkina, O. V., Demianova, A. V., Kovaleva, G. G., Kotsemir, M. N., Kuznetsova, I. A., Ozerova, O. K., Polyakova, V. V., Ratay, T. V., Ryzhikova, Z. A., Strel'tsova, E. A., Utyatina, K. E., Fridlyanova, S. Iu., & Schugal, N. B. (2022). *Tsifrovaia ekonomika: 2022: kratkii statisticheskii sbornik* [The digital economy: 2022: a statistical brief]. National Research University Higher School of Economics.

Abdrakhmanova, G. I., Vishnevskiy, K. O., Zinina, T. S., Kovaleva, G. G., Polyakova, V. V., Privorotskaya, S. G., Rudnik, P. B., Suslov, A. B., & Fursov, K. S. (2021). Trendy tsifrovizatsii—postpandemiia [Digitalization trends—post-pandemic]. In S. M. Plaksin, A. B. Zhulin, & S. A. Farizova (Eds.), *"Chernyi lebed" v beloi maske. Analiticheskii doklad NIU VShE k godovshchine pandemii COVID-19* [Black swan in a

white mask: Analytical report by HSE University on the anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic] (pp. 194–218). National Research University Higher School of Economics. https://doi.org/10.17323/978-5-7598-2500-5

Age-tech: Odna iz samykh bystrorastushchikh nish tsifrovoi ekonomiki [Age-tech: A fastest-growing niche of the digital economy]. (2019, October 25). MNIAP. https://xn--80aplem.xn--p1ai/analytics/Age-tech-odna-iz-samyh-bystrorastusih-nis-cifrovoj-ekonomiki/

Andone, I., Popescu, C., Spinu, A., Daia, C., Stoica, S., Onose, L., Anghel, I., & Onose, G. (2020). Current aspects regarding "smart homes"/ambient assisted living (AAL) including rehabilitation specific devices, for people with disabilities/special needs. *Balneo Research Journal*, *11*(4), 444–449. https://doi.org/10.12680/balneo.2020.376

Andreeva, M. M., & Volkov, V. R. (2013). Korreliatsionnyi analiz v sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniiakh [Correlation analysis in sociological research]. *Vestnik Kazanskogo tekhnologicheskogo universiteta*, *16*(7), 271–274.

Averin, Yu. P., & Sushko, V. A. (2019). Kontseptsiia kachestva zhizni v sovremennykh sotsiologicheskikh teoriiakh [The concept of quality of life in modern sociological theories]. *Izvestiya of Saratov University. Sociology. Politology*, *19*(1), 4–11.

Barysheva, G. A., Klemasheva, E. I., Nedospasova, O. P., Ngoc, T. T. B., & Thang, N. C. (2022). Vovlechennost' pozhilykh liudei v protsessy sovremennykh tsifrovykh transformatsii [Involvement of older adults in the processes of modern digital transformations]. *Advances in Gerontology*, *35*(1), 68–75. https://doi.org/10.34922/AE.2022.35.1.007

Bashkireva, A. S. (2016). Innovatsionnye gerontotekhnologii v razvitii strategii deistvii v interesakh grazhdan starshego pokoleniia v RF [Innovative gerontotechnologies in the strategy for action development for the elderly persons in Russia]. *Vestnik Roszdravnadzora*, *4*, 19–24.

Biniok, P., Menke, I., & Selke, S. (2016). Social inclusion of elderly people in rural areas by social and technological mechanisms. In E. Domínguez-Rué & L. Nierling (Eds.), *Ageing and technology: Perspectives from the social sciences* (pp. 93–118). Transcript.

Borgmann, A. (2010). Orientation in technological space. *First Monday*, *15*(6–7). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v15i6.3037

Casati, F., Anikina, E. A., Ivankina, L. I., Klemasheva, E. I., Kashapova, E. R., Malanina, V. A., Taran, E. A., Frolova, E. A., & Shavlokhova, A. A. (2021). *Kompleksnaia sistema otsenki neravenstva pozhilykh liudei i proektirovanie instrumentov ukrepleniia ikh zhiznestoikosti* [Comprehensive system for assessing the inequalities of adult people and designing tools for strengthening their resilience]. STT.

Chen, Y.-R. R., & Schulz, P. J. (2016). The effect of information communication technology interventions on reducing social isolation in the elderly: A systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *18*(1), Article e18. https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.4596

Christiansen, L., Lindberg, C., Berglund, J. S., Anderberg, P., & Skär, L. (2020). Using mobile health and the impact on health-related quality of life: Perceptions of older adults with cognitive impairment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(8), Article 2650. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17082650

Danilova, I. V., & Kilina, I. P. (2019). Innovatsionnoe prostranstvo: Teoreticheskie i metodicheskie aspekty [Innovation space: Theoretical and methodological aspects]. *Upravlenie ekonomicheskimi sistemami*, *7*, Article 4.

Didino, D., Taran, E. A., Gorodetski, K., Melikyan, Z. A., Nikitina, S., Gumennikov, I., Korovina, O., & Casati, F. (2018). Exploring predictors of life satisfaction and happiness among Siberian older adults living in Tomsk Region. *European Journal of Ageing*, *15*(2), 175–187. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-017-0447-y

de Oliveira Silva, D., Marquine Raymundo, T., & da Silva Santana, C. (2012). Use of electronic devices in homes by elderly. *Gerontechnology*, *11*(2), 192. https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.602.00

George, L. K. (2006). Perceived quality of life. In R. H. Binstock, L. K. George, S. J. Cutler, J. Hendricks, & J. H. Schulz (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (6th ed., pp. 320–336). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012088388-2/50021-3

Ghahramani, F., & Wang, J. (2020). Impact of smartphones on quality of life: A health information behavior perspective. *Information Systems Frontiers*, *22*(6), 1275–1290. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-019-09931-z

Gomes, I. D., Sobreira, L. S., da Cruz, H. D. T., Almeida, I., de Souza, M. C. M. R., & Souto, R. Q. (2022). Teleconsultation script for intervention on frail older person to promote the care-of-the-self: A gerontotechnology tool in a pandemic context. In J. García-Alonso & C. Fonseca (Eds.), *Gerontechnology IV: Contributions to the Fourth International Workshop on Gerontechnology, IWoG 2021, Évora, Portugal, November 23–24, 2021* (pp. 133–145). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97524-1_13

Grasland, L. (1992). The search for an international position in the creation of a regional technological space: The example of Montpellier. *Urban Studies*, *29*(6), 1003–1010. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420989220080931

Grigoryeva, I. A., Ukhanova, Yu. V., & Smoleva, E. O. (2019). Transformatsiia sotsial'noi politiki v Rossii v kontekste stareniia naseleniia [Transformation of social policy in Russia in the context of population aging]. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, *12*(5), 124–140. https://doi.org/10.15838/esc.2019.5.65.8

Iancu, I., & Iancu, B. (2020). Designing mobile technology for elderly. A theoretical overview. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *155*, Article 119977. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.119977

Ivanov, V. V. (2011). Tekhnologicheskoe prostranstvo i ekologiia tekhnologii [Technological space and technology ecology]. *Vestnik Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, *81*(5), 414–418.

Kalinkova, M., & Orlikova, M. (2017). Kachestvo zhizni pozhilykh liudei [Quality of life of elderly people]. *Historical and Social-Educational Idea*, *9*(3/2), 108–119. https://doi.org/10.17748/2075-9908-2017-9-3/2-108-119

Karapetyan, R. V., Lebedeva, E. V., & Titarenko, L. G. (2021). Tekhnoeidzhizm I tekhnopovedenie pozhilykh gorozhan: Rezul'taty rossiiskikh i belorusskikh issledovanii [Technoagism and technical behavior of the elderly citizens: Results of Russian and Belarusian researches]. *Advances in Gerontology*, *34*(2), 311–318. https://doi.org/10.34922/AE.2021.34.2.019

Klemasheva, E. I., & Kashapova, E. R. (2022). Model' sub'ektivnykh otsenok vliianiia elementov tekhnologicheskogo prostranstva na uroven' zhizni pozhilykh liudei [Subjective assessments model of the influence of the technological space elements on the standard of living of the elderly]. *Journal of Wellbeing Technologies*, *46*(3), 118–127. https://doi.org/10.18799/26584956/2022/3/1195

Kurtev, I., Bézivin, J., & Aksit, M. (2002, October). *Technological spaces: An initial appraisal* [Paper presentation]. The 4th International Symposium on Distributed Objects and Applications, DOA 2002, Irvine, California, USA.

Kuvshinova, O. A. (2012). Problemy sotsial'nogo konstrukta pozhilogo vozrasta [Problems of the social construct of old age]. *Tomsk State University Journal of Philosophy, Sociology and Political Science*, *1*, 24–30.

Manuilskaya, K. M., Rogozin, D. M., Gryaznova, O. S., Ipatova, A. A., & Vyugovskaya, E. V. (2021). *Zhizn' vne izoliatsii. Kontseptsiia novogo sotsial'nogo doma* [Life outside of isolation. The concept of a new social home]. Delo.

Mathiyazhagan, S. (2022). Field practice, emerging technologies, and human rights: The emergence of tech social workers. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, *7*(4), 441–448. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00190-0

Mazilov, E. A., & Sakhanevich, D. Yu. (2020). Struktura i elementy nauchno-tekhnologicheskogo prostranstva [Structure and elements of scientific and technological space]. *Corporate Economics*, *2*, 4–13.

Mishra, K. N., & Chakraborty, C. (2020). A novel approach toward enhancing the quality of life in smart cities using clouds and IoT-based technologies. In M. Farsi, A. Daneshkhah, A. Hosseinian-Far, & H. Jahankhani (Eds.), *Digital twin technologies and smart cities* (pp. 19–35). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18732-3_2

Nekhoda, E. V., Roshchina, I. V., & Pak, V. D. (2018). Kachestvo zhizni: Problemy izmereniia [Quality of life: Problems of measurement]. *Tomsk State University Journal of Economics*, *43*, 107–125. https://doi.org/10.17223/19988648/43/7

Östlund, B. (2021). Digitalization of later life: What prevents the care sector from meeting the rapid digitalization of older populations? Advances in human factors and ergonomics in healthcare and medical devices. In J. Kalra, N. J. Lightner, & R. Taiar (Eds.), *Advances in human factors and ergonomics in healthcare and medical devices: Proceedings of the AHFE 2021 Virtual Conference on Human Factors and Ergonomics in Healthcare and Medical Devices, USA, July 25–29, 2021* (pp. 287–298). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80744-3_36

Papa, F., Cornacchia, M., Sapio, B., & Nicolò, E. (2017). Engaging technology-resistant elderly people: Empirical evidence from an ICT-enabled social environment. *Informatics for Health and Social Care*, *42*(1), 43–60. https://doi.org/10.3109/17538157.2016.1153477

Pavlova, I. A., Nedospasova, O. P., Barysheva, G. A., & Rozhdestvenskaia, E. M. (2021). *Resursnyi potentsial starshego pokoleniia* [Resource potential of the older generation]. STT.

Peine, A., & Neven, L. (2019). From intervention to co-constitution: New directions in theorizing about aging and technology. *The Gerontologist*, *59*(1), 15–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gny050

Polyakova, V., & Iudin, I. (2022, March 24). *Kak za 25 let izmenilos' mnenie rossiian o nauke i tekhnologiiakh?* [How has Russian opinion about science and technology changed in 25 years?]. HSE Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge. https://issek.hse.ru/news/578560514.html

Rebko, A. A., & Semutenko, K. M. (2016). Osobennosti vnedreniia sovremennykh informatsionno-kommunikatsionnykh tekhnologii v sfere mediko-sotsial'nogo obespecheniia i profilaktiki zabolevanii sredi lits pozhilogo vozrasta [Main features of implementation of modern information and communication technologies in the sphere of medical and social welfare and disease prevention among elderly persons]. *Health and Ecology Issues*, *4*, 73–80.

Rybakova, E. V., Sultanova, R. M, & Gayazova, G. A. (2019). Vliianie tsifrovykh sredstv kommunikatsii na kachestvo zhiznedeiatel'nosti, udovletvorennost' zhizn'iu i oshchushchenie vkliuchennosti pozhilykh liudei [The impact of digital communications on quality of life, life satisfaction and a sense of inclusion of older people]. *International Culture & Technology Studies*, *4*(1), 30–34. https://doi.org/10.17586/2587-800X-2019-4-1-30-34

Sayed Umar, S. M. R. Y., Mohd Arshad, M. N., & Ariffin, M. I. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and addressing digital divide in Malaysia. *Journal of Information Systems and Digital Technologies*, *3*(2), 29–49.

Shchekotin, E. V. (2022). *Kontseptsiia kachestva zhizni v usloviiakh tsifrovizatsii obshchestva: Sotsiologo-upravlencheskie aspekty* [Digital transformation of the quality of life: Sociological and managerial aspects] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Pacific National University.

Simakina, M. A. (2012). Transformatsiia kachestva zhizni v informatsionnom obshchestve [Transformation of the quality of life in the information society]. *Russian Journal of Education and Psychology*, *3*, Article 14.

Sinyavskaya, O. V., Cherviakova, A. A., & Gorvat, E. S. (2022). Analiz faktorov vykhoda s rynka truda v vozraste 45 let i starshe v Rossii: Rol' kharakteristik zaniatosti, smeny raboty i polucheniia obrazovaniia [Factors that lead to leaving the labor market at the age of 45 and up in Russia: Role of job characteristics, labor mobility and life-long learning]. *Sotsiologicheskiy Zhurnal=Sociological Journal*, *28*(2), 50–72. https://doi.org/10.19181/socjour.2022.28.2.8986

Sushko, V. A. (2021). Oshchushchaemoe kachestvo zhizni i tsennostnaia struktura rossiiskogo naseleniia [The feeling quality of life and the value structure of the Russian population]. *Sotsiologiia*, *1*, 61–74.

Tarasenko, E. A., & Ryzhkova, T. B. (2019). Gerontechnology: Faktory, vliiaiushchie na vybor pozhilykh potrebitelei na rynke meditsinskikh tekhnologii i uslug [Gerontechnology: Factors influencing the choice of older consumers in the market of medical technologies and services]. In *Proceedings of the 5th International Scientific and Practical Conference "Management Sciences in the Modern World", Moscow, November 7–9, 2018* (pp. 161–164).

Varlamova, Yu. A. (2022). Mezhpokolencheskii tsifrovoi razryv v Rossii [The Intergenerational digital divide in Russia]. *Universe of Russia, 31*(2), 51–74. https://doi.org/10.17323/1811-038X-2022-31-2-51-74

Vasileva, E. N., & Mosina, O. A. (2014). Resursnyi potentsial "pozhilykh": Tekhnologii realizatsii [Resource potential of the "elderly": Implementation technologies]. *Modern Problems of Science and Education*, *1*.

Vidiasova, L. A., Kuznetsova, E. M., & Grigoryeva, I. A. (2022). Integratsiia pozhilykh liudei v informatsionnoe prostranstvo: Issledovatel'skii keis Sankt-Peterburga [Integration of the olderly into the information space: Research case of Saint Petersburg]. *Advances in Gerontology*, *35*(5), 668–678. https://doi.org/10.34922/AE.2022.35.5.002

Wright, D. (2009). *Report on good practices in e-inclusion, ethical guidance and designing a dialogue roadmap* (Senior Deliverable D4.1). Senior Project. http://erdc.fm.uniba.sk/Report%20on%20good%20practices%20ethical%20guidance%2015%20Nov%2009.pdf

Zubova, O. G. (2022). Tsifrovizatsiia i kachestvo zhizni pozhilykh liudei v sovremennom rossiiskom obshchestve [Digitalization and the quality of life of the elderly in modern Russian society]. *Sotsiologiia*, *5*, 55–64.

ARTICLE

Return Migration From Russia to Kyrgyzstan: Dynamics, Causes, and Structure

Galina I. Osadchaya, Tatyana N. Yudina, Olga A. Volkova, Egor Yu. Kireev
Institute for Demographic Research of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied
Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

ABSTRACT

The study's significance lies in the need for comprehensive information on return labor migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan and the profiles of return migrants, which would allow us to anticipate spatial mobility in the future. This is particularly relevant due to Russia's interest in new migrants as essential labor force to address the demographic crisis. The Kyrgyzstani government also requires these data to prevent unemployment among return migrants. This paper aims to assess return migration dynamics and its structure, uncover the causes, goals, and reasons for recurrent migration to Russia, and examine the expectations of Russia's social and migration policy during the special military operation. The empirical analytical base comprises the results of a questionnaire survey of 515 return migrants and focused in-depth interviews with 37 return migrants in Kyrgyzstan in October–November 2022, as well as a questionnaire survey of 425 labor migrants and focused interviews with 52 labor migrants in November–December 2022 in Moscow. The findings indicate that return migration is voluntary and spontaneous. The official estimate of the scope of return migration, as well as the prospects of labor migration to Russia after February 24th, 2022 and the imposition of anti-Russian sanctions, remains unclear. The structure of return migration aligns with the structure of labor migration in Russia in terms of gender, age, and employment sectors. The motivation behind the decision to return has a cumulative effect. However, most respondents cited personal and family issues as the main reasons for return migration. Approximately 30% of respondents, regardless of gender, attributed the special military operation and the worsening economic situation in Russia as reasons for returning to their

home country. About 22% of respondents envision recurrent migration to Russia in the near future, while around 30% have not yet decided. Labor migrants seek institutional support from Russia, including assistance in preparing registration documents, social insurance provision, removal of administrative obstacles for employment, and the creation of favorable conditions for adaptation.

KEYWORDS

return labor migration, employment, demographic crisis, spatial mobility, migration dynamics

Introduction

Labor migration is a crucial necessity for Russia, stemming from the scarcity of its domestic workforce amid the backdrop of demographic crisis. Upon entry into the Russian Federation, migrants from Kyrgyzstan have sufficient competency in the Russian language, and they predominantly find employment in the sectors that are least sought after by Russian nationals. As citizens of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Kyrgyz migrants are exempt from requiring a labor license (patent) for employment (Osadchaya, 2021; Osadchaya et al., 2021).

The return migration of Kyrgyz individuals is influenced by several factors, including social migration organizations (SMOs), sanctions against Russia, coordinated economic and social mechanisms, instruments facilitating the free movement of labor force, and common standards of social and labor relations established over the past seven years by the EAEU. However, such return migration leads to a significant loss of labor resources for the receiving country (Russia) while simultaneously presenting a "challenge" to the sending countries in the fight against unemployment.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent and drivers of return migration of Kyrgyz citizens, as well as to delineate the profile of return migrants, including their social, professional, demographic, and family-related aspects. Additionally, the research seeks to evaluate the prospects and strategies of spatial mobility, explore the reasons and conditions influencing the decision to return to Russia, and evaluate what Kyrgyz migrants expect from the Russian government in case of returning to Russia again. Through this analysis, we intend to shed light on the complex and multifaceted dynamics of return migration between Russia and Kyrgyzstan. The research on return migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan, as a pattern of mobility within the EAEU, holds significance in advancing the fields of sociological theory, migration theory, and empirical knowledge. It contributes to the development of theoretical and methodological models for understanding return migration and addresses the actual challenges associated with this phenomenon.

The research introduces a novel approach to studying return migration and contributes to sociological knowledge about migration by presenting substantiated models of migration activity among Kyrgyzstan citizens. It assesses the dynamics,

causes, and structure of return migration. The findings provide conceptual support for further empirical studies on migration in the EAEU. Additionally, the study suggests suitable instruments and mechanisms for Russia's social and migration policy to address the challenges of recurrent migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia.

Literature Review and Theoretical Assumptions

Although return migration has long been acknowledged in migration studies, various migration theories tend to overlook it or perceive it solely as either a failure or success of the migration process (Cassarino, 2004). Graziano Battistella (2018) argues that when settling abroad, migrants often harbor the intention of eventually returning to their home country. However, in reality, the majority of migrants end up staying overseas, which is reflected in the term "the myth of return," encompassing various situations (Carling et al., 2015) and emphasizing the infrequent occurrence of actual return migration.

Interest in researching return migration gained prominence in the 1980s when temporary migration programs to Western Europe came to an end, and European countries sought to encourage migrants to repatriate. A well-known study conducted by Massey et al. (1993) concluded that no single theory fully explains this phenomenon, as multiple causal processes operate simultaneously at different levels. Extensive analyses of the literature in this field were carried out by Carling et al. (2011, 2015). Some researchers, like Stark (1993), link migrants' decision to return to family situations. However, the multitude of possibilities hinders the formulation and testing of clear hypotheses regarding why and when a migrant will return, either permanently or temporarily.

The renewed interest in the early 2000s regarding the link between migration and development, as well as the impact of migration on the development of sending countries, has brought attention back to return migration (Battistella, 2004; International Organization for Migration, 2018, 2022; Rogers, 1990). Battistella (2018) discusses the conceptual and political framework of return migration, considering legislative measures that influence return migrants' lives, personal factors, and the role of structural factors in both sending and receiving countries that impact the decision to return. This framework also accounts for various "types of return."

The complexities of return migration necessitate a conceptual framework that encompasses different situations and decisions to return (voluntary and involuntary) (Battistella, 2018). These diverse conditions significantly influence individuals' likelihood and willingness to reintegrate (Cassarino, 2020). For successful reintegration, all stakeholders must effectively prepare for the process (Cassarino, 2014b). However, Cassarino (2014a) questions the validity of the "decision to return" variable, as it is often determined from the destination country's perspective.

The theoretical foundation of our 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 that facilitate migrants' reintegration through knowledge transfer, information, and membership (Cassarino, 2004, pp. 257, 262).

Schiele (2020) discussed this phenomenon in EU countries, evaluating the impact of life satisfaction on return migration to Germany among first-generation migrants from 26 countries. The study reveals that cross-country differences in estimated return rates can be explained by expected variations in life satisfaction improvement/ deterioration of returning migrants.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has shown significant interest in return migration, evidenced by several reports focused on Central Asia (International Organization for Migration, 2018, 2022; Ryazantsev, 2020). One of their recent reports, *Vozvratnaia migratsiia: Mezhdunarodnye podkhody i regional'nye osobennosti Tsentral'noi Azii* [Return migration: International approaches and regional peculiarities of Central Asia], delves into the return migration issues of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This comprehensive report sheds light on return migration problems, theoretical aspects such as classification, definitions, and the intent of states regarding voluntary return migration programs. It also explores the legal basis, reintegration, and the region's potential for these programs (Ryazantsev, 2020).

Russian scholars have also contributed to the research on return migration. For instance, Abashin (2017) explores the impact of Russia's economic situation and migration policy on migrant returns to their home countries. Abashin offers a classification of circular migration models, analyzing migrants' preparedness for return, deportability, nostalgia for migration, and transnational life. Another study by Ivanova (2017) examines the emigration of Russian citizens and their return to the Russian Federation. Her research provides insights into the reasons for their departure and return, along with the socio-economic portrait of migrants, their living conditions abroad, and the reintegration process. Krasinets (2022) investigates the return migration of compatriots to Russia within resettlement programs at federal and regional levels, in particular the efficiency of mechanisms governing Russian citizens' return and their behavior in Russia, including the spatial features of resettlement processes. A comparison of successful approaches to state legal regulation of ethnic repatriation in three post-Soviet countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia) is presented in the paper by Jampeisov et al. (2020). Ryazantsev et al. (2021) examine the trends and reasons behind return labor migration from Russia to Tajikistan, as well as the challenges faced by return migrants in reintegrating into Tajik society. They point out the lack of specific reintegration programs for return migrants. Furthermore, Kuschminder (2017) discusses the role of temporality in return migration, encompassing the idea of return, decision-making about return, circular and seasonal visits, and the experience of return and reintegration, using examples from Albania, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. Additionally, Sivoplyasova, Voinov, and Pismennaya (2022) examined gender aspects of return migration from Russia to Central Asia. Makhmadullozoda (2019) investigates the legal and economic facets of reintegration for returned labor migrants in Central Asian countries. The study analyzes the statutory regulations of Central Asian countries in this area, identifies trends, factors, and prerequisites for the return of labor migrants from abroad, and proposes potential solutions to address this issue.

The literature review indicates that return migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan remains underexplored due to challenges related to statistical undercounting, empirical

measurements, and estimation of these processes amid a fast-moving social, political, and economic landscape. The complexity of causality, involving multiple factors and actors, further highlights the need for further investigation in this field.

