

PREMISES FOR CLASS STRUCTURES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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This study represents by its content a competent sum up of the processes which have unfolded in Moldova for more than two decades of transition and it is focused on social stratification dimension. The social stratification itself proves to be a complex phenomenon, including a differentiated system of hierarchies which form up an integral entirety, determining the positioning of an individual within a social group. The opportunity of this monographic study dedicated to bringing out the processes of social stratification is determined by the need to identify the existence and theoretical grounding of the formed up groups or which are in process of being formed up, them being subjected to research by developing scales based on more criteria.

The indispensable nature of the investigations is amplified by the development of a new methodology, which would ensure the emphasis being placed on new social structure compatible with reality, approached through the prism of certain measurement indicators. While in Soviet period the social structure was grounded in occupation, there being present a simpliste picture with no consideration for internal hierarchy, neither for the diversity of the activities, nowadays there is an absolutely innovative approach, grounded on the complexity of the processes from within and out of the society, there being pointed out both the traditional dimension and the trends derived from creating a knowledge based society.

The work undertakes a multiaspectual analysis of stratification, including economic and political, professional and cultural dimensions.

Key words: social class, social categories, social structure, social stratification, education, occupation, social status, lifestyle.

Acest studiu reprezintă o totalizare a proceselor care s-au produs în Republica Moldova pe filiera social stratificatoare mai mult de două decenii de tranziție. Stratificarea socială se dovedește a fi un fenomen complex, incluzând un sistem diferențiat de ierarhii care formează o totalitate integră, determinând poziționarea unui individ în cadrul unui grup social. Oportunitatea studiului consacrat reliefării proceselor de stratificare socială este determinată de necesitatea de a identifica existența și de a fundamenta teoretic grupurile formate sau în formare, supunându-le cercetării prin elaborarea unor scale în baza mai multor criterii.

Indispensabilitatea investigațiilor este amplificată de elaborarea unei metodologii noi, care să asigure punerea în lumină a unei structuri sociale corespondentă realităților, abordată în sensul unor indicatori aplicați pentru măsurare. Dacă în perioada sovietică structura socială a fost fundamentată pe ocupație, fiind prezentat un tablou simplist, fără a ține cont de ierarhiile în interior și de diversitatea activităților, actualmente s-a impus o abordare absolut inovatoare, fundamentată pe complexitatea proceselor din societate și în afara ei, reliefând atât tradiționalul, cât și tendințele derivate din implementarea societății bazată pe cunoaștere și tehnologii de vârf.

Lucrarea conține analiza multiaspectuală a stratificării, incluzând dimensiunile economică și politică, profesională și culturală.

Cuvinte cheie: clasă socială, categorii sociale, structură socială, stratificare socială, educație, ocupație, statut social, mod și stil de viață.

Данное исследование представляет собой обобщение результатов социологических опросов в области социального неравенства в Республике Молдова за последние двадцать лет. Социальная стратификация является комплексным феноменом, который включает в себя

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дифференцированную систему иерархизации и которое формирует общую целостность, определяя положение индивидуума в составе социальной группы.

Значение исследованию придаёт теоретическое аргументирование формирования социальных групп, выработка новой методологии, выявляющее новую социальную структуру и которая способствует выявлению новых индикаторов и осуществлению социального измерения. В советском периоде социальная структура базировалась на видах деятельности, представляя собой суженный подход к этому вопросу. Сейчас появилась необходимость рассмотрения данного процесса в новом ракурсе, основанного на комплексность социальных процессов, выявляя как традиционные процессы, так и новые тенденции.

Данная работа представляет междисциплинарный анализ стратификации, включая её экономические, политические, профессиональные и культурные аспекты.

Ключевые слова: *социальный класс, социальное неравенство, социальная структура, социальная стратификация, образование, род занятий, социальный статус, образ жизни.*

JEL Classification: *I20; I24; I25; I29; I31*

Introduction. The social stratification is considered to be a complex and multidimensional process, determined by economic, political, cultural, psychological, moral factors, etc. An important role in the formation of people's lifestyle, of economic structures, traditions, social and psychological fields is held entirely by historical circumstances. Historical factors are relevant for groups' forming, social and class structures. Stratification that is formed in Moldova in conditions of building the postmodern society contains in it the nucleus consolidation of social groups and the formation of new classes. These ones, in their resistance structures, contain remnants of social memory.

