

Creative Class: The Scope of Social Responsibility

Yury Grigorjevich Volkov

Institute of Sociology RAS and Institute of Retraining of Southern Federal University,
Rostov-on-Don, Russia

Abstract: The author's position is that the achievement of a certain level of solidarity in Russian society is related to an increase in social activity of the creative class, which from the "metaphorical" state becomes the subject of social relations, as in the opinion of the author, it is aimed at constructive cooperation with governmental institutions and is aware of responsibility within the group competence and self-organization. In Russian society, where the social structure has acquired socially polarized parameters and where the main achievement of the previous decade is considered to be the middle class formation, the creative class is seen as an ideological construct. Creative orientation is strengthening not only in high-status groups, but is also embodied as a social inquiry in basic social classes engaged in material production and social sectors (highly qualified workers, doctors, teachers and cultural workers). At that, analysis of the social situation shows that creativity is not an external marker, but a form of self-identity, oriented to a sense of solidarity with the same creative personalities. The author concludes that the Russian creative class is in the "intermediate" state and that it has not reached the understanding of the value of self-realization in various spheres of social life, seeing creativity as a factor of a purely professional activity.

Key words: Creative class • Creative values • Socially creative practices • Creative activities • Social self-esteem • Social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The American sociologist R. Florida proclaimed the emergence of a new social class for which the creative activity is a crucial factor [1]. How the discovery of R. Florida correlates with Russian social realities? In Russian society, where the social structure has acquired socially polarized parameters and where the main achievement of the previous decade is considered to be the middle class formation, the creative class is seen as an ideological construct. However, the tendency of mass layers inclusion in the creative activities is obvious and it is connected not only with the growth of the service sector. A more important factor is the need in self-realization and willingness to participate in socially creative practices that are expressed in the positions of Russians.

We believe that, despite the dominance of the adaptive strategies and demonstration of consumerist intentions, the dynamics of social well-being of Russians shows the orientation to social creativity and social activity. This is evidenced by the trends in public relations: according to the results of a major study, "What

Russians dream about", despite that the ability to cooperate has weakened (- 23%), according to the own admission of respondents, the positive changes are taking place in the understanding of "just and reasonable society" (33%) [2]. The overall picture "hides" the creative aspect, because justice is associated first of all with equality of opportunity and reasonably arranged society – with the practices of social participation and cooperation. In other words, the data show that, despite continued skepticism in the evaluation of many phenomena in modern Russia nearly two-thirds of the surveyed believe that the current trajectory of the country in the long term will lead to the desired results. Critically perceiving the Western vector of development, consolidation of market regulators and formal democratic institutions, based on the legal individualism, the respondents emphasize that the priority of social rights and a commitment to social equality as an ideal of social development is in providing equal opportunities for self-actualization, search of an interesting job and access to professional, educational, social and mobilization resources.

In our opinion, the social differences existing in Russian society are not caused by keeping the "Asian" tradition associated with the institution of power and property [3]; in the conditions of forming social positions associated with a monopoly for the specific types of resources (political, legal, economic and cultural), the factor of belonging to a graded and stratified hierarchy becomes important. One can not but pay attention to the fact that social inequalities are reproduced in the context of social adaptation, which criteria are success / failure. Over the past twenty years an idea of the success as "a high income, a certain level of consumption and solution of personal (private) problems" has been formed. But according to the results of sociological research, the successfully adapted layer shows dissatisfaction with the opportunities of social self-realization, career development and participation in public affairs. Characteristically, among the requirements for an "ideal" work there is an interesting job, which in figures is almost equal to the well-paid one. It can be noted that the respondents are the group with social ambitions and peculiar social optimism in contrast to the traditionalist generations, but creative settings, in varying degrees, reveal different generational strata of Russian society.

