

Agents of Social Change: Determining Identification Criteria and Designing an Indicator Model



**Irina N.
VOROBEVA**

Cherepovets State University
Cherepovets, Russian Federation
e-mail: Vorobyova-i-n@yandex.ru
ORCID: 0000-0001-5970-051X; ResearcherID: AAX-4496-2021



**Albina A.
MEKHOVA**

Cherepovets State University
Cherepovets, Russian Federation
e-mail: albina_mekhova@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0001-6377-3404; ResearcherID: AAX-5670-2021

Abstract. Modern Russian society is undergoing major changes. The concept of social change has a long history of theoretical understanding; usually, two approaches, the evolutionary and the revolutionary, are distinguished. We consider this concept within the framework of a new post-modernist or organizational-activity paradigm, when the “social agent” plays an active transformative role. The problem is of a complex interdisciplinary nature, directly related to the theory of social change, social and human capital, and the creative class. We try to find out which social groups of Russian society support changes and can become their agent-guides, what distinguishes them from other people, what their share is in the modern social structure of society, region, city. The article provides a justification for the relevance of identifying agents of social change as a social basis for the transformation and development of the territory. Based on the analysis of foreign and domestic research experience, we design our own notion of

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the term “agents of social change”, define the criteria for their identification, create an indicator model for empirical identification of the share of agents of social change in the social structure of the urban community. Theoretical judgments and conclusions are supported by empirical data from a sociological survey of Cherepovets residents. The choice of the city for approbation of the model is not accidental. Cherepovets has the status of a territory of advanced socio-economic development and is in dire need of agents of social change. According to an empirical study, in Cherepovets the core of social change is 4.6%, and the periphery of the core, which we designate as activists, is 17.4%. A comparison of the empirical results of our study and studies of leading Russian authors on the topic of social participation shows that Cherepovets, on average, reflects the general trend in Russia. The population as a whole has rather pronounced attitudes towards activity, while the behavioral practices expressed in our model in various forms of social participation are lagging behind significantly. We prove the validity of the developed model for studying the stated problem and empirically confirm that the development potential of the territory is largely determined by the presence of agents of social change in the social structure.

Key words: agents of social change, creative class, indicator model, social capital, social participation, social resources.

Problem statement

Social change is one of the broadest and most complex sociological concepts. In the broadest sense, social change refers to the transition of a social object from one state to another. The concept has a long history of theoretical understanding: from classical theories that consider social change as evolutionary having a natural character, to contemporary approaches that fundamentally revise the understanding of the driving forces of social change. There are progressive and regressive changes, global and local, etc. In the context of the problem posed, the postmodern approach is of interest (E. Giddens, P. Sztompka, M. Archer, V.A. Yadov, etc.). According to it, social change is a multifactorial process, which is influenced by changes in the external environment, economy, culture, political institutions, but the role of a social subject, which by its activity adapts social structures to the interests of social groups, seems decisive. Territorial development in this way depends on activists who are ready to support the change of the regional space in all its practices, from inclusion in the practices of co-participating management, urban improvement to social support

for the needy segments of the population. But even everyday practices related to one’s own well-being are hardly implemented by the population in a fairly close range, and the speed and effectiveness of social changes are reduced due to weak support. Therefore, it is necessary to identify social groups, people with certain qualities and competencies, who are not only able to see new opportunities for themselves in changing, sometimes crisis conditions, but also inclined to construct a new reality, to social participation, who can become the social base of transformations, their guides and agents. Thus, the conceptualization of the concept of “agents of social change”, the formation of a theoretical and empirical indicator model for the analysis of this social group seems to be an urgent theoretical task.

A practically significant task is to identify the share of agents of social change in the social structure as a whole, the region and the city. In our opinion, the quantity and quality of the layer of this group largely determine the development potential of the territories. The empirical measurement of its share in the social structure requires the

formation of a valid sociological methodology, i.e. the determination of indicators of the identification of agents of social change. The problem is that there is no single approach to it in modern science. Thus, the main purpose of the study is to form our own approach of the concept of “agents of social change”, to develop a theoretical and practical indicator model of measurement, empirical testing of the model and interpretation of the results obtained taking into account the specifics of a particular territory.

Theoretical foundations of the research

The problem of identifying and researching agents of social change is of a complex interdisciplinary nature, lies at the intersection of sociology, economics, management, and social psychology. Methodological guidelines of the research are found in classical and modern theories of social change, social and human capital, and the creative class.

Social change is understood as “the transition of a social object from one state to another, a significant modification in the social organization, its institutions and social structure, a change in social patterns of behavior, renewal and growth of the diversity of institutional forms” (Kirdina, 2003). In the article, social change is interpreted within the framework of the organizational-activity paradigm, which means that they are considered not as a natural-historical, but as a socio-historical process in which a “social agent” or “actor” plays an active transformative role.

From the point of view of the theory of the social field, “social reality appears as an interpersonal reality in which there is a network of connections, attachments, exchanges, is a fabric connecting people with each other” (Sztompka, 1996, p. 27). Agents of social change are subjects who create so-called nodes in this field that unite others to organize socially significant activities. These social actors “mobilize their own resources and modify, build structures so as to “enter into

an interface” with them and actively engage in the process” (Sztompka, 1996, p. 6). The subjects appear in two aspects – collective action and individual interactions forming complex networks. It is they who create networks of norms, values, prescriptions, ideals, form a culture of interaction, develop and reform the channels of interaction of group ties. Social change is the activity of social agents, their practices that change social structures.