Method and Its Justification

In our study, we define "return migration" as the movement of individuals back to their country of origin after leaving their temporary residence abroad and crossing an international border (Sironi et al., 2019). We also use the term "recurrent migration" to describe patterns of cross-country mobility that may or may not happen again. Our research focuses on evaluating the possibility of repeated labor mobility abroad, excluding the study of circular and seasonal movements as types of labor migration.

We believe that recurrent migration can result from cumulative life circumstances. The reasons for returning to the country of origin vary, including successful goal achievement or an unsuccessful migration experience, personal or family circumstances, and prospects for successful professional activity in the home country. The study of return migration necessitates assessing and understanding the social and economic relations between host and home countries, as well as connections with previous places of residence. It also involves exploring resources for returning home, models of interpersonal relations, migration experiences of returnees in terms of time spent abroad, resource deployment, legal status, reasons, and projects. We recognize that return migrants form heterogeneous groups, and their potential to influence sending and receiving countries differs respectively.

The analysis of return migration dynamics, structure, and reasons from Russia to Kyrgyzstan is based on research conducted by the Institute for Demographic Research of FCTAS RAS and Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University (Project leader: G. I. Osadchaya). The study involved 515 return migrants (questionnaire survey) and 37 return migrants (focused in-depth interviews) and was conducted in Kyrgyzstan from October–November 2022. Additionally, 425 labor migrants (questionnaire survey) and 52 labor migrants (focused in-depth interviews) were interviewed in November–December 2022 in Moscow. .

In Kyrgyzstan, respondents were selected using nonrandom sampling through one-attribute targeted selection, including labor migrants who had returned from Russia. The informants for in-depth interviews in Kyrgyzstan were selected using the "snowball" method among labor migrants who had returned from Russia. In Moscow, respondents were chosen through nonrandom sampling using two-attribute targeted selection: citizens of Kyrgyzstan working there. The informants for in-depth interviews were also selected using the two-attribute "snowball" method among citizens of Kyrgyzstan working in Moscow.

In preparing this paper, an analysis of scientific literature and statistics related to the research topic was conducted. The combination of chosen methods for data collection and problem analysis enhances the reliability of our findings.

Research Results

Dynamics of Return Migration From Russia to Kyrgyzstan

The assessment of return migration, along with the prospects of labor migration from post-Soviet countries to Russia, following the start of the special military operation in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, remains ambiguous. Thus, according to the Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service], after the migration gain in Russia in 2021 (in comparison with the "COVID" year of 2020),[1] a migration outflow was observed in October 2022, which was –20.6 thousand people.[2] The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia has not registered the migration outflow. For example, during January–December 2022, the number of migration registrations of non-citizens in Kyrgyzstan reached 1,184,469 people, while the number of non-citizens whose registration was terminated, and they left the country was 1,003,155 people. In 2022, there was a 21% increase in decisions made to issue residence permits (primarily), while the number of individuals obtaining Russian citizenship (reception, restoration, and recognition) increased by 18% (Table 1). However, experts acknowledge the incompleteness of the data available from the Ministry.

Table 1

Data on Migrants From Kyrgyzstan in Russia in January–December 2021 and 2022

	MIGRATION REGISTRATION		TEMPORARY RESIDENT PERMIT		RESIDENT CARDS		Number of individuals to receive Russian citizenship (citizenship reception, restoration, and recognition)
	Non-citizen migration registration cases	Non-citizen migration deregistration cases	Positive decisions on temporary resident permits	Number of non-citizens with valid temporary resident permits, as of the end of the reporting period	Number of decisions on resident cards (primary)	Number of non-citizens with valid resident cards, as of the end of the reporting period	
January–December, 2021							
Kyrgyzstan	1,063,928	696,658	7,141	8,238	10,072	14,289	19,241
January–December, 2022							
Kyrgyzstan	1,184,469	1,003,155	9,675	8,516	12,771	14,582	23,496

Opinions of Kyrgyzstani citizens, who are participants in the migration process themselves, do not fully clarify the situation. When asked about the returns of labor migrants to Kyrgyzstan, more than half of the respondents (21 out of 37) who had returned to their home country mentioned that many of their compatriots left Moscow after the imposition of sanctions against Russia.

---

[1] Total migration gain in 2020 was 106,474 people and 429,902 in 2021. See Rosstat (2022a).

[2] See Rosstat (2022b).

The most common responses provided by return migrants are as follows:

I think there has been an outflow of labor migrants after the imposition of sanctions against Russia … several people among my acquaintances and friends who had left for work returned. They worked in markets in Russia, and upon their return they have also been working in local markets. (Diana, 24, general secondary education, service sector)

Yes, some have returned. Builders, installers, mostly workers. They plan to move to England and South Korea from Kyrgyzstan. (Melis, 46, secondary professional education, construction sector)

There were those who had Russian citizenship, they were afraid that they would be called up for military service and they returned to Kyrgyzstan. They were people with dual citizenship. By profession they traded in the market. (Rinat, 25, secondary professional education, delivery service)

More than half of those Kyrgyzstani migrants who stayed in Moscow (29 of 52 people participating in our in-depth interviews) noted that the special military operation and sanctions against Russia did not affect the labor migration and did not create outflow.

All my friends work in Russia because they need money and they have settled down quite well. (Fatima, 35, salesperson)

There are no such people among my friends, everyone remains in his or her place, no one has left for other regions of Russia or have gone back home, to Kyrgyzstan. Someone works as a picker, someone drives a taxi, but everyone remains in Moscow. (Samat, 25, salesperson)

Nothing has changed among my friends. Everybody, in principle, remained where they were, and they see no reason to return. They return home only for personal reasons: a wedding or just for a vacation, or because of a relative's illness. They have all settled down well enough, received a registration. (Aziza, 27, service sector)

In our opinion, contradictions in the evaluative judgments of migrants can be attributed to their personal psychological characteristics, the influence of reference groups, their level of success in settling in Moscow, and their assessment of the prospects of readaptation in Kyrgyzstan.

Structure of Return Migration From Russia to Kyrgyzstan
According to the questionnaire results, 47.2% of respondents returned to their home country between June and October 2022, and 25.4% between January and June 2022. Among the interviewed returnees, 15.0% had spent up to six months in Russia;

13.4%, from six months to a year; 31.1%, from one year to three years; 17.9%, from three to five years; and 22.6%, more than five years, indicating that on average four out of ten respondents have extensive migration experience. These respondents are primarily aged between 26 and 35. A third of those who returned have a Bachelor's degree, while a fifth have secondary professional education. Most of them returned from Moscow and Moscow region (60.8%) and St. Petersburg and Leningrad region (25.1%) and settled mainly in Bishkek (78.6%) or Osh (11.3%). Among them, 72.4% are citizens of Kyrgyzstan, and 26.6% are citizens of Russia.

It is evident that return migrants, in their employment in Kyrgyzstan, were guided by their previous professional experience, just as they were when searching for jobs in Russia. However, the areas of employment in the labor market of Kyrgyzstan have been somewhat adjusted, with a notable increase in employment in transport, taxis, education, delivery, and courier service. Additionally, the number of unemployed has doubled (Table 2).

Table 2

Sectors Where Returned Migrants Were/Are Employed in Russia and Kyrgyzstan (% of Respondents, Quantitative Survey)

Field	Worked in Russia	Work now in Kyrgyzstan
Industry	5.8	7.2
Construction	8.9	6.8
Transport, taxi	11.3	6.8
Agriculture	3.3	3.5
Trade	19.6	19.8
Education and research	4.1	7.4
Healthcare	4.1	3.1
Services	22.7	18.6
Information technologies	5.2	6.2
Housing and utilities	1.7	0.6
Delivery service	4.1	2.7
Do (did) not work	8.0	16.1
Other	1.2	1.2

Through the analysis of stories shared by the migrants we interviewed in Kyrgyzstan regarding their work activity after returning, we gain insights into their experiences, meanings, and hopes upon coming back to their homeland. These narratives corroborate the findings of the quantitative survey. Upon return, some individuals resume their former scope of activity, while others attempt to make changes or embark on their own entrepreneurial ventures. Nevertheless, the majority still retain aspects of their migrant experience, and some remain unemployed. Informants assess their chances of success differently, reflecting varying perspectives on their future prospects.

I permanently relocated to Kyrgyzstan, and I don't have any plans to leave … After returning, the best solution was to get a job at my old place of work, that is, where I had been working before moving to Russia. This is the driving school. Chances of success ... I can't answer, I haven't evaluated them. (Ilyas, 30, higher education—Bachelor's degree, worked in the field of education)

I moved to Kyrgyzstan for permanent residence. When I was in Moscow, my parents started working in trade, now I work with them, the prospects are good. (Camila, 29, higher education—Bachelor's degree, trade)

We moved to Kyrgyzstan for permanent residence, since our son had already grown up. I work in the same field as in Russia. Given my extensive experience as a hairdresser over the years, I believe my chances of success are quite promising. (Diana, 32, higher education—Bachelor's degree, service sector)

Salaries are not satisfactory, so I do not work. There is a chance of success, but it takes time. (Sofa, 28, higher education—Bachelor's degree, service sector)

I'm a surgeon in a private clinic. I do not plan to move from Kyrgyzstan now. The chances of success are high. (Ruslan, 33, higher education—postgraduate, healthcare)

I work seasonally, I am not working at the moment. It's hard to talk about the future. (Sania, 22, higher education—Bachelor's degree, unemployed/looking for a job)

I am currently not employed, so we are living off the money we saved during my time working in the Russian Federation. As of now, I am unsure about my future plans. (Arslan, 30, secondary professional education, unemployed/looking for a job)

After returning to my homeland, I have managed to start my own small business, and I earn money from it. I have finally decided to stay in Kyrgyzstan. Hope everything works out. (Bakyt, 32, secondary professional education, business owner)

Got a job at a construction site. Moved to Kyrgyzstan for permanent residence. Chances of success are below average. (Melis, 46, secondary professional education, construction)

I moved for good, and my family has a business, I help them now sometimes at the market. (Urmat, 32, general secondary education, trade)

According to the positive responses from 58% of respondents (comprising 25.8% "Yes" and 32.2% "Rather Yes"), their expectations of returning to Kyrgyzstan from Russia were generally fulfilled. The share of those whose expectations were

met is 9% higher among men and 30% higher in the age group of 46–65. However, for 31.3% of respondents, their preparedness for the new social realities turned out to be insufficient. Their expectations from the return were either not fully met or not met at all, with answers such as "Rather No" at 23.3% and "No" at 8.0%. Additionally, 10.7% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question (approximately the same proportion in all age and gender groups).

These ratings strongly correlate with the satisfaction scores regarding the jobs people found in Kyrgyzstan. More than half of the respondents believe that their work is well paid (with positive responses of "Yes" at 22.7% and "Mostly Yes" at 30.6%, totaling 53.3%); the answer choice "fits my knowledge, abilities, and opportunities" received "Yes" responses from 28.3% and "Mostly Yes" responses from 35.9%, together constituting 64.2%; and the answer choice "generally satisfies" received a total of 62.45% positive responses (summing "Yes" at 25.7% and "Mostly Yes" at 36.7%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Respondents' Opinions on Their Work in Kyrgyzstan, % of all Surveyed
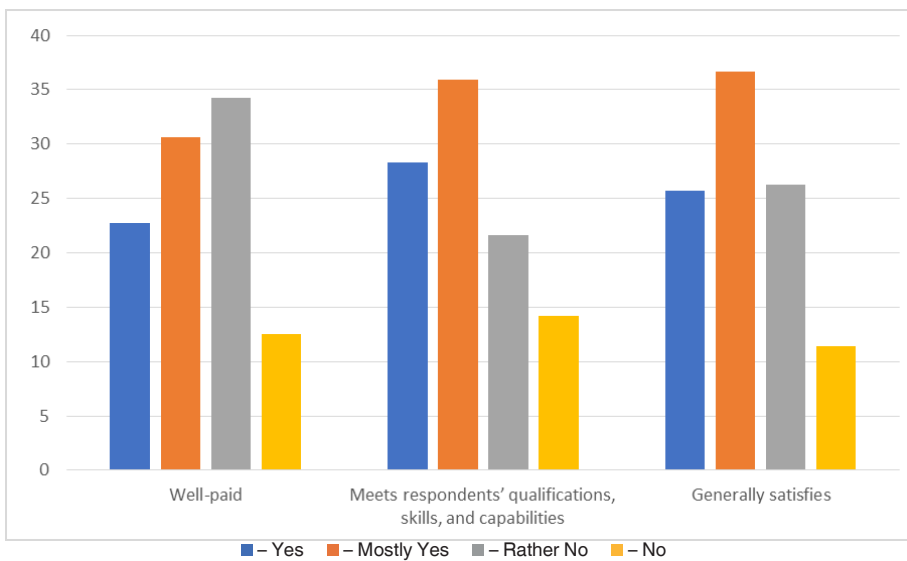
Reasons for Return Migration From Russia to Kyrgyzstan
It should be noted that many migrants, facing challenging adaptation and missing their homes and families, began contemplating returning to their homeland from the early days in Russia. Despite various reasons influencing the decision on return migration, our respondents highlighted specific factors that were pivotal for them at the moment. Among the respondents, 17 out of 37 cited family and personal issues, including health conditions requiring more affordable medical treatment in Kyrgyzstan, caregiving for parents, and ensuring the education of their children who were left in Kyrgyzstan with their grandparents, as the main reasons for their return.

We lived well in Moscow; many relatives were nearby. I had some difficulties at work, it did not immediately start to work out. It was very difficult to study and work long hours at the same time. Besides, the climate was different from ours. We decided to return home because of our child. It was time to go to school and get ready. Yes, we returned after February 24th, but the situation between Russia and Ukraine did not affect us. (Angelina, 29, higher education, trade)

I came to Russia alone to earn more money. My daughter and my wife stayed home. Life in Russia was good, at first, I worked in a store, did merchandising, there were difficulties with documents, registration was very difficult, and there were eight of us living in a two-room apartment. It was difficult for me. I began to think about returning after a month there, since I was on my own, I missed my family. I have returned recently. Anyway, it's better at home, I decided to realize myself in my own country. I came back before the war, so it didn't affect me. (Rinat, 25, secondary professional education, delivery service)

I was compelled to migrate because of the lack of job opportunities. I moved alone, my beloved family stayed in Bishkek. Everything was going pretty well, I worked at Yandex Taxi, I didn't encounter any difficulties, probably because my move was not a spontaneous decision and everything was more or less thoroughly planned. I began to think about returning at the beginning of 2022, and finally made a decision closer to spring. I was largely driven by homesickness and, in general, my expectations from the move were not particularly fulfilled. The events related to Ukraine, fortunately, did not affect me in any way. (Ilyas, 30, higher education—Bachelor's degree, education)

About a third of our informants (13 out of 37 in-depth interviewed) cited the special military operation and the related economic downturn as the reason for their return.

I moved to Russia to earn more, I moved alone. My family consisting of mom, dad, and little brother stayed at home. At first time it was very difficult: a new city, a different mentality, cold weather, missing relatives and my native city. I worked from home, received clients in the apartment. The first difficulty was to find housing, since everything was expensive, but I was lucky and in Telegram3 I found girls with whom I rented an apartment, sharing the rent. After the events that took place after February 24, 2022 in Russia, I made the final decision to return to my homeland, since even before that I had thoughts of returning, and after the start of the events I finally decided. (Diana, 24, general secondary education, service sector)

I left for Moscow because of small wages. I moved alone. The rest of my family remained in Kyrgyzstan. In the beginning, it was difficult because of registration and job search. I had problems with my salary being delayed or not paid, but it

---

3 Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

got better over time. I worked in construction. After 1.5 years in Russia, I started thinking about returning to Kyrgyzstan. Eventually, I decided to go back because of the worsening economic situation in Russia and lower salaries due to events in Ukraine. (Melis, 46, secondary professional education, construction sector)

Seven respondents named the following reasons for their return: their contract ended, their goals were achieved, and they were offered a job in Kyrgyzstan.

I came with friends, and my parents wanted me to go so that I could earn well. I worked in the construction industry, and it was challenging to adapt. I missed my family and Kyrgyzstan. The events in February did not influence my return since my work contract was ending. (Max, 21, general secondary education, construction sector)

The reason for migration to Russia was the desire to earn money. I came to Russia alone. My parents, brothers, and sister remained in Kyrgyzstan. They reacted positively to my decision to move. In Moscow, I found a job, acquired a new profession and was earning money. I worked as a cook in a restaurant. There were no difficulties. For the first time, I began to think about returning to my homeland in the spring of 2022. A few months later, I decided to return. The reason is that I was offered a job in Kyrgyzstan. The reaction of relatives and friends was good. The events taking place around Ukraine did not influence my decision. (Zeine, 48, secondary professional education, service sector)

### *Recurrent Migration From Kyrgyzstan to Russia*

The decision of recurrent migration to Russia is influenced by the returnee's condition and status, as well as their choice to conclude the migration cycle in Russia. Approximately 22% of respondents demonstrate a model of secondary cross-border mobility, planning to return to work in Russia in the near future. This recurrent migration tendency is more prevalent among women and respondents aged 26–35. Additionally, individuals with general secondary education, a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and those with Russian citizenship show a higher inclination towards this decision.

In the group of migrants whose expectations of returning to Kyrgyzstan from Russia were fulfilled, there is a 23% lower proportion of those planning to return to Russia within three months. Conversely, in the group of those planning to return to Russia, a somewhat higher proportion associates Russia with the possibility of good earnings and a comfortable life for themselves and their family members (Figure 2).

The majority of informants (30 out of 37 interviewed) stated that if they were to make a decision about secondary migration, they would return to the same cities and organizations, and plan to work in the same sphere. Four informants even mentioned that they would carefully consider and develop a detailed plan of action.

Figure 2

Expectations of the Respondents in Relation to Russia, % of Those Surveyed Planning and Not Planning Recurrent Migration
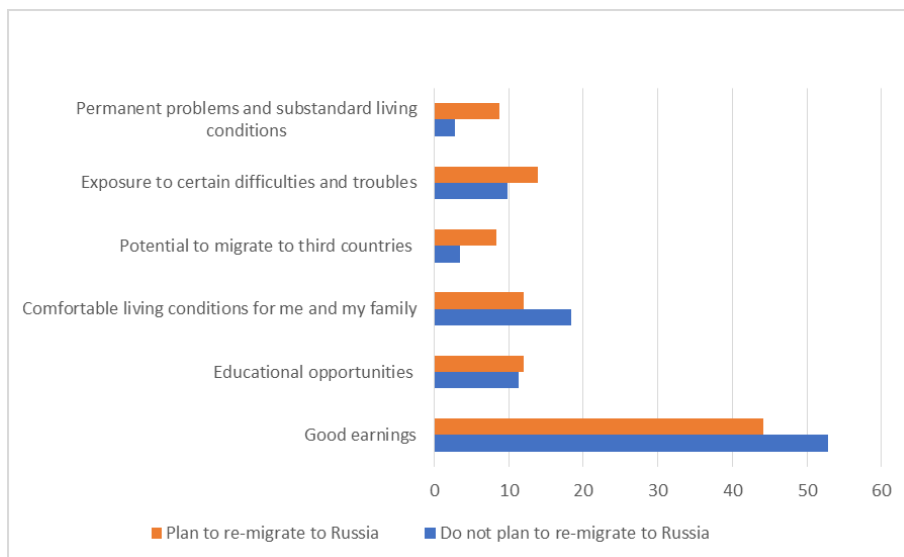
I think, if I go to Russia, this will be a deliberate and well-considered decision. This time, I won't repeat my past mistakes of going and then searching for a job. I will plan ahead, think things through, and develop a strategy to avoid difficulties. Maybe, for a while, I'll focus on enjoying my leisure time. (Diana, 24, general secondary education, service sector)

Among the primary reasons that could influence the decision-making model for secondary migration are as follows: first, the desire for good wages and a stable job (mentioned by 11 out of 37 informants); second, an attractive offer for a regular job with promising prospects, good salary, and favorable working conditions (cited by 6 out of 37 informants), and, third, concerns about destabilization, unstable politics, and unemployment in Kyrgyzstan (noted by 7 out of 37 informants).

The majority of respondents planning to return to work in Russia identify themselves as Kyrgyzstani citizens.

I perceive myself as a Kyrgyzstani resident and citizen. As a resident of Kyrgyzstan and an ethnic Kyrgyz, I comply with the Muslim canons and customs of my ancestors in a modern way. (Zeine, 48, secondary professional education, service sector)

Out of 37 informants, only seven respondents believe that migration has become an integral part of their lifestyle, and they cannot imagine their life without migration, which is why we can describe them as circular transnational migrants.

> I can say yes, I don't like to sit tight, I want to try to live in other countries too, I love my homeland and will always return home, but there's always travelling. (Atay, 26, higher education—Bachelor's degree, delivery service)

> I plan to move to the USA and to find a job there. I don't know, in the age of globalization, it's hard to imagine life without migration. Everybody, I think, wants to migrate, especially in our country, because life is tough here. (Rinat, 25, secondary professional education, delivery service)

> Yes, migration has already become an integral part of my lifestyle. I can't imagine my life without migration, I think. I don't see any shortcomings in the migrant way of life. (Zeine, 48, secondary professional education, service sector)

Some informants strongly rejected the possibility of new migration, emphasizing its downsides.

> Living as a migrant is challenging, especially in the beginning when you might feel somewhat lost. Local people may treat you with distrust or disdain, particularly if you are Asian. However, with time, you start to adapt and feel more integrated into the new culture. The most difficult moments often arise when there are job-related problems (from my own experience). Many people experience delays in their salary or even lose their job altogether. On top of that, there are expenses like rent, food, and the need to send money back home. During such times, you may feel overwhelmed as the main purpose of the journey is to earn money for yourself and your family back home, yet you find yourself struggling to meet your own basic needs. (Aibek, 27, secondary professional education, construction industry)

> Yes, I can easily envision my life without migration. I haven't been a migrant for an extended period of time, and I don't wish to become too accustomed to it. Each person's experience varies. In my case, I've become more independent, but being away from family and friends has given me much to contemplate. One of the drawbacks is the challenge of finding housing, and the harsh climate has made it difficult for me to adjust. (Bakyt, 32, secondary professional education, business owner)

Maintaining connections with compatriots and/or friends who remain in Russia can influence people's decision about circular migration. In our survey, nine out of ten respondents who returned to Kyrgyzstan reported staying in touch with their fellow countrymen who are still in Russia.

Regarding recurrent migration back to Russia, our informants suggest that if the Russian government streamlined the document processing during registration, facilitated working in their respective professions, provided social insurance, and exhibited a more welcoming attitude towards migrants, it would promote the effective utilization of the labor potential of those coming to Russia.

The decision to opt for recurrent migration to Russia reflects an individual's life strategy, goals, and approach to achieving them, considering their previous

personal experiences, as well as their determination to obtain citizenship and support integration processes in Eurasia. Those who have chosen a recurrent migration strategy to Russia are more actively supportive of integration processes in the EAEU and are more inclined to seek Russian citizenship (Figure 3, 4).