Confirmation of this conclusion can be found in the shift of social practices from adaptation to social activism. This in turn leads to the problem of social integration and consolidation of the socially active and independent layers of the population on the basis of the formation of the priorities of social development and the inclusion of the value of creativity as the basis of social consolidation. First, Russians welcome the positive changes aimed at eliminating "excessive" social inequalities. Second, in assessing the current situation in terms of its justice or injustice, Russians are more guided by the notion of the proper and fair to the public, rather than by private interests. Third, the presented estimates suggest that the era of "irresponsible individualism" is close to completion and therefore, there is an increase in the demand for collective practices, social initiative and the implementation of social projects at local and regional levels. This leads to the conclusion that the existing creative inquiry and readiness to socially significant collectivist practices determine the addressness of the shifts in mass sentiments. In other words, we can talk about social subjectivity, of the development of a social group, which may take on the mission of the integrating core of the Russian society. The period of active social transformation, associated with the subjectivity of political and business elites, has shown that the best way of social development in Russia is determined by the

inclusion of the potential socio-active segments of the population, clearly outgrowing the framework of "forced innovativeness" in their social value orientations and striving for social presentations by working with a broad social strata to find a way out of a situation of social inaction.

This is evidenced by the fact that the creative orientation strengthens not only in high-status groups, but is also embodied as a social inquiry in basic social classes engaged in material production and social sectors (highly qualified workers, doctors, teachers and cultural workers). Not to be unfounded, we can refer to the Russians' attitude to personal success as a result of their own efforts (70%) [4]. Such self-appraisal can be interpreted as a recognition of the importance of personal responsibility in supporting the formation of prerequisites of real social modernization (liberty, equality of opportunity and social creative work).

Of course, we must realize that only one of five Russians, to some extent, declares commitment to creativity, initiative and participation in public affairs, however, the "new" collectivists appear to be a group that is gaining influence, as they are employed in social innovation and have high educational and professional potential and, no less important, aim at a dialogue with the society and the state. In this regard, we can say that in the social integration aspect, the "creative class is consolidated on the basis of the development of new forms of social creativity and aspires to the formation of new social and socio-occupational niches" [5]. Assessing the potential of the Creative Class, by which we mean an integrated social group, including people with creative attitudes and oriented to self-realization and social self-appraisal, it can be emphasized that creativity in the Russian variant is characterized, first of all, by a commitment to be a "highly cultural" person and secondly, by a sense of inner peace and life "in harmony with oneself." Third, it is the focus on solidarity not only with family and friends, but also with people who share common views on life.

This is a very important position, which allows overcoming social uncertainty and mistrust, which arose in the Russian society in the period of social self-adaptation. People, who have passed through the school of adaptation to the changes and achieved a success at the cost of re-training, new business skills and by parting with paternalistic expectations, are aware of the narrow horizons of material well-being and would like to find the meaning of work, gain respect and establish contacts with "like-minded".

This does not mean that the members of creative class are indifferent to the problems of material well-being, but for them achieving a certain level of material success makes sense if linked to the implementation of creative life goals. An inspiring goal is to create a productive social climate supported by cooperation in the search for innovative approaches and solutions. Apparently, it is the desire to "live creatively" that leads to the efforts of creative people towards self-determination and directing the available resources to personally significant results.

At that, the analysis of social situation shows that creativity is not an external marker, but a form of self-identity, oriented to a sense of solidarity with the same creative personalities. Without exaggerating the effect of a sense of community and the strength of the existing social relations [6], we can emphasize that the social impact of the creative class is that it comes as a social reference group, the group of social integration in "excessive" social inequalities. The Russian society has formed a high level of social disintegration due to both social polarization, emergence of parallel social worlds and value splits, leading to conflict representations of interests and identities.

In our opinion, despite the inconsistent assertion of creative interests, the analyzed group is forming a social inquiry for creative development. Optimism in the evaluation of the future is based on the rejection of the desire to be rich; and the desire to "live keeping up with the Joneses" means that members of the creative class are prepared to take the lead in the formation of public inquiries. Based on the fact that the dreams of the middle class as the subject of social modernization have never been realized and that the question about the demand for the civilian potential of the population remains open, we can say that the creative class has the benefits of social integration, focusing on professional self-realization, which includes reducing consumer motivation and distrust to the rest groups of the population. Russia's middle class turned out to be a hostage of both excessive social expectations and the actual risk of downward social mobility. Socio-professional criteria have become blurred, as among the middle class not only "high" professionals but individuals with middle-income, but employed in the service sector, were ranked. The middle class did not show social subjectivity in the sense that, as a group, oriented to serving interests of the Russian elite strata, it was taken "captive" by consumer standards that seemed the most appropriate form of social expression. But in a situation where the achievement of the average status in the system of social stratification can be regarded as temporary and requiring constant and intensive efforts for

its maintaining, the creative motivation becomes minimal, fixes only intensive consumption and is not determined by assessment of the possibilities of proper creativity.