To highlight the qualities and attitudes of these subjects, we used such theoretical constructs as innovators, creative class, agents of renewal. J. Schumpeter (1949) was one of the first to try to identify agents of renewal, or agents of “creative destruction”. In his theory, these are entrepreneurs who have not only a unique motivation for work, but also special personal characteristics: a desire for innovation, a sense of their own independence, faith in their own strength, and the ability to take risks. It is these traits and value attitudes that seem to be the most important characteristics of agents of social change. It is no coincidence that at the beginning of the 21st century, in the era of transition to the knowledge economy, many researchers again turn to J. Schumpeter calling him the prophet of innovation (Heertje, 2006; McCraw, 2007).

The well-known management theorist of the 20th century P. Drucker, justifying the possibility of managing change and trying to understand who the leaders of this process are, associated change with innovation, and primarily saw leaders in “knowledge workers”, brain workers, workers with knowledge (Drucker, 1985). He argued that in a knowledge society it is innovation that becomes the most important source of profit, and “knowledge workers”, intellectuals who easily master new knowledge, acquire increased importance. According to the scientist, such an employee is a leader of change both in business and in public administration. According to his theory, the manager of the knowledge society faces three most important tasks: the first is the ability to change, the

second is the willingness to constantly retrain in the work process and, finally, the third is the willingness to perform the functions of a leader, initiate changes and manage them (Drucker, 2002).

The category “creative class” is very consonant with the concept of “agents of social change” (Florida, 2002; Florida, 2005). R. Florida considered a part of the staff of new type organizations, people with a desire for constant renewal, knowledge exchange, capable of creativity, with a pronounced individuality, self-expression and tolerance to be a creative class. Later, the concept received a broader interpretation – a layer of people in society, the distinctive features of which are activity, tolerance, individuality, and self-expression. In the theory of R. Florida, the tolerance index integrates two indicators: the values index and the self-expression index. The values index is the confrontation degree between traditional and modern societies, the readiness of the community to accept new ideas. Self-expression index is the quality of life, democratic society, tolerance of migrants, national and sexual minorities. The latter was perceived ambiguously in the scientific community, the category “creative class” received a certain negative connotation, which at first narrowed its use. However, now the concepts of “creativity”, “creative class”, and “creative society” have become rather popular. In the context of the stated problem in this theory, in our opinion, there is a great heuristic potential.

In 2015, the Martin Prosperity Institute launched the research Global Creativity Index, in which it presented a new economic development model, called “3T”: Talent, Technology and Tolerance. The researchers argue that in the knowledge economy, where consumption and production are based on intellectual capital, the 3T criteria and creativity in general are closely related to economic and social development.

The theme of the creative class is actively being developed in the Russian social science. The most

interesting and close to our vision are the views on the problem of A.N. Pilyasov and O.Y. Kolesnikova (Pilyasov, Kolesnikova, 2008). They formulated a list of characteristics of the creative class, among which are acceptance of change and loyalty to the present; the ability to work at the junction of different professions and knowledge fields; willingness to change their residence place, place of work for the sake of professional growth and the opportunity to do what suits their interests; high self-esteem and developed reflection on the demand in the labor market.

O.I. Shkaratan identifies the category of information workers as part of the creative layer (Shkaratan, 2009). Like P. Drucker with his “knowledge workers”, he focuses on the exceptional role of knowledge and education. It is important to emphasize that we are not talking about formal education, but about one that contributes to the constant increase of intellectual and cultural capital and the development of creative abilities. O.I. Shkaratan describes creative workers as super-efficient, whose unique knowledge and skills correspond to their unique incomes, and incomes, in turn, allow forming a special lifestyle. The scientist identified the following characteristics of the creative class: work involved in computer technology, a high degree of autonomy in work, education and access to its higher levels, constant readiness to change the type of activity, adaptation to more and more new conditions, the ability to find original solutions, their own needs for professional development, professional competence and the ability to “reprogram” yourself in accordance with new production tasks, the possession of scarce resources due to the inability to be replaced, for example, machines (Shkaratan, 2008).

Yu.G. Volkov (Volkov, 2014; Volkov, 2020) notes that the Russian creative class is not identified by income level, which means that income can be both high and below average, it is distinguished by self-motivation, the ability to work at the junction of

different knowledge fields (Volkov, 2010). The scientist speaks about the importance of interaction between state structures and the creative class: the state expands the possibilities of social development by including the social energy of the creative class. It is the creative class that hopes are pinned on the formation of a new Russian ideology that will help to successfully overcome crisis periods and build a successfully functioning socio-economic system (Volkov, 2013).

O.K. Trubitsyn also argues that it is the network structures of the creative class that take on the main role in ensuring innovative national development, displacing the importance of state structures in this process (Trubitsyn, 2019). Unlike R. Florida, who proves that the creative class accumulates in megacities and, as a rule, is formed among the technostructure, advanced programmers or representatives of creative industries, he says that the employment of workers in a certain field does not mean belonging to the creative class by itself. In his opinion, the new class is concentrated mainly in a small number of cities with good living conditions, and not always the largest ones.

A.Y. Maslennikova and S.P. Lapaev focus on the regional aspects of the formation of the creative class. The authors consider it very important for the socio-economic development of the territory to retain and consolidate creative people in the regions, small and medium-sized cities. This requires the loyalty of the state and society to the style and lifestyle of such people, the formation of conditions that ensure innovation and inventions, i.e. a purposeful state and regional policy of the formation and reproduction of the creative class is needed (Maslennikova, Lapaev, 2012).

The problem of social support for socio-economic transformations of modern society is actively being developed within the framework of the theory of social capital, the fundamental basis of which are the works of P. Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2001; Bourdieu, 2002), R. Putnam (Putnam,

1995), J. Coleman (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 2001). In Russian science, the origins of the theory of social capital can be seen in the activity-activist approach of V.A. Yadov. In his opinion, the decisive “mover” of social change is social actors, collective movements, civil societies and ordinary citizens. The author emphasizes that in this approach, the concept of “social resource” or “social capital” comes to the fore. An important place in the resource approach of V.A. Yadov is occupied by a block of individual and personal resources, among which are high personal self-esteem, internality (we prefer to use the category locus of responsibility), readiness for risk, ability to adapt (Yadov, 2001).