At the beginning of the twenties century, in Bessarabia, part of the Russian Empire, there was a medieval dominant social structure, much alike the imperial agrarian colonized provinces, which according to statistics, is represented by a very small number of very rich people (large landowners, landowners, merchants) – 0.001%, rich people (landowners, merchants, clerks, manufacturers) – 0.58%, people that had a decent life, having land surfaces providing natural economy for them – 35%, people who were affected by poverty, periodically or permanently subjected to deprivation, chronic malnutrition and having no access to education – 64%. Under these conditions, barely were forming the germs of capitalism, bourgeoisie's, an important element of the social structure that later would influence the formation of the middle class – the base class in the modern society. The division of Europe after World War I, the emergence of new geopolitical structure, returning Bessarabia to the Romanian Unitary state, caused the synchronization of the social processes in Bessarabia and the Old Kingdom, made quicker the formation of the modern society in Bessarabia. The process was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II and the re-annexation of Bessarabia, this time in the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Moldavian SSR. However, people's minds didn't delete the values that were promoted by the modern society for two decades.

Premises for class structures in the Republic of Moldova

The impact that had the Bolshevik ideology disorganized the social, economic, demographic life in the Moldavian SSR, abolished the private property, were organized also the deportations and massacres by starvation of hundreds of thousands of people. The policy of change of the national structure, made mechanically, by massive immigration of the foreigners and emigration of native population strengthened only apparently the working class and intellectual class from MSSR. The ethno-linguistic social conflicts could not be mitigated, using the instruments of the Soviet state socialism dictatorship; they just went in a phase of latent accumulations. The intellectual elite formation was subjected to ideological pressure to make possible the obedience to the state's power structures.

The formation of the new state, sovereign and independent – Republic of Moldova, doesn't mean just one new graphic appearance worldwide. This process is accompanied by economic transformations, usually difficult ones, by shock operations for most of the citizens, by democratization and social restructuring of the entire population.

The political and socio-economic changes led to the formation of new groups, social strata, new professional structures and changed the structure of the society as a whole. New groups, new social strata appeared not only based on the classic layering principles, but have specific national features on their

foundation, related to the privatization process, to the economy and market relations formation, to the geopolitical reasons.

In the Republic of Moldova there is noticed a specific trend in the post-Soviet space: people who have prospered in business and made great fortunes, involve themselves in politics, occurring the process of oligarchization the state power. Sociologists try to find the reasons for this phenomenon. In our view, the reasons are as follows:

a) In the Moldovan public life there is not enough to have the wealth, which is permanently subjected to risk, because the wealth wasn't always acquired perfectly in a legal way, but rather by the proximity to the hierarchy nomenclature sources, meaning the access to the public money.

b) Rich people come into politics in order to enhance their social-economic status. The main factor of their property economic security becomes the political party affiliation and the proximity to the ruling political circles.

Such events were characteristic to the early stage formation of the socialist society. In Moldova, the state institutions influenced by businessmen, formed monopolistic structures to extort money from the poor people and direct them towards to the rich persons. The state leaders use the state institutions for the businessmen benefits. Generally speaking, their purpose is to make the rich people richer and the poor ones poorer.

The society faces not only a socio-economic crisis, but also a profound identity crisis. It remains to be divided by ethno-cultural-linguistic criterion, formed in Soviet times. Thus, in the absence of a social cohesion, based on the national identity, cannot be built a viable economy.

According to the distribution of responses about subjects' self – positioning, the social structure of Moldova can be represented as follows: 4% of the population believes that it is economically provided and afford luxuries; 13% believe that have no shortages and can afford certain goods; 27% is positioned closer to the middle stratum, and 56% identify themselves with social structures situated down. This division is a general one, because social structures are not distinguished by homogeneity. Relating to the indicators such as income, wealth significantly restricts the boundaries and content of a middle social stratum. The consumption pattern represents today the main factor that determines subjects' position in the social hierarchy. Particularly the consumer style is today in the Republic of Moldova the main factor in social self-identification. The study results confirm once again that the Moldovan society remains one unstable in the absence of a consistent middle social stratum.

The basic criteria of the economic differentiation are disposable income. Under this criterion, three fifths of the population has low incomes that do not surpass the threshold of the minimum standard of living and life and are situated in the poverty zone. It is impetuous necessary to increase the efficiency of the national economy, the permanent increase of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), creating adequate conditions for every citizen of the country for self-assertion and creative work according to his skills and capabilities. In this regard, it is necessary to develop small and medium business, family business. As a result will appear new jobs, better paid, which will help increase the population's income, promote in the social hierarchy, especially in poor areas.