Figure 3

Respondents' Support for Integration Between Russia and Kyrgyzstan Within the EAEU, % of Surveyed Migrants Who Stayed in Moscow, Return Migrants Planning Recurrent Migration to Russia, and Migrants Who Completed Their Migration Cycle
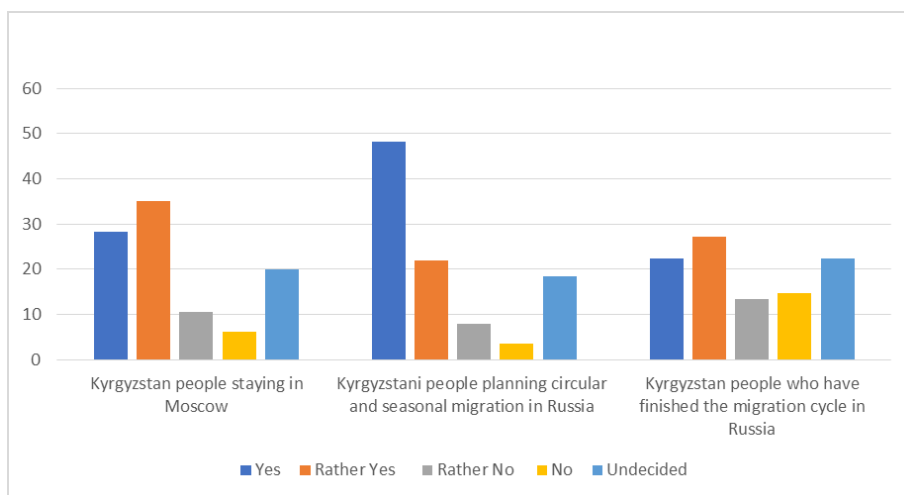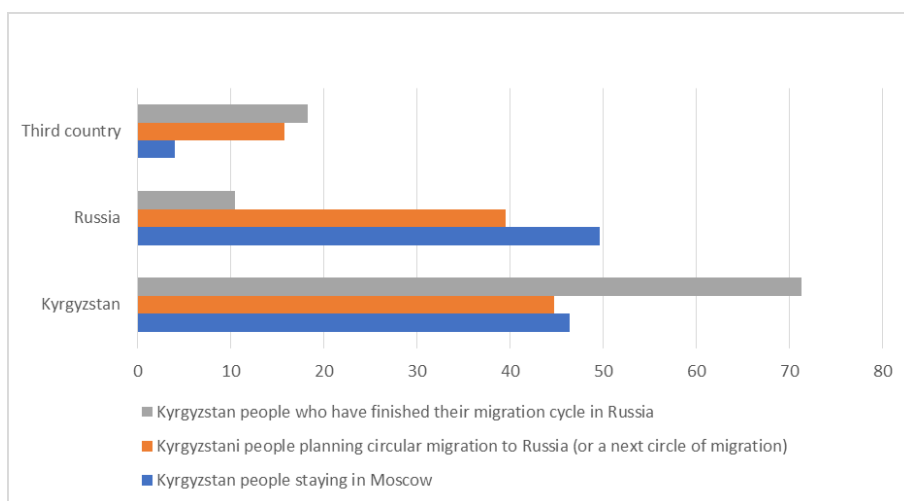

Figure 4

Citizenship Plans in Five Years (% of Surveyed Migrants)

Discussion and Conclusion

The study examines return migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan under recent social, political, and socio-economic conditions, focusing on the reasons and motivations behind Kyrgyzstani people's decision to move back to their country of origin or their willingness to consider another migration to Russia. These decisions are influenced by various factors, including the specific locations where migrants settle, the emotions and challenges they experience during the move, and the changes in their daily lives.

The research reveals the ambiguity in both official data and subjective opinions of survey participants regarding the scale of return migration to Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, the prospects for labor migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia after the start of the special military operation and the imposition of sanctions against Russia remain uncertain.

Return migration is characterized as voluntary and spontaneous, A significant proportion of returnees settle in Bishkek (78.6%), possibly due to their previous work experiences in major Russian cities. When seeking jobs in Kyrgyzstan, return migrants draw upon the professional migration experience they gained in Russia. Interestingly, 58% of respondents feel that their expectations of returning to Kyrgyzstan from Russia have been fulfilled.

The year 2022 was characterized by a unprecedented connection between return migration and military/political issues. Approximately a third of respondents attributed their decision to return to the special military operation, while a fifth of them cited factors like contract completion, achieving migration goals, or attractive job offers in Kyrgyzstan. However, half of the respondents mentioned personal and family reasons as the primary motivator.

Among those in Kyrgyzstan, 22% consider recurrent migration to Russia, planning to return for work between December and March. Meanwhile, 49% believe their migration cycle in Russia is complete, and 29% are undecided. The decision for recurrent migration depends on migration experiences, personal traits, and aligning life conditions with their values. This group shows greater support for integration within the EAEU and a higher inclination to obtain Russian citizenship. Some informants believe that migration has become an integral part of their lifestyle, and they cannot imagine their life without it.

For those not planning to return to Russia, factors like good wages, stable job opportunities, attractive job offers, political instability, and unemployment in Kyrgyzstan influence their decision. However, should they choose to return, they intend to go to the same cities and organizations, working in the same specialties.

Regarding recurrent migration, informants expect institutional support from Russia, such as legalization assistance, social insurance provision, elimination of administrative employment barriers, and comfortable adaptation conditions. Equal pay for equal work, protection of migrants' social and labor rights, and adherence to migration legislation are essential aspects for successful integration.

This research enriches the field of migration theory and sociology, providing new insights into return migration. Our theoretical findings, specifically regarding return migration to Kyrgyzstan from Russia as a form of mobility within the EAEU,

provide a conceptual foundation for future empirical research on migration in the EAEU. These results can be utilized in developing educational courses and improvement programs focused on integration processes within the Eurasian Union, benefiting Masters, postdocs, university teachers, and specialists studying migration theory and sociology.

Furthermore, the results can help in creating favorable conditions for the integration policy of the EAEU, and in devising effective instruments and mechanisms for social and integration policies within Russia and the Eurasian Union. They can also play a crucial role in addressing issues related to return migration and return migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan. Overall, the research contributes to migration studies within the EAEU and may be of interest to decision-makers in the sphere of migration policy and practice.

References

Abashin, S. N. (2017). Vozvrashchenie domoi i tsirkuliarnaia mobil'nost': Kak krizisy meniaiut antropologicheskii vzgliad na migratsiiu [Return home and circular mobility: How crises change anthropological views of migration]. *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, *3*, 5–15.

Battistella, G. (2004). Return migration in the Philippines: Issues and policies. In D. S. Massey & J. E. Taylor (Eds.), *International migration: Prospects and policies in a global market* (pp. 212–229). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0199269009.003.0012

Battistella, G. (2018, March 8). *Return migration: A conceptual and policy framework*. Center for Migration Studies. https://cmsny.org/publications/2018smsc-smc-return-migration/

Carling, J., Bolognani, M., Erdal, M. B., Ezzatti R. T., Oeppen, C., Paasche, E., Pettersen, S. V., & Sagmo, T. H. (2015). *Possibilities and realities of return migration*. Peace Research Institute Oslo. https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/report/possibilities-and-realities-return-migration

Carling, J., Mortensen, E. B., & Wu, J. (2011). A *systematic bibliography on return migration*. Peace Research Institute Oslo. https://www.prio.org/publications/7199

Cassarino, J.-P. (2004). Theorising return migration: The conceptual approach to return migrants revisited. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, *6*(2), 253–279.

Cassarino, J.-P. (Ed.). (2014a). *Reintegration and development*. European University Institute. https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/30401

Cassarino, J.-P. (2014b). A case for return preparedness. In G. Battistella (Ed.), *Global and Asian perspectives on international migration* (pp. 153–166). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08317-9_8

Cassarino, J.-P. (2020). Are current "return policies" return policies? A reflection and critique. In T. Bastia & R. Skeldon (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of migration and development* (pp. 343–352). Routledge.

International Organization for Migration. (2018, August 29). *Migrant vulnerabilities and integration needs in Central Asia: Root causes, social and economic impact of return migration. Regional field assessment in Central Asia 2016*. https://www.iom.int/node/86511

International Organization for Migration. (2022, July 27). *Return and reintegration key highlights 2021.* https://publications.iom.int/books/return-and-reintegration-key-highlights-2021

Ivanova, R. V. (2017). *Vozvratnaia migratsiia v Rossiiu: Eshche odna emigratsiia?* [Return migration to Russia: Another emigration?]. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta. Ekonomika*, *33*(1), 141–161. https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu05.2017.108

Jampeisov, D., Ryazantsev, S., Peremyshlin, S., & Jampeisov, D. (2020). Managing ethnic repatriation experience: Central Asian states and Russian Federation. *Central Asia & the Caucasus*, *21*(1), 124–136.

Krasinets, E. S. (2022). Vozvratnaia migratsii v Rossiiu: Tendentsii proshlogo i realii nastoiashchego [Return migration to Russia: Trends of the past and realities of the present]. *Population*, *25*(1), 105–117. https://doi.org/10.19181/population.2022.25.1.9

Kuschminder, K. (2017). *Reintegration strategies: Conceptualizing how return migrants reintegrate*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-55741-0

Makhmadullozoda, N. R. (2019). Reintegratsiia vozvrashchaiushchikhsia trudovykh migrantov v stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii: Pravovye i ekonomicheskie aspekty [Reintegration of returning labor migrants in the countries of Central Asia: Legal and economic aspects]. In *Proceedings of the XIX International Scientific and Practical Conference "Fundamental Science and Technology—Promising Developments", June 10–11, 2019, North Charleston, USA* (Vol. 2, pp. 127–133).

Massey, D., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, *19*(3), 431–466. https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462

Osadchaya, G. I. (2021). Otsenka urovnia sotsial'noi adaptatsii molodykh migrantov v megapolise [Assessing the level of social adaptation among young migrants in the megapolis]. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, *14*(1), 186–198. https://doi.org/10.15838/esc.2021.1.73.13

Osadchaya, G. I., Leskova, I. V., & Yudina, T. N. (2021). Kyrgyzskaia molodezh' v moskovskoi aglomeratsii: Adaptatsionnye strategii [Kyrgyz youth in the Moscow agglomeration: Adaptation strategies]. *Sotsialnaya politika i sotsiologiya*, *20*(3), 135–145.

Rogers, R. (1990). *Return migration, migrants' savings and sending countries' economic development: Lessons from Europe* (Working paper No. 30). Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development.

Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service]. (2022a, July 29). *Chislennost' i migratsiia naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2021 godu* [Population and Migration in the Russian Federation in 2021]. https://rosstat.gov.ru/compendium/document/13283

Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service]. (2022b). *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii: Ianvar'–noiabr'* [Socio-economic situation in Russia: January–November]. https://rosstat.gov.ru/bgd/regl/b22_01/Main.htm

Ryazantsev, S. V. (Ed.). (2020). *Vozvratnaia migratsiia: Mezhdunarodnye podkhody i regional'nye osobennosti Tsentral'noi Azii* [Return migration: International approaches and regional peculiarities of Central Asia]. International Organization for Migration. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/Return-Migration-in-CA-RU.pdf

Ryazantsev, S., Khonkhodzhayev, F., Akramov, Sh., & Ryazantsev, N. (2021). Return migration to Tajikistan: Forms, trends, consequences. *Central Asia & The Caucasus*, *22*(2), 162–173. https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.2.14

Schiele, M. (2020). Life satisfaction and return migration: Analysing the role of life satisfaction for migrant return intentions in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47*(1), 110–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1763786

Sironi, A., Bauloz, C., & Emmanuel, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Glossary on migration. International Migration Law No. 34*. International Organization for Migration. https://publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg34-glossary-migration

Sivoplyasova, S. Yu., Voynov S. M., & Pismennaya, E. E. (2022). Gendernye osobennosti vozvratnoi migratsii v strany Tsentral'noi Azii [Gender features of return migration in central Asian countries]. *Business. Education. Law*, *1*, 19–25. https://doi.org/10.25683/VOLBI.2022.58.109

Stark, O. (1993). *The migration of labor*. Blackwell.

ARTICLE

Refining Methodological Reflection: Exploring the Interviewing Experience of Oocyte Donors

Natalya B. Gramatchikova
Institute of History and Archaeology, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yekaterinurg, Russia

Irina G. Polyakova
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The article reflects on the collaborative experience between a practicing psychologist actively involved in the oocyte donation protocol (participating in guide development, conducting interviews, and drawing conclusions for the clinic) and a philologist who interprets the interview transcripts using narrative and communicative situation analyses. The article begins by describing the interviewing process, the structure of the oocyte-donor guide, and the profile of a "stable donor," drawing from Russian-language materials. Through narrative analysis of 21 transcripts, the roles of the interviewer and informant at each stage of the interview process are identified, along with their contributions to the discussion and testing of the communicative situation. The paper investigates both the instances of cooperation and discrepancies observed among the participants as they strive to construct a credible and value-consistent autobiographical narrative that comprehensively encompasses their donation experience. The article analyzes both explicit and hidden narrative motives placed by informants in a conversation unfolding from the respondent's past into a projected future. The authors aim to situate this experience within a broader personal value context, which includes compensatory aspects related to the pressing concerns of potential donors.

Introduction

As the field of reproductive donation and oocyte donation in particular continues to grow, more individuals are being involved in reproductive medicine practices. This has led to the growing awareness of the need for qualitative changes in the approaches to selecting and preparing egg donors. According to international research, the use of donor oocytes is one of the most effective reproductive technologies that help infertile people become parents (Barri et al., 2014; Hogan et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the use of donor material in human reproduction is riddled with contradictions (Beeson et al., 2015) and undoubtedly requires further study.

There is no universal approach to how reproductive donation should be legally regulated. In several European countries, such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, oocyte donation is prohibited by law. In other countries, like Denmark and Sweden, a procedure is considered dangerous to donors' health and is subject to significant legislative restrictions (Lima et al., 2019). Among global trends, a movement towards open gamete donation is evident (Blyth & Frith, 2009). An increasing number of countries are adopting legislation requiring disclosure of the donor's identity. Such legislation acts in the interest of children born from donor materials, granting them the possibility, if desired and upon reaching a certain age, to connect with their biological parents. While most countries allow compensation for donor expenses, monetary remuneration is not typically permitted.

Russian legislation in this area is quite accommodating and regulated by the Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation dated July 31, 2020, No. 803n *O poriadke ispol'zovaniia vspomogatel'nykh reproduktivnykh tekhnologii, protivopokazaniiakh i ogranicheniiakh k ikh primeneniiu* [On the Procedure of the Use of Assisted Reproduction Technologies, Contraindications and Limitations of Their Application]. According to this Order, oocyte donors can be both non-anonymous and anonymous. This Order does not provide for financial compensation or for its absence (O poriadke ispol'zovaniia, 2020).

In contrast to other countries, active social advertising of reproductive donation is absent in Russia. The most effective advertising strategy among experts is considered to be the "word of mouth," where information is passed on by interested individuals who have experience with donation or those in need of donor material. Other forms of advertising are considered less effective or even detrimental (Bashmakova et al., 2023, p. 43). Moreover, an essential channel for transmitting information is from doctor to patient.

The research project *Sotsial'no-psikhologicheskoe blagopoluchie donorov ootsitov: Sotsiokul'turnye faktory i osobennosti motivatsii* [Socio-Psychological Well-Being of Oocyte Donors: Sociocultural Factors and Motivation Factors], which was

conducted from January 10, 2022 to March 31, 2022, included 21 semi-structured 1.5-hour interviews with women who expressed a desire to become oocyte donors and met health requirements. The formal outcome of the interview should be the psychologist's conclusion about the donor's readiness and motivation for the donation procedure. The psychologist also evaluates the potential risks of further cooperation with this or that donor for the fertility clinic. However, the narratives obtained during the conversation between the donor candidate and the psychologist also allow for several research questions to be raised: the first question concerns the structure of the guide and the second question involves the possibility of interpreting women's statements not only as "feedback", but also as a means of gaining new knowledge about the driving motives of donation and their connection with the donor's life situation. These two questions will be our focus of attention in this article.

Goals of Interviewing, Guide Structure, and Methodology of Analysis

Given the high health risks involved in oocyte donation, it is important to ensure the donor's psychological and physical well-being not only during but also after the donation procedure. In other words, a young egg donor after the end of the stimulation cycle should maintain fertility, stable relationships with her loved ones, and be at peace with their moral and ethical beliefs. Certainly, reproduction centers need mentally and physically healthy donors who are ready for repeated procedures and are capable of weighing the benefits and risks for their mental and physical health.

Thus, the current tasks of interviewing can be formulated as follows:

• Identify external and internal sociocultural factors that influence the motivation for oocyte donation depending on the absence/presence of prior donation experience, candidate's age, and their social and economic status;

• Identify significant socio-psychological indicators correlating with motives for donating oocytes;

• Identify and systematize social and ethical-psychological problems (barriers) of oocyte donation as well as the ways donors deal with them;

• Build a socio-psychological profile of a "stable donor".

It should be noted that the clinic invests resources in donors before the donation procedure. This includes legally required medical examinations and treatment of some minor conditions that are discovered during the process, the costs of which are covered by the fertility clinics. In some large reproductive centers in Russia, there are staff psychologists whose main task is to diagnose women whose character traits or symptoms of personality disorders make them unsuitable for the clinic. The psychologist also evaluates the punctuality, communicative competence, and overall adequacy of the applicants.

Unfortunately, as far as we know, at this stage, the activity of a diagnostic psychologist remains strictly pragmatic in nature. A review of Russian academic publications gives grounds to believe that no research has been conducted in this field. As for international research, several examples of similar qualitative studies can be provided. For instance, in 2014, a team of British researchers conducted

11 semi-structured interviews with egg donors. In addition to studying the participants' own "reproductive history," that is, their experience of going through the procedures of selection, counseling, and becoming an oocyte donor, the interviews included questions about the reasons for their participation in egg donation programs, how they first learned about egg donation, and whether they discussed this procedure with other people. During the interviews, a special emphasis was made on the thoughts and feelings of the participants regarding the recipient person or couple, the resulting child, and the possibilities for future information exchange (Graham et al., 2016). A research team from Australia conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with oocyte donors. Their findings were used to devise a guide, which included questions about the experience of egg donation, the quality of medical care, and "feedback" regarding the degree of satisfaction of the donors' expectations of donation. All questions were open-ended and formulated as an invitation for the participants to describe their experience in their own words (Hogan et al., 2022).

Our methodology is most akin to the one employed by Canadian researchers (Winter & Daniluk, 2004). Their attention was focused on the interviews with egg donors. The analysis was based on the authors' acknowledgment of a respectful attitude towards egg donation as a phenomenon, and trust that individuals are the best sources of information about themselves. This is the ethical platform on which the methodological part of the article is based (Winter & Daniluk, 2004, p. 486). Our Russian colleagues, sociologists and anthropologists, also highlight the fact that the consideration of reproductive matters inherently involves value judgments (Zdravomyslova & Temkina, 2009b, p. 8). Introducing Russian-language materials into scholarly discussion becomes even more important, especially considering their significant differences from foreign practices, which will be further considered.

The material of this article consists of the transcripts of interviews with oocyte donors. There were 21 donors aged between 19 and 34. Six of them had already experienced at least one donation. The multifaceted and sensitive nature of the topic requires an interdisciplinary comprehensive approach. Initially, based on the analysis of international literature, a semi-structured interview guide was developed by giving due regard to the Russian context and in accordance with the goals of interviewing. The guide included five main sets of questions: prior donation experience, motivation, sociocultural factors that influence or determine motivation, donation barriers, and socio-demographic characteristics. The guide was developed by a professional sociologist and implemented in interviews by a professional psychologist with the help of a psychological toolkit.

After conducting the first three pilot interviews, the guide was revised because the donors had difficulty engaging in conversation and preferred to give brief answers. The decision was made to consolidate and formulate the following sets of questions: the client's family history (parental family and childhood), the current family situation, and egg donation and all its components. This allowed us to obtain the necessary narrative for analysis. In this article, the examination of the narratives resulting from the psychologist's interaction with the prospective donor is conducted in collaboration with a philologist. Together, they redirect their attention to the text, the structure of the communicative situation, the essence of the narrative, and other relevant factors for a comprehensive analysis.

Several key theoretical provisions underpin the methodological framework applied in this article. We rely on the approach to qualitative research interviewing formulated by S. Kvale (1996), which postulates openness and trust in a new type of knowledge that is not "acquired" as a result of processing "tons of verbal ore" for the sake of a psychological conclusion at the end of the interview, but rather emerges in the answers of egg donors as they attempt to articulate the pivotal moments that led them to participate in an oocyte donation protocol.

It is important to take into account the fact that women perceive their participation in the interview as part of the selection procedure, which undoubtedly affects the nature of their responses (the interview is not purely sociological; the power dynamic between the interviewer and the informant is unequal). In most cases, it is obvious to the psychologist that women want to find the "right answer" and, thus, not be "rejected," losing the opportunity to participate in the project and the expected financial reward. In this study, we do not delve into the evaluation of the "authenticity" or social acceptability of the motivations voiced by the donors, as it falls outside the scope of our material and ethical framework. From the hour-long conversation with each informant, we can provide a description of how they represent their autobiography as they enter into a new sphere of relationships for Russian society, the discourse tools they are prepared to use, and where they lay down their "individual paths." Prospective egg donors often restrict their statements to the bare minimum when they are in a stressful situation of having to undergo yet another test. From a philological standpoint, the aforementioned factors enhance the significance of discursive elements. For psychologists, socially acceptable motives for donation take center stage and are reiterated during interviews, while developed narrative fragments gain greater importance. However, during the interview, the psychologist–donor tandem constructs a specific autobiographical narrative, in which it is possible to distinguish between the layers of "routine," of what is "eventful" and "hidden" (Golofast, 1995). The peculiar nature of the situation, standing apart from everyday practices, and its formalization in the form of a conversation is what allows us to interpret such texts as self-descriptions. In his monograph, N. Luhmann defined the possibilities and limits of self-description of social systems, revealing the relativity and, at the same time, the critical importance of distinguishing between subject and object. He also pointed out the inevitability of self-simplifications in such self-descriptions (Luhmann, 1997/2009).

For research purposes, with certain reservations, we can 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. The sphere of "projected future" is where the traces of the collision of "scenarios" are the most pronounced: the psychologist suggests considering several situations that are modelled based on global practices in the field of reproductive technologies and the psychologist's own counseling experience; the woman's task is to react to them and perhaps oppose them with her own vision. More and more countries are enacting legislation that permits only known (non-anonymous) donors, indicating a worldwide shift towards open gamete (sperm and egg) donation

(Blyth & Frith, 2009). In this case, lawmakers act in the interests of the resulting children, giving them the opportunity, if desired and upon reaching a certain age, to meet their biological parents (Golombok et al., 2006; McWhinnie, 2001). Considering this, the main goal of the final segment of the interview is to enable the women to imagine meeting their prospective biological offspring in different circumstances and to fantasize about their emotions and sentiments in this situation.

To structure our article, we will use the "biographical illusion" of moving from the past to the future, despite the fact that in the interviews themselves, the thematic areas of "past–present–future" do not always follow a direct chronological order and often form one or two cycles that clarify (or refute) previous answers.

In our opinion, the anthropological perspective is highly relevant to our research material. Since the focus of our research is on reproduction, which is directly linked to the fundamental aspects of human existence such as life, death, and the meaning of life, the relevance of the anthropological perspective cannot be overstated. This applies regardless of whether the context is medical or domestic. Perhaps, this stage of data accumulation in the sphere of reproduction can be seen as a "panoramic dimension" of this social sphere (Golofast, 2000, p. 132). Regarding the relationship between individual texts and their potential for sociology and anthropology, V. Golofast wrote the following:

> Personal texts condense the sociocultural fabric of everyday life. *It no longer makes sense to view them only as signs of individual psychology or as a psychoanalytic space. They become a window into the sociocultural world* [emphasis added], the properties of which are much better known than the world of the soul and the unconscious. (Golofast, 2000, p. 133; trans. by N. Gramatchikova & I. Polyakova [N. G. & I. P.])

"An Open Door to the Past": The Informant's Childhood in the Parental Family
Using the informant's family history to connect their past and present can be a successful strategy for initiating the conversation with a prospective donor. This approach can establish a more comfortable psychological atmosphere and provide insight into the donor's communicative behavior.[1]

It should be noted that the women themselves focus entirely on the present. After deciding to donate their oocytes, they are generally not very interested in elaborating on the context of this decision. Perhaps, most of them are not accustomed to the role of storytellers. Most women are heavily involved in family matters, which means that even when they are focused on passing the "entrance psychological test," their own family history can evoke an emotional response in them.

At this stage, the psychologist's ultimate goal is to "do no harm": when encountering unprocessed traumatic experiences from the past, the specialist tries to "mirror" their presence for the woman herself and discuss them if the patient is ready and willing to engage in dialogue:

---

[1] The guide provides options depending on the donor's previous donation experience or lack thereof, but we will consider the situation in general without focusing on these differences.

Question (Q): Could you tell me about your childhood, please?

Answer (A): I was the only child in my family. Child of the 90s. I can't say that I had an ideal childhood like those who were more well-off. But my mother tried to do everything she could. It was an ordinary childhood …

Q: But were you subjected to physical punishment in your childhood?