The use of the resource approach to study the possibilities of a particular territory was continued in the works of Yu.A. Drozdova. In her opinion, the region’s development depends on the involvement of citizens and rural residents as the main territorial communities in the processes of modernization and social development of the territory, and the region’s future is determined by its social resources (Drozdova, 2019).

Important characteristics of the social capital of the region, from our point of view, are the ability to adapt to environmental changes, the willingness to unite for joint actions, a sense of responsibility for the state of affairs in the place of residence (Guzhavina, Vorobeva, 2017; Guzhavina et al., 2018; Guzhavina, Mekhova, 2018). In our opinion, these characteristics harmoniously complement the important indicators of identifying a class of agents of social change. A high level of internal locus of responsibility for what is happening around creates a tendency to work together to transform the environment.

The social activity level, which is an indicator of the behavioral practices of agents of social change, can be studied through the category of social participation. For the first time, the concepts of civil, public and social participation began to appear in American sociological research

in such areas as civil society theory, urban studies, applied research and practices of working with the population in local communities (Fagence, 1977; Verba et al., 1978). In modern Western literature, the problem of participation has become part of the subject field of research carried out within the framework of the study of social networks, social identity, problems of local communities, partnerships, civil society (Newton, Giebler, 2008; Bartal et al., 2019; Chanda, Mishra, 2019; Bekalu et al., 2020).

There is no methodological unity in Russian science regarding the interpretation of participation. Often the terms social, civic, and public participation are used as synonyms. Some researchers interpret social participation as a generic category for political, civic and public participation. Others distinguish two forms of participation – actually social and political. The problem of “terminological confusion” is noted by I.A. Skalaban and L.I. Nikovskaya (Skalaban, 2011; Nikovskaya, Skalaban, 2017). Without delving into methodological discussions, let us say that most scientists, in an attempt to differentiate the forms and types of social participation, pay attention to the vertical (interaction with the authorities) and horizontal (joint activity of citizens themselves) dimensions of participation; formal (membership in public organizations) and informal participation; collective and individual participation; the main marker of social participation, its main criterion is considered to be a significant social result.

Territorial aspects of the study of the practice of social participation are presented in the works of A.A. Merzlyakov and V.S. Bogdanov (Merzlyakov, 2014; Bogdanov, Merzlyakov, 2018). The authors say that the potential of social participation depends on the socio-cultural field of the region which includes values, customs, traditions, and convincingly show that different conditions for social participation were formed in regions with different levels of socio-cultural development.

We also find methodological guidelines for the study of agents of social change in new approaches to the stratification of society. One of the approaches is connected with the theories of life styles, consumption styles. In the context of the topic we have stated, the practical application of these hikes seems interesting. One of the well-known sociographic methods of identifying consumption styles belongs to E.S. Petrenko (Petrenko, 2011). The typology of consumption styles of the Public Opinion Foundation is based on socio- and psychography (Galitskaya et al., 2012). We also consider it necessary to identify some iconic characteristics of the lifestyle and consumption of agents of social change, to determine their empirical markers.

Innovative practices in the field of consumption, labor, leisure and, of course, in the field of social participation are impossible today without special competencies, in particular digital ones. A number of modern researchers pay attention to it (Dezuanni, Foth, 2019; Batova, 2019; Sadovaya et al., 2019; Sokolov, Barsky, 2021; Zaitseva, 2021). In our opinion, digital competencies are only an important, in contemporary conditions, a necessary condition for the formation of more significant competencies, especially if we are talking about agents of social change. We mean the so-called soft skills – a wide range of competencies including the ability to organize, negotiate, work in a team, take responsibility, effectively organize your time and quickly adapt to new situations, think and act outside the box, etc. As thematic scientific reviews show, interest in this problem in foreign and Russian science has recently been extremely high (Tsalikova, Pakhotina, 2019). Basically, scientists pay attention to the demand for these competencies in the labor market, the need to transform the education system, create methods and tools for the formation of soft skills¹ (Rimskaya et al., 2021; Uvarina, Savchenkov, 2021).

¹ Stepanova A., Dyatlikovich V. (2017). Research “Russia 2025: from personnel to talents”. *TASS*, October 27, 2017. Available at: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/4680191>

Consequently, the variety of theoretical and practical approaches to the problem under study proves its interdisciplinarity and relevance both in social science and in practice. Generalization of Russian and foreign experience allows drawing several conclusions. First, it is obvious that the main driver of influence and incentive for research in this area have been drastic changes in the economy. The knowledge economy requires flexible technologies, brings a person to the fore and imposes new requirements on them as an employee. In order to be effective yourself and make one's organization effective and profitable, it is necessary to have certain qualities. Such an economy-based approach, including attempts to describe a new type of employee, is more distinct in the works of foreign authors (J. Schumpeter, P. Drucker, R. Florida, etc.). In Russian science, in our opinion, the approaches are somewhat broader: the knowledge economy, the knowledge society require new paradigms of human capital as a whole, and new mechanisms for its formation. In addition to economic aspects and the requirements of the contemporary labor market, the works of Russian scientists more often explore social aspects, a new type of human capital is considered as the basis of social capital, as a resource for the social development including for more effective government activities – social participation in the broad sense of the word, participatory design, etc. (D.V. Afanasyev, Yu.G. Volkov, I.A. Skalaban, L.I. Nikovskaya, etc.).