Using the methods of comparative analysis of stratification criteria and the dimension of the disposable income and comparing them with the subsistence minimum, allowed us to divide the population into six groups. The first stratum is formed by the richest people, the second one- wealthy people and the third – not too wealthy people. The last three strata have income up to the amount of the subsistence minimum and include most of the population (about 60%). It is necessary to develop and build on measures that would help raise population's incomes by creating well-paid jobs.

The structure of consumption expenditures serves as an objective characteristic of quality of life. In the most insured households the share of expenditures for needs satisfaction is noticeably higher than in the least insured households.

These are expenditures for education, recreation, contributing to increasing human capital; these are spending on housing facilities, transport and communications, which creates conditions for a comfortable life; these are expenses for restaurants and cafes that provide power outside the home and represent one of the indices of high level of welfare.

The existence in the least insured households of plots of land with an area greater than in the most insured, attest the following. In Moldova, rural residents had access to land regardless of their level of welfare. The achievement of the program "Earth" secured land possession of land acquired for the account of equivalent land shares. However, the least wealthy households do not have sufficient means for

the production, which would create opportunities for "out" them out of poverty. This concerns, first, means of production, without which it is impossible to get a high return on agricultural production in large volumes and obtain based on sufficient income to overcome poverty.

In the socio-professional stratification took place changes, though they are not so quick and positive as we would like them to be. There are a number of factors that form the individuals' perceptions in this regard. Income level and education is crucial in building future plans of respondents. The more advanced studies are, the aspirations and their plans for the future are more optimistic. However, these respondents are more demanding for the level of training and obviously have a higher level of information.

The income level influences on the respondents' job mobility intentions. With the increasing levels of income, decrease the respondents' intentions to change profession or field of their work. Though one of the main reasons of changing the work place is the low wage for the job they have actually, very few people would plan to open a business on their own or say they would like to work in the private sphere. Most respondents are opting for the public sector, because the situation in this area is relatively stable. This situation is observed especially in rural areas where the budget sphere allows people to have income not too big, but without risk.

The profession is crucial in filling a position in the social hierarchy. According to the results of our research, the majority of the respondents (over 60%) invoke as the first criterion of considering a profession prestigious one the high level of paying it. The character and emotional aspects of labor matters less, but in the same time every fifth respondent believes that a prestigious profession should also be interesting. However, when asked to name the most prestigious professions in the top, were selected not just the best paid. The most prestigious is the medical profession (47%), followed by the jurist one – 36%, professor and economist – just over 20%, the computer programmer – 18%.

The institutional research results indicate a greater interest (compared to previous research conducted) to labor professions as well. Thus, every tenth respondent considered to be prestigious such professions as builder and carpenter. In the rural area a lot of respondents are opting for the profession of farmer. It becomes to be evident the idea that prestigious professions are not only those that involve intellectual work but also physical too.

The education level and the age of the respondents influence the criteria determining the prestige of professions. For people having higher education it is important, first of all, that the profession it be interesting, as the education level is lower, the criterion becomes less important. Respondents with complete and incomplete secondary education are focused on how well paid is the profession. The same trend is observed and related to the respondents' age: for young people, the salary is not so important. With increasing age, are changing and the respondents' preferences, ie the elderly are the most pragmatic.

In the Republic of Moldova persist acute socioeconomic disparities. They are manifested, in particular, through the major economic inequality, extremely one observed in urban and rural areas, including by income, consumption, property distribution and by human and social available capital. And though in the recent years are evident the trends of reducing the level of inequality, there is a high level in all profiles. This fact represents a real threat to the social security of the country.

Quantitative and qualitative indicators of inequality must become an essential reference point in the economic and social policy coordination. The problem of the gap between the upper and lower levels of the society cannot be solved without a review of distributive relations, in order to increase the tax burden on excessive incomes and raising of the incomes for poor people to the accepted social norms. In this situation, the regulatory role of the state is of biggest importance. In the Central and Southeast European countries, as well as the Baltic states, where reforms were successful performed, the state acted in many plans to control inequality.

Today's economic and social situation in Moldova, despite its complexity, is not objective fatal. It can be repaired by the development and implementation of the state social policy based on the scientific principles and systematically argued.

The development of the economic, social, cultural, environmental policies is the prerogative of the governmental institutions, the priority of the political space.

Sociocultural processes, developed over the last two decades, allow us to say that the state doesn't have a policy of development and reorganization of cultural infrastructure. The formation of elites in culture is left to the will of communities, thus government delegating its powers to the local government.

