

Olympic games in Sochi screen modern civil society in Russia

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Abstract. The Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sochi is a project of national value. The Games bring long-term positive social changes. They will make it possible to create new standards. Sochi Games provide unique opportunities for civil society to activate and mobilize in ways and numbers it did not do before. The Olympics demonstrate development of democratic values.

Keywords: Olympic Games; a screen of Russian civil society; development of civil society; volunteering; opposition; democratic values; patterns.

Introduction. The purpose of this article is to provide a discussion of the nature of Russian civil society, of civil society in Europe and to show how Olympic Games in Sochi screen modern civil society in Russia.

"Civil society" has become a central theme in contemporary thought about philanthropy and civic activity. The term is increasingly used to suggest how public life should function within and between societies. At the same time, it provides a way of describing the social action that occurs within the context of voluntary associations or intermediary bodies. Carnegie Centre in Russia states: "It is hard today to speak of a common and well-formed civil society in Russia. Civil society exists, but it is fragmentary and divided across both horizontal and vertical sections of the population. Russian civil society as it exists today is basically a collection of different groups with different interests, different motives for participation, and varying organizational forms." [1]

Materials and Methods. The methodological basis of this paper is dialectical method. Also used to the following general scientific methods of analysis, observation.

Discussion. In Western media we can see attacks and critics on Russian democracy and civil society. First of all, the press criticizes Russia for authoritarian power. Then they attack Russian's power rotation. They are sure that though there were elections in Russia, there was no rotation of power and system and elections were not used to legitimize the rotation. Next critique is connected with "listening of the people". Western press tells that people don't go on a direct protest, because the price for protesting on labour issues is very high. Also Western media criticize Russian's "recruitment of elites". They claim that Russia is governed by a circle of friends.

Western view states that Russia is fashioned a democratic surface, but under this surface all types of non-democratic practices are flourishing. Russian political and economic reforms are not organized around the experimentation of different models in different regions and they don't try to figure out what works from the point of view of the leadership.

To comment these statements of the opposition we can demonstrate some ideas of polemic between RF Russian Ambassador Mr. Chizhov with his Western counterparts. He asks "What is 'democracy' anyway? The EU's vision of a modern "democracy" - based on free elections, free press, respect for human rights and market economy values - differs from Russia's more relativist understanding of the much-disputed term, which first appeared in classical-era Greece. "Democracy if properly translated from the Greek... is 'rule of the people,'" Mr Chizhov explained. "The specific forms of democracy are quite different. Take Britain for example, a democratic country - is the existence of a hereditary House of Lords part of European democratic standards?"

Conducting his political views Mr. Chizhov states: "There is no single banner of democracy. And of course, any attempt to make a mechanical shift of democratic patterns from one country to another is detrimental to the notion of democracy,"

Comparing life in Sweden and in Turkmenistan, for example, the Ambassador said "They [Swedish people] might seem to be freer to an outsider. But if you ask them how they feel, the people in Turkmenistan might say that they are happier". Considering democracy scorecards 'unhelpful' Mr. Chizhov warned that "it's important for the EU not to try and draw dividing lines between those countries: this country is better, and this country is worse, this is a more democratic regime, this is less democratic. It would not be helpful." [2]

European civil society is understandable and assumed. European civil society is based on "a belief in, and the practice (more or less) democratic forms of government (and of governance more generally)". The adherence to the rule of law is important part of European civil society. Next relevant feature of European civil society is respecting for human rights, including those of free communication and the free exchange of ideas. Also the separation of power (that is to say, most importantly, of the executive and the judiciary) is observed in Europe. One might add, at the risk of some controversy, that European culture is confessional typically Christian because is marked by a concern with human (social) 'solidarity' and in economic matters it is marked by a clear preference for (more or less) free markets.

It may be said that the presence of civil society is implicit in a culture with these broad features. But these features are sufficiently broad to leave a good deal of room for differences between civil societies as exemplified in different nations. That should not be surprising given the differences in culture between the nation states and indeed within countries.

Nicolas Bonnal published his article in February 2013 with title "Why Western democracy is the worst of regimes?" He writes «Many great countries nowadays, like Russia, China, Venezuela and Iran are labelled undemocratic in the West. But is it evil? Is it such a flaw? Let us analyze the situation and that perilous insult. Western democracy has been criticized since the beginning, and especially by the greatest minds: Thoreau, Edgar Poe or Tocqueville. The end of the nineteenth century sees a new wave of critics emanating from more technical analysts, like Belorussian scientist Ostrogorski or Irish political thinker William Lecky. These thinkers, among many others, assist the development of parliaments everywhere, parliaments that bring discontents, lack of liberties, huge debts and hidden elites' control of the public opinions. Democracy is by no way a bargain. Ostrogorski's books on American political life reveal that democracy is not... democratic, yet that everything is controlled by invisible wire-pullers and the "machine" of militants, "bosses" and political activists. [3]

Also according to Michael Curtis (Michael Curtis is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Rutgers University) "... support for people who criticize their own Western democratic societies is now all too apparent among many Western intellectuals, academics, members of the media, international organizations, and religious groups which, while refusing to challenge cases of injustice, particularly in Muslim countries." [4]

The opponents to the official political views underline: "The 2014 Winter Games in Sochi could be a catalyst for civil society development. In the Russian manifestation of a hybrid, the state is constantly reviving old methods and learning new ones to keep the opposition and civil society in check while trying to maintain the illusion of democracy." "...Russian civil society is also learning new methods of dealing with the state and strengthening itself in the process."