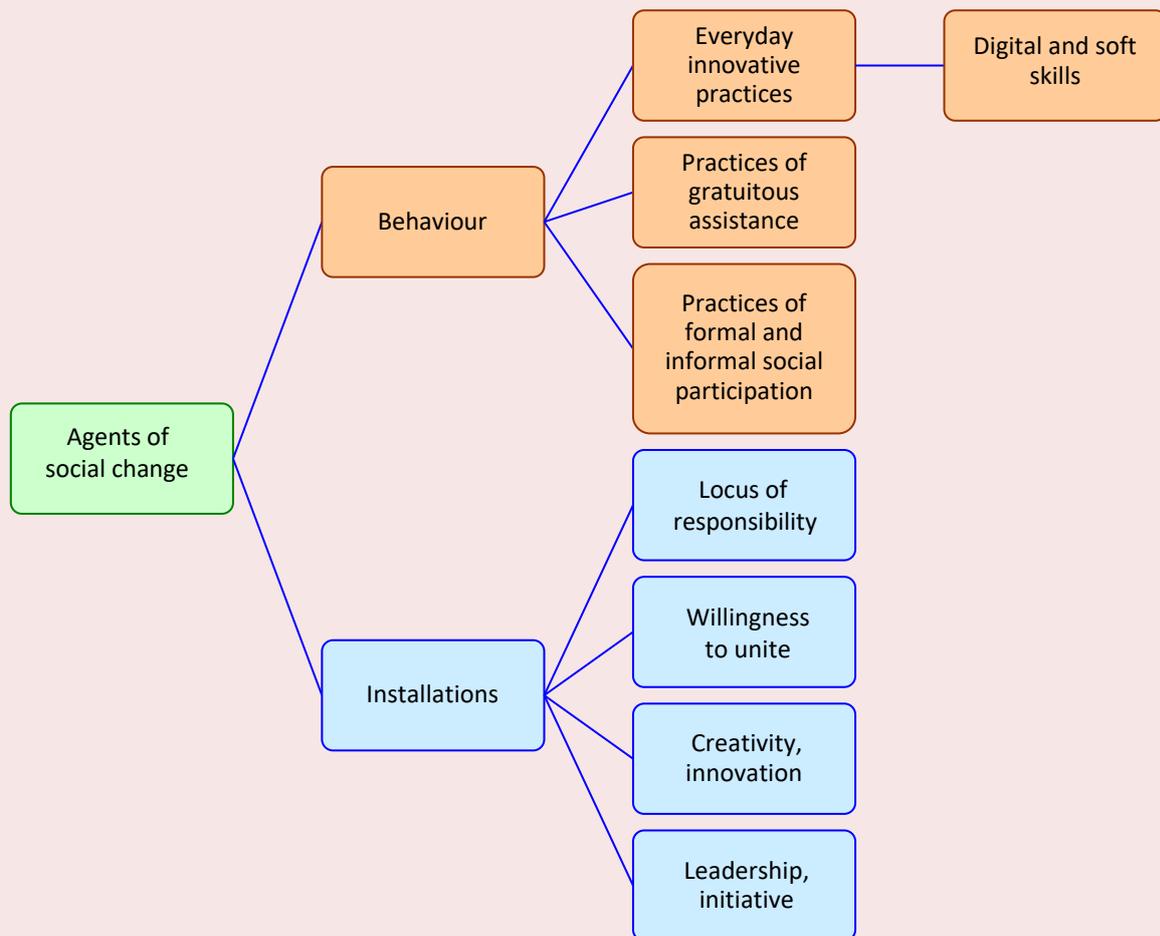
Second, with all the variety of approaches, the purpose of the research in this area is the same – to form an image of the “advanced” part of the population, which, thanks to its qualities, characteristics and competencies, not only quickly fits into the new reality, but also creates it itself. Scientists in the above review call this layer differently: creative class, information workers, knowledge workers, etc., focusing either on its main characteristic or on some aspect of its function. In our opinion,

these designations are conditional. The main thing is that all the authors tried to define the image of the avant-garde layer, its features and characteristics. These features are difficult to verify and measure, hence the polyphony of approaches to their definition, but the general view of the need to include in this list the acceptance of changes and crises as new opportunities, the availability of competencies to use these opportunities and the creation of new technologies and practices both in the production sector and in everyday life, which is clearly represents as a new social reality. But the researchers do not single out in this list the features on the attitudes of behavior and competence which seems important to us.

Based on a deep analysis and understanding of various approaches, we have tried to systematize these features and characteristics into a kind of theoretical construct “agents of social change” to identify a layer of people who support transformative social activities and are included in it, who have a certain set of attitudes and behavioral practices that are in demand in modern conditions of social transformations. The activity of agents of social change in our interpretation consists in participating management, inclusion in the practices of organizing social regional space. According to P. Sztompka's classification, these subjects represent the meso-level, to which he refers large groups, social communities (Sztompka, 1996, p. 44). But in our case, agents are people who are inclined to organize these communities for certain purposes, often in line with everyday practices of social participation, to form networks of like-minded people around themselves or to join them.

In our opinion, these subjects should have the following attitudes: an internal locus of responsibility for affairs in the surrounding social reality, a tendency to unite to solve emerging problems in order to become nodes of the social field, initiative, innovation, a high adaptation level to changing conditions. In addition, they must

Figure 1. Theoretical model for identifying agents of social change



Source: own compilation.

have developed digital competencies due to the partial displacement of social reality into the digital environment. Such attitudes form the value core of agents of social change. The second defining component is already formed behavioral practices of social participation. They are reflected in real social actions, which, for the convenience of practical measurement, we have divided into three types: formal social participation, informal assistance, and helping behavior.

Methodology and method of the research

The theoretical model for identifying agents of social change is based on two blocks – attitudes and behavior (Fig. 1).