A: Yes, you know, at certain moments, it was probably very hurtful for me. I didn't understand why, but now, analyzing my past life, I understand. She worked from nine to nine. Basically, it was my granny who brought me up. That is, she was always emotionally exhausted. Dad, so to speak, was a bit of a slacker. My father was absent most of my childhood, so my mother took it all upon herself and carried the load. At the moment I can't change anything anyway. I do realize that she was wrong, yes, but … I don't want to accept that she was wrong. Why would I accumulate this negativity towards my mother? I wouldn't be picking at her faults now.

Q: Do you remember which word you used to describe your childhood?

A: Not now, no.

Q: Ordinary.

A: Well, yes, it was quite ordinary.

Q: No, not all children, especially girls, are beaten by their parents, let alone their mothers. This is not an ordinary thing. (Donor 21)

The donor refrains from discussing the traumatic situation and seeks ways to evade such discussions:

Q: Do your parents know?

A: No, my mother died. I didn't tell my dad.

Q: And why?

A: I don't consider it necessary.

Q: And your brother?

A: My brother's dead.

Q: What happened to your relatives?

A: I don't want to talk about it. (Donor 17)

The constant shifts between the past and present function as "hyperlinks," established by the psychologist, frequently resulting in surprising revelations for the woman herself, as she often remains disconnected from her negative past experiences.

Childhood experiences are most often attributed by the informant to the sphere of the everyday, familiar, and shared with the majority. Sometimes the psychologist's and donor's understanding coincide:

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: It was wonderful. That is, I was loved, dressed, fed. In other words, it was a good and fulfilling childhood. I had an older sister whom we played with … Childhood … with family outings, with homemade pies, with books. Yes, yes. With picnics outdoors, yes. (Donor 12)

Another example:

Q: How can you describe your childhood? What was it like?
A: I don't know, it was ordinary, Soviet, obviously there were some moments when we experienced a lack of something, there were some good moments, but nothing negative. Nothing particularly spectacular as well. Everything was quite ordinary, normal.
Q: In other words, you can't describe your childhood as happy?
A: We lived, yes, in a small town, and there we didn't have everything we wanted. But in terms of family relationships, everything was fine, there were no negative situations. (Donor 14)

This dialogue demonstrates that the researcher and respondent view the woman's family history from fundamentally different perspectives: the expert seeks to identify the factors of family well-being/unwellness as an important part of the motivational complex, as well as to clarify the woman's typical problem-solving strategies and tactics. Meanwhile, the woman finds herself in a position of a person who needs to recreate a normalized picture of her parental family and/or of her current family relationships within a limited period of time.

There are, however, no clearly defined criteria for family well-being or maladjustment, not only in the common understanding but also in the Russian academic literature. As a result, researchers use several types of classifications of family dysfunction based on different sets of criteria or risk factors: medical-biological, sociocultural, psychological, socio-economic, and others (Kuragina, 2019).[2]

Thus, it can be suggested that a significant proportion of women assess the situation of their childhood in the parental family as normal, avoiding its evaluation from the position of other social strata. This may happen not only due to their internal psychological defenses but also because the concept of "family well-being" is not thoroughly defined, leading to uncertainty about what constitutes a healthy family environment:

A: It was difficult when I was a teenager, in childhood; childhood was ordinary like everybody else's, normal, good, active childhood, wonderful friends, and wonderful parents.
Q: So, you had a mom and dad?
A: I had a mom and dad, but when I was about 11, my dad started drinking, had alcoholism, and basically, he fell out of my life, so I only had my mom. (Donor 18)

The interviewer's questions and clarifications compel some women to look at things differently, and what is more difficult *to articulate* the circumstances of their past that they were not accustomed to reflecting upon. Then the donor's statement "can't complain, everything was fine" (Donor 20) in the language of another social stratum reveals a long-

[2] "Families at risk" include low-income families, families in stressful and crisis situations, families where one of the parents is a minor, families who have shifted the care of their family members to relatives, and others (Obstoiatel'stva, n.d.).

standing experience of domestic violence from her stepfather; constant cohabitation with a grandmother with dementia in the same room, which exhausted the informant, is normalized by the mother but identified by the psychologist as a real problematic situation (Donor 4); the informant habitually hides the beginning of her sexual life at age 12 from gynecologists in an attempt to avoid being judged: "Now, every time gynecologists ask me about when I started my sexual life, I sometimes give them an older age, because they start asking unnecessary questions. I don't like it, I'm against it, but I can't change it now" (Donor 6). The psychologist's clarifying questions move the donor to the legal field which considers sexual activity with minors to be illegal:

Q: Was it a boy? Not an adult man?
A: No, it was an adult man, but at that moment I didn't think that, he was 19.
Q: So, he was *liable, actually, and could be charged with corrupting minors* [emphasis added].
A: Yep.
Q: But it was consensual?
A: Yes. (Donor 6)

Starting with the perfunctory statement, "[Childhood] was good, we always went out of town with parents, together and united," the speaker then goes on to describe the deteriorating relationship with her father: "It's not painful or sad or fun, I just don't care" (Donor 4).

Another example: Donor 6 has been suffering from a long-standing acute feeling of guilt over her mother's suicide; this feeling was compounded by her mother's alcoholism, her parents' divorce, and her younger brother's troubled life. According to the psychologist, even though donors may have developed effective coping mechanisms, such as starting a family, having children, and learning multiple in-demand professions, unresolved "questions about the past" persist, preventing them from accurately evaluating their childhood and overall past:

Q: How can you describe your childhood?
A: I am not sure, really … I don't know … It's hard to describe my childhood.
Q: What do you think, as a grown-up woman and mother of two children, why your mother chose this path?
A: For me this is probably the biggest mystery. Most of all, perhaps … now I often find myself thinking that she was not suited for such a lifestyle, pondering about why she would do something like this … how could she have abandoned her children … And I still don't understand, I can't justify it at all, for me it's incomprehensible how she could have done something like that. (Donor 6)

The repressed past resurfaces in different forms: the eating behavior of the donor's younger brother, who was left in her care by her mother, is replicated in her son: "It's strange, he hardly ate anything, by the way, my son is behaving the same way now. He only ate bread with mayonnaise" (Donor 6); difficulties in the patient's sex life, conveyed through silence and pause in decoding:

Q: You tried and so?
A: Sex?
Q: Yes.
A: I still have difficulties with sex. In terms of psychological understanding. So, I don't know what to say.
Q: You mean you didn't enjoy it?
A: [silence]. (Donor 6)

A woman with a positive childhood background and strong communication skills is able to effectively engage in dialogue by blending persuasive transparency, advantageous self-presentation, and a well-defined sense of personal limits:

Q: What was your childhood like?
A: *I had a happy childhood*. I had a mom, dad. I did ballroom dancing; I went to an arts center. *I also studied hard*. *Because my Mum is a teacher*. I had an elder brother. I played volleyball, for a short while, because it was too far from home and interfered with my studies, neither of my parents could take me there, so *I just threw myself into studies*. After the 9th grade, I went to college, *following in the footsteps of my older brother*. Yes, he was *an authority figure for me*. Well, first, our mother influenced him, and then I followed my brother. *When I was a child, I spent a lot of quality time with my dad. He would always take me to the slides, if this is what you were asking about* [emphasis added]*,* I have clear memories of my Christmas parties and I remember spending a lot of time with relatives as well. (Donor 17)

The answers about relationships, both past and current ones, are marked in a similar manner:

Well, it started with getting acquainted, then courting, that is, *the candy-bouquet period, it was obligatory for me.* Basically, I started dating young men when I reached adulthood. *That is, before I was 18, I didn't think much about it, I was too busy.* Generally speaking, I didn't have boyfriends as such, and after 18, when I started dating a guy, I lost my virginity, so if you need to ask me this question, it happened at the age of 18. *I haven't had many sexual partners. If you need the exact number, I can tell you, but if I can keep that secret, I'd rather not tell you* [emphasis added]. Then there were some boyfriends and that was it. (Donor 17)

In such cases, we can speak of a favorable narrative picture that the donor candidate is capable of clearly presenting in the testing situation.

In the thematic area related to the donor's past, an autobiographical narrative is formed, where what seems "routine," belonging to the sphere of daily life, prevails on the surface (Golofast, 1995). The psychologist's clarifying questions and their focus on certain aspects turn a number of practices into "eventful" ones: caring for a younger brother, early onset of sexual life, long-term cohabitation with a mentally ill

relative, parental incompetence of the mother or father, etc. This happens when self-built "defenses" against unprocessed past experiences fail and a woman finds herself face to face with her previous problems and emotions. However, there are cases when the woman is able to steer the conversation away from unwanted topics using her communication skills, as in the example of Donor 17 above. In such cases, the issue of donation may be marked as "hidden," and the specialist may note that the woman's hierarchy of concerns and problems appears to be stable since she manages to maintain privacy in the areas she does not wish to discuss during the intake testing.

In this sense, the reactions of the interlocutor (a specialist conducting the conversation) in all modes other than calm acceptance, including persistent clarifications, surprise, detachment, incomprehension, etc., mark the limits of routine and "everyday life" for the informant, opening up an exit beyond the boundaries of the social stratum into the realm of individual or group space of uncertainty, thus revealing "the prospect of stratification of determining forces, their subordination and connection" (Golofast, 1995; trans. by N. G. & I. P.) on the next step. Here, along with the understandable pain, there arises a "window of opportunities"[3] that ultimately leads to the transformation or discovery of the "biographical illusion," but these reflections go beyond the scope of this article.

The informants' discussion of their past is mostly discursive, covering two aspects of the context: as the background and condition of producing a particular text, and as an arsenal of expressive means. Discourse can highlight the normative institutions that organize the conversation.

Why the statements of informants, presented as texts, are important for the present? Sociologists observe that in personal texts people's actions are recorded and imbued with meaning:

> Personal texts are not just a parallel reality where the world of actions and behavior is doubled or imitated, reflected or retold, it is an integral part of the actions as such, the condition necessary for their repetition and comprehension, in many cases they constitute the reality that is more important and durable than the actual physical actions performed and reproduced by people. The reason why these physical actions are what they are is because they are culturally shaped and it is in this capacity that they are perceived, normalized, controlled and simply make sense. (Golofast, 2000, p. 137; trans. by N. G. & I. P.)

"Myself Today": Donors' Self-descriptions of Present
Women tend to feel more confident while answering the questions about their present. In this part, the psychologist's questions are related to the donor's current family situation, intra-family relationships, and distribution of roles (including the financial burden on spouses), place of work, desired number of children, and organization of leisure time.

---

[3] As our material is limited to interview transcripts, we do not have data on how women will use it, or whether they will use it at all. However, some donors may decide to follow the interviewer's recommendations and seek individual counseling sessions with a psychologist (Donor 6, for example).

Women's decision to participate in the donation procedure is usually related to their perception of the resources that they can use to improve their overall life situation in the broadest sense. Thus, women may be more willing to accept potential risks to their fertility from donation procedures because they may perceive these risks as hypothetical or not yet existing, and may be less concerned about future threats compared to their current problems.[4] According to some donors, doctors' assurances that the donation procedure is safe if done "two or three times in a lifetime" (as reported by Donor 17) and "as long as it is not overdone, it does not appear to carry any risks" (as reported by Donor 5) are usually enough to satisfy women's concerns. Moreover, none of the prospective donors had any serious health problems and, therefore, had no experience of overcoming or encountering such problems.

An important factor that directly affects a woman's willingness to take part in a donation program is the conditions she will be offered by the clinic, including a full medical examination during the preliminary stage. It is highly uncommon for patients to receive this level of service and medical care for free in today's context. Therefore, donors mark this part of the program as a contribution to their health and a kind of step up the social ladder, especially since it is beneficial and does not involve any interaction with the bureaucratic state healthcare system (for more on the relationship between attitudes towards medical care and values and norms regarding health and illness, see Aronson, 2009, p. 159). What is worth noting at this point is that, on the one hand, people with a lower social status tend to have an instrumental attitude to their health and, on the other hand, our respondents show a strong inclination towards self-care expressed through their verbalized intention to find a "good doctor" and the "right clinic," which is made possible by their participation in the donation program.[5]

As was mentioned above, an interview with a psychologist can also be considered as a self-description text. N. Luhmann (1997/2009) highlights the paradoxical nature of such self-descriptions, as the systems themselves are part of what they describe, generating the integration of differences in order to recreate their own unity.

It can be seen that during the interview with a psychologist, some of the "puzzle pieces", i.e., elements of the patient's self-description of their present, are reproduced by the woman herself, while others arise as responses to the psychologist's questions. As a result, the formation of a specific "profile" of self-description occurs, that is a "reproductive history of a woman" (Instruktsiia i putevoditel', 2009).

All elements/themes that are included in the analysis are value-laden, which means that they are significant to prospective donors themselves: me and my child/children, me and my partner, me and my job, me and my nuclear/extended family

---

[4] Studies by Canadian colleagues confirm women's optimistic (sometimes excessively so) view on the process of donation (Winter & Daniluk, 2004, p. 487).

[5] For more on such practices in the context of reproductive medicine in Russia, see Zdravomyslova & Temkina (2009a). An important difference in the procedures for preparing for donation is that while international researchers discuss psychological counseling for couples before a consensus is reached (Winter & Daniluk, 2004, p. 485), in the Russian context, the burden of explaining and coordinating the decision-making process with all interested parties falls entirely on the female initiator. In general, this fits well into a gender scheme that is typical of Russia, when "the resources available to women and their beliefs about health largely determine the treatment strategies of the whole family" (Aronson, 2009, p. 166).

(relatives), me and my environment (friends, colleagues), and even me and "my God" (the latter was always prompted by the psychologist).

Young single and married women with children divide their time between part-time work and education,[6] which leaves little time for leisure activities. The latter are not well developed and easily monetized, for example, women take up creative side jobs (e.g., doing manicures). Starting their own business is often expressed as a dream (Donor 4). For young mothers with two children, family responsibilities take up all their time.

At the same time, an unclear picture of the family history correlates with the lack of clarity about the informant's current desires including those related to the choice of profession. This can be illustrated by the case of Donor 6, who adores the maternity hospital and who worked as an operating room nurse while being aware of the fact that for her, this activity "holds no opportunity for development or career growth," she also does part-time studies in veterinary medicine while being afraid of animals, especially dogs, etc.

The social environment is described as friendly and is not viewed as an issue:

A: Most of my free time is occupied and sometimes I am on the go all day and I don't have time to think why I am not in a relationship. It means it doesn't bother me that much.
Q: What is your friendly circle like?
A: My friendly circle consists mainly of people I study with because we spend most of our time together. Additionally, there are friends from school, and I used to train and do sports, so I still have some very good friends from there as well. (Donor 12)

Few of the interviews we studied described situations of clear relationship distress (e.g., when a partner is completely indifferent to the woman's decision to donate, "invests little" in the relationship and in organizing joint life in general). In such cases, the woman's desire to use her fertility potential to improve her financial situation is understandable but it is not primary.

A third of the donors (7 out of 21) have experienced divorce and are now in their second marriage or "in a relationship." They tend to describe the decision to initiate divorce as their own, and attribute it to practical reasons related to their domestic situation:

No, actually there was no some major, dramatic reason, just some daily things I faced when I was on maternity leave, that is, I had been working a lot before I went on leave and later, when I was on maternity leave, I started to realize who I was living with and I was not happy about it, so this decision was taken and we divorced, but we maintained a good relationship for the sake of our child, we have preserved a good healthy relationship … It was mostly the financial situation that I was unhappy with when I was on leave and somehow it seemed to me at that moment that it would be easier and better for me if I was on my own. (Donor 12)

---

[6] Among the activities that the informants remembered practicing in their childhood and youth, the most frequently mentioned were choreography, gymnastics, track and field, cheerleading, and playing the guitar. With caution, it can be assumed that in the past, most of them had experience of active interaction with their own body.

On the other pole, there is a picture of a stable family life with the spouses sharing similar values:

> We had *very similar ideas about family, that it should be a conscious decision,* and we discussed having children. I mean, we didn't discuss having children in terms of what we would name them, but rather the fact that, *well, this is the right age, there is already some understanding, there's work, there's some stability, and both of us want children, both of us want a family. We wanted a family in the traditional sense, so that we would have some rules at home*. Well, if we go into detail, if it's interesting, then *I can tell you that even before we had sex, we took some medical tests, I told him: "Dear ..., so this is what we are going to do." I won't give any names, I just said: "I want to be completely open with you, that our safety is very important to me." And we planned both of our children...* For both pregnancies, I had pregnancy supervision being done at the same clinic, all the way through. I had some difficult time during childbirth, they didn't give me enough time to dilate when I was having my second baby, that is, *we are feeling pretty serious about children and especially their health, yes* [emphasis added]. (Donor 17)

The question of whether the donor's participation in the project is a right decision by God, i.e., higher powers and values, is raised in all the cases by the psychologist. The respondents themselves frequently resort to this category in their discussions of women's infertility problems ("the Lord does not give you children," "the Lord will give you children later"). Some of them selectively adhere to domestic religious practices: "I believe that if you get baptized, you will have a guardian angel. I believe in holy water, when babies cry, you should wash them with it. However, for instance, I don't go and light candles for good health" (Donor 5).

The function of current behavior regulation is carried out not by God but by authoritative adults:

> A: I am not a believer to the extent of considering how the Lord views it.
> Q: So, does your God, the one inside you, agree with this action?
> A: Yes.
> Q: So, you are totally comfortable with this decision?
> A: Yes, because I'm not doing anything wrong. If I was doing something bad … I analyze my actions a lot, sometimes it even becomes my limitation and I don't really like it. This is why if it was something bad, I wouldn't be doing this in the first place.
> Q: What do you compare it with? You've mentioned that you analyzed it, but how do you understand whether an action is good or bad? What is your reference point?
> A: Probably, my reference point is my mother. I'm constantly with the children now, for example, if a child approaches me and I say something to him, later I think, "But if my mother … my mother never spoke to me like that when I was a child, so I must be doing something wrong". (Donor 5)

When asked directly about the attitude of their God towards the process of oocyte donation, women responded by defining their relationship with God as an equal relationship, describing it in tones similar to the way they would use when talking of distant relatives:

Q: Does your God approve of this activity?
A: I didn't ask Him about it; it is me who gets to decide, not Him. I never even thought about asking.
Q: Why?
A: Because I have my own opinion. (Donor 17)

Astrological interests and "ancestology" ("reinforcing one's bloodline that is getting weaker") can occupy the place of higher values (Donor 17). The idea of the "boomerang" is popular: "Because I want to help people to have children. I want them to have the same happiness as me" (Donor 17).

At the value level, setting the discursive frameworks (and, as a result, achieving deeper understanding) requires time and resources that exceed the capacity of counseling within the program. And then the psychologist, on the one hand, conveys the acceptance of the motives voiced by the woman ("there are no rules" to become an oocyte donor), trying to ease the tension, and, on the other hand, tries to assess to what extent the decision to donate "fits into a balanced, deliberate, informed mindset." In their turn, the women react to the interviewer's attempts to "get to the heart of the matter" with counter-questions: "What's the catch? I don't get it" (Donor 17).

What do women's narratives tell us about their present? We see how the conflicting frameworks of self-description and (auto) ethnography intersect in the texts produced by women and in the research perspective on them. In the most internally consistent system of conclusions, which is also evident in the composition of this section, we can see the influence of an ethnographic framework, which organizes, simplifies, and to some extent, imposes traditionally archaizing perspectives on the observed tendencies. The specialist is primarily interested in the candidate's social experience, coping strategies and problem-solving skills, and the nature of their immediate environment. In our view, the task of philologists is to evaluate the contribution of each party to the communicative situation, to identify moments of simplification or temptation to do so, especially given that, as we return to Luhmann, not only are self-descriptions not free of them but also are often directly inclined towards them.

The value-driven, supra-pragmatic level of motivation is not extensively discussed in the interview: aside from socially acceptable motives such as "helping people," "helping a desired child to be born," "passing on one's genes," etc., the rest requires clarification and is often not entirely obvious to the woman herself. Nevertheless, it is at this point that we approach the most generalized and comprehensive image of the "self," which emerges from autobiographical narratives that

project consciousness and thinking onto a special temporal horizon—the macro-scale of human life. Here arises an ambiguous, perhaps unexpected, or even frightening meaning of such words as life, fate, happiness, life path, event, chance … Part of these words are used daily, but when they are applied to oneself, the conversation moves to a special level. (Golofast, 1995, p. 73; trans. by N. G. & I. P.)

"Projected Future" and Motives of Donation: "Right vs Wrong"

In countries where oocyte donation is highly regulated, there is a complex screening process involving a comprehensive social, medical, and psychological assessment of candidates for donation (Practice Committee, 2008). Research has shown (Gorrill et al., 2001) that out of 315 telephone inquiries from potential donors, only 38 women (12%) become part of the active donor pool. Another research team (Levy et al., 2007) believe that the most common reason why certain donors are rejected is their mental health problems (24%).

In our case, the outcome of the interviews conducted for the clinic is the psychologist's assessment of the woman's readiness for the donation protocol, the presence of a clear and consistent motivation, and the overall adequacy and communicative ability of the patient. Therefore, in the second part of the interview, the psychologist moves on to the questions about the motives for donation, seeking primarily to assess the probability of the prospective donor's long-term successful cooperation with the clinic based on her psychological and value orientations.

There is evidence that egg donors pursue diverse motivations (Practice Committee, 2008), with altruistic motives coexisting alongside financial ones. This multifaceted motivation facilitates the implementation of reproductive programs in countries where monetary rewards for oocyte donors are legally prohibited.

For fields that are introducing new medical and social technologies and practices, such as organ transplantation, adoption, euthanasia, and others, there are some positions that already have a general public consensus, while others are still under debate. In the latter cases, progress is being made through the direct involvement of the stakeholders in the process, such as donors and recipients in our case. As their numbers grow, the social landscape is inevitably changing. Are donors ready to openly act as drivers of this change? Generally, no.

Despite the fact that most donors read literature on methods of reproduction and/or received initial information about such technologies from acquaintances who were higher in social/age status, they themselves do not share the attitude of "social promotion" of their activities in the field of reproduction. Although most of them have not encountered negative assessments of their donation or reproductive donation in general from the people in their social circle, women probably assume low societal awareness and low tolerance in principle. In this situation, even if neutral/positive reviews prevail, even few negative ones can be significant, especially in the sphere directly related to the notions of femininity, motherhood, and similar, which can be extremely painful and have a "long-playing" effect. Therefore, women are not willing to risk a situation of vulnerability, engage in "defensive" behavior, or spend time

justifying themselves, they are not ready to pay such a price for participating in a reproduction program. This partially explains why anonymity in donation is crucial for some women.

By the time of the psychological testing, the decision to donate had already been made by the women and agreed upon with their significant inner circle (the gynecologist and the husband). In some cases, the prospective donors' close ones had been informed and had no expressed opinion on this matter, being satisfied with the donor's explanations regarding the safety of the procedure for her health. The donors themselves, for the most part, perceive this project as depending solely on their decision and not negatively affecting their significant others. Viewing their own fertility as a resource, women consider their decision within the "my body, my choice" paradigm. However, these interviews indicate that preserving intra-family consent is essential for those donors who are married (14 out of 21 women in our sample).

In some cases, women who view donation as part of a broader project of self-sacrifice or a practice of "testing oneself" may face initial resistance from their environment, but this does not deter them. For these women, donation represents a significant altruistic step towards entering adulthood, among other motivations.[7] This is more characteristic of young unmarried women who live with their parents and want to finally separate (Donor 4); or those who want to "repay a debt to the past," heal a situation of guilt, etc. (Donor 6).

For some donors the concept of "secret benefactor" is quite significant: they express their disapproval of letting others know about the donation. In their eyes, it "eliminates" the meaning of this act:

> If a person does something good, roughly speaking, I think they should never trumpet their good deeds. When they do something good, it should come from their heart, it should be done for the greater good, and if it is done like this: "Have you heard? Let me tell you about it!" You can't just flaunt it, it's not right. For me, it is simply unfathomable. (Donor 17)

In the donor' eyes, this practice of keeping silent about one's good deeds is not strictly limited to donation: "We go to orphanages, we help orphanages, we do not make a show of it" (Donor 18); "basically, I don't like showing such things or talking about them. Well, you've done something good, so, you are a good person. No need to shout about it" (Donor 19).