Graeme Robertson in his book "The politics of protest in hybrid regimes" calls citizens' actions as "counter-measures in response to the hybrid Russian regime's abuse of power". [5]. In connection with Sochi Olympics the opponents of the Russian official government say that "activism in Sochi must be and is being engaged by the authorities, which will prove fruitful to local civil society development in the long run. And civil society development on the local level, as pointed out by French sociologist Karen Clement, is key to the development of Russian civil society in general, since one of the factors that may strengthen it is the development of networks of groups across regions. [6]

The Olympic spotlight is getting brighter as the Games approach, and Sochi is indeed an interesting place for both current and future study of Russian civil society. Civil society activity in Sochi will likely continue to increase in the run-up to the Olympics. As the Games loom nearer, it is likely that increasing national and international media attention will be given not only to the status of the preparations, but to the behavior of the host country as a whole."

We support the idea that "...the Sochi Games are already providing increased opportunities for local civil society development". The Sochi Olympics represents a definitive screen of Russian civil society activity. In the beginning of the Olympic construction we could see that many critics were raised in connection with the local authorities buying the lands from Lower Emeriti Bay long-time residents for a fair market price in 2007. But during the following years, local residents could get their land approved as private property.

We could imagine the difficulties the government faced by the following example. According to IRN.Ru analytical agency, prices for land, located next to the shoreline, reached \$150,000 per 100 m² in half a year, while price per square metre in average panel apartment building on the outskirts of the city already reaches \$2000. This could lead to decrease in tourist interest to Sochi, which already has fallen below Anapa, Gelendzhik and Adler.

Another obstacle was to get an agreement with the indigenous population of Sochi region. The similar problem exists almost in any city hosting Olympic Games. First, Circassia organizations in the North Caucasus spoke out against the Olympics, pointing out that the games would take place on the land that had been inhabited by their ancestors until the 1860s, when the Russian-Circassia War, which they claimed to have been genocide, forced 97 percent of the Circassia's to move to the Ottoman Empire. The 2014 Organizing Committee worked with different groups of the population and all problems were solved and the agreement of indigenous population received.

According to the Olympic Charter, Olympic movement being a mighty humanistic movement in the world recognizes an exceptional interrelation between sport and nature, and it identifies for itself three key major dimensions: sport, culture and environment. The goal of Olympism is to make sports everywhere conducive of harmonious mankind development in order to contribute to creation of peaceful society that will care for retaining human dignity.

Thousands of Russian people are involved in preparation for Olympic Games including construction, management, sport training, cultural, educational, and environmental programs. Participatory engagement indicates that members of the society enjoy access to and governance of resources used for the common good. They are free to be involved in civic action and social change, and are free to participate in group affiliations that provide a sense of belonging on a community level. Constitutional authority protects the rights and privileges of citizens in a civil society. Under the rule of law, citizens and social groups are constitutionally legitimized and empowered to hold economic and political actions accountable for their work as community servants and trustees. Within this social context, all community members have moral responsibility to use their civil liberties in ways that do not violate the human rights of others. The practice of equity, justice, and reciprocity produces social order and stability.

Volunteering in Sochi Olympic Games which is generally considered an altruistic activity has been revived in Russia bringing together 25,000 volunteers. An entire generation is being brought up with awareness and understanding of the Olympic and Paralympic values. To be an Olympic volunteer means both challenges and opportunity, at the same time intending to promote good or improve human quality of life, but people also volunteer for their own skill development, to meet others, to make contacts for possible employment, to have fun, and a variety of other reasons that could be considered self-serving. The experience will help them develop determination, will, and the commitment to teamwork. [7]

Conclusion. Changing attitudes, raising awareness in issues such as tolerance, inclusiveness (including for people with disabilities), social and environmental responsibility are prerequisites for civil society's development. The intangible legacy of the XXII Olympic Winter Games and XI Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi is knowledge accumulated skills and experience, and development of a feeling of patriotism and national pride. Unique positive potential of the Games is helpful in laying foundation for implementation of new Russian philosophy of sustainable development anchored in Russian national idea. Different projects help to enhance environmental awareness, improving national practices in establishing and implementing environmental standards, governance and management tools.

The main objective of all the activities for preparing the Games is to facilitate Russian national idea, to strengthen the positive reputation of Russia on the world stage. The modern Olympic Games are now a colossal stimulus for the development of the Russian Federation as a democratic state realizing the values of civil society.

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Олимпийские игры в Сочи как отражение современного гражданского общества в России

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Аннотация. Олимпийские и Паралимпийские Игры в Сочи - проект национального значения. Игры вносят долгосрочные положительные социально-экономические изменения. Они позволяют создать новые стандарты. Игры в Сочи предлагают уникальные возможности для активизации и мобилизации новых путей в развитии гражданского общества. Олимпиада демонстрирует развитие демократических принципов и активности.

Ключевые слова. Олимпийские игры; отражение Российского гражданского общества; развитие гражданского общества; волонтерское движение; оппозиция; демократические принципы; модели.