

**REVIEW on master thesis of the student of St. Petersburg State University**

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**Topic «Patterns of interaction between NGOs working with disabled people and state authorities in the context of austerity policy: case study of Russia and Finland»**

Aleksandr Bugrovskii's graduate qualification work is a completed study devoted to the specifics of the interaction of such social actors as the state and NGOs in the situation of reducing the financing of expenditures for the state social obligations. The two NGOs from Finland and Russia are providing assistance to people with disabilities have been selected for comparison. The research topic is relevant and interesting for sociological analysis, since the current changes in the social policies of both countries put the issues of transformation of the welfare state regimes, trends in the marketization and deinstitutionalization of social services, as well as the possibilities of comparing the Russian experience with Western countries. The text of the qualifying work consists of an introduction, four chapters and conclusion.

The author defines his research as interdisciplinary, therefore the conceptual apparatus is not developed only by sociological approaches; the theoretical studies of social policy, globalization, and public administration are used in the work. Involvement of theoretical constructs not only from different levels of generalization, but also from different areas of social knowledge demonstrates that the dissertant is fluent in and familiar with modern literature in his choice of problems for the research. Alexander reasonably presents the design of his research project, choosing as a research strategy case study, and using several sociological methods to collect and analyze empirical data. This allows me to speak about the validity of the conclusions obtained during the study.

The first chapter of the thesis presents a theoretical framework for research in which the author provides an analytical description of scientific concepts and approaches used in their work. As it was stated, the student is building an interdisciplinary theoretical basis for his work. The author conducted research on the concept of de-commodification, developed by Esping-Andersen; the loss of state sovereignty under the influence of globalization (Saskia Sassen); important for the modern social theory term - social capital (Bourdieu, Fukuyama, Putnam, Lytkina); theory of new public management, arose a counterweight to the Weberian theory of bureaucracy (Lowe, Richmond, Kelly, Caputo). Presenting an analytical overview of the basic concepts, Alexander makes the assumption, that the north-European countries are associated with the egalitarian model of relations, then the Russian model of relations is characterized by the paternalistic model of relations.

The second and third chapters of the master's thesis are devoted to the description and analysis of the Finnish and Russian cases. Presenting the material in both chapters, the author follows the general logic of the presentation and the analysis scheme. In the second chapter, the author shares his experience of work in the organization chosen for the analysis (Kehitysvammaisten Palvelusäätiö (KVPS)); and describes the history of the organization, information on the status of the organization and its organizational structure, as well as the activities and types of KVPS's work. The analysis of the documents, as well as the analysis of interviews with the staff of the organization, allowed the thesis to reconstruct how the values, mission, objectives and strategies of KVPS changed in the situation of growing marketization of social services and reducing the role of the state and the amount of financing. A certain paragraph in this chapter is devoted to an analysis of the sources and methods of financing the organization (2.4 Changes in funding: the key points for financial stability). The author shows how the principles of KVPS work are changing in accordance with the principles of rationalization, marketization, etc., that is, those requirements that neo-liberal logic imposes on the work of NGOs.

In conclusion, the author comes to the fact that the organization he considers is less focused on the search for new actors and sources of funding, which is associated with a "passive" adaptation to the changed structural conditions and the preservation of the principle of egalitarianism in the interaction of the state, the third sector and the individual, rather than the state paternalism.

The third chapter of the work is a description of the Russian case. As an object of study, the author chose "Saint-Petersburg Association of Non-governmental Organizations of Parents with Disabled Children (GAOORDI)". In this chapter, Aleksandr presents in details the materials collected about the organization: history, formal status; organizational structure; activities; mission, goals and strategy, sources of financing. The student analyzes the case, placing it in a broader context related to the legislative framework governing the activities of NGOs in Russia in general and St. Petersburg in particular, budgetary financing of the social sphere in recent years, which makes it possible to understand the specifics of interaction between NGOs and the state as a whole. As a result, the author concludes that the analysis of the Russian case allows him to speak about the prevailing paternalistic model of interaction between the state and the NGOs, which is expressed by the state desire to make NGOs more manageable and controlled, through the financial mechanisms. This is also reflected in the fact that socially-oriented NGOs essentially become an instrument for the implementation of social guarantees of the state.