Thus, in all cases, the donation is inscribed in a broader projective context that women articulate to some extent in the interview. All participants tend to minimize their fears of the possible negative consequences of their donation: they read articles about donation, talk to doctors, inform their loved ones, and they are hesitant to disclose their decision to others. The interviews show that some contexts of donation are better

---

[7] One of the cases in our materials involves a donor (Donor 12) who also expressed a desire become an organ donor after death, although she admitted that this desire has not yet been legally formalized. This represents the most extreme position on this issue that we have encountered in our research.

understood by psychologists (for example, financial compensation[8]), while others lead to additional questions–"checks":[9]

> All this "I want to help everyone in the world without expecting anything in return" … To be honest, I don't believe in it. You may think differently, and it is quite possible that your belief gives you a lot, too. (Donor 14)

The final part of the interview comprises a series of thought experiments with elements of psychodrama: the psychologist describes situations of a "possible future," sometimes taking on the roles of significant relatives (for example, the respondent's parents) and observes their reactions. The technique appears to be quite effective if by effectiveness we mean the ability to elicit an emotional and verbal response in a short amount of time (approximately 15 minutes).

While at the first stage, the researcher takes a neutral position, as determined by the discursive structure of the narrative about the past and the representation of the present, in this part of the interview, the specialist's position contains elements of agonalism, sometimes reaching provocativeness ("We only have an hour and a half, and we need to spend half an hour on diagnosis, so I'm pushing it a bit here," warns the specialist in Interview 4).

Therefore, the psychologist offers to the woman a "mental experiment," prompting an emotional reaction, specifically, she is asked to describe her feelings in the event of a possible future meeting with a child born as a result of donation: "great," "but he's not really my child, he doesn't live with me, I didn't give birth to him" (Donor 18). The next hypothetical situation is a meeting with the recipient parents and it is suggested that they might be unpleasant to the donor in appearance or behavior. The psychologist also suggests playing out a meeting with an adult child who has been given the opportunity to learn personal information about their biological mother. Each of these situations reflects the global trends of the human right to full and accurate information about their origins, and in this sense, such projective situations are completely justified as part of the donor preparation program. Another important point is that this task addresses the goal of assessing the donor's overall emotional lability and sensitivity. This explains the active leading role of the psychologist at this stage of the interview.

---

[8] "Q: This means you see some advantages of donation for yourself? A: Yes. Q: Once again, which ones? Let us go through them so that we could end on a positive note. A: Self-assertion to some extent, proving something to myself. Second, I will get rewarded for the job I will do. Q: That's it? A: Yes, I guess so. The key things. Q: I think it is an *honest answer* [emphasis added]" (Interview with Donor 4).

[9] When time is limited, this approach proves to be effective. An illustrative example from the interview: "Q: Based on what you're telling me, you simply don't need it. There's just no real motive that … A: I was just thinking about what you said. Q: You see, the motive is that 'I didn't think it through, I read something that assured me that it's safe and that it will be helpful to someone,' and then I decided to proceed. I see the goal, I don't see obstacles. Why such a goal? A: After today's conversation, I started thinking about it" (Donor 19). Then the informant asks a series of questions about the conditions for refusing to participate in the project and admits that she has given little thought to the risks and adverse scenarios for herself personally if "something goes wrong", for example, "I just never thought that there would be any risks on my part, that something would go wrong" (Donor 19).

Women perceive these situations as distant, only hypothetically possible (not accidentally, their remarks about their possible feelings are often accompanied by laughter, marking the situation as unserious). They are quite actively defending their vision of the future in relation to the image of the recipient parents as loving.[10] Speaking of the cases of possible claims of children born from their egg, the women disassociate themselves from "parents": "Parents are those who raised you, who put their soul, strength, time, who put all their love, tenderness into you" (Donor 17).

Here, the psychologist does not smooth out but amplifies the observed contradictions, drawing the donor's attention to the inconsistencies in her answers. The free association method here is combined with closed-ended questions:

Q: Do you consider yourself a happy person?
A: Yes.
Q: In what way? You've said yes and you're smiling, what does it mean?
A: I don't know, I am fine, everything's really fine for me, I have a great job, great friends, I have a great man, health, I think, otherwise I wouldn't have come here.
Q: You are an oocte donor. You don't tell your wonderful friends about it, you conceal this fact. (Donor 19)

Thus, the narrative and the situation become quite intense, which works in favor of the psychologist, as the expressed emotional reactions, both smiles and tears, become landmark for formulating/clarifying the patient's emotional profile.

In the final part of the interview, the psychologist focuses on fostering a positive attitude in the woman who has decided to participate in the donation program.

Conclusion

To sum up, we have described a counseling methodology that is being tested within the framework of the oocyte donor preparation program. For the clinic, the main outcome of the consultation is the psychologist's conclusion regarding the possibility of repeated effective cooperation with the woman and her personal characteristics.[11] Given the time constraints (one-hour consultation plus time for testing), the psychologist needs to solve a multifaceted task that includes establishing contact with the patient, engaging her in a dialogue to obtain possibly more detailed answers regarding her current situation and motives for donation, as well as offering her several thought experiments to assess the degree of her emotional stability. Without significant practical experience, the task of selecting donors cannot be accomplished by a psychologist.

---

[10] Typically, donors perceive recipient parents as responsible and mature individuals who prioritize values beyond monetary considerations: "They already have a completely different understanding of life and when they carry the child for nine months, they invest themselves in the process, the husband cherishes his wife, and she takes great care of herself, she wouldn't be going to the gym to do pole dancing and she wouldn't engage in an immoral lifestyle, smoke, drink, and so on. She has made a commitment. This is what I think it will be like. People who ask for children have already learned their life lesson" (Donor 17).

[11] For example, if the donor is afraid of injections, it is preferable to suggest a long-acting medication and assess whether the woman has accurate information about the preparation process for donation, etc.

Out of all the interviewees, six were recommended to seek personal psychological therapy. Two of them eventually decided not to participate in the donation program.

After analyzing the interview data, we have attempted to describe the hypothetical "stable donor" in Russia as follows: typically, it is a person aged 28–30 (which means that this person has accumulated certain life experience), with a complete family and two children. The donor has no desire for additional biological children (this decision is supported by her partner and she has no fertility concerns). The donor has an "open position" towards recipient parents and potential offspring, expressing willingness to meet them if necessary and having no fear of exposure. The donor is also willing to meet the resulting children and tell her own children about their biological siblings. It is important that the donor does not demonstrate potential dependence on relationships with recipients, leaving the initiative for contact solely to their side, and focusing on her own family and children. The donor has a clear pragmatic motivation, including a conscious understanding of donation as a socially acceptable activity. The donor has formed a structure of life attitudes and values that allows for the separation and acceptance of responsibility: "My child is the one I carried and gave birth to." She displays no accentuation of personality traits or tendencies towards dramatization and shows a disposition towards a positive result.

The main barriers to donation, as indicated by the informants, include the following: fear of adverse effects on their health, concerns about the future of the children, and the informational aspect (uncertainty about the openness/anonymity of the program, primarily within their close circles but also in society as a whole).

According to psychologists' observations, the emotional profile of oocyte donors is often "smoothed out," they are constrained at the beginning of the conversation and, as a result, provide little information. In this regard, questions about the family, both the parental family and the donor's own family, allow the psychologist to elicit more detailed and elaborate responses and prepare the woman for a more extensive dialogue, rather than just fill out a questionnaire verbally. The second part of the interview is aimed at clarifying the donor's current life situation, while the final part tests the possible emotional amplitude (taking into account its inevitable increase during hormonal stimulation).

What does narrative analysis and analysis of the communicative situation reveal? To start with, the contribution of *both* sides to how the conversation develops becomes apparent: during the initial stage, there is a process of revision of what the woman commonly regards as her "normal past"—her past experiences are analyzed from a distinct "expert perspective." Considering that for many, the decision to become a donor is motivated by financial factors stemming from the social and economic situation of the donor's parental family, the link between the woman's past and present becomes clearer, not only for the woman herself but also for an outside observer. It should be noted that this is not about "simulating well-being" for the sake of eliciting a positive assessment by the psychologist. Rather, a good sign is the closeness of the discursive frameworks of the donor and the psychologist in this case. Although she may have faced difficulties early in life, a woman can still come to terms with her complicated past, recognizing both its upsides and downsides.

In the present, women take a rather active position, and participation in donation only increases their subjectivity. The specialist's task at this stage is to make it clear that in some cases, young women pursue the goals of separation or compensation tasks that are only indirectly related to donation, and therefore the psychologist should suggest considering another option for implementing the intended goal.

Finally, the third stage of the interview should be filled with emotions and be indicative of the specialist's capacity to handle them. At the same time, we should note that women are often less preoccupied with their hypothetical future than with their present and past problems. We believe that the balance of subjectivity and objectivity towards a potential donor is the most challenging in this aspect, since the clinic is obviously concerned with the possibility of "looking into the future" and hence avoiding any problems. However, from the donors' perspective, this future should actually solve their current problems. While the ambition of reproductive clinics to follow global trends in open donation is both clear and feasible, it is important to note that most of the risks and challenges faced by oocyte donors lie outside this domain. Moreover, it may not be practical to address the areas that are truly painful for clients, given that the available resources of psychological support are limited. In this regard, the psychologist's concluding phrases are aimed at shaping a positive outlook on the overall outcome of the procedure for the potential donor.

References

Aronson, P. (2009). Strategii obrashcheniia za meditsinskoi pomoshch'iu i sotsial'noe neravenstvo v sovremennoi Rossii [Health care-seeking strategies and social inequality in modern Russia]. In E. Zdravomyslova & A. Temkina (Eds.), *Zdorov'e i doverie: Gendernyi podkhod k reproduktivnoi meditsine* [Health and trust: A gender-based approach to reproductive medicine] (pp. 155–178). EUSP Press.

Barri, P. N., Coroleu, B., Clua, E., Tur, R., Boada, M., & Rodriguez, I. (2014). Investigations into implantation failure in oocyte-donation recipients. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, *28*(1), 99–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2013.08.012

Bashmakova, N. V., Polyakova, I. G., Mazurov, D. O., & Symanyuk, E. E. (2023). Osobennosti motivatsii i rekruting donorov ootsitov: Klinika vs donor [Characteristics of motivation and recruitment of oocyte donors: Clinic vs donor]. *Gynecology, Obstetrics and Perinatology*, *22*(1), 40–45. https://doi.org/10.20953/1726-1678-2023-1-40-45

Beeson, D., Darnovsky, M., & Lippman, A. (2015). What's in a name? Variations in terminology of third-party reproduction. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, *31*(6), 805–814. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2015.09.004

Blyth, E., & Frith, L. (2009). Donor-conceived people's access to genetic and biographical history: An analysis of provisions in different jurisdictions permitting disclosure of donor identity. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, *23*(2), 174–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebp002

Golofast, V. B. (1995). Mnogoobrazie biograficheskikh povestvovanii [Diversity of biographical narratives]. *Sotsiologicheskiy Zhurnal=Sociological Journal*, *1*, 71–88.

Golofast, V. B. (2000). Veter peremen v sotsiologii [Wind of change in sociology]. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, *3*(4), 122–139.

Golombok, S., Murray, C., Jadva, V., Lycett, E., MacCallum, F., & Rust, J. (2006). Non-genetic and non-gestational parenthood: Consequences for parent-child relationship and the psychological well-being of mothers, fathers and children at age 3. *Human Reproduction*, *21*(7), 1918–1924. https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/del039

Gorrill, M. J., Johnson, L. K., Patton, P. E., & Burry, K. A. (2001). Oocyte donor screening: The selection process and cost analysis. *Fertility and Sterility*, *75*(2), 400–404. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0015-0282(00)01711-8

Graham, S., Jadva, V., Freeman, T., Ahuja, K., & Golombok, S. (2016). Being an identity-release donor: A qualitative study exploring the motivations, experiences and future expectations of current UK egg donors. *Human Fertility*, *19*(4), 230–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/14647273.2016.1221148

Hogan, R. G., Hammarberg, K., Wang, A. Y., & Sullivan, E. A. (2022). "Battery hens" or "nuggets of gold": A qualitative study on the barriers and enablers for altruistic egg donation. *Human Fertility*, *25*(4), 688–696. https://doi.org/10.1080/14647273.2021.1873430

Hogan, R. G., Wang, A. Y., Li, Z., Hammarberg, K., Johnson, L., Mol, B. W., & Sullivan, E. A. (2020). Having a baby in your 40s with assisted reproductive technology: The reproductive dilemma of autologous versus donor oocytes. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, *60*(5), 797–803. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajo.13179

Instruktsiia i putevoditel' dlia zhenshchin-klientok/patsientok meditsinskikh uchrezhdenii sfery reproduktivnogo zdorov'ia [Instruction and guide for female clients/patients of reproductive health care facilities]. (2009). In E. Zdravomyslova & A. Temkina (Eds.), *Zdorov'e i doverie: Gendernyi podkhod k reproduktivnoi meditsine* [Health and trust: A gender-based approach to reproductive medicine] (pp. 423–426). EUSP Press.

Kuragina, G. S. (2019). K voprosu ob utochnenii poniatii "sem'ia gruppy riska", "deti gruppy riska" [On the question of clarifying the concepts of "family at risk", "children at risk"]. In Yu. Yu. Ivashkina & O. V. Kosteychuk (Eds.), *Profilaktika beznadzornosti i pravonarushenii nesovershennoletnikh. Opyt Sankt-Peterburga* [Prevention of child neglect and juvenile delinquency. The experience of St. Petersburg] (pp. 11–18). Gorodskoi informatsionno-metodicheskii tsentr "Sem'ia".

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. SAGE.

Levy, D., Minjarez, D. A., Weaver, T., Keller, J., Surrey, E., & Schoolcraft, W. B. (2007). Oocyte donor screening a retrospective analysis of selection process and prospective donor exclusions. *Fertility and Sterility*, *88*(Suppl. 1), S266–S267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2007.07.905

Lima N. S., Álvarez Plaza, C., & Cubillos Vega, C. (2019). Donantes de ovocitos: Análisis comparativo de dos muestras de Argentina y España sobre perfil de donantes, motivaciones y anonimato [Oocyte donors: Comparative analysis of two samples from Argentina and Spain on donor's profile, motivations and anonymity]. *Política y Sociedad*, *56*(3), 603–622. https://doi.org/10.5209/poso.59726

Luhmann, N. (2009). *Samoopisaniia* [Self-descriptions] (A. Antonovsky, B. Skuratov & K. Timofeeva, Trans.). Logos, Gnozis. (Originally published in German 1997)

McWhinnie, A. (2001). Gamete donation and anonymity: Should offspring from donated gametes continue to be denied knowledge of their origins and antecedents? *Human Reproduction*, *16*(5), 807–817. https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/16.5.807

O poriadke ispol'zovaniia vspomogatel'nykh reproduktivnykh tekhnologii, protivopokazaniiakh i ogranicheniiakh k ikh primeneniiu [On the procedure of the use of assisted reproduction technologies, contraindications and limitations of their application]. The Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 803n. (2020, July 31). http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202010190041

Obstoiatel'stva, kotorye mogut vystupat' osnovaniem dlia priznaniia sotsial'no opasnogo polozheniia [Circumstances that may serve as grounds for recognition of a socially dangerous situation]. (n.d.). Official website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Tula Region. https://mintrud.tularegion.ru/family-center/profilaktika-semeynogo-neblagopoluchiya/kriterii-otneseniya-semi-k-kategorii-nakhodyashcheysya-v-sotsialno-opasnom-polozhenii/

Pennings, G., de Mouzon, J., Shenfield, F., Ferraretti, A. P., Mardesic, T., Ruiz, A., & Goossens, V. (2014). Socio-demographic and fertility-related characteristics and motivations of oocyte donors in eleven European countries. *Human Reproduction*, *29*(5), 1076–1089. https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/deu048

Practice Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine & Practice Committee of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology. (2008). 2008 Guidelines for gamete and embryo donation: A Practice Committee report. *Fertility & Sterilization*, *90*(Suppl. 5), S30–S44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2008.08.090

Winter, A., & Daniluk, J. C. (2004). A gift from the heart: The experiences of women whose egg donations helped their sisters become mothers. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *82*(4), 483–495. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2004.tb00337.x

Zdravomyslova, E., & Temkina, A. (2009a). "Vracham ia ne doveriaiu", no … Preodolenie nedoveriia k reproduktivnoi meditsine ["I don't trust doctors", but …

Overcoming distrust of reproductive medicine]. In E. Zdravomyslova & A. Temkina (Eds.), *Zdorov'e i doverie: Gendernyi podkhod k reproduktivnoi meditsine* [Health and trust: A gender-based approach to reproductive medicine] (pp. 179–210). EUSP Press.

Zdravomyslova, E., & Temkina, A. (2009b). Vvedenie. Gendernyi podkhod v issledovanii reproduktivnykh praktik [Introduction. Gender-based approach in research on reproductive practices]. In E. Zdravomyslova & A. Temkina (Eds.), *Zdorov'e i doverie: Gendernyi podkhod k reproduktivnoi meditsine* [Health and trust: A gender-based approach to reproductive medicine] (pp. 7–20). EUSP Press.

Sustainable Energy Transition in Russia and Ghana Within a Multi-Level Perspective

Pius Siakwah
Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Ghana

Yulia V. Ermolaeva
Institute of Sociology of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

Polina O. Ermolaeva
Center of Advanced Economic Research, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, Russia

Boadi Agyekum
University of Ghana Learning Centres, University of Ghana, Ghana

ABSTRACT

This paper is a case study based on a critical review of existing literature and primary data through interviews to investigate energy transition framing and manifestation in the Global South. It provides critical insights into sustainable energy transition in Ghana and Russia within a multi-level perspective (MLP). We argue that whereas Ghana's energy transition concepts and policies are mirrored by landscape, regime, and niche, practical transitioning has been slow due to inadequate resources and incentives, limited historical culpability in global greenhouse gas, and the country being locked-in to existing hydrocarbon socio-technical systems. The MLP approach is useful in describing energy technologies, markets, and consumption practices. But in Russia, social policy at distinct levels is united by centralised energy law and technical systems, as well as institutional rules and differences based on costs in economic regions. This paper contributes to the energy transitioning discourse within the Global South using Russia and Ghana as cases to highlight how

psiakwah@ug.edu.gh, mistelfrayard@mail.ru,
polina.ermolaeva@gmail.com, bagyekum@ug.edu.gh

transition policies and practices differ from country to country, driven by economic, political, social, cultural, and historical elements with global frameworks serving as guides. Rigid application of landscape, regime, and niche concepts is challenged in describing and analysing the context-specific nuances in sustainable energy transition policy across spaces. There is a fundamental challenge of mechanically fusing a one-fits-all approach to sustainable energy transitioning in developing countries and societies due to differences in historical contributions to climatic issues and inequality of access to resources and technologies. Energy transition processes and practices should be compatible with social justice.

KEYWORDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

Energy has been a lifeline of the global economy, powering factories and homes with diverse energies: non-renewable (oil and coal) and renewable (solar, wind, and bioenergy). It has, however, become obvious in recent years that over reliance on hydrocarbon as the main source of energy is unsustainable due to climate change, environmental degradation, and human health concerns. The idea of energy transition has become topical in development and sustainability discourses. Sustainable energy transition (SET) is being used to conceptualise and operationalise energy transition (Araújo, 2014; The Energy Transition, 1983). Despite SET's appeal and potential in explaining energy transition, researchers, policymakers, scientists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across the spectrum have raised questions relating to sustainable energies transition both in the developed and developing world.[1] Fukuyama (2002), Kaku (2008), Rifkin (2011), Toffler (1980), and Wallerstein et al. (2013) have written about the sustainability and environmental dimensions of energy

---

[1] We proceed from the definition of developed and developing countries based on the criteria proposed by the UN. See: Committee for Development Policy & United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2021).

as a component of the world economy and the engine of culture that determines the future of mankind, and how energy transition is equally important for both the economy and environment. Transitions are viewed by some researchers, policymakers, and scientists as the fundamental sustainable energy pillars, although how and where this process may occur might differ based on circumstances. According to Rifkin (2011), global transitions may take place in several different ways in the political strategy for energy, and these include transitions to renewable energy sources, distributed generation (mini-power plants that generate electricity at the place of consumption), the use of hydrogen and other alternative energy technologies, the use of Internet technology to turn the energy system of each continent into an intelligent electric grid, and transitioning to electric cars. It is of fundamental importance that efforts be made to move to more sustainable energy sources.

There are, however, some problem areas with the transitional process such as centralised and decentralised options, carbon and renewable generation combined. The energy space is complex with different interests and actors, and this will require negotiations and trade-offs. Energy transition has geopolitical dimensions (Downie, 2022). Wallerstein et al. (2013) argue that this includes supporters of hydrocarbon energy (oil-producing and exporting states), start-ups and established leaders in the field of renewable energy production (consumers, environmentalists, scientists, organisers of advanced industries), and intermediate types who focus on the short-term or long-term benefits of energy production. But transition can happen together with economic transformations in the management of the energy complex, for example, when a new public communication technology changes together with new energy systems and goals. The main direction of renewable energy development globally seems to have been the transition from a hierarchical structure (centralised) to a horizontal arrangement of economic and energy management. But the distributed nature of renewable energy sources requires cooperation, and not a hierarchical command system of redistribution of resources, which changes the model of socio-economic interaction; the role of the regions as a "knot" connected by energy, communication, and transport systems is important (Wallerstein et al., 2013). Thus, conceptualisation of energy transitioning has to make room for diverse actors, institutions, and a scale of (re-)negotiation.

A multi-level perspective (MLP) framework has been used over the years to conceptualise and explain energy transitions, identifying and assessing institutions and actors within the energy space: landscapes, regimes, and niches (Figure 1). Rip and Kemp (1998) developed the MLP but it has since been refined by others (Geels, 2005; Geels & Schot, 2007). The framework has been used to analyse and explain sustainable energy transition. As a framework, MLP views transition as transpiring through interactive processes within and among three analytical levels: socio-technical landscapes, regimes, and niches (El Bilali, 2019; Geels & Schot, 2007; Rip & Kemp, 1998). Thus, transition becomes a product and function of interactions between and among niche-level innovations, established regimes, and exogenous landscapes (Bridge, 2018; Geels, 2002, 2005, 2011; Geels & Schot, 2007; Rip & Kemp 1998). Transition also encompasses shifting from a socio-technical system to

Figure 1

The Scheme of the MLP Methodology
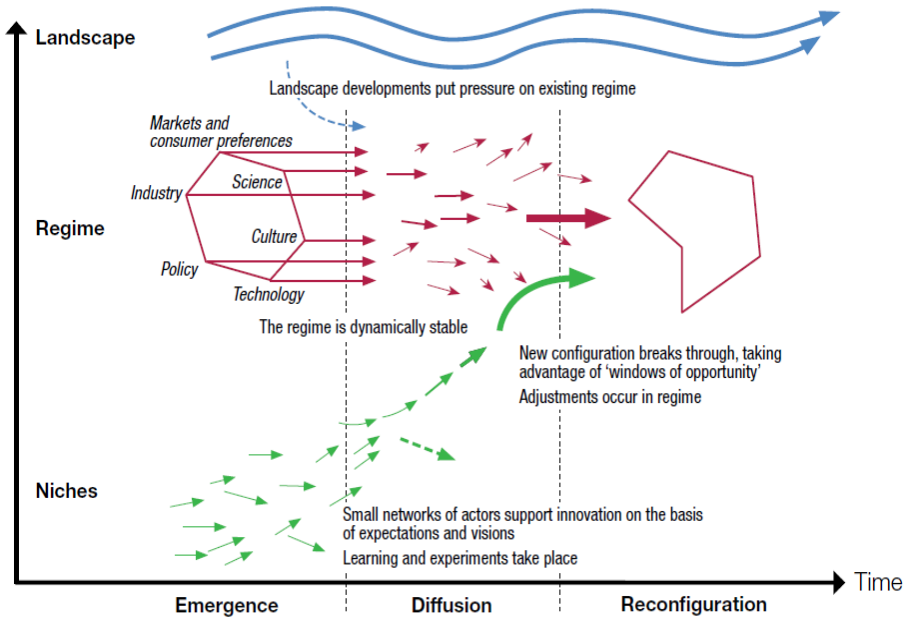
Note. Source: Adapted from Geels (2011) and Genus & Coles (2008).

another (El Bilali, 2019), through dialectic interactive processes at the niche–regime–landscape interface. Thus, sustainable energy transition is *socio-technical* since the process entails changes in social and cultural values and behaviour, and technological changes in how society appreciates and uses energy resources. *Niche* innovations build up internal incentive and change momentum, while *landscape* changes create pressure that destabilises the *regime*, with the resulting destabilisation creating avenues for niche innovations within the system and replacement of an existing regime (El Bilali, 2019, p. 2; Geels, 2006; Markard & Truffer, 2008). The socio-technical transition often results in "deep structural changes" over extended periods in specific systems (e.g., transport or energy), and it involves reconfigurations of technologies, markets, institutions, knowledge, consumption, and cultural norms (Geels, 2011; Swilling et al., 2016, p. 654). But as a change process, transition entails complex non-deterministic interrelations between the three levels of landscape pressures (macro), regime structures (meso), and niche innovations (micro) (Swilling et al., 2016). Macro, meso, and micro are the systems through which transitions are sustained and reconfigured (Power et al., 2016). They become spaces of change and reconfiguration.

