

# Social innovations like the instrument of social changes

A. Shabunova

*Department of socio-economic development and management of territorial systems  
Vologda science center RSA  
Vologda, Russia*

G. Leonidova

*Department of socio-economic development and management of territorial systems  
Vologda science center RSA  
Vologda, Russia  
gvl@vscc.ac.ru*

L. Mukhametova

*Institute of Economics and Information technologies  
Kazan State Power Engineering University  
Kazan, Russia*

**Abstract**—In recent years, social innovation has become one of the most important accents in the economic development strategies of developed countries. Increased interest in this instrument of social changes is associated with their positive contribution to the achievement of a high level of employment, social security, gender and social equality; well-being of the population. As a new model of interaction between civil society and the state, social innovations increase the ability of the population to organize and act. The article deals with the essence of social innovations and the effect of their implementation on the development of society and territories. To solve these problems, we have summarized the views of foreign and domestic scientists on the problems of social innovation, analyzed with the help of sociological research the possibility of using social projects, the willingness of the population to participate and implement social practices, the presence of the request of civil society for social innovation. The article presents some examples of social innovations in Russia, shows their social effect in solving social problems. We learned that despite the low innovative activity of the population, there is a high willingness to participate in volunteer programs in the Russian society. Our results provide a new perspective on the development of social innovation and can serve as a basis for assessing the role of this tool in the development of Russian regions. The following researches should broaden our understanding of the interaction of government, civil society and non-profit structures to create a favorable environment for the development of social innovation.

**Keywords**—social innovations; social changes; model of interaction; territories; Russian regions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The mainstream of solving the problems of social development in post-industrial countries is on the level of increasing the participation of citizens, non-profit organizations, and private companies. The most striking example of this approach is the concept of "governance without a state" [1]. It lies in the fact that the tasks of the social sphere in modern conditions can be and are solved not only by the state, but with the active participation of civil society.

Attention to the social sphere is associated with the increasing role of socio-cultural factors in the development of countries. In the conditions of instability, imbalance of modern societies caused by globalization processes, "the permeability of territorial boundaries of societies increases, citizens acquire new freedoms that increase their personal

parity with society and at the same time create new contradictions with it" [2]. The solution of these contradictions and the realization of freedoms cannot always be realized by state measures and institutions. And here comes to the aid of actively developing in developed countries, civil society. It helps to solve social problems through such a tool as social innovation.

The importance of social innovation in addressing the social, economic, political and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century is recognized worldwide. Practitioners, managers and researchers firmly believe that technological innovations themselves cannot overcome the problems of modern society [3].

Interest in social innovation has increased at the end of the twentieth century, for example, in Europe and Canada they came to be regarded as a scientific concept and slogan of action for the analysis and management of territorial development, especially in urban areas [4].

A new surge in attention to social innovation was noted at the beginning of the XXI century. Thus, in 2009, the social innovation Fund was established in the United States to attract people to find new ways to solve social problems. A number of American universities (Stanford, Brown, Oxford, and Cambridge) have opened research centers of social innovation. In European countries, social innovations have been considered as one of the directions of social policy (for example, within the framework of Horizon 2020) [5].

However, despite the growing scientific and practical interest in social innovation around the world, a common understanding of this instrument of social changes has not developed, and the effectiveness of social innovation has not been clearly characterized. In this study, we examined the main approaches to the essence of social innovation and gave an analysis of existing social practices in Russia, which showed high results.

## II. METHODS

Statistical databases of the Federal state statistics service of the Russian Federation, Eurostat, were used for the analysis. The empirical base of the work was the results of monitoring sociological research of the Vologda scientific center of the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted by the method of questionnaire survey of the population of the Vologda region (Russia). Public opinion surveys have been conducted since 1996 and 1,500 respondents over the age of

18 are interviewed in 2 cities and 8 rural areas. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by the observance of proportions between urban and rural population; sex and age structure of the adult population of the region. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

The study uses empirical data of sociological surveys of the Russian population of the Russian center for public opinion research on the problem of innovation activity and the Center for research of civil society and the non-profit sector of the HSE (Russia) to assess the role of non-profit organizations in the development of social innovation, data of the ZIRCON research group to assess the role of social innovation and the willingness of the population to participate in social projects.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The socio-cultural development of Russia has a number of transformations due to the causes of both internal and external content. Among the internal reasons, reforms of the end of the XX century played an important role: the change in the form of the state system, the transition to a market economy, the subsequent transformational recession, which led to a decrease in the efficiency of the Russian economy, social stratification of society, a decrease in the quality of life of a large part of the population. The external wave of transformations is associated with the processes of globalization, the spread of information and digital technologies, and changes in socio-cultural patterns of behavior. The inability to overcome new social challenges with the help of traditional methods and means of public administration has led to the fact that in Russian practice began to actively pay attention to the development of social innovation.