Based on the analysis and understanding of Russian and foreign theoretical and methodological approaches to the problem under study, we have identified a list of attitudes and behavioral practices which, in our opinion, are in demand in contemporary Russian society and act as distinctive features, markers of agents of social change. The installation block includes the following indicators (markers): the responsibility locus (agents of social change are distinguished by the priority of the internal locus of responsibility), the willingness to unite, the propensity for innovation, creativity, leadership attitude, the desire to take initiative.

The behavioral block also consists of four main elements: everyday innovative practices that involve the possession of digital and soft skills; helping behavior – practices of gratuitous assistance and volunteering; involvement in social and political participation (formal and informal).

The model allows dividing the population into groups depending on the presence and formation degree of these attitudes and behavioral practices, namely, on proximity to a group of agents of social change.

Based on the theoretical model, an indicator model was developed for the empirical identification and measurement of the share of agents of social change in the social structure. The indicator model formed the basis of the sociological research methodology; the indicators are the answers to the questions of the sociological questionnaire.

There are several questions for each indicator (marker). For example, in the installation block, the locus and level of responsibility are identified by the questions “Do you feel responsible for what is happening in the house / in the neighborhood / in the organization, the enterprise where you work / in the city / in the country?”; “Do you agree with the judgment: “My financial situation in the present and future depends primarily on me”, etc.

Willingness to unite is determined by the question “There are people who are ready to unite for joint actions to solve common problems, and there are those who are not ready to unite with other people. Are you with those who are ready to unite?” It is concretized by questions: “Are you ready to unite with other people to <...> participate in the house management / improve the territory / help the poor / fight against crime / protest against the wrong actions of the authorities / protect own rights / spend leisure time?” etc.

Creativity, propensity for innovation, initiative, leadership is revealed by the answers to the questions “How much do you agree with the judgments <...>?: “it is typical for me to put forward a large number of ideas”; “I prefer to be a leader, not a

performer, to take the initiative”; “the process of creative activity gives me emotional satisfaction”; “it is important for me to realize my abilities”; “I easily get used to changes in the workforce, in life, at work”; “I am constantly trying to improve my education”; “I will be engaged in creating something new, even if it involves difficulties and risks”; “my sociability contributes to solving important problems for me”, etc.

In order to analyze the data, we assume to use the index method. We measure almost all indicator questions of the installation block on the classical scale “Yes”, “Rather yes”, “Rather no”, “No”, “Hesitate to respond”. The respondents’ answers are assigned the following scale values: “Yes” – 5; “Rather yes” – 4; “Hesitate to respond” – 3; “Rather no” – 2; “No” – 1. The index is the arithmetic mean of the values assigned to the answers. For each respondent, we calculate private indexes for each question; the index by indicator (marker) is the average of the private indexes on the issues of this indicator; the total index for the block is the average of the indices by indicators.

The questions of the behavioral block, aimed at identifying innovative practices, are mainly based on the format “Could you say what of the above you did in the last year or two?”. For instance, to identify innovative consumer and everyday practices, we propose a list of thirty practices, most of which involve the possession of digital and soft skills, for example: “book tickets, hotels, accommodation via the Internet”, “use online banking”, “use smart technology”, “make rational proposals, file a patent”, “get additional education including remotely or online”, “participate in research conferences, seminars including online”, etc.

Formal and informal social participation is identified by the question “Do you participate in the activities of public organizations?” which is accompanied by an extensive list of public organizations. The question presupposes answers for each of them: “Yes, I am a member of this organization / I am not a member of this

organization, but I took part in events, actions of this organization / No, I do not participate in the activities of the organization in any way". In addition, the questionnaire includes the question "In which of the listed public affairs did you voluntarily and free of charge participate in the last year or two?". The same format of the question is used to identify practices of helping behavior, gratuitous assistance: "What of the above did you do for other people for free over the previous year?" The answer options list all types of assistance from material, moral to informational, consulting and just neighborly (call a doctor, look after other people's children). The index for such questions is calculated depending on the number of answer options and the amount of the respondent's choices. The sum of the choices is assigned certain values-weights. For example, for a question involving a choice from a list of 26 names of practices, the value 1 is assigned if the respondent chose from 0 to 4 practices, the value 2 – from 5 to 10, the value 3 – from 11 to 15, the value 4 – from 16 to 20 and the value 5 – from 21 or more. We have another example: when answering the question "Are you a member of any official public organization?" the value 1 is assigned if the respondent has not chosen any option; 2 if he is a member of one organization; 3 – two choices, 4 – three or four choices, 5 – more than four choices. Accordingly, private and general indexes are also calculated in the behavioral block. The integral index of belonging to a group of agents of social change is calculated for each respondent as an average between the indices of the blocks of attitudes and behavior; it can reach values from 5 to 1.

In April 2022, we tested the indicator model during a survey of the adult population in Cherepovets in order to identify the proportion of agents of social change².

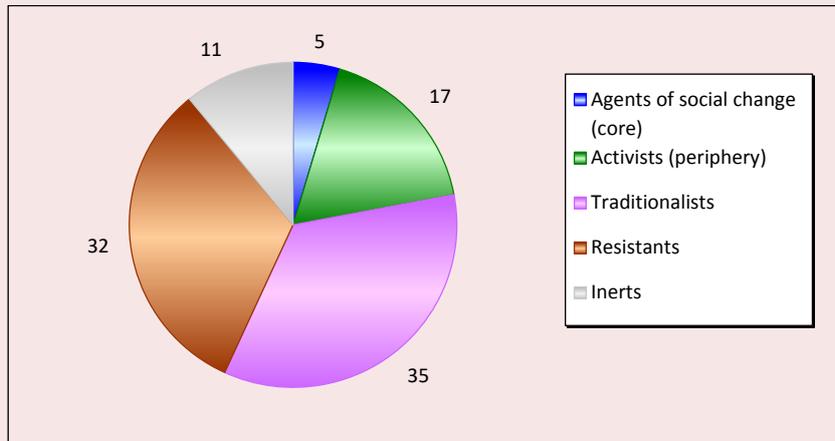
² Sociological survey of the population over 18 years old at the place of residence by face-to-face interviewing, a sample of 668 people, quotas by gender and age in accordance with the gender and age structure. Statistical error does not exceed 5%.