Baker et al. (2014) explain landscape as the external environment or influences at the macro level. The landscape comprises of the structuring forces

of ideologies, institutions, discourses, political, and economic trends at the macro level (Power et al., 2016). According to Geels (2011, p. 28), landscape entails the demographical trends, political ideologies, societal values, and macro-economic patterns that impact the dynamics of the regimes and niches. Landscapes in energy transitions are the entrenched structural societal relationships that change only gradually (Foxon et al., 2010), including international trends and technologies, funding institutions (e.g., the World Bank), and market-based policy instruments (e.g., Clean Development Mechanism [CDM]) (Baker et al., 2014). These structures, institutions, and discourses are ingrained to shape entities at the level of regimes and niches. Regimes are the patterns of technologically determined behavior shaped by "cognitive routines," shared by engineers, and influenced by policymakers, scientists, energy users, vested interests, and professional groups (Baker et al., 2014, p. 794). Within the sustainable energy space, Unruh (2000) noted that regimes are national governments' policies to stimulate socio-economic development, with a tendency of predictability and "lock-in" mechanisms. Niches are protected spaces at the micro level for innovations (Geels, 2011) and shaped and conditioned by technologies, policies, and practices from dominant regimes (Baker et al., 2014; Lehtonen & Kern, 2009). Niches are operationalised by networks of dedicated actors (Geels & Schot, 2007). As protected spaces, niches encompass networks of actors with innovative technologies and their uses. We can, however, disagree with the designation of niches as protected spaces at micro level as they can occur at multiple spaces, both at the meso and macro scales. Innovation gradual processes are championed by multiple networks of actors (Bawakyillenuo et al., 2018).

Whereas MLP fits some of the energy transition in the developed economies, with some of these high-income countries making significant strides in energy transitions despite high energy consumption (Bridge, 2018; Geels, 2005, 2006, 2011), the same cannot be said for developing economies. There are only some publications on MLP and energy transitions in developing countries such as Brazil (Basso, 2018; da Costa et al., 2019), South Africa (Baker et al., 2014; McEwan, 2017), Asia (Berkhout et al., 2010), and Africa. The paper addresses this gap by reflecting on sustainable energy transitions in Ghana and Russia. This paper provides critical insights and reflections on the sustainability of energy transition in developing countries using Ghana and Russia as cases under the methodological lenses of MLP. The study highlights the various efforts at promoting energy transition, framing of the debate and practices of transition, and possibilities of alternative framing within developing countries contexts. We raise the question as to what extent the MLP approach is applicable and effective in describing change in the developing economies. We argue that mechanically transferring a one-fits-all approach such as the MLP to developing countries is problematic as it does not sufficiently explain changes in energy transition across spaces given the differences in social, economic, and political systems in specific countries.

Background of Study Areas and Methodology

This research, in the form of an exploratory case study, used a multiple methods approach. It includes two cases, Russia (Eastern Europe and Northern Asia) and Ghana (West Africa), that can be classified conceptually as developing countries, even though we admit there are variations in the levels of development. The selection of cases is rationalised by both their similarities and differences. Although they are very heterogeneous in terms of geography, climate, culture, and social issues, they share similar problems as a result of emerging economies such as limited indigenous capital, political instability and poor governance, clientelism, too strong/weak state regulations and the drive to attract foreign direct investments (FDIs). Natural resources broadly and energy in particular are important for these economies as sources of export for foreign exchange and local economic development. There are more than 600 million people in Africa who still have no access to any form of energy, while Russia is one of the leading producers of oil and gas, providing energy to fuel the economies of Europe. Thus, the solution for Africa and Russia in terms of cooperation may include the creation of jobs and the export of technology from Russia based on traditional energy for regions that need it. Among other things, Russia plans to export its nuclear technology to Africa by building expensive nuclear power plants throughout the continent.

The cases were selected to reflect countries on sustainable energy transitions in the Global North (Russia) and Global South (Ghana). Broadly, these countries can both be classified as developing though are at various stages, with Russia more advanced economically and technologically. And even though both countries are natural resources dependent, Russia is more extractive industry intensive than Ghana. Each of the countries contributions to global greenhouse emissions differ; hence, the incentive to adopt green technologies also differ. It is within this context that we interrogate how MLP's landscape, regime, and niche is suitable for describing and analysing change in the sustainable energy transitioning systems in these two countries specifically and developing countries generally. We raise the question as to what extent MLP approach is applicable and effective in describing change in the developing economies on two different cases irrespective of the social, economic, and political contexts.

Russia is the world's fifth largest CO_2 emitter. The country has also not yet ratified the Paris Agreement up to date. At the same time, warming in Russia is occurring twice as quickly as the average for the rest of the world, increasing the risk of floods and wildfires across the country. The energy intensity of the Russian economy decreased by 16% in 2005–2015 (an average of 1.7% per year). Russia has the largest known natural gas reserves of any state on earth, along with the second largest coal reserves and the eighth largest oil reserves. This is 32% of the world's proven natural gas reserves (23% of the probable reserves with the monopoly Gazprom, which produces 94% of Russia's natural gas production; in a global context Gazprom holds 25% of the world's known gas reserves and produces 16% of global output), 12% of the proven oil reserves, 10% of the explored coal reserves (14% of the estimated reserves), and 8% of the proven uranium reserves. Russia is the largest oil producer in the non-OPEC

countries and second biggest in the world after Saudi Arabia, has the world's second largest coal reserves, with 157 billion tonnes of reserves (Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation, 2023). The energy system of the Russian Federation consists of the United Energy System (seven combined energy systems and geographically isolated energy systems). From 2017 to 2018 Russia had high changing dynamics of energy production 630.7 billion kWh (a decrease of 1.3%); 193.7 billion kWh at hydroelectric power stations (an increase of 3.3%); 204.3 billion kWh at nuclear power plants (an increase of 0.7%); 62.0 billion kWh at power plants of industrial enterprises (an increase of 2.9%); 0.8 billion kWh SES[2], (an increase of 35.7%); 0.2 billion kWh at wind farms (an increase of 69.2%). The Russian government has approved a plan to support renewable energy from 2025 to 2035, investments in the construction of green stations will amount to 360 billion rubles. In 2020, 40.4% of the electricity generated in Russia came from nuclear and hydropower (including large hydroelectric power plants). Thermal power plants provided 53% of the production. The share of renewable energy sources, which includes wind farms and solar stations, in electricity generation was 0.3%, or 3.36 billion kilowatt-hours (based on data from the System Operator).

In the Russian case study, desk-based research and semi-structured elite interviews were conducted. Desk research analysed international and national trends in energy transition and was used to identify the initial group of stakeholders for the interviews; other stakeholders were identified through snowball sampling. Interviews with professionals were selected based on their high level of professional knowledge and expertise on the subjects, the diversity in status, age, and gender. The sample of 60 people included ecologists based in state institutions, representatives of environmental NGOs and grassroots organisations, academics (climatologists, ecologists, sociologists, social geographies, human ecologists), and environmental regional proponents. Their roles in energy policy are very different; most of the Russian environmental NGOs and researchers have only symbolic power to influence the policymaking. Desk research was conducted in 2018 and the interviews in 2019.

Ghana is situated in West Africa with a population of about 29.6 million (The World Bank in Ghana, 2023). The country has made significant strides in social, political, economic, and industrial development. As a member of the global institutions like the United Nations, energy and sustainable discourses including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015 (Conference of Parties, COP 21) have engaged the attention of Ghana civil society organisations and citizens. As Ghana aspires to industrialise and modernise its agriculture, unreliable and costly power is a constraint. Maintaining Ghana's macro-economic stability and middle-income status can be hampered by energy challenges (Ministry of Energy, 2010). Ghana's energy mix has changed over the years, with some energy sources becoming more prominent than others. In 2010, since most people still lived in rural areas, biomass (fuelwood and charcoal) constituted about 60% of Ghana's energy consumption, with electricity, petroleum, and other sources accounting for the rest. In the industrial and service sectors, electrical power is dominant, representing 70% of usage (Ministry of Energy, 2010). Ghana has a total installed 4,398.5 MW electricity capacity, including hydropower

---

[2] Sustainable Energy Solutions.

(1,580 MW), thermal (2,796 MW), and renewable (22.5 MW) (Power Africa, 2019). But the power actually available rarely exceeds 2,400 MW due to rain fluctuations, fuel inadequacies, and dilapidated infrastructure. Natural gas from Ghana's oil fields since 2010 is supposed to mitigate the fuel challenges, while renewable energy sources like biofuels, solar, and wind are viewed as the future of power generation. Placing Ghana's energy policies in perspective reveal some ad-hoc tendencies in policies and implementation. The limited renewable energy sources in Ghana's energy mix raises earnest future questions about energy transitions and framing.

The Ghana case study uses desk-based methods to conduct the analysis of international and national trends in energy transition. Data for this study was gathered from document sources such as Ghana Renewable Energy Act (2011), Ghana Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Action Plan (2012), Ghana's National Energy Policy (2010), and other published and policy documents on energy on Ghana. These data sources were critically read, themes developed and analysed to illustrate how MLP explains changes within the energy transition discourse in Ghana. Although the study employed a mixed-methods approach, it was not conducted in the traditional comparative design manner. To minimise the possible biases and provide robust evidence for each case, we tried to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data from various reliable sources in each case, respectively, to draw on comprehensive credible findings.

Interrogating Energy Transition in Developing Economies

In this section, we investigate energy transition in Ghana and Russia through analysing how the issues of landscape, regime, and niche operate in these developing countries.

Sustainability Energy Transitions in Russia

Landscape. The Russian energy policy is very clearly positioned as the raw material export economy model that is based mainly on gas generation. Energy export directions are fundamental for the Russian economy for both traditional and green energy and create exchange networks within developing countries. The reliability of the joint energy system is increased and ensures the energy flow of the united energy system without technological disruptions in the networks or the threat of energy shortages. This system allows the efficient export of surplus capacity to promising markets in a number of Asian countries, at the moment with a low level of competition. Some of the exporters (European countries, Southeast Asia) have long-term purchasing power, while the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and neighbouring countries, on the contrary, have low, which makes these markets unpromising. An export-based economy links to the dependency on the price and demand on oil, mineral resources, and gas, and policy changes that will define opportunities and benefits too.

The potential use of renewable energy (further renewable energy sources) in Russia is enormous. According to various estimates, it amounts to 270 million tons of equivalent fuel, including the main types of energy sources. There are various economic and technical potentials in regions determined by natural and climatic factors and energy consumers' requests. The positive factor for the development of

renewable energy sources is the reliability of the co-joint energy system increases; the negative factors include the differences in national legislation and energy independence plans of the potential countries of exporters of renewable energy, and geopolitical situations in the CIS countries and near abroad that block transition to renewable energy sources.

During the special military operation in Ukraine, the West imposed sanctions on Russia, and this led to:

(a) neutralising the dependence of the latter on mineral and energy raw materials from Russia, and Russia is looking for opportunities to export energy resources and products in other directions: for the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Asian, and African region;

(b) hindering the development of the Russian economy, the implementation of an energy-efficient and energy-saving programme for traditional energy, since it needs both internal resources, dependent on GDP for the export of mineral and energy raw materials, and external resources built on cooperation in the exchange of resource-saving programmes with a number of Western countries;

(c) the green energy agenda, implemented within the country and involving an increase in the percentage of renewable energy, also stayed on a "pause" because in turbulent times of special military operation it is important for Russia to find a new balance for the development of the Russian green energy sector in the broadest sense, which already includes many different aspects (such as renewable energy sources, storage, hydrogen, carbon dioxide capture), and leaves only really necessary competencies. For example, it makes sense to develop autonomous power supply systems (renewable energy sources, storage, or backup generation) for remote areas, including northern regions, the issue of import substitution for a wide range of technologies, equipment, and materials.

Regime. This level is constituted by the resource-driven economy, highly dependent on fossil fuels, the monopoly of big oil companies, and a low share of renewable energy (however, the dynamics are positive). The sustainable energy transition policy varies greatly at the municipal level. The energy system of Russia and natural energy resources are monopolised by the state and distributed centrally. The Russian unified energy network is unique and centrally distributed energy in each region is cheap for the consumers.

In Russia, the problems of energy modernisation in the federal regions differ qualitatively depending on the existing ecological, economic, and cultural capital of the region; the country has energy support tools for different prices for centralised and decentralised zones. The Russian strategy for the development of the energy policy of the country until 2035 proposed that the dependence of the Russian economy on the fuel and energy sector increased in exports (70%), federal budget revenues (50%), and investments (40%). In Russia, the problems of regional modernisation varied enormously, suggesting the development of separate local measures and energy support tools for different prices, non-price, and decentralised zones. Legal and administrative organisational aspects highlight the need to include administrative regulation in the area of responsibility of the developer and their motivation.

According to the federal programme of energy transition, dependence on carbon resources will be minimised or can be eliminated. The energy strategy considers nuclear power plants and large hydropower plants as an alternative opportunity to reduce oil production and exports and increase the availability of electricity in the regions. Eight priority areas and 34 critical technologies were approved by the President of the Russian Federation. The direction "Energy and energy saving" is one of them. Critical technologies include six technology groups aimed at improving energy efficiency and energy conservation, including technologies of new and renewable energy sources; nuclear energy, nuclear fuel cycles; management of radioactive waste; hydrogen energy technologies; technologies for the production of fuel and energy from organic raw materials; technologies for creating energy-saving systems for transportation, distribution, and consumption of heat and electricity; technologies for creating energy-efficient engines and propulsors for transport systems.

Niche. The renewable energy minority are grouped into niches driven by primarily economic factors and the huge hydrocarbons lobby.

Table 1

Stakeholders' Interests in Russian Energy Transition

Stakeholder	Interests	
Government and municipal structure	Safety, profitability, large projects, international position	
Citizens	Safety, timeliness of energy supply, low tariffs	
Workers from energy industry	Developing the industry in terms of its human and economic resources, social security, and market stability.	
Business+ government production	Investors: Profitability, risk, return on investment, protection of their rights and interests.	Producers of energy: Compliance with contractual obligations and legislation by energy companies, timeliness, and completeness of payment for delivered products.

Note. Source: Authors.

Few major independent corporations manufacture the equipment. Their interest is focused on autonomous provision for consumers in areas within individual farms, installation of energy-saving equipment in multi-storey buildings based on or through renewable energy sources, and the scientific community working with companies.

Western investors in wind farms have acted as the main force: for example, the Finnish Fortum in partnership with Rosnano with the technological partner of Danish Vestas. Domestic corporations are also participating: Rosatom by Lagerwey, Enel Russia, a generating company controlled by the Italian Enel with the technological partner, Siemens Gamesa.

The main investors in solar generation are Photon Solution (the new alliance of Hevel, Renova, and T-Plus Solar Systems), founded by the Chinese Amur Sirius, Finnish Fortum. Key investors in the small hydropower sector are RusHydro and its subsidiaries, TGK-1 (Gazprom), En+. The state-owned RusHydro is also independently building (without feed-in tariffs) wind farms, solar stations, and geothermal sources in the Far East.

The ministries and departments are only responsible for making the final decision in the legislative sphere; specific functions are assigned to agencies that can provide comprehensive information on local problems. Agencies are under state regulation, but are also representatives of the commercial infrastructure, which gives them a double advantage. Non-profit partnerships arise from the professional expert community, and are also included in the regulatory apparatus. The energy efficiency of a business is determined more by economic factors than environmental ones; there are no subsidies from the state to support these initiatives. A mixture of actors may lobby the state (directors of companies are representatives of the state). In management, establishing mutually beneficial communication and economic activity between the energy conservation programme and private enterprises may offer tax benefits. There are restrictions on the sources of traditional energy generation, on the extraction of resources, and their distribution (Bushuev, 2020).

The social improvement of the energy infrastructure as a social institution and the creation of rules and patterns increased civilian control, self-management, resource-saving behaviour, and eco-friendly education. Citizens living in old buildings in Russia cannot regulate heating individually, which means that people often keep their windows open in winter when the heat in apartments is too high, but the energy consumption practices in new households have been positively changing. The individual heating systems have the technical capacity to regulate the heating. Reduced energy consumption is promoted by financial incentives; better housing insulation has started to decrease the heat losses by changing the window frames (Romanov, 2022).

Thus, while the share of the renewable energy in general is pretty low, SET varies greatly according to the policy at municipal level and local SET "regimes". The "niches" are grouped by coal, gas, atomic suppliers of a certain type of energy and technology. The major SET barriers in the Russian context are associated with the energy justice and energy poverty issues, including low public ownership and engagement in the energy policy; the infrastructural barriers (the post-soviet legacy of houses where people cannot regulate the thermostats); undeveloped green technologies and legal base, etc. Renewable energy is too expensive in comparison with the traditional model for the development of small regions and could be developed at the expense of a private business that produces equipment and a scientific institute that creates new developments. The tense international situation causes issues of decarbonisation and energy transition, which until recently were considered in the Western world as one of the main challenges for humanity, to temporarily fade into the background. However, these issues become more acute in order to implement sustainable development with equal access to the benefit of civilisation, including mineral and energy resources, which mutual sanctions can significantly complicate and tighten, leading entire regions of the world to economic and social collapse.

Sustainable Energy Transition in Ghana

In order to understand energy transition in Ghana, we analysed developments in the energy space within the framework of the Sustainable Energy Transition through the prism of landscape, regime, and niches.

Within the concept of *landscape* in energy transition, Ghana is positioned in the global energy system as an exporter of raw material. The main sources of commercial energy in Ghana are thermal, hydro, biomass, and limited solar energy. Ghana exports oil while at the same time relying on power generated from thermal sources fuelled by diesel, gas, and hydro. These energy sources serve industrial and domestic purposes. The national energy architecture of Ghana is shaped and conditioned by international conventions, frameworks, and policies, which constitute the *landscape*. For example, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the Brundtland Report in the 1980s, central to the concept of sustainability including limiting greenhouse gas emission, is part of the broader global landscape that guides Ghana's energy policy. Other global frameworks that continue to guide Ghana's energy policies are the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Rio Earth Summit, June 1992), the Kyoto Protocol (COP3, December 1997), an extension of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that guides states' greenhouse gas emissions targets, and the Earth Summit II or Rio+10 (Johannesburg, September 2002) that provided a political framework to reaffirm commitments towards sustainability, and Rio+20 (Rio de Janeiro, June 2012) that focuses on reducing greenhouse gas.

Countries party to the UNFCCC, including Ghana, are enjoined to publish and update their national communication on climate (NCC), which includes emission inventories (Ministry of Environment & Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Under Article 12 of the UNFCCC, Ghana submits its national communication every four years and a biennial update report to the COP (Ministry of Environment & Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Ghana's National Inventory Report (NIR) which contains estimates for net greenhouse gas emissions for 1990–2012 was also submitted as part of the reporting regime. In 2008 and 2011, Ghana submitted its first and second national communications. The 2015 report is the third made to UNFCCC. Ghana's reports not only document efforts in meeting the convention, but also showcases the country's domestic policies that aimed at tackling climate change (Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Whereas COP1 took place in March–April 1995 in Berlin, the 2015 COP21 (Paris Climate Agreement) was the landmark agreement that enjoined countries to limit hydrocarbon consumption and shift to renewable energies. Based on COP21, Ghana committed to building a climate-proof society to meet socio-economic needs, and contribute to global efforts in combating climate change (Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). These broad global climate landscapes have guided Ghana's energy regimes over the years, even though their impact of sustainable energy transition is a subject of debate.

In energy transition discourse, *regime* denotes the national policies, regulations, and agencies that guide energy production and use. There is no shortage of policies, agencies, and regulations nationally aimed at guiding the energy policies in Ghana (see Ministry of Energy, 2010; Ministry of Environment & Environmental Protection Agency, 2015; Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Ghana's National Energy Policy was formulated in 2010 to guide the development of the energy sector, especially oil and gas, to create a conducive environment for investment, job creation, and industrial

development (Ministry of Energy, 2010). The policy is aimed at securing long-term fuel supplies for the thermal power plants, reducing technical and commercial losses, increasing access to renewable energies, and diversifying the national energy mix. The vision was to develop an "energy economy" through oil and power exports by 2012 and 2015 respectively (Ministry of Energy, 2010). However, based on the experiences of Ghana since 2010, it is evident that there are limited guidelines on renewable energy development via niches with funding sources, timelines, and uptake channels. It is obvious from the vision that Ghana has been more concerned with increasing the quantity of energy regardless of the source.

Further to the 2010 energy policy, the Renewable Energy Act (2011) provides a framework for the development, investment, management, utilisation, sustainability, and supply of renewable energy (Renewable Energy Act, 2011). Some of the main renewable energy sources are wind, solar, hydro, biomass, biofuel, and geothermal. The policy envisages that the renewable energies will be integrated into the national energy grid system. Without any clear guidelines on financing, implementation, local technologies, and niche development, it is aimed at building indigenous and local capacities technologically in the renewable energies sector. This raises questions as to how the aims will be achieved over time in Ghana.

Moving beyond renewable energies, the Ghana Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Action Plan was developed in 2012 to ensure sufficient and sustainable energy provision in the country (Energy Commission et al., 2012). It aims at ensuring universal access to electricity, the promotion of liquified petroleum gas (LPG), and improved cooking stoves. The national electricity coverage in Ghana increased from 66% in 2008 to 72% in 2011 (Energy Commission et al., 2012). The electricity coverage in Ghana is about 85% currently with plans to have a universal coverage in the near future. Ghana has been concerned with increasing the electricity coverage but not the source of the power. Renewable energies currently contribute about 22 MW to Ghana's energy mix. Besides the broad policies, there are limited concrete changes of promoting energy transitions in Ghana through the development of niches.

At the *niches* level, sustainable energy transition is represented by technological development and research and development (R&D). Ghana policies consisted of sectorial performances, R&D, public funding, and scientific research and are less focused on policy objectives such as decarbonisation. The Ghana Energy Action Plan, however, recognises the need for partnerships between government, civil society organisations, the research community, and the private sector. Biomass as a source of over 60% of the total energy has seen limited financial and technological investment in Ghana. The vast arable lands are degraded due to wood fuel harvesting for domestic and commercial use. Support for decentralised off-grid technologies (such as solar PV and wind) as alternatives to the conventional electricity supply in Ghana is limited.

The most dominant local energy niche in Ghana is promoted through private sector investments in thermal energy generation. Over the years, the Ghana government guarantees power purchase to IPPs (Independent Power Producers). This led to the development of several thermal power plants such as the Kpone I & II, Sonon Asogli, and Takoradi Thermal 1 & 2 (T1&T2) by the private sector, sometimes in

partnership with the state. The Africa & Middle East Resources Investment Group LLC (Ameri) and Karpower were built recently through partnerships with foreign investors. This highlights how Ghana's energy policies and niches are locked into existing hydrocarbon energy systems either through using crude or gas for power generation. Ghana's energy system entails transitioning within the hydrocarbon mix, with limited or no opportunities for local investment in renewable energy niches. The supposed establishment of a renewable energy fund to promote and finance sustainable transition energy niches never materialised.