Russian sociologist O. Shkaratan reasonably questions the effectiveness of the existing system of social benefits and payments [7], which, in his opinion, formally keeping the constitutional guarantees, actually reinforces the trend of increasing social inequalities. And it's not just the lack of economic resources for realizing the idea of the welfare state. Orientation to social security reduces the actual labor and socially creative motivation; "corruption" comes from the production of social illusions, infusion of the idea that nothing depends on the citizens and the key of social welfare is the state. Thus, the creative inquiry has not taken institutional and social value roots in the society, since, on the one hand, the disintegration effect of private consumer interests is obvious and on the other hand, the integration within the etatistic matrix results in varying degrees of social dependence.

Meanwhile, the fact that the vast majority of Russians tend not so much to a career as to an interesting work is a significant indicator of the shift of public sentiment [8]. Perhaps the most notable is the fact that the orientation to interesting work is based on social self-esteem and understanding of the professional activity as a form of self-realization and self-expression and as a tool to improve social influence. Not surprisingly in this context, that the representatives of the creative class demonstrate dissatisfaction with the dominant adaptive strategies that limit the personal capacity and make creative self-identity of no prestige in the society. Assessing their life, as good and successful, they point to the fact that the state is not interested in stimulating creative activities and increase in the opportunities for self-realization is often associated only with proper initiative, the formation and implementation of the practice of "small businesses."

In our view, there is a certain interdependency between an inquiry for creative activities and social self-esteem. This is particularly evident in the evaluation of the situation of the mass group of creative class, workers in the public sector. Standing out of the criteria of the middle status on their income and career prospects, representatives of the "intelligent" professions focus on the loyalty to professional duty and opportunities of self-realization in the chosen field of activity. This position should be understood not so much as a form of self-adaptation, which guarantees immunity from the effects of relative deprivation; an important is the emphasis on harmony between goals in life and

professional activities. The main reason that people perform their professional duties creatively is the choice of creative activities, as the ones related to assessment and self-realization of capacities and the ability to act outside the box.

In other words, what is perceived in the minds of the consumer as archaic and marginality and as a manifestation of lack of success, the creative class estimates as an evidence of social "advancement". It is clear that despite the imitation of creativity at the level of consumption, the consolidation of creativity occurs in the context of improving the professional qualification and status. Meanwhile, value and normative stereotypes in professional activities that were previously focused on the stability and warranty, are being eroded. It becomes clear that the orientation to a stable job and a guaranteed career in life leads to an increased social dependence of the person; 40% of Russian citizens for whom high quality of life and standard of consumption is available "do not want to see" a positive change in their lives as a result of social change [9]. It can be assumed that this is the result of a violation of social justice as equality of opportunities and of the citizens' evaluation of the changes as a result of own efforts that are independent of external influences.

Disappointment in instrumental values is that a stable job is no longer perceived as an absolute good and its presence is often determined not by high professional and business skills, but by the fact "where a person works," and whether it is the privileged or unprivileged profession. Speaking about the creative class, its ideas and evaluation orient to the willingness to change, to independence, to success of a creative person and most importantly, to the formation of creative social practices consolidating Russians in the Russian society. We can say that the three components of social behavior distinguish the representatives of the creative class. First, the creative class is oriented to confidence in the future; therefore, its behavioral strategies are based on the deferred compensation. Secondly, motivation of social professional activities includes creative self-realization and recognition of personal autonomy. Third, there is an obvious tendency to solidarity with people "acting and thinking in the same way".

Based on these assumptions, we should be aware that creativity is manifested in different ways and can be used for different purposes [10]. For creativity to become the norm of public and private life, the creative class must implement integration into Russian society as a process of social inclusion of independent groups and strata in the socio-economic and socio-political life. Self-realization

is associated with an interesting job, professional qualifications and finally, with self-esteem as an autonomous individual, bringing the common good.