Research results

The research made it possible to identify five population groups depending on the proximity to the group of agents of social change. The group of agents of social change itself, in turn, is divided into the core, whose representatives meet all the criteria of the indicator model (integral index in the range 5–4), there are only 4.6% of them in Cherepovets, and the periphery (activists). Activists do not have all the features, but they carry a great potential for social activity, most often they have significantly developed value attitudes, but at the same time they do not reach the core level of behavioral practices and sometimes require external mobilization (index in the range 4–3.34), they are 17.4% in Cherepovets. The third, the largest group, we conditionally called the traditionalists (index in the range of 3.33–2.67); its share was 34.8%. These are those who are afraid of changes, want to stay in their comfort zone, and adhere to the usual traditional practices. They do not like change, but they do not particularly resist it, unlike the fourth group – opponents of change. We have conditionally designated them as resistant (index 2.66–2). They do not just dislike change, but they resist it, slow it down. According to the research, such respondents was 32.2%. The fifth group (10.9%) included those who have practically no signs of activity and creativity. These are socially passive citizens; they distance themselves from the problems of society and collective activity. We conditionally called them inert (index 2–1; *Fig. 2*).

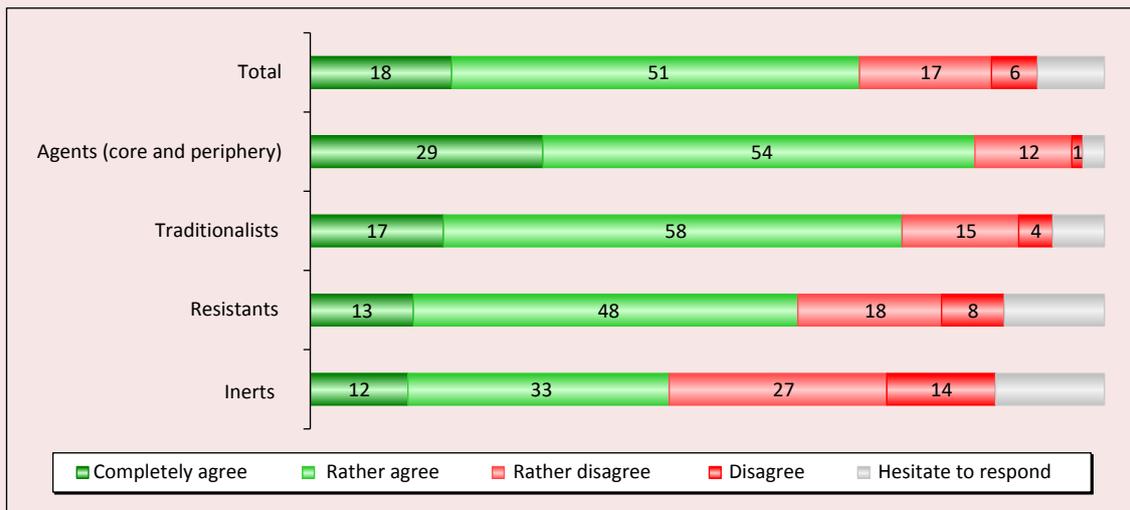
The difference between agents of social change from other groups can be described through the distribution of answers to basic questions. The core group is not statistically representative enough, so it is worth paying attention to the responses of the periphery of the agents of social change, whom we have designated as activists. For the representativeness of the data, we combined these two groups, which together make up 22% and are statistically significant for identifying patterns.

Figure 2. Distribution of the population of Cherepovets by groups according to the indicator model, %



Source (here and further): sociological survey in Cherepovets.

Figure 3. Distribution of answers to the question “How much do you agree with the judgment “The main thing in life is initiative, entrepreneurship, the search for new things in work and life”, in the context of the identified population groups,%

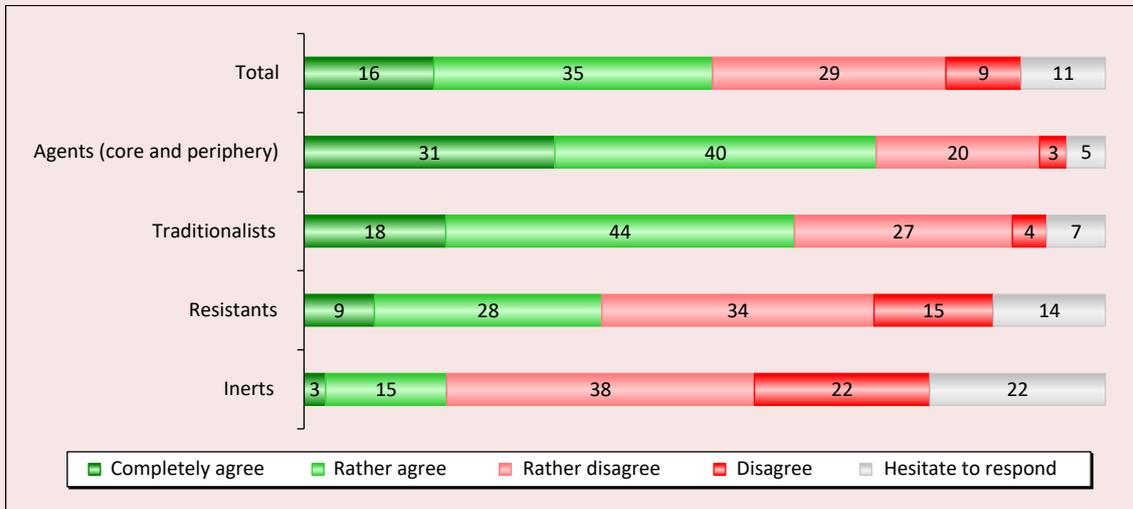


Agents of social change have a highly developed motivation for achievement; 83% of the representatives of this group fully or rather agree with the judgment “The main thing in life is initiative, entrepreneurship, search for new things in work and life”. Among the inert ones, there was only 45% (Fig. 3). 74% of agents of social change replied that they prefer to take the initiative, to be a leader, rather than a subordinate.