Analysis of scientific views on the essence of social innovation shows that modern researchers offer different definitions of this phenomenon, based on its specific functions or properties. It is argued that social innovation is designed primarily to meet the needs of society and respond to social challenges (social challenge). The form of this tool of social change can be different. This includes a new or significantly improved product, process, marketing method or organizational model, and "new solutions that create new or improved systems of interaction" [6], etc. The common feature of all innovations is that they should all better meet social needs (Table 1).

This approach substantiates the possibility of applying social innovations in a wide range of practical activities of the company, individual teams, companies, etc.

A narrower interpretation is inherent in those authors who consider this tool as a new approach to solving problems arising in the social sphere, in particular in education and health care.

In the study, we adhere to a broad interpretation, considering social innovation as a combination of social practices in different areas, created by actors or groups of actors, adopted and institutionalized as a new social practice aimed at meeting the needs and solving the problems of human development [14].

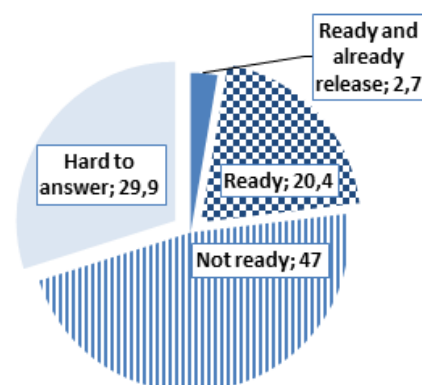
As a rule, social innovations are generated by active population and non-governmental non-profit organizations

**TABLE I. SOME APPROACHES TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE ESSENCE OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Essence of the approach</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Business Panel on Future EU Innovation Policy (2009)	experiment	Involving citizens into co-producing
Murray R., Caulier-Grice J., Mulgan G. (2010)	Unities and communities	Creating of new relations
Howaldt, J., Schwarz, M. (2010)	Wideness of access to the resources	New abilities in social relationships
Martinelli, F. (2012)	Equal access to the social services	Increasing of the acting ability
Caulier-Grice J., Davies A., Patrick R., Norman W. (2012)	«More than the idea»	Satisfying of the social needs
Bund E., Hubrich D-K., Schmitz B.,Mildenberger G., Krlev G. (2013)	SI is a process	Increasing of the acting ability of people
Anderson T., Curtis. A., Wittig C. (2014)	Wideness of access to the resources	Response on the social tasks

(NGOs) [15]. However in Russia this process goes not "from below", and "from above" [16].

It can be explained by the low innovation activity of Russians in this direction. Our research shows that the implementation of social projects aimed at solving social problems (socialization of disabled people, employment of vulnerable groups of citizens, production of environmentally friendly products, improving the quality of life of people, etc.) is currently engaged in only about 3% of the population (fig. 1).



**Fig 1. Readiness of Russians to participate in the implementation of social projects aimed at solving social problems (socialization of disabled people, employment of vulnerable groups of citizens, production of environmentally friendly products, improving the quality of life, etc.).**

Source: data of sociological survey "Quality of labor potential"

However, the basis of civic initiatives for the promotion and development of social innovation is sufficient. These are those who are already involved in innovative processes and those who are ready for it – more than 50% of the population.

One of the examples of widespread social innovations in Russian cities is the integrated system of socially significant projects built in Vologda, United by the common brand "Vologda is the city of good deeds". The projects implemented in the created system solve the most important social problems within the framework of the city partnership, combining the resources of the government, the business community and the residents of the city. The projects are based on the broad inclusion in the solution of common problems of various categories of the population (youth, veterans, businessmen, activists of public organizations, volunteers, etc.). Today the city has more than 40 socially significant projects. Among them: "Care", "Blossoming city", "City of childhood", "Youth labor brigades", "Friendly neighbors", "Breath of streets" and many others [17]. As a result, not only the main goal of the project (the solution of a specific social urban problem) is achieved, but also other positive "side" effects are manifested that affect the improvement of the quality of life of citizens and reduce social tension.

According to research conducted in the framework of the project SI-DRIVE as a participant in the 7th EU framework program in 2014 – 2017 identified that social innovation in Russia most often used in the area, mostly related to the direct functions of the welfare state such as health care and social assistance (33%), education (25%), reducing inequalities in access to services in the field of leisure (20%), employment (19%) and environment (4%; fig 2).