In this way, there are socio-cultural barriers associated with both the effects of social and value disintegration and with the amorphous social representation of the creative class. If the middle class in Russia has failed because of the instability of the status frames and forms of self-identification and has not proved as a social subject, the creative class even willing to "show off" may remain a potential social player in the conditions of implicit articulation of own social interests and a breach of creative settings with socio-integrative values of society. The activeness of creative class is weak at the societal level, has no effect on the dynamics of social change and, not least important, does not combine the practice of small business and support of large-scale social projects. Therefore, the conflict between social ambitions of the creative class and the actual level of subjectivity at social meso-level, in inter-group interaction, is obvious.

In short, the paradox is that the members of the creative class, insisting on the choice of social modernization, do not develop creative impulses that effect the actualization of the human potential of the Russian society. "We can say that during the years of rapid social change Russians formed willingness to restructure social policies based on the redefinition of social and professional activities." Highlighting this fact, nevertheless we can not overstate the impact of creative attitudes, since the ability to social maneuver and the readiness to act according to the logic of the situation may produce a refusal to follow "high goals." In the context of a change of profession it may create a phenomenon of semi-professionalism or, worse, a professional simulation, which we observe in the current "bursts" of political activity and the unpreparedness of the representatives of the expert community, as the elite of creative class, to offer not a scheme of "the spread of opinions", but constructive approaches to the issues discussed by society.

Creativity includes the effect of "getting away" from reality and the choice of inactivity, as a way not to be included in the mass social practice, when professionalism is not translated into social creativity. Indifference towards the social civic activity, traditionally inherent to the Russian public life, is based on the "transfer" of creativity in alternative forms of activity, the concentration at the social micro-level. "Escape from Freedom" is expressed in the fact that the creative class shows opposition to the authorities, largely explaining the

inertia by the narrow frameworks of proper social self-realization. The reality shows that the social activity of the creative class has not reached the level of social maturity, which would form the universal need for creativity in the Russian society.

It should also be noted that, to a great extent, the practices determining the behavior of the creative class, are formed as a commitment to specific subcultural values and stand out of the modality by constructing cultural differences. This fact gives R. Florida cause to talk about "bohemian" creative class and that the geography of creativity is associated with creativity as a way of life [11]. Meanwhile, the author acknowledges that hobbies, private interests and demonstrative identities affect the choice of professional activity only as the formula of free time that is, increase the gap between the profession as a routine and self-expression as a way to be yourself outside of work.

In the context of our thoughts it becomes obvious that the Russian creative class is in the "intermediate" state; it has not reached the notions of the value of self-realization in various spheres of social life, seeing creativity as a factor in a purely professional activity. However, it is not accurate to assess the creative class as a group of the capital's beau monde, unsatisfied, mainly with the relation of the power structures to the formed political ambitions. Creative class as a social subject puts forward, albeit in an amorphous form, a variant of social integration based on cooperation of society and government on an equal basis, identifying areas of mutual responsibility and competence.

REFERENCES

1. Florida, R., 2002. *The Rise of The Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. N-Y: Basic Books, pp: 12-15.
2. *The Middle Classes in Russia: Economic and Social Policies*. Moscow, 2003, pp: 11.
3. Shkaratan, O.I., 2012. *Sociology of Inequality: Theory and Reality*. Moscow, pp: 264.
4. *The Middle Classes in Russia: Economic and Social Policies*, pp: 25.
5. Volkov, Yu. G., 2011. *Creativity: a Historical Breakthrough of Russia*. Moscow, pp: 136.
6. Bourdieu, P., 1986. The forms of capital. In *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. N.Y. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, pp: 241-258.
7. Shkaratan, O.I., *Sociology of Inequality: Theory and Reality*, pp: 412.
8. *The Middle Classes in Russia: Economic and Social Policies*. Moscow, 2003, pp: 86.
9. Shkaratan, O.I., *Sociology of Inequality: Theory and Reality*, pp: 13.
10. Florida, R., 2005. *Cities and the Creative Class*. Routledge.
11. Florida, R., 2010. *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*. N-Y: HarpersCollins Publishers.