Opportunities of Sociology in the Time of Troubles

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Abstract: The article investigates productivity of sociological studies in Russia. The idea of "Time of Troubles" in Russia is emphasized and its influence on modern sociological thought is considered. The distinctive features and particularities of national “dark days” as well as opportunities offered by use of intuitive - rational paradigm while carrying out the researches are identified.

Key words: Sociology %The Time of Troubles %Intuitive-rational paradigm %Research

INTRODUCTION

Situation of social instability which in specific cultural and civilization conditions of Russia is manifested in the form of one more Russian Time of Troubles actualized the issue of opportunities and perspectives of social cognition. This problem is often formulated in regard to sociology and one of the solution of it is conclusion about crisis of traditional sociology which is unable not only to predict turbulent social processes but even to interpret the current events adequately. Key issue for modern Russia is the problem of productivity of sociological knowledge which is caused, among other reasons, by short history of national sociology: it exists for 50 years only. Having inappropriate experience of constructing of theoretical framework (in comparison with western countries)and application of empirical practices and - as a result – being of low authority in the society, sociology suffers deficit of new conceptual approaches. In the same time it has to deal with very complex processes which often can not be interpreted in the form of ideas developed by western sociological school. In such conditions it is necessary to understand if sociology can exist in non-typical socio-environment and if the answer is yes, then what its functional role is.

The problem of sociology’s opportunities is not new and is a transcription of permanent question formulated in regard to science and scientists by public: “What benefit do you bring?” Today it is not only up-to-date but additionally actualizes itself because of the process of pragmatization of reality, which touched almost every sphere of society including science and education.

Opportunities of Sociology: Ideas of E. Durkgeim, K. Marx, M. Weber became the foundation of modern sociology [1]. Russian and Britain scientists point out: “If some time ago knowledge, science found support in Enlightenment picture of the World and were considered as limitless and absolute value today the notion of so called useful knowledge prevails – the knowledge limited in principle, focused on specific point and aimed to obtain result, bringing immediate economic benefit” [2-4]. Sociological perception is existence in a state “to regard oneself very far” from familiar routine of our habitual life in order to have a look at them at a new angle” [5].

One of the most negative consequences of current changes is increase in servility of sociology. Such metamorphose is so typical for modern Russia that is viewed by some scientists as typical feature of professional sociological activity. Servility is especially typical for sociology in regions were demand for researches is limited and governmental and partially municipal power can be a reliable customer which guarantees more or less appropriate payment for scientists' labor. Besides that on regional level there exist effective levers of indirect influence of power on the researchers. Using these levers regional government bodies are able to provide publication of complimentary sociological material which most often needed by them for organization of election campaign and creation of their own positive image.

Solution of the problem of opportunities and functional role of sociology is not obvious. In the very first look it is obvious that it is potentially able to give general picture of status quo practically in every social
sphere. But this potential opportunity is realized incompletely, not to the degree planned by specialists and obtained results are often biased. Therefore, not complying with one of the main criterion of scientific rigour they can solve only limited-range tasks of practical transformation of the world. Such criticism of sociology will be constant because sociology becomes more “dogmatic” and “orthodox”, connected only with textual analysis, too much academic and too poorly connected with assessment of social processes [6].

Moreover, functional load of sociological practice is not limited to only empirical measurement of social variables. In many cases it is not even a key task.

**In Our Opinion a Number of External and Most Important Conditions Includes:**

- **C** Availability of civil society necessary element of which is freely acting individual dependable on the results of his work and exchanging them by his will. Only such an individual is able to state his own distinct opinion systematically not caring for the sequences of expression of his thoughts. Civil position is precondition of free-will readiness of a person for sociological dialogue, obtaining of objective knowledge as a result of it while all other positions lead to obtaining of illusive data or quasi-sociology. The formation of sociological knowledge itself has become possible and demanded when a notion about civil society had formed in public consciousness and, as Russian practice proved it, such knowledge becomes surplus in a case of refusal from civil ideals. It is known that institutionalization of sociology in the USSR was possible only in the late 60-s after easing of political regime.

- **C** Stability of social processes supported by specific norms and regulations which can only change in accordance with law, which are universal and unconditional for implementation. Only in this case discourse of a scientist and person, as investigated object, makes sense and judgments become significant and subject to interpretation;

- **C** Rationality of thinking and behaviour of most part of population which gives grounds for formulation of ideas and using them both during discourse and analysis of obtained results;

- **C** Reflexivity of citizens' thinking - their ability to evaluate critically the results of their own cognitive and practical experience in the framework of formed cultural environment. Reflexion plays key part in human life because it is a essential and principal act of consciousness in returning to itself thanks to reflection from the boundary virtually set between it and the world in the process of cognition.