Multi-level Perspective, Energy Transition, and Change

This paper provides critical insights on sustainable energy transitions in developing countries based on the experiences of Russia and Ghana under the methodological lenses of MLP. We examine to what extent a MLP is suitable for describing change in sustainable energy transition within landscape, regime, and niche concepts, and the potential challenges of mechanically transferring a one-fits-all approach to developing countries. It is obvious that given the different socio-economic and political economies across spaces, diverse conceptual tools are needed to better explain energy transition in developing countries.

In the Russian case, the findings reveal that SET is controversial because although the government is interested in modernisation and diversification of the economy, diversification of the markets for import is still highly dependent on the export of fossil fuels and the resource-based "regime" has led to lock-in in the "niches". The main challenge is in synchronising the changes to the values and practices of all the system's actors with the emerging risks and constant dynamic of the "landscape". Policy towards the sustainability transition lay in the rethinking of export policies both in the field of carbon raw materials and developing renewable energy capacities, and recognised such transition from a raw materials export model to a "stimulating infrastructure". Also, it is necessary to approach the Russian regions contextually, to provide subsidies for the renewable sources of energy, developing public-partnerships, establishing communication between the energy-saving programmes and private enterprises, and creating restrictions for the extraction of the resources. The growing structure of renewable energy will create a new "investment cycle" in the general energy balance, and competition in certain industrial sectors for jobs and finances will be expected (Romanov, 2022). On the one hand, the epistemological potential of the MLP approach for the Russian context is fruitful as a new research ground for describing the sustainability transition process among various stakeholders and levels (there is no literature that analyses energy transition in Russia from this perspective). In the Russian case, the MLP approach clearly presents the fundamental energy technologies, markets, institutions, consumption practices, and social policy that exist on different levels (common, regional, local), united by one centralised energy law and technical system (landscape); one institutional energy rule (meso) differs only by cost in economic regions. Niches including green and raw export stakeholders (governmental and business structure) represented their effectiveness previously

by economic benefits in local internal energy using and export benefits. The raw materials export model of Russia raises issues for the green global economy and the political economy of socio-technical transitions is critical in energy transition discourse (Baker et al., 2014). On the other hand, rigid definitions of the concepts of "regime", "landscape", and "niche" do not describe organically and in full the nuances of the SET processes in the Russian context because of the interchange and interdependence of the niche and regime actors who are mainly driven by economic and political values under the resource-driven economy, the monopoly of big oil companies, great variability of sustainable energy transitions policy across regions in Russia, and low agency to regulate the temperature in homes independently. The centralisation and monopoly of the energy structure bears the advantages of continuity and reliability of the power supply utilities, but also raises barriers to developing a decentralised renewable energy system that tries to exist within the same unitary system. In this regard, the concepts of energy justice and energy poverty can provide better conceptual explanations of such processes.

The Ghana energy transition trajectory can be mirrored with the landscape, regime, and niche conceptually and theoretically; in practice, however, it is obvious that sustainable energy transitioning has been problematic since the country is locked into the existing hydrocarbon socio-technical system. As noted earlier, Ghana's energy transition lies within the landscape of international energy and sustainability conventions, frameworks, and socio-technology systems. The global landscape at the macro scale has informed the Ghana energy regime (meso) such as energy and renewable energy policies albeit with limited success in promoting sustainable energy transition. Theorising existing energy transition is Eurocentric (Power et al., 2016) based on assumptions of state capacity, markets, institutions, and infrastructure. But this does not represent the realities of some of the developing economies with a weak state and institutions and market systems (Berkhout et al., 2010; Bridge et al., 2013; Hansen & Coenen, 2015; Lawhon & Murphy, 2012) to generate funds for niche innovation. For example, in Ghana there is limited national or local investment, and the state has become deeply tied to existing hydrocarbon socio-technical and political systems (Unruh, 2000). In the past 50 years, Ghana has been committed to the hydropower system from Akosombo and Kpong, and since the late 1990s a thermal energy mix due to climate change and unreliable rainfall that affected energy produced by the hydro dams. Thus, Ghana has been technologically, structurally, and socially linked with two energy systems (hydro and thermal) with limited incentives to invest in alternative energy sources. Ghana is only circulating within the same hydrocarbon and hydro socio-technical system and cannot be said to be necessarily transitioning. A power purchase guarantee for IPPs irrespective of source does not encourage niche innovation in renewable energies. There is also the question as to whether local actors have the capabilities, be it financially and/or technologically to capitalise on the regime to invest in niches in Africa. Development of renewable energies is partly dependent on funding from governments, local investors or transnational FDIs. In Ghana, local actors do not appear to have the capacity for investments, and energy transition projects such as the biofuel from Jetropha are initiated by foreign entities

(Boamah, 2014). Some of Ghana's biofuel projects were financed by Canadian and Norwegian investors, fronted by local actors. This raises questions of the interests of the investors: sustainable energy or profit.

In this paper, we argue that even though Russia and Ghana strive for energy transition, the diversification of the markets for import are still highly depended on fossil fuels export and resource-based "regimes" which led to lock-in in the "niches". Both Ghana and Russia are commodity export models of energy policy development but they have a different base: in Ghana, more energy is produced on the basis of hydropower and thermal plants mostly power by natural gas. Russia's landscape perspective implies maintaining the status of an independent commodity-exporting power, which, however, retains its obligation to reduce emissions, while Ghana demonstrates a greater number of cases on reducing emissions within various intercountry agreements. Under the regime, both Russia and Ghana are showing a high commitment to the conventional energy market developing these technologies as part of energy efficiency and promoting jobs in this sector; however, Ghana seems more theoretically committed to diversifying with renewable energy sources. Also, due to climate complexity, renewable energy sources in Russia are currently expanding into the southern territories and Siberia. Niches for the development of technological innovation also differ across countries. Ghana is advancing private sector decarbonization innovation through private sector led solar equipment though still limited, and which is supposed to be more competitive, which is easier to implement given the greater focus on decentralized energy system and with investments in biomass and solar energies as the future to betting on. Despite these efforts, Ghana's energy architecture is still glued in thermal. The energy system of Russia is unified, centrally controlled, characterized by inertia, and the development of innovations in the field of renewable energy sources is mainly concentrated within the same structures and concerns that promote traditional hydrocarbon technologies, new technological niches will need to integrate into the existing system and select such economic instruments that will maintain a convenient tariff for the consumer. Russia is developing technologies in the field of all possible sources of renewable energy, with particular emphasis on hybrid solar and wind stations in the South and Siberia, biomass energy in the North but energy-efficient solutions in the field of traditional energy are developing the fastest than renewables.

With the MLP, there is a focus on niches and elite actors as deliberate leaders and promoters of innovative energy transition. Emphasis is placed on "bottom-up" niche innovations, even though where it fails to account adequately for entrenched landscape or regime stakeholders such as multinational firms whose behaviour is not easily altered by the state (Coenen & Truffer, 2012; Power et al., 2016; Truffer, 2012). But overly focused on elite and formal actors as drivers of niche innovation tends to de-emphasise informal networks of innovation and diffusion that characterise the development and uptake of technologies. It is also now clear that MLP need to adapt to different energy networks and flows in the geopolitical space beyond the macro-regime of the state. Transition concepts have been relatively diminutive about questions on geopolitics in shaping domestic and international energy policy choices and transition regimes

(McEwan, 2017; Power et al., 2016; Silver & Marvin, 2016). Politics partly drive niche innovation within the sustainability energy space. We argue the need to highlight the political economy of socio-technical energy literatures to allow for an understanding of how and why transnational actors, including "emerging powers" (such as China, Brazil, and India) play roles in shaping regimes, landscapes, and niches. There are a growing number of studies in the literature on energy geographies that raise queries about the energy infrastructures as sites of contestation, competition, and struggle over resources, technologies and social systems, ethics, energy poverty and justice, and socio-economic implications (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015). Based on the concept of "energy landscapes", Frantál et al. (2014) observe that an energy system is not necessarily a physically delimited space, but instead dynamic entities constituted by complex local, national, and transnational flows of technologies, funding agencies and ideologies. Ramos-Mejía et al. (2018) highlight the challenges of socio-technical transformations amidst poverty and sustainability in energy transitions with dissimilar local dynamics. Countries exhibit a mix of well- and ill-functioning institutions, markets, and social systems, with each having implications for energy transitions. The developing countries are not homogenous, with differentiated structures, policies, and actors that either facilitate or inhibit effective energy transition. There is, therefore, the need for justice in energy transition discourse, while at the same time examining the historical trajectories of technologies. As Monagas & Corral (2022) recently note, it is obvious that given the different socio-economic and political economies across spaces, diverse conceptual tools are needed to better explain energy transition in developing countries.

References

Araújo, K. (2014). The emerging field of energy transitions: Progress, challenges, and opportunities. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *1*, 112–121. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2014.03.002

Baker, L., Newell, P., & Phillips, J. (2014). The political economy of energy transitions: The case of South Africa. *New Political Economy*, *19*(6), 791–818. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2013.849674

Basso, L. (2018). *Domestic determinants of international cooperation: An analysis of the intricate relationship between energy politics and climate change mitigation* [Published doctoral dissertation, Universidade de Brasília]. Repositório Institucional da UNB. https://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/32689

Bawakyillenuo, S., Olweny, M., Anderson., M., & Borchers, M. (2018). Sustainable energy transitions in Sub-Saharan African cities: The role of local government. In P. Droege (Ed.), *Urban energy transition: Renewable strategies for cities and regions* (2nd ed., pp. 529–551). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102074-6.00042-5

Berkhout, F., Verbong, G., Wieczorek, A. J., Raven, R., Lebel, L., & Bai, X. (2010). Sustainability experiments in Asia: Innovations shaping alternative development pathways. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *13*(4), 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2010.03.010

Boamah, F. (2014). How and why chiefs formalise land use in recent times: The politics of land dispossession through biofuels investments in Ghana. *Review of African Political Economy*, *41*(141), 406–423. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.901947

Bridge, G. (2018). The map is not the territory: A sympathetic critique of energy research's spatial turn. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *36*, 11–20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.09.033

Bridge, G., Bouzarovski, S., Bradshaw, M., & Eyre, N. (2013). Geographies of energy transition: Space, place and the low-carbon economy. *Energy Policy*, *53*, 331–340. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2012.10.066

Bushuev, V. V. (2020). Ekorazvitie i energetika [Ecological development and energy complex]. *Journal of Environmental Earth and Energy Study*, *1*, 19–32. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3737981

Coenen, L., & Truffer, B. (2012). Places and spaces of sustainability transitions: Geographical contributions to an emerging research and policy field. *European Planning Studies*, *20*(3), 367–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2012.651802

Committee for Development Policy & United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2021). *Handbook on the least developed country category: Inclusion, graduation and special support measures* (4th ed.). United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/desa/handbook-least-developed-country-category-inclusion-graduation-and-special-support-measures-4th

da Costa, J., Jr., Diehl, J. C., & Secomandi, F. (2019). Towards systems-oriented energy solutions: A multilevel analysis of a low-income energy efficiency program in Brazil. *Sustainability*, *11*(20), Article 5799. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11205799

Downie, C. (2022). Geopolitical leverage in the energy transition: A framework for analysis and the case of Australian electricity exports. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *93*, Article 102826. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102826

El Bilali, H. (2019). The multi-level perspective in research on sustainability transitions in agriculture and food systems: A systematic review. *Agriculture*, *9*(4), Article 74. https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture9040074

Energy Commission, Sustainable Energy for All, & United Nations in Ghana. (2012). *Ghana. Sustainable energy for all. Action plan*. https://www.energycom.gov.gh/files/SE4ALL-GHANA%20ACTION%20PLAN.pdf

Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). *Ghana's third national communication report to the UNFCCC: 2015 climate change report*. https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/gha_nc3.pdf

Foxon, T., Hammond, G., & Pearson, P. (2010). Developing transition pathways for a low carbon electricity system in the UK. *Technology Forecasting and Social Change*, *77*(8), 1203–1213. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2010.04.002

Frantál, B., Pasqualetti, M., & van der Horst, D. (2014). New trends and challenges for energy geographies: Introduction to the special issue. *Moravian Geographical Reports*, *22*(2), 2–6. https://doi.org/10.2478/mgr-2014-0006

Fukuyama, Y. F. (2002). *Our posthuman future: Consequences of the biotechnology revolution*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Geels, F. W. (2002). Technological transitions as evolutionary reconfiguration processes: A multi-level perspective and a case-study. *Research Policy*, *31*(8–9), 1257–1274. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333(02)00062-8

Geels, F. W. (2005). *Technological transitions and system innovations: A co-evolutionary and socio-technical analysis.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

Geels, F. W. (2006). Co-evolutionary and multi-level dynamics in transitions: The transformation of aviation systems and the shift from propeller to turbojet (1930–1970). *Technovation*, *26*(9), 999–1016. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2005.08.010

Geels, F. W. (2011). The multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions: Responses to seven criticisms. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, *1*(1), 24–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2011.02.002

Geels, F. W., & Schot, J. (2007). Typology of sociotechnical transition pathways. *Research Policy*, *36*(3), 399–417. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2007.01.003

Genus, O., & Coles, A.-M. (2008). Rethinking the multi-level perspective of technological transitions. *Research Policy*, *37*(9), 1436–1445 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2008.05.006

Hansen, T., & Coenen, L. (2015). The geography of sustainability transitions: Review, synthesis and reflections on an emergent research field. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, *17*, 92–109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2014.11.001

Kaku, M. (2008). *Physics of the impossible: A scientific exploration into the world of phasers, force fields, teleportation, and time travel*. Doubleday.

Lawhon, M., & Murphy, J. (2012). Socio-technical regimes and sustainability transitions: Insights from political ecology. *Progress in Human Geography*, *36*(3), 354–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132511427960

Lehtonen, M., & Kern, F. (2009). Deliberative socio-technical transitions. In I. Scrase & G. MacKerron (Eds.), *Energy for the future: A new agenda* (pp. 103–121). Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230235441_7

Markard, J., & Truffer, B. (2008). Technological innovation systems and the multi-level perspective: Towards an integrated framework. *Research Policy*, *37*(4), 596–615. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2008.01.004

McEwan, C. (2017). Spatial processes and politics of renewable energy transition: Land, zones and frictions in South Africa. *Political Geography*, *56*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.10.001

Ministry of Energy. (2010). *National energy policy.* Ghana Government. https://mida.gov.gh/pages/view/108/NATIONAL_ENERGY_POLICY_FINAL_2010.pdf

Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation. (2023). *Doklad o realizatsii plana deiatel'nosti Ministerstva energetiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period 2019–2024 godov, utverzhdennogo Prikazom Minenergo Rossii ot 28 ianvaria 2019 g. No. 45, za 2022 god* [Report on the implementation of the activity plan of the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation for the period 2019–2024, approved by Order of the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation No. 45 of January 28, 2019, for 2022]. https://minenergo.gov.ru/view-pdf/13623/207483

Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation & Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). *National greenhouse gas inventory report: 2014 national carbon accounting*. https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/ghanir.pdf

Monagas, M. del C., & Coral, S. (2022). Should Western renewable energy microgrids be exported to African islands? Exploring governance, village experiences, and sociotechnical challenges in Cape Verde. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *93*, Article 102830. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102830

Power, M., Newell, P., Baker, L., Bulkeley, H., Kirshner, J., & Smith, A. (2016). The political economy of energy transitions in Mozambique and South Africa: The role of the rising powers. *Energy Research and Social Science*, *17*, 10–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2016.03.007

Power Africa case study: Ghana. Advancing gender equality in Africa's off-grid sector. (2019). Power Africa. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/PA_Case_Study.2019.04.09.508.pdf

Ramos-Mejía, M., Franco-Garcia, M.-L., & Jauregui-Becker, J. M. (2018). Sustainability transitions in the developing world: Challenges of socio-technical transformations unfolding in contexts of poverty. *Environmental Science and Policy*, *84*, 217–223. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2017.03.010

Renewable Energy Act (Act No. 832). (2011, December 31). Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. https://energycom.gov.gh/files/RENEWABLE%20ENERGY%20ACT%202011%20(ACT%20832).pdf

Rifkin, J. (2011). *The third industrial revolution: How lateral power is transforming energy, the economy, and the world.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Rip, A., & Kemp, R. (1998). Technological change. In S. Rayner & E. L. Malone (Eds.), *Human choice and climate change: Vol. 3. The tools for policy analysis* (pp. 327–399). Battelle Press.

Romanov, R. V. (2022). Vozobnovliaemye istochniki energii v Rossii: Razvitie i perspektivy [Renewable energy sources in Russia: Development and prospects]. *Scientific Notes of Young Researchers*, *10*(3), 5–11.

Silver, J., & Marvin, S. (2016). Powering sub-Saharan Africa's urban revolution: An energy transitions approach. *Urban Studies*, *54*(4), 847–861. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016668105

Sovacool, B. K., & Dworkin, M. H. (2015). Energy justice: Conceptual insights and practical applications. *Applied Energy*, *142*, 435–444. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2015.01.002

Swilling, M., Musango, J., & Wakeford, J. (2016). Developmental states and sustainability transitions: Prospects of a just transition in South Africa. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *18*(5), 650–672. https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2015.1107716

The energy transition in developing countries (Pre-2003 economic or sector report No. 4442)*.* (1983). The World Bank. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/905411468350188509/the-energy-transition-in-developing-countries

The World Bank in Ghana. (2023, March 31). The World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview

Toffler, E. (1980). *The third wave*. Morrow.

Truffer, B. (2012). The need for a global perspective on sustainability transitions. *Environmental Development*, *3*, 182–183. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2012.05.010

Unruh, G. C. (2000). Understanding carbon lock-in. *Energy Policy*, *28*(12), 817–830. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0301-4215(00)00070-7

Wallerstein, I., Lemert, C., & Rojas, C. A. (2013). *Uncertain worlds: World-systems analysis in changing times* (G. Ciccariello & J. A. Mota Lopes, Trans.). Paradigm.

Renata Summa (2021). *Everyday Boundaries, Borders and Post Conflict Societies*. Palgrave Macmillan

Denis V. Slepchenko
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Post-conflict peacebuilding often involves the need to address more complex issues than merely putting an end to hostilities and resolving the conflict. Society can remain divided, both in terms of its internal structure and external characteristics. In post-conflict situations, frequent changes in various aspects of social relations often serve as triggers for new conflicts.

In her book *Everyday Boundaries, Borders and Post Conflict Societies*, Renata Summa 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.

Post-conflict in this study is defined as the state of a society that has experienced conflict or war and is in the process of recovery. Therefore, post-conflict can serve as a common backdrop for numerous social processes, including democratization, economic reconstruction, social rehabilitation, resulting in the restoration of peaceful life and the reform of society.

The book begins by examining the cases of Sarajevo and Mostar (p. 6) to explore shifts in the utilization of borders in the daily lives of post-conflict societies. At this point the author argues that borders, in their essence, are linked to the practice of demarcation and are not limited solely to geographic aspects or spatial characteristics. Peace agreements caused a reorganization of borders and this process, in its turn, reshaped social structures and thus increased the significance of borders in post-conflict socio-political life (pp. 7–9).

The second part of the book explores the concepts of borders and boundaries. Borders are predominantly understood as physical demarcations, whereas boundaries are rooted in social and cultural aspects and feature more prominently in language and religion. The author argues that

> boundaries can be understood as a much more fluid and dynamic category, which allows moving away from the metaphor of the line. From the metaphor of the line, we pass, with boundaries, to the metaphor of a gray zone. Although it can be instituted and backed by political authorities, boundaries are not necessarily clearly identified to interstate borders. Even though they produce, shape and organize space, they can be of multiple types: symbolic, social, linguistic, cultural, urban, spatial, etc. Being less institutionalized, their crystallization or transgression depend, to a larger extent, on a series of everyday practices. (p. 38)

Everyday boundaries possess a fundamental quality—they remain concealed and inconspicuous, yet they play a pivotal role in shaping society and shaping interactions between individuals in their everyday activities.

The third chapter examines everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton peace settlement and explores the connection between boundaries and the everyday. The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates certain methodological aspects related to the concept of everyday life–it should not be regarded as a structured entity that can be subdivided into different "levels" or "layers" (p. 75). Instead, the author suggests looking at everyday life from a different perspective: as a unique set of practices used by members of society, including displacement, alienation, "denaturalization" (p. 84), and demarcation. Displacement implies the expulsion of certain groups or nationalities from specific territories or social spheres; alienation means isolating people from their society and culture; denaturalization stands for the loss of cultural identity; and demarcation reinforces the differentiation of society within the *borders* and *boundaries*.

The fourth chapter analyzes post-conflict social processes in the suburb of Sarajevo, where the territory is administratively divided into Sarajevo and Istočno Sarajevo by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). Among other things, the chapter explores the remarkable example of the coach station in Istočno Sarajevo, which has turned into a "place of socialization" and thus acquired meanings that are different from those it initially had. Within this context, R. Summa investigates the intricate interplay between boundary-making practices that define life in Sarajevo and alternative practices that facilitate the crossing and transcending of these boundaries (pp. 125–141). Everyday life "smooths out" conflict situations, gradually making them less noticeable.

The central theme of the fifth chapter is the city of Mostar. After the Dayton Accords, this city became frequently associated with the concept of "division" due to the conflicts that occurred there between 1993 and 1994. The western part belonged to the Croatian Defence Council, and the eastern part to the army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the conflict, the division in terms of political borders vanished but persisted in terms of social boundaries. However, as R. Summa argues,

these boundaries were also gradually fading away in everyday life. When we closely examine the areas of ongoing conflict in the city, we don't simply find a straightforward spatial division; instead, we observe a process of demarcation. This demarcation is defined by spatial-temporal discursive constructs that aren't immediately apparent in everyday perception but gradually take shape as boundaries in the course of the conflict's development (pp. 182–184).

The final chapter describes more complex aspects of everyday life. To this end, the focus again is made on Sarajevo and its urban space, especially the BBI shopping center and its square, where everyday life blurs the distinction between international and local. The boundaries became less distinct as various social practices converged. In this context the everyday can be understood as a kind of catalyst for social interaction: everyday practices unite people regardless of how different they may be. Thus, as discussed earlier, everyday life relegates conflicts to a secondary position, while interaction takes precedence.

R. Summa's research combines the investigation of various manifestations of borders and boundaries with an analysis of post-conflict practices. These practices can contribute to conflict mitigation, although only to a partial extent. Such divisions within society are observed universally when we consider them in the context of the term *boundaries*. Cultural boundaries, often imperceptible in everyday life, become readily apparent in the course of conflict development. The example of former Yugoslavia illustrates the ubiquity of hidden practices associated with conflicts. The main strength of this book is its emphasis on the daily, routine manifestations of a conflict, which are often taken for granted by the participants themselves and which pose significant methodological challenges for researchers. In the book, the author aims to build a methodological framework that goes beyond the spatial dimension of boundaries and emphasizes their dynamic and evolving nature, highlighting the idea that boundaries are in a constant state of flux. This book can be recommended to researchers of conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Yugoslav Wars, and any prolonged civil confrontations in general.

Addendum to the article

Exploring Anchor Personality and True Meaning in Indonesian Young Adults

Annisa Ardi Ayuningtyas, Bagus Riyono
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

The article "Exploring Anchor Personality and True Meaning in Indonesian Young Adults" by Annisa Ardi Ayuningtyas & Bagus Riyono https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2023.7.2.233 published in the Vol. 7, No. 2 of *Changing Societies & Personalities* should include an amendment, which is an ACKNOWLEDGMENTS section to be added after the ABSTRACT and KEYWORDS sections on page 102, which should read as follows

ETHICAL CODE

FOR JOURNAL EDITORS

We ask all journal editors to make every reasonable effort to adhere to the following ethical code for *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal articles that are worthy of peer review:

- Journal editors should be accountable for everything published in their journals meaning that they should strive to meet the needs of readers and authors; strive to constantly improve their journal; have processes in place to assure the quality of the material they publish; champion freedom of expression; maintain the integrity of the academic record; preclude business needs from compromising intellectual and ethical standards; always be willing to publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies when needed.

- Journal editors should give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted for consideration for publication, and should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).

- Journal editors' decisions to accept or reject a paper for publication should be based on the paper's importance, originality and clarity, and the study's validity and its relevance to the remit of the journal. Editors should not reverse decisions to accept submissions unless serious problems are identified with the submission.