Politics is the sphere of interests of the certain strata of society. In this regard we must emphasize that the current structure of governments clearly reflects the interests of the social groups of the elite: party

officials (their number has more than doubled, until 31.7%) and the representatives of the business elite (from 2 to 16.8%). Today, more often in Parliament, deputies insist on promoting their party and corporate interests. Being guided by these principles is very difficult to reach consensus in order to achieve overall goals. This is more visible considering the fact that in the political sphere of our society, the social and personal relations are indivisible. State leaders are rich people; the authorities do not have poor people among them. This situation demonstrates the immaturity of the civil society institutions. They are not able to control the politicians, "to push" their representatives in power. The officials named on their positions take care to promote on the hierarchical positions "theirs", activity based on principles of brotherhood, kinship, friendship, sometimes – on ethnicity. This creates the elites of the clan. The strata of the governing class consists of stable political and cultural groups, united by the community of political and economic interests and usually consolidated around the heads of executive structures based on personal dependence.

The researches show that nepotism in the spheres of power is more spread on the regional and local level. Here is observed the organizing of activities on the principle of the management commands, hardly subordinated to the executive power in the region. Social bonds with much wider – outside of orders: are mobilized friends, relatives, former classmates, former coworkers. But the main success of the leadership is determined by the existence of the solid links with useful people, personal relationships of loyalty, possession of material resources of power.

The mutual influence of the socio-economic and political reforms has a great impact on the process of stratification. Political selection of parties, the attitude towards them and population's activism often result in common views in assessing the reforms and the state of affairs in a domain or another, for different groups of interests. However, the quality of life, as well as other social and economic indicators, became determinant for voters' political preferences. For example, respondents from rural areas, where the economic situation is a real challenge, consider reforms mostly negative (57%), compared to those from the cities (37%). This is due to the fact that rural residents are less politically active. In their sociological survey they often write: "My vote and opinion change nothing".

This way, local relations of kinship and charisma of some party leaders have a strong influence on people's political choices. During election, candidates win the most votes within the areas where they were born – from 75 to 90%.

In the society there is a lack of political unity between participants in social processes (leaders do not listen to what their people want and people do not hear what their leaders say). As a result, there is no a consensus in carrying out democratic changes.

The underdevelopment of political process, the amorphous situation of its structure, the political actors' anemia ("We are together with those in power and who have more chances to win today") creates situations where neither opposition, nor society is able to have a rational discussion with the leadership. In these circumstances, the opposition doesn't act like a political opposition, but rather as a radical movement.

The low level of social activity holds back the de-concentration of power. So far, it has proved as being impossible to reduce the dominance of the ruling political elite and its representatives in decision making. They control major state resources, central power relation with local government institutions and civil society organizations entirely. The mentality of "people's power", always ready to control and sustain the elites throughout governing process is not consolidated in Moldova yet.

In Moldova, there is still the practice of "political clientele," which proves that social groups that are close to the presidency, parliament, government, concentrate in their hands the most important levers of government, have great possibilities to make use of power as they like. State power administration at regional levels is considerably limited. More than 52% of surveyed local administration workers consider themselves not fully free in their activity and their ability to make effective local policy and that "centralization of power is still quite large." However, local power bodies have different degrees of autonomy in solving their community problems. A partial economic and financial independence was recognized by 57% of respondents; only 27 percent of leaders think of themselves as fully independent in financial matters; partial financial autonomy in social developing of rural areas and their infrastructure was recognized by 55% of respondents and 28% of the heads of local government bodies believe they are absolutely dependent.

Sociological analysis data show that Moldova has an absolutely critical need to improve the legislation on local self-government to attract public organizations in the implementation of local policies,

making better the elites' selection technologies and the development of various forms of democracy in local authorities' politics.

Interaction between internal and external policy implementation is not always stable, which negatively affects the general social progress. If the priorities of the EU integration are drawn with precision within foreign policy, then the internal politics doesn't contain an enhanced support for this direction of development, and some political groups are even hostile to the European course of Moldova.

During the period of important socio-historical processes, especially during transition periods, new forms of participation of new social groups in politics are born and developed. Based on circumstances' and factors' diversity that define state and society policies, social structure turns and settles around nucleus, changing its functions, perfecting various social practices. The development of political reforms and political process in Moldova grows every year, which fortifies confidence that the path of democracy development, which some countries have passed centuries ago, will be crossed faster, because we have directions to look up to, there are practices that can be useful.

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