

COPING BEHAVIOUR IN THE POST-COMMUNIST RUSSIA: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIES OF THE UNDERCLASS

Research Support Scheme

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Main targets of the research project:

1. To build up a taxonomy of life strains having faced by the groups from the emerging Russian underclass;
2. To reveal the main resources including professional skills, personal networks, information sets, personal savings and accumulated wealth which are normally mobilised for resilience;
3. To get a new insight into the frames of perception and interpretation of life strains and coping actions;
4. To construct a typology of coping strategies including behavioural patterns and conceptual schemes applied by the deprived groups;
5. To find out the main objective and subjective factors which determine the coping strategies;
6. To trace the basic peculiarities in coping strategies of different new underclass groupings;
7. To examine the regional differentiation in coping behaviour;
8. To work out policy measures encouraging the coping strategies of groups in relative deprivation and disseminate the results among experts and policy makers.

Groups of the special interest

- *Unemployed*, i.e. the groups which have lost their jobs as a result of company closures and job dismissals;
- “*New poor*”, i.e. the groups which may have a part-time or even full-time employment but have lost a large part of their income due to chronic lay-offs and low payment. These groups experience an evident decline in living standards below the subsistence level;
- *Migrants*, i.e. the groups which have been enforced to move their homes for various reasons and are facing difficulties in getting employment which corresponds to their previously acquired skills.

Data sources

Main surveys. Three specially targeted surveys are supposed to provide major data for the project. They are:

- First set of in-depth interviews (100 respondents in 4 regions)
- Standardised survey (800 respondents in 4 regions)
- Second set of in-depth interviews (100 respondents in 4 regions)

Group of unemployed. We selected respondents with the period of unemployment from 3 to 12 months, which is sufficient for getting an experience linked to this status. From the socio-demographic standpoint the parameters of gender, age and educational level have been controlled.

Group of 'working poor'. We selected respondents working the enterprises of military industry and science (both academic and applied). The firms were supposed to have wage arrears of more than 3 months or very low wages insufficient for maintaining reasonable living standards. We interviewed respondents who have been working at the enterprise for more than 5 years, and therefore, can compare the times before and after the decline of the enterprise. The ratio of manual workers and professionals at the industrial enterprises and science institutions was 1:1 and 1:5 respectively.

Group of forced migrants. We selected those who have come from the NIS countries and North Caucasus regions of Russia. The respondents must come to the region of their new residence not earlier than one year ago so the experience of migration was relatively fresh. One third of them were registered with the Federal Migration Service. The rest two thirds of respondents have been approached via NGOs.

Duration of the project - 24 months starting July 1998.