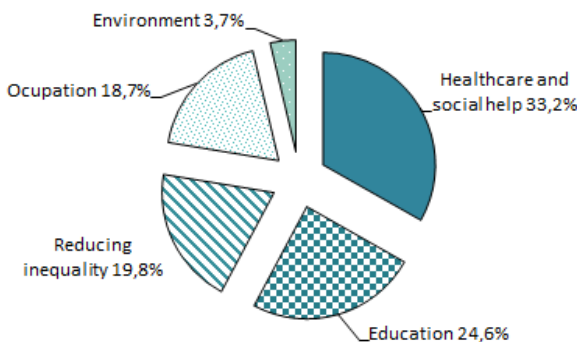


Fig 2. The distribution of implemented projects of social innovation on the territory of Russia in the activity fields, %.

Source: data of the Fund "Our future"; [18].

The prevalence of social innovations in culture, health and education is already having positive effects. In the period 2010 – 2017 there was a significant increase in positive assessments of the population about the level of health (2 times), education (1.5 times) and culture (1.2 times; fig. 3).

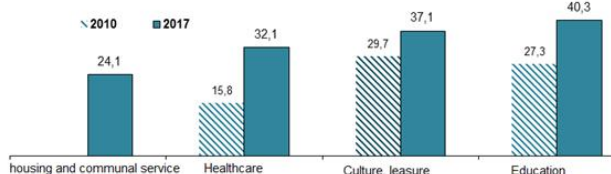


Fig 3. The proportion of the population that noted a good level of security, the Vologda region, in %.

Source: survey data the "socio-cultural portrait of the region" (2010) and "socio-cultural modernization of the region" (2017)

An example of positive social practice is the experience of the Vologda scientific center of the Russian Academy of Sciences included in the European Atlas of social innovations to create a Scientific and educational center of Economics and information technologies in the region. The center is a multi-stage system of training and retraining of highly qualified specialists for science, economic entities and regional authorities. As a social innovation, the Scientific and educational center is, firstly, an integrated structure that combines the potential of science and education, and secondly, a systematic organization of a continuous cycle of training and research activities of talented young people from the age of 12, based on the mechanism of integration relationships and interdepartmental partnership. The priority of activities and social effect of REC is to involve as many young people as possible in research work. This is considered by us, on the one hand, as a way to improve the efficiency of mastering knowledge and skills that meet educational standards and further generation, i.e. the way of increasing knowledge, on the other – as a way of initial training, and, finally, to assist the region in solving the problem of staffing its scientific and technological sphere [19]. The peculiarity of the Scientific and educational center as a type of social innovation is that it is organized on contractual terms with academic institutions and educational organizations, as well as the fact that within the REC operates an innovative environment that allows the use of the latest methods and methods of teaching children and young people: use diverse methods, active forms and methods of The result of this social innovation is a real practical contribution: to the research corps of the region for the period from 2003 to 2018. More than 60 highly qualified specialists (doctors and candidates of Sciences) were included, which is 12% of the total number of researchers (509 people in 2017).

According to the Fund of regional social programs "Our future", from 2007 to 2016 187 innovative projects were implemented within the framework of the organization's activities in the country [20]. The main drivers of social innovation are the support of Federal and regional authorities, the charisma of the ideologist-leader, information and communication technologies.

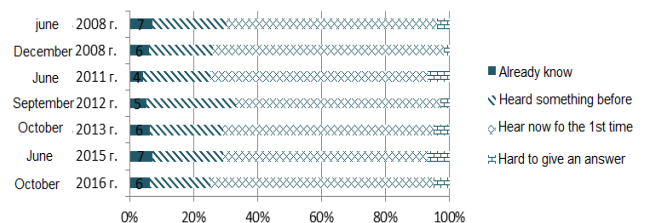


Fig 4. Do you know the phrase "Social entrepreneurship"? (% of total sample).

The initiation of social projects on the part of the authorities in Russia is due, as mentioned above, to the weakness of civil society and the attitude of Russians to state support. According to the ZIRCON research group, a large proportion (48%) of Russians rely only on the state in solving social problems and only 4% – on non-state structures . In addition, the data from the ZIRCON monitoring also indicate

a problem such as the lack of awareness of Russians about social entrepreneurship (fig. 4). And the share of informed has not changed during 8 years of measurements (4-7%) [21].

Source: [21].

The weakness of the Russian civil society is due to the fact that under the influence of external and internal challenges of recent times it has become heterogeneous. "The transformation of modern Russian society - according to N. I. Lapin - characterized by the emergence of a new social (in a broad sense) differentiation that changes the motivation of activities and opportunities for the well-being of different categories of the population and, in turn, changing under the influence of changes in these subjects" [22]. In a differentiated society, the task of the state is to meet the needs of all categories of citizens, ensuring the well-being of all social strata. Social innovations are the main tool for solving problems. The growing sector of socially oriented non-profit organizations (SONPO) – from 2012 to 2015-by 30% can support initiatives in the social sphere, give them the greatest acceleration [23].