In the fourth chapter of the dissertation, the author examines in more detail the models of the relationship between the state and NGOs in a comparative perspective. In order to make a comparison between the Finnish and Russian cases, the author returns to the concepts of social capital and solidarity that he introduced in the first chapter, operationalizing and presenting them in tabular form (Table 11. Social capital of non-governmental organizations of Russia and Finland, P. 90; Table 12. Typology of patterns, P.91). The developed analytical scheme allows to describe the egalitarian (Finnish case) and paternalistic (Russian case) model of relations between the state and the NGOs. It can be noted that the comparison made seems reasonable, but it would be easier to perceive the text if the author briefly presented this scheme at the end of the theoretical and methodological part of the work. This would make it possible to remove the existing "gap" between the theory and the description of cases.

The work is written in good literary style: easy to read with interest, and the author's arguments seem clear and well structured.

The main block of questions concerns the theoretical grounds of the presented research.

Firstly, the author uses and stops on the conceptualization of the notion of de-commodification, which is one of the criteria for selection of the model of the welfare state, but does not pass the analytical comparison of a higher level (at the level of welfare regime). What is the reason for this choice? The typology of Esping-Andersen's welfare states has already gained quite a lot of criticism. One of the directions of criticism is that in the "pure" form the welfare regime is difficult to detect and it is rather necessary to talk about the mix welfare regime. In this regard, the question arises: why did the author choose the classical work of Esping-Andersen and how does he correlate his research in that criticism and / or attempt to understand the mix welfare system, which is formed under the influence of neo-liberalism?

The student puts forward the thesis about the loss of the state's sovereignty, which develops after Saskia Sassen. I would like to ask the author to operationalize this concept and in more details, using examples from the recent history of Finland and especially Russia, to show how the state loses its dominant position in the sphere of social protection of the population under the influence of international actors? This thesis requires special reinforcement in relation to the Russian case, since in 2012 the law on foreign agents was adopted, which is aimed at regulating the activities of NGOs and increasing their control over the state.

Conceptualizing the notion of social capital, which is undoubtedly one of the basic concepts of modern social theory, the author starts from the view of P. Bourdieu, describes the approach of Fukuyama and Putnam to his understanding. Further, in this series of theorists dealing with this problem, he puts the Russian researcher T. Lytkina. Without challenging in any way the contribution of this sociologist and without questioning the significance of her work, the ques-

tion arises: why does the student use this approach, while leaving behind the brackets, for example, the concept of James Coleman's social capital?

I would also like to ask student clarification why to determine the situation in which the state significantly reduces the cost of financing the social sphere, he uses terms such as austerity policy, individualization, commercialization and minimizing the role of government in addressing social issues, but does not refer to this concept as the neoliberalism, which is widely used in social studies, as well as works devoted to the analysis of social-term policy, in addition used by the author in thesis. What is the heuristic potential chosen by the candidate of concepts?

Secondly, using the typology of welfare states Espinga-Andersen, the author does not substantiate the cases chosen by him for comparison in the categories of social policy regimes. I would like to clarify how Russia fits into this analytical scheme and fits into it at all?. To which typology of the welfare state does it apply and by what criteria?

Thirdly, by making a comparative analysis of the Finnish and Russian cases, unfortunately, the author does not pay sufficient attention to the contextual description, which would be extremely useful for the perception of the text, especially not by experts in the field of social policy and disability research. Because there are questions about what a NGO field in Russia and Finland, St. Petersburg and Tampere respectively (the number, destinations of work); How many NGOs work with people with disabilities? What are the specifics of the work of these NGOs? What can be said about the clients of these NGOs (number, socio-demographic characteristics).

Fourth, in describing the Russian and Finnish cases, the author does not provide information on the empirical material with which he works. With whom and how much was interviewed? What documents were analyzed? What else came up with the analysis material? How did the author analyze the data?

However, despite the questions and comments presented above, it is necessary to evaluate the peer-reviewed graduation qualification work as a completed independent scientific research, which has a solid theoretical and empirical basis and raises issues relevant to modern sociology. Master's thesis of Aleksandr Bugrovskii fully meets the requirements for qualifying works of this kind, and deserves a good assessment.

**8th June 2017**

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