**Sociology of Time of Troubles**: Traditional irrational approach to reality did not exclude existence of narrative, firmly fixed behavioural rules which are being registered by scientific research. In the context of weberian approach to sociological analysis all the questions connected with historical transformations are considered in terms of rational analysis without due regard to emotional constitution of the mankind [7]. These rules were derived from basic cultural values until now representing some system. Problem of today is how to destroy it, to bring it into unstable condition.

Russian sociologists deals with new case of “Time of Troubles”, which is specific phase in cultural development whose characteristics are combination of rationality crisis and crisis of values and norms, result of which is chaotization of public life - and as effect of it - wide spread of intuitive ways of reality exploration [8]. Characteristic features of “Time of Troubles” are as follows:

- **C** Discredit of socially significant, consolidating ideas, orientation of almost every status group to its own "special truth";

- **C** Abnormal composition of individual and social consciousness in which quite opposite ideas, orientations and mind-sets co-exist;

- **C** Social desertion [9];

- **C** Illogic character of public thinking which even can take forms of legitimacy of absurd;

- **C** Total negative self-reflexion and self-evaluation which manifests itself in typical masochistic humiliation of our own history, culture, in nihilism of social future;

- **C** “sedative” (reduced) reaction to external factors even those which influence level of life, mass apathy and indifference;

- **C** Ideological victimity which is manifested in potential readiness to become a victim of cheating, object of rude mind manipulation;

Thus, period of “Time of Troubles” in Russia is a specific phase in cultural development characterized by combination of rationality crisis and crisis of values and norms, result of which is wide spread of intuitive ways of reality exploration.

Stake on intuition is rather adequately reflect specific character of living activity in unstable social environment and possibly is most appropriate foundation for strategy of life in this situation; besides that it is intrinsically connected with national traditions [10]. But practice of intuitive decisions can not be analyzed sociologically: analysis is unable to identify social process trends and patterns and registers only the degree of spread of such approach.
Prevailing of mind-set oriented to intuitive decisions/actions which is legitimized by mass consciousness and does not contradict to public opinion inevitably turns rationally-grounded social investigation process into fragmental one which is a precondition for narrowing of opportunities while investigating social phenomena.

Firstly, this method is base on refusal from absolutization of empirical fact regardless of what it is: a number obtained in the result of mathematical processing of survey data or judgment obtained by qualitative methods of research.

Secondly, intuitive-rational method of cognition excludes preliminary formulated scientific hypothesis because every hypothesis is a tool of self-restriction of cognition subject. Starting point of sociological study made by intuitive-rational method is assumption about availability of many options most of which are so indistinct that they can not be formalized in the form of logically correct statement.

Thirdly, necessary condition of the method is submerging of a sociologist into investigated reality, perception of it as intrinsic part of his own existence, in regard to which a researcher is not indifferent and into which he is integrated from the very start.

Fourthly, intuitive-rational attitude to reality is being built as driven by paradox algorithm enabling to see in obvious process not only distinct but hidden contradictions (conflicts).

Fifthly, intuitive-rational paradigm changes the contents of researcher's reflexion. While methods and tools of cognition must be systematically re-evaluated in the framework of traditional approach intuitive-rational paradigm identifies other objects of self-analysis: sociologist's motivation, degree of his engagement into investigated space and thesaurus, in accordance with which a researcher forms his disposition.

Sixthly, the process of application of intuitive-rational method intrinsically free from external rationally-grounded criticism, suggests refusal from debates on positions formulated by opponents, until final result is obtained.

Compliance with these requirements is necessary first of all because orientation to intuitive-rational approach in sociology can be easily interpreted as a kind of “carte-blanche” for falsification of sociological data. That is why we emphasize that while performing scientific work a scientist should never refuse from traditional quantitative and qualitative measurements based on rational research paradigm. With all limitations of opportunities and potential proneness to falsification they facilitate objectiveness of cognition process.

CONCLUSION

Thus, current Russian society of Time of Troubles significantly reduced opportunities of sociologists, led to crisis of sociology as a science which is manifested in absence of wide conceptual generalizations, proved by the practice of developmental forecasts and reinforcement of servility of public sociological knowledge. As a variant of going out of crisis we propose development and use of intuitive-rational paradigm.

Stake on use of the potential of intuitive-rational sociology actualizes the problem of public morals in Russian sociology. Only by means of moral restrictions investigation process will not turn into imitation, justified by specific character of intuitive decisions.

Today intuitive cognition in spite of the difficulties associated with its application offers more opportunities for analysis of public practice in Russia than traditional sociological approaches.

REFERENCES