In addition, the study of the problem of social innovation in Russia showed that unlike the technological sphere, for which innovative projects are a dynamic process driven by the needs of scientific and technological progress, social innovation processes need a public request. And such a request, in our opinion, exists (fig. 5).

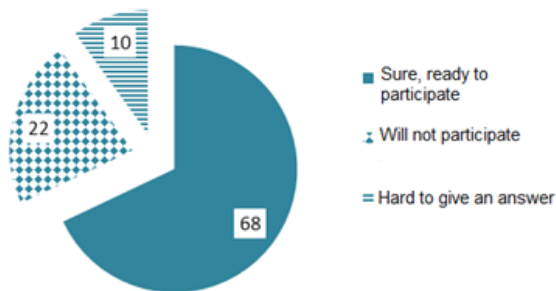


Fig 5. There are different circumstances in life, but if we consider the usual conditions, then in the next 1-2 years will you participate in programs to help other people on the terms of free support, volunteering? (closed question, one answer, % of all respondents).

Source: [24].

If we consider volunteering as one of the social practices, the studies demonstrate a high willingness of the population to participate in volunteer programs (68% expressed their intention to participate in such events).

In 2009 the scientists of the Vologda scientific center predicted the population, birth and death in Vologda based on the trends and demographic factors [11]. After using the project management in strategy planning and for realization of the city strategy all the values of the specified indicators were not only achieved but even exceeded: the raise of population was higher on 9%, birth increasing – on 24%, death decreasing – on 3% , comparing to the prediction (fig. 4).

During the strategy realization period from 2009 till 2016 were following increase of the birth rate: in Russia on 4.9%, in Vologda region on 6%, in Moscow on 7.3%, in Cherepovets on 13.9%, in Vologda on 23.4%.

During the Strategy-2020 realization period on the basis of project management were created positive conditions for business developing. It is confirmed by increasing of undertakings on 63.7%, amount of which was 23,4 thousands of organizations in 2016.

Positive tendencies were formed in the sphere of tourism based on the event (project) calendar. The tourist flow has multiplied by 3.4 times from 2009 till 2016. In 2016 the amount of visitors reached 781.8 thousands of people. Comparing to Velikiy Ustug that was visited by 278.5 thousands of people.

An important resource of increasing population is migration. The migrating growth (decrease) of population in Vologda is shown on fig. 5.

If we consider volunteering as one of the social practices, the studies demonstrate a high willingness of the population to participate in volunteer programs (68% expressed their intention to participate in such events).

#### IV. SUMMARY

In the article we analyzed the main approaches to the essence and understanding of social innovations, identified the main factors affecting the development of social innovations in Russia, showed the real contribution of this tool of social change in the social development of the territory. In the article the examples showed that the implementation of social innovation has a positive effect, as evidenced by the increase in public assessments of the activities occurred a significant increase in positive assessments of the population about the level of development of health (2 times), education (1.5 times) and culture (by 1.2 times). The development of regional integration structures such as REC serves as a basis for strengthening the scientific and technical potential of the territories. Our results provide a new perspective on the development of social innovation and can serve as a basis for assessing the role of this tool in the development of Russian regions. Future researches should broaden our understanding of the interaction of government, civil society and non-profit structures to create a favorable environment for the development of social innovation. It is about the new role of state strategies and government programs in the creation of appropriate mechanisms and support structures, the integration of business and civil society resources, support from scientific and educational institutions.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study was performed with financial support of RFBR, research project No. 18-010-00717.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] P.D. Aligica, Public Choice, 1–2, 287 (2014)
- [2] N.I. Lapin, Filosofskij zhurnal, 1, 93 (2014)
- [3] J. Howaldt, C. Kaletka, A. Schröder, M. Zimgiebl, Atlas of Social Innovation. New Practices for a Better Future (TU Dortmund University, Dortmund, 2018)
- [4] F. Moulaert, E. Swyngedouw, F. Martinelli, S. Gonzalez, Can Neighbourhoods Save the City? Community development and social innovation (New York and London, 2010)
- [5] A. Massey, K. Johnston-Miller, Policy & Politics, 44, 663 (2014)
- [6] E. Bund, U. Gerhard, M. Hoelscher, G.A. Mildemberger, Historical Social Research, 3, 48 (2015)



- [7] Who can call themselves proactive people?, Information and analytical Bulletin on the development of civil society and the non-profit sector in the Russian Federation, 2, 1, (2015)
- [8] R. Murray, Caulier-Grice, G. Mulgan, The Open Book of Social Innovation (NESTA/Young Foundatio, London, 2010)