Agents of social change are creative, prone to innovation and creativity: 71% agreed with the judgment “It is typical for me to put forward and express a large number of different ideas” (among the inert only 18%), 82% – “The process of creative activity gives me emotional satisfaction” (Fig. 4).

Agents of social change are characterized by a developed motivation to help others and

Figure 4. Distribution of answers to the question “How much do you agree with the judgment “Is it typical for me to put forward and express a large number of different ideas?”, in the context of the identified population groups, %



transform their environment. Among the agents of social change, 46% agreed with the judgment “For the sake of generally significant goals, I am ready to sacrifice some of my money, time, and strength”, while among the inert – only 15%. The majority of the population adheres to the opposite attitude: “I am not ready to sacrifice my

efforts, money, and time for the sake of generally significant goals”.

Eighty three percent of representatives of the group of agents of social change are aimed at continuous development and raising, improving of education; among the entire population – only 58%, among the inert – only 10% (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Distribution of answers to the question “How much do you agree with the judgment “I am constantly trying to develop, improve my education?” in the context of the identified population groups, %

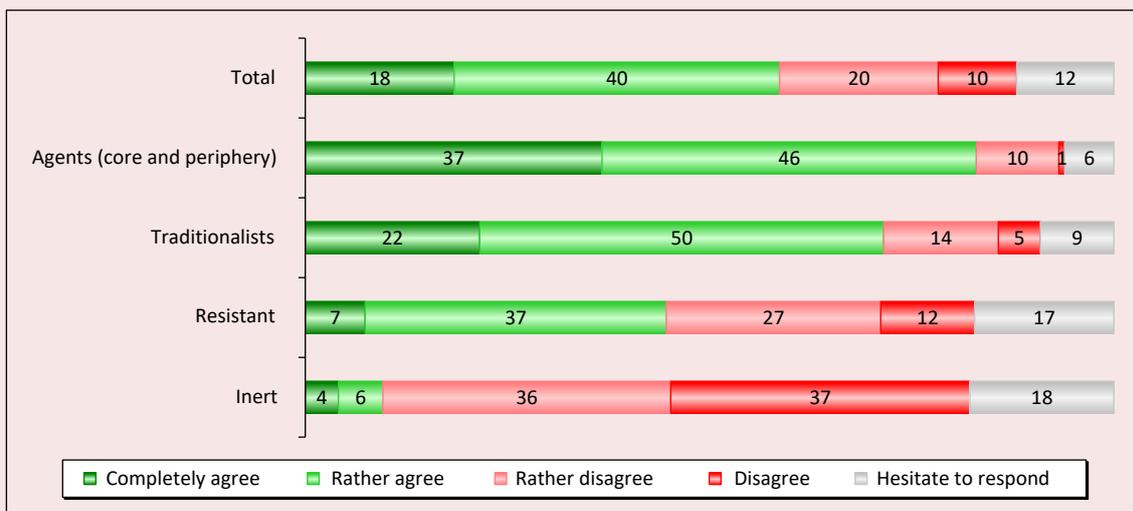


Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question “What of the above did you do in the last year or two at work?” (select all the necessary answers), %

Respond option	For the sample as a whole	Agents (core and periphery)	Traditionalists	Resistants	Inerts
<i>I do not work</i>	29	12	18	38	69
Search for the necessary information using the Internet	42	67	48	32	3
Get additional education	21	41	25	9	0
Work overtime, on weekends	42	63	46	34	15
Help new employees, colleagues	35	59	41	20	6
Spend leisure time with workmates	22	37	25	16	1
Earn extra money, have additional earnings	23	34	38	17	6
Do a job necessary for the organization with no remuneration	24	39	37	19	4
Make rational proposals, be the initiator of innovations at work	16	33	19	9	0
Work remotely	16	29	20	7	3
Change profession, specialty	11	18	14	8	0
Purchase (including online use) books, newspapers, magazines by profession, specialty	12	29	11	4	1
Participate in industry, professional conferences, exhibitions	7	20	7	2	0
None of the above	2	0	1	5	10

Source: sociological survey results of the population of Cherepovets.

Attitudes are the basis of active activity, but they do not always develop into behavioral reactions. The behavior of agents of social change corresponds to activist attitudes. The behavioral block of the indicator model allows measuring it. In terms of measuring the behavioral aspects of the constant development mindset, the question “What of the above did you do in the last year or two at work?” was introduced into the toolkit. Among the agents of social change, 41% have recently received additional education, 33% have made rational proposals, were initiators of innovations, participated in conferences (Tab. 1).

It is not by chance that we conditionally determined the desired group as agents of social change. It was important to identify not just

creativity and innovation, but also the social orientation of these qualities. In this part, the attitudes to joint activities for solving social problems and the responsibility locus are of particular interest; 71% of agents of social change feel responsible for what is happening in the house, yard; among the general population – only 49%, among the inert – 25% (Fig. 6); 57% of agents of social change feel responsible for affairs in the city, only 32% among all citizens, and 8% among the inert.

Agents of social change have a high propensity for collective action: 83% are ready to unite for the arrangement of the residence territory (among the opponents of change, less than half – 43%, among the inert – 21%; Fig. 7).

Figure 6. Distribution of answers to the question “Do you feel responsible for what is happening in your house, yard”, in the context of the identified population groups, %

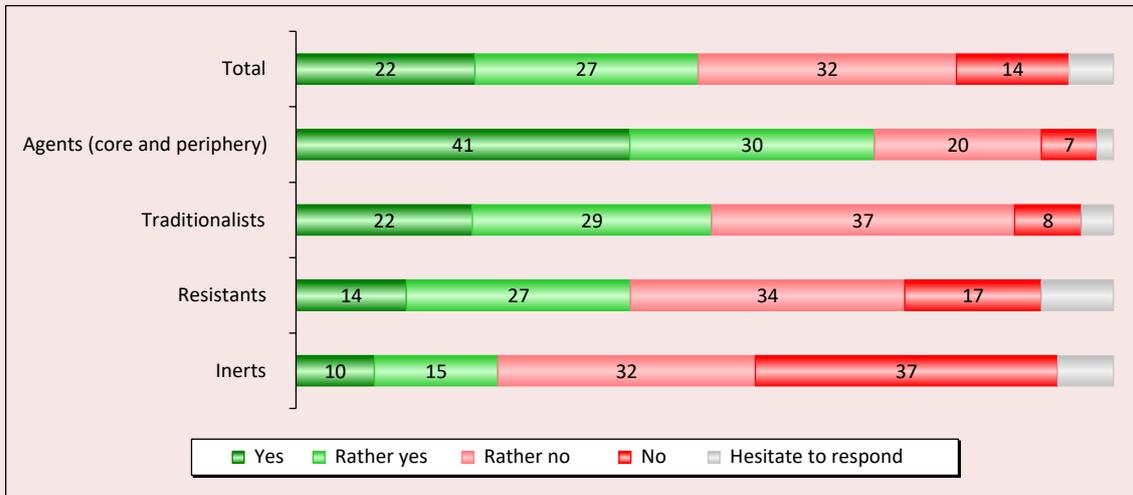
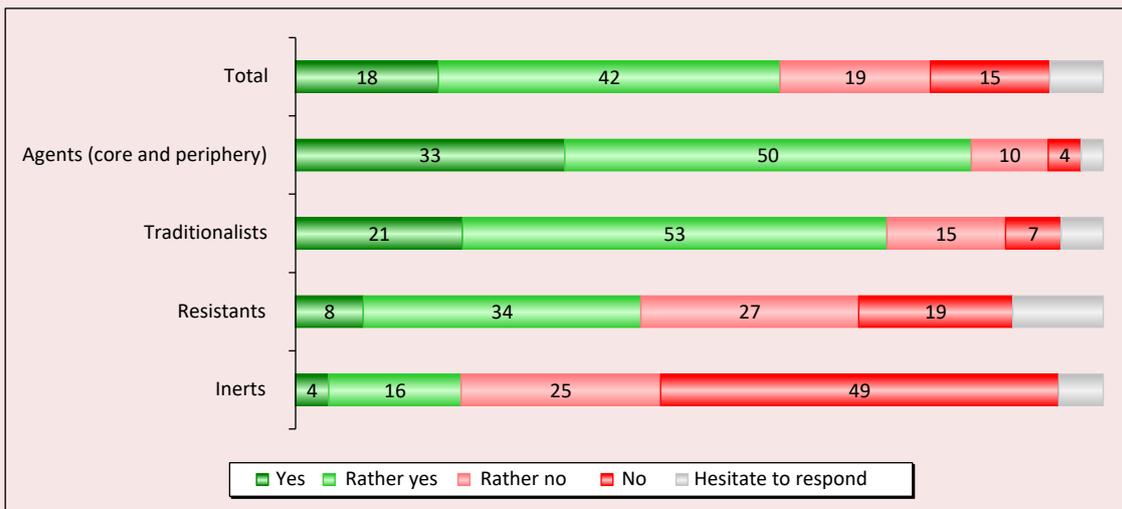


Figure 7. Distribution of answers to the question “Are you ready to unite with other people to equip the territory of residence (house, yard, city)”, in the context of the identified population groups, %



The propensity for collective action and a high responsibility level for what is happening around are confirmed by real practices of social participation, active social activity; 68% of agents of change over the previous year or two have taken a real part in the territory’s improvement. For comparison: among all residents of the city, only 25% participated in various landscaping practices, among the inert – only 1%; 73% of representatives of the group of

agents of social change participate in charitable activities (only 23% among the entire population; *Tab. 2*); 67% helped people gratuitously with money, 63% – with things and products, 23% – in finding a job; 45% of representatives of the core of change agents and 20% of the periphery delivered food, clothing, and medicines to their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic (only 12% of the total population).

Table 2. Distribution of answers to the question “Could you say which of the listed public affairs you have voluntarily and free of charge participated in over the previous year or two?”, %

Respond option	For the sample as a whole	Change agents	Traditionalists	Resistants	Inerts
Community service at the place of residence (litter picks, landscaping activities)	25	68	27	9	1
Charity events (including cash donations to those in need)	23	73	23	7	0
Mass events (city holidays, etc.)	13	52	12	2	0
Activities of non-profit organizations, worked as a volunteer, volunteer	7	37	5	1	0
Blood donation	6	22	6	1	0
Public discussions, actions about social problems including on the Internet	5	29	3	1	0
Animal care in shelters, hunting farms, at the racetrack	3	10	2	1	0
Public hearings	2	10	1	1	0
Search for missing people, the work of search groups	1	6	0	0	0
Elimination of the consequences of natural disasters (fire, etc.)	1	3	0	1	0
Keeping order (people’s squads, etc.)	1	3	1	0	0
None of the above	54	4	45	78	99
Source: sociological survey results of the population of Cherepovets.					