- Journal editors must ensure that all published reports and reviews of research have been reviewed by suitably qualified reviewers (including statistical review where appropriate), and ensure that non-peer-reviewed sections of their journal are clearly identified.

- Journal editors must keep the peer-review process confidential. The editor and any editorial staff of the journal must not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

- If a journal editor receives a claim that a submitted article is under consideration elsewhere or has already been published, then he or she has a duty to investigate the matter with *CS&P* Editorial Board.

- An editor should take reasonably responsive measures when ethical complaints have been presented concerning a submitted manuscript or published paper. Such measures will generally include contacting the author of the manuscript or paper and giving due consideration of the respective complaint or claims made.

- Journal editors may reject a submitted manuscript without resort to formal peer review if they consider the manuscript to be inappropriate for the journal and outside its scope.
- Journal editors should make all reasonable effort to process submitted manuscripts in an efficient and timely manner.
- Journal editors should arrange for responsibility of the peer review of any original research article authored by themselves to be delegated to a member of the *CS&P* Editorial Board as appropriate.
- If a journal editor is presented with convincing evidence that the main substance or conclusions of an article published in the journal are erroneous, then, in consultation with *CS&P* Editorial Board, the journal editor should facilitate publication of an appropriate corrigendum or erratum.
- Editor should refrain herself (himself) (i.e. should ask a co-editor, associate editor or other member of the editorial board instead to review and consider) from considering manuscripts, in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or (possibly) institutions connected to the papers.
- Any data or analysis presented in a submitted manuscript should not be used in a journal editor's own research except with the consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage.
- Editors should be alert to intellectual property issues and work with their publisher to handle potential breaches of intellectual property laws and conventions.
- Journal editors should make decisions on which articles to publish based on quality and suitability for the journal and without interference from the journal owner/publisher.

FOR AUTHORS

We expect all authors submitting to *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal to adhere to the following ethical code:

- All authors must warrant that their article is their own original work, which does not infringe the intellectual property rights of any other person or entity, and cannot be construed as plagiarizing any other published work, including their own previously published work. Plagiarism takes many forms, from "passing off" another's paper as the author's own paper, to copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's paper (without attribution), to claiming results from research conducted by others. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable.

- All authors named on the paper are equally held accountable for the content of a submitted manuscript or published paper. All persons who have made significant scientific or literary contributions to the work reported should be named as co-authors. The corresponding author must ensure all named co-authors consent to publication and to being named as a co-author. Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors.

- Authors must not submit a manuscript to more than one journal simultaneously. An author should not in general publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal of primary publication. Authors should not submit previously published work, nor work, which is based in substance on previously published work, either in part or whole.

- Authors must appropriately cite all relevant publications. The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used.

- The work and/or words of others, this has been appropriately cited or quoted. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported in the author's work unless fully cited, and with the permission of that third party.

- If required, authors must facilitate access to data sets described in the article. a paper should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work.

- Authors must declare any potential conflict of interest–be it professional or financial–which could be held to arise with respect to the article. All authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript.

- Authors must avoid making defamatory statements in submitted articles, which could be construed as impugning any person's reputation.

FOR PEER REVIEWERS

We ask all peer reviewers to make every reasonable effort to adhere to the following ethical code for *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal articles they have agreed to review:

- Reviewers must give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted for consideration for publication, and should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).

- Reviewers should declare any potential conflict of interest interests (which may, for example, be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or

religious) prior to agreeing to review a manuscript including any relationship with the author that may potentially bias their review.

- Reviewers must keep the peer review process confidential; information or correspondence about a manuscript should not be shared with anyone outside of the peer review process.

- Reviewers should provide a constructive, comprehensive, evidenced, and appropriately substantial peer review report, and provide feedback that will help the authors to improve their manuscript. Reviewers should express their views clearly with supporting arguments and make clear, which suggested additional investigations are essential to support claims made in the manuscript under consideration, and which will just strengthen or extend the work. Reviewers must ensure that their comments and recommendations for the editor are consistent with their report for the authors.

- Reviewers must be objective in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory. Reviewers must avoid making statements in their report, which might be construed as impugning any person's reputation. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate.

- Reviewers must be aware of the sensitivities surrounding language issues that are due to the authors writing in a language that is not their own, and phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect.

- Reviewer must not suggest that authors include citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work merely to increase the reviewer's (or their associates') citation count or to enhance the visibility of their or their associates' work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons.

- Any selected reviewer who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript should notify the editor and excuse himself from the review process.

- Reviewers should make all reasonable effort to submit their report and recommendation in a timely manner, informing the editor if this is not possible.

- Reviewers should identify relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation. Reviewers should call to the journal editor's attention any significant similarity between the manuscript under consideration and any published paper or submitted manuscripts, of which they are aware.

- Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer's own research without the express written consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage.

INSTRUCTION FOR AUTHORS

Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. These instructions will ensure we have everything required so your paper can move through peer review, production, and publication smoothly. Please take the time to read and follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements.

Use these instructions if you are preparing a manuscript to submit to *Changing Societies & Personalities*. To explore our journal portfolio, visit https://changing-sp.com

Changing Societies & Personalities considers all manuscripts on the strict condition that:

(a) the manuscript is your own original work, and does not duplicate any other previously published work, including your own previously published work;

(b) the manuscript has been submitted only to *Changing Societies & Personalities*; it is not under consideration or peer review or accepted for publication or in press, or published elsewhere;

(c) the manuscript contains nothing that is abusive, defamatory, libelous, obscene, fraudulent, or illegal;

(d) the manuscript is presented in grammatically correct, stylistically appropriate and readable English.

By submitting your manuscript to *Changing Societies & Personalities* you are agreeing to any necessary originality checks your manuscript may have to undergo during the peer-review and production processes.

Manuscript preparation

1. General Guidelines

Description of the Journal's Article Style

All authors must submit articles written in good English using correct grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. If authors are non-native English speakers or writers, may, if possible, to have their submissions proofread by a native English speaker before submitting their article for consideration.

A typical manuscript is from 6000 to 8000 words including tables, references, captions, footnotes and endnotes. Review articles should not exceed 4000 words, and book reviews should not exceed 1500 words. Manuscripts that greatly exceed this will be critically reviewed with respect to length.

Manuscripts should be compiled in the following order: title page (including Acknowledgements as well as Funding and grant-awarding bodies); abstract; keywords; main text; acknowledgments; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figure caption(s) (as a list).

Abstracts of 150–200 words are required for all manuscripts submitted.

Each manuscript should have 5 to 10 keywords.

Section headings should be concise.

All authors of a manuscript should include their full names, affiliations, postal addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses on the cover page of the manuscript. One author should be identified as the corresponding author. Please give the affiliation where the research was conducted. If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. Please note that no changes to affiliation can be made after the manuscript is accepted. Please note that the email address of the corresponding author will normally be displayed in the published article and the online version.

All persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship must be named in the manuscript as co-authors; the corresponding author must be authorized by all co-authors to act as an agent on their behalf in all matters pertaining to publication of the manuscript, and the order of names should be agreed by all authors.

Please supply a short biographical note for each author.

Please supply all details required by any funding and grant-awarding bodies as an Acknowledgement on the title page of the manuscript, in a separate paragraph, as follows:

For single agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For multiple agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency 1] under Grant [number xxxx]; [Funding Agency 2] under Grant [number xxxx]; and [Funding Agency 3] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For all manuscripts non-discriminatory language is mandatory. Sexist or racist terms must not be used. The singular "they" or "their" is endorsed as a gender-neutral pronoun. Instead of using adjectives as nouns to label groups of people, descriptive phrases are preferred. Instead of broad categories, using exact age ranges that are more relevant and specific is preferable.

2. Style Guidelines

Font: Helvetica, "Helvetica Neue" or Calibri, Sans-Serif, 12 point. Use margins of at least 2.5 cm (1 inch).

Title: Use bold for your article title, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.

Authors' names: Give the names of all contributing authors on the title page exactly as you wish them to appear in the published article.

Affiliations: List the affiliation of each author (university, city, country).

Correspondence details: Please provide an institutional email address for the corresponding author. Full postal details are also needed by the publisher, but will not necessarily be published.

Anonymity for peer review: Ensure your identity and that of your co-authors is not revealed in the text of your article or in your manuscript files when submitting the manuscript for review.

Abstract: Indicate the abstract paragraph with a heading or by reducing the font size.

Keywords: Please provide five to ten keywords to help readers find your article.

Headings: Please indicate the level of the section headings in your article:

- First-level headings (e.g., Introduction, Conclusion) should be in bold, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.

- Second-level headings should be in bold italics, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.

- Third-level headings should be in italics, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.

- Fourth-level headings should also be in italics, at the beginning of a paragraph. The text follows immediately after a full stop (full point) or other punctuation mark.

Tables and figures: Indicate in the text where the tables and figures should appear, for example by inserting [Table 1 near here]. The actual tables and figures should be supplied either at the end of the text or in a separate file as requested by the Editor.

If your article is accepted for publication, it will be copy-edited and typeset in the correct style for the journal.

Foreign words and all titles of books or plays appearing within the text should be italicized. Non-Anglophone or transliterated words should also appear with translations provided in square brackets the first time they appear (e.g., weltanschauung [world-view]).

If an English translation of a foreign work is referenced, the author, title, and so forth come from the version read, with a nod to the translator: Piaget, J. (1969). The psychology of the child (H. Weaver, Trans.). Basic Books.

If acronyms are employed (e.g., the BUF), the full name should also be given the first time they appear.

Please use double quotation marks, except where "a quotation is 'within' a quotation". Long quotations of words or more should be indented with quotation marks.

To draw more attention to the items and help readers understand the separate, parallel items in a complex list, use lowercase letters in parentheses before each item. Do not use numbers in parentheses.

If you have any queries, please contact us at https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/about/contact

Description of the Journal's Reference Style

CHANGING SOCIETIES & PERSONALITIES
STANDARD REFERENCE STYLE: *APA*

APA (American Psychological Association) references are widely used in the social sciences, education, engineering and business. For detailed information, please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines and https://apastyle.apa.org/blog

In the text:	
Placement	References are cited in the text by the author's surname, the publication date of the work cited, and a page number if necessary. Full details are given in the reference list. Place them at the appropriate point in the text. If they appear within parenthetical material, put the year within commas: (see Table 3 of National Institute of Mental Health, 2012, for more details)
Within the same parentheses	Order alphabetically and then by year for repeated authors, with in-press citations last. Separate references by different authors with a semi-colon.
Repeat mentions in the same paragraph	If name and year are in parentheses, include the year in subsequent citations.

With a quotation	This is the text, and Smith (2012) says "quoted text" (p. 1), which supports my argument. This is the text, and this is supported by "quoted text" (Smith, 2012, p. 1). This is a displayed quotation. (Smith, 2012, p. 1)
Page number	(Smith, 2012, p. 6)
One author	Smith (2012) or (Smith, 2012)
Two authors	Smith and Jones (2012) or (Smith & Jones, 2012)
Three or more authors	Three or more authors is shortened right from the first citation: Smith et al. (2012) or (Smith et al., 2012).
Authors with same surname	G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2008) G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2012)
No author	Cite first few words of title (in quotation marks or italics depending on journal style for that type of work), plus the year: (Study Finds, 2007).
Not published yet	Do not provide a year in the reference if the document is not published yet. If the document is about to be published, use "in press": Smith (in press)
Groups of authors that would shorten to the same form	Cite the surnames of the first author and as many others as necessary to distinguish the two references, followed by comma and et al.
Organization as author	When a document doesn't list a specific author, list the organization in the author position. The name of an organization can be spelled out each time it appears in the text or you can spell it out only the first time and abbreviate it after that. The guiding rule is that the reader should be able to find it in the reference list easily. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2012) or (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2012) University of Oxford (2012) or (University of Oxford, 2012)
Author with two works in the same year	Put a, b, c after the year (Chen, 2011a, 2011b, in press-a)
Secondary source	When it is not possible to see an original document, cite the source of your information on it; do not cite the original assuming that the secondary source is correct. Smith's diary (as cited in Khan, 2012)
Classical work	References to classical works such as the Bible and the Qur'an are cited only in the text. Reference list entry is not required. Cite year of translation (Aristotle, trans. 1931) or the version you read: Bible (King James Version).
Personal communication	References to personal communications are cited only in the text: A. Colleague (personal communication, April 12, 2011)
Unknown date	(Author, n.d.)
Two dates	(Author, 1959–1963) Author (1890/1983)
Self-translated passage	If you translated a passage from one language into another it is considered a paraphrase, not a direct quotation. Thus, to cite your translated material, all you need to do is include the author and date of the material in the in-text citation. It is recommended (but not required) that you also include the page number in the citation, because this will help any readers to find the translated passage in the original. You should not use quotation marks around the material you translated (alternative: to use the words "my translation" after the passage in squire brackets).
Notes	Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. Any references cited in notes should be included in the reference list.

Tables and figures	Put reference in the footnote or legend
Reference list	
Order	Your reference list should appear at the end of your paper. It provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any source you cite in the body of the paper. Each source you cite in the paper must appear in your reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list must be cited in your text. Alphabetical letter by letter, by surname of first author followed by initials. References by the same single author are ordered by date, from oldest to most recent. References by more than one author with the same first author are ordered after all references by the first author alone, by surname of second author, or if they are the same, the third author, and so on. References by the same author with the same date are arranged alphabetically by title excluding 'A' or 'The', unless they are parts of a series, in which case order them by part number. Put a lower-case letter after the year: Smith, J. (2012a). Smith, J. (2012b). For organizations or groups, alphabetize by the first significant word of their name. If there is no author, put the title in the author position and alphabetize by the first significant word.
Form of author name	Use the authors' surnames and initials unless you have two authors with the same surname and initial, in which case the full name can be given: Smith, J. [Jane]. (2012). Smith, J. [Joel]. (2012). If a first name includes a hyphen, add a full stop (period) after each letter: Jones, J.-P.
Book	
One author	Author, A. A. (2012). *This is a book title: And subtitle.* Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Two authors	Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (2012). *This is a book title: And subtitle.* Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Three authors	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2012). *This is a book title: And subtitle.* Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
More authors	Include all names up to twenty. If there are more than twenty authors, list the first nineteen authors, followed by an ellipsis and the last author's name.
Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). *Book title: And subtitle.* Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
No author	*Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary* (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster (place of publication is optional).
Chapter	Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor (Ed.), *Book title: And subtitle* (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional). Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor & B. B. Editor (Eds.), *Book title: And subtitle* (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional). Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor, P. P. Editor, & B. B. Editor (Eds.), *Book title: And subtitle* (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).

Edited	Editor, J. J. (Ed.). (2012). *Book title: And subtitle*. Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional). Editor, J. J., Editor, A. A., & Editor, P. P. (Eds.). (2012). *Book title: And subtitle.* Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional). Editor, J. J., & Editor, P. P. (Eds.). (2012). *Edited online book: And subtitle.* (*The website name*). https://www.w3.org
Edition	Author, A. A. (2012). *Book title: And subtitle* (4th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Translated	Author, J. J. (2012). *Book title: And subtitle.* (L. Khan, Trans.). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Not in English	Doutre, É. (2014). *Mixité de genre et de métiers: Conséquences identitaires et relations de travail* [Mixture of gender and trades: Consequences for identity and working relationships]. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 46, 327–336. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036218 For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html
Online	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work: Subtitle* [Adobe Digital Editions version]. (*The website name*) https://www.w3.org
Place of publication (optional)	Always list the city, and include the two-letter state abbreviation for US publishers. There is no need to include the country name: New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Washington, DC: Author Newbury Park, CA: Sage Pretoria: Unisa Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press Abingdon: Routledge If the publisher is a university and the name of the state is included in the name of the university, do not repeat the state in the publisher location: Santa Cruz: University of California Press Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
Publisher	Give the name in as brief a form as possible. Omit terms such as "Publishers", "Co.", "Inc.", but retain the words "Books" and "Press". If two or more publishers are given, give the location listed first or the location of the publisher's home office. When the author and publisher are identical, use the word Author as the name of the publisher.
E-book	
	A citation of an e-book (i.e., a book accessed on an e-reader) or a book viewed online (e.g., on Google Books or in PDF form) includes the DOI where available. If there is no DOI, link to the page where the book is viewed, or where the e-book can be purchased or accessed. Since e-books sometimes do not include page numbers, APA recommends using other methods of identifying a specific passage in in-text citations—for example, a chapter or section title, or a paragraph number. Author, A. A. (2009). *Book title: And subtitle*. Abingdon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1007/xxxxxxxxxxxx

Multivolume works	
Multiple volumes from a multivolume work	Levison, D., & Ember, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Encyclopedia of cultural anthropology* (Vols. 1–4). New York, NY: Henry Holt (place of publication is optional). Use Vol. for a single volume and Vols. for multiple volumes. In text, use (Levison & Ember, 1996).
A single volume from a multivolume work	Nash, M. (1993). Malay. In P. Hockings (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of world cultures* (Vol. 5, pp. 174–176). New York, NY: G.K. Hall (place of publication is optional). IIn text, use (Nash, 1993).
Journal	
One author	Author, A. A. (2011). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*, *22*(2), 123–231. https://doi.org/10.1080/xxxxxxxxxxxxxx Volume numbers in references should be italicized, but do not italicize the issue number, the parentheses, or the comma after the issue number. If there is no DOI and the reference was retrieved from an online database, give the database name and accession number or the database URL (no retrieval date is needed): Author, A. A. (2011). Title of the article. *Title of Journal, 22*(2), 123–231. (*The website name*) https://www.w3.org
Two authors	Benjamin, L. T., Jr., & VandenBos, G. R. (2006). The window on psychology's literature: A history of psychological abstracts. *American Psychologist*, *61*(9), 941–954. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.61.9.941
Three authors	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (1987). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*, 22, 123–231. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
More authors	Include all names up to twenty. If there are more than twenty authors, list the first nineteen authors, followed by an ellipsis and the last author's name.
Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). Title of the article: Subtitle of the article. *Title of the Journal*, *22*(1), 12–23. https://doi.org/ xx.xxxxxxxxxx
No author	Editorial: Title of editorial. [Editorial]. (2012). *Title of the Journal*, 14, 1–2.
Not in English	If the original version is used as the source, cite the original version. Use diacritical marks and capital letters for the original language if needed. If the English translation is used as the source, cite the English translation. Give the English title without brackets. Titles not in English must be translated into English and put in square brackets. Author, M. (2000). Title in German: Subtitle of the article [Title in English: c article]. *Journal in German*, 21, 208–217. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx Author, P. (2000). Title in French [Title in English]. *Journal in French*, 21, 208–217. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html
Peer-reviewed article published online ahead of the issue	Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (2012). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx If you can update the reference before publication, do so.
Supplemental material	If you are citing supplemental material, which is only available online, include a description of the contents in brackets following the title. [Audio podcast] [Letter to the editor]

Other article types	Editorial: Title of editorial. [Editorial]. (2012). *Title of the Journal*, 14, 1–2. Author, A. A. (2010). Title of review. [Review of the book Title of the book, by B. Book Author]. *Title of the Journal*, *22*(1), 123–231. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
Article in journal supplement	Author, A. A. (2004). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*, 42(Suppl. 2), p–pp. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
Conference	
Proceedings	To cite published proceedings from a book, use book format or chapter format. To cite regularly published proceedings, use journal format.
Paper	Presenter, A. A. (2012, February). Title of the paper. *Paper presented at the meeting of Organization Name*, Location.
Poster	Presenter, A. A. (2012, February). Title of the poster. *Poster session presented at the meeting of Organization Name*, Location
Thesis	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of thesis* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation or master's thesis). Name of the Institution, Location.
Unpublished work	
Manuscript	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2008). *Title of the manuscript*. Unpublished manuscript. Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2012). *Title of the manuscript*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
Forthcoming article	Do not provide a year in the reference if the document is not published yet. If the document is about to be published, use "in press": Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (in press). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
Forthcoming book	Author, A. A. (in press). *Book title: Subtitle*.
Internet	
Website	When citing an entire website, it is sufficient just to give the address of the site in the text. *The BBC* (https://www.bbc.co.uk).
Web page	If the format is out of the ordinary (e.g., lecture notes), add a description in brackets. Author, A. (2011). Title of document [Format description]. (The website name) https://URL
Newspaper or magazine	Author, A. (2012, January 12). Title of the article. *The Sunday Times*, p. 1. Author, A. (2012, January 12). Title of the article. *The Sunday Times*. http://www.sundaytimes.com/xxxx.html Title of the article. (2012, January 12). *The Sunday Times*. http://www.sundaytimes.com/xxxx.html
Reports	
May or may not be peer-reviewed; may or may not be published. Format as a book reference	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Report No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Report No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org

Working paper	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Working Paper No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Working Paper No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Discussion paper	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Discussion Paper No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Discussion Paper No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Personal communication	Personal communication includes letters, emails, memos, messages from discussion groups and electronic bulletin boards, personal interviews. Cite these only in the text. Include references for archived material only.
Other reference types	
Patent	Cho, S. T. (2005). U.S. Patent No. 6,980,855. Washington, DC: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
Map	London Mapping Co. (Cartographer). (1960). Street map. [Map]. (*The website name*) https://www.londonmapping.co.uk/maps/xxxxx
Act	*Mental Health Systems Act*, 41 U.S.C. § 9403 (1988).
Audio and visual media	Taupin, B. (1975). Someone saved my life tonight [Recorded by Elton John]. On Captain fantastic and the brown dirt cowboy [CD]. London: Big Pig Music Limited (place of publication is optional). Author, A. (Producer). (2009, December 2). *Title of podcast* [Audio podcast]. (The website name) https://www.w3.org Producer, P. P. (Producer), & Director, D. D. (Director). (Date of publication). *Title of motion picture* [Motion picture]. Country of origin: Studio or distributor. Smith, A. (Writer), & Miller, R. (Director). (1989). Title of episode [Television series episode]. In A. Green (Executive Producer), Series. New York, NY: WNET. Miller, R. (Producer). (1989). The mind [Television series]. New York, NY: WNET.
Database	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, A. A. (2002). A study of enjoyment of peas. *Title of the Journal*, *8*(3). Retrieved February 20, 2003, from the PsycARTICLES database.
Dataset	Author. (2011). *National Statistics Office monthly means and other derived variables* [Data set]. Retrieved March 6, 2011, (*The website name*) https://www.w3.org If the dataset is updated regularly, use the year of retrieval in the reference, and using the retrieval date is also recommended.
Computer program	Rightsholder, A. A. (2010). *Title of program* (Version number) [Description of form]. Location: Name of producer. Name of software (Version Number) [Computer software]. Location: Publisher. If the program can be downloaded or ordered from a website, give this information in place of the publication information.

Social media	
Facebook[1] citation (post)	News From Science. (2019, June 21). *Are you a fan of astronomy? Enjoy reading about what scientists have discovered in our solar system—and beyond?* This [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/ScienceNOW/photos/a.117532185107/10156268057260108/?type=3&theater Parenthetical citation: (News from Science, 2019) Narrative citation: News from Science (2019)
Facebook citation (page)	Community of Multiculturalism. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved October 14, 2020, from https://www.facebook.com/communityofmulticulturalism/ Parenthetical citation: (Community of Multiculturalism, n.d.) Narrative citation: Community of Multiculturalism (n.d.)

Recommendation how to cite government documents:
https://guides.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/APA/book-government-publication
For more examples see:
https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples

3. Figures

Please provide the highest quality figure format possible. Please be sure that all imported scanned material is scanned at the appropriate resolution: 1200 dpi for line art, 600 dpi for grayscale and 300 dpi for color.

Figures must be saved separate to text. Please do not embed figures in the manuscript file.

Files should be saved as one of the following formats: TIFF (tagged image file format), PNG (portable network graphics) or JPEG (also JPG).

Each file should be no larger than 1 megabyte, the total size of all files attached to one article should not be more than 20 megabytes.

All figures must be numbered in the order in which they appear in the manuscript (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2). In multi-part figures, each part should be labelled (e.g., Figure 1(a), Figure 1(b)).

Figure captions must be saved separately, as part of the file containing the complete text of the manuscript, and numbered correspondingly.

The filename for a graphic should be descriptive of the graphic, e.g., Figure1, Figure2a.

---

[1]   Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

Изменяющиеся общества и личности

2023. Том 7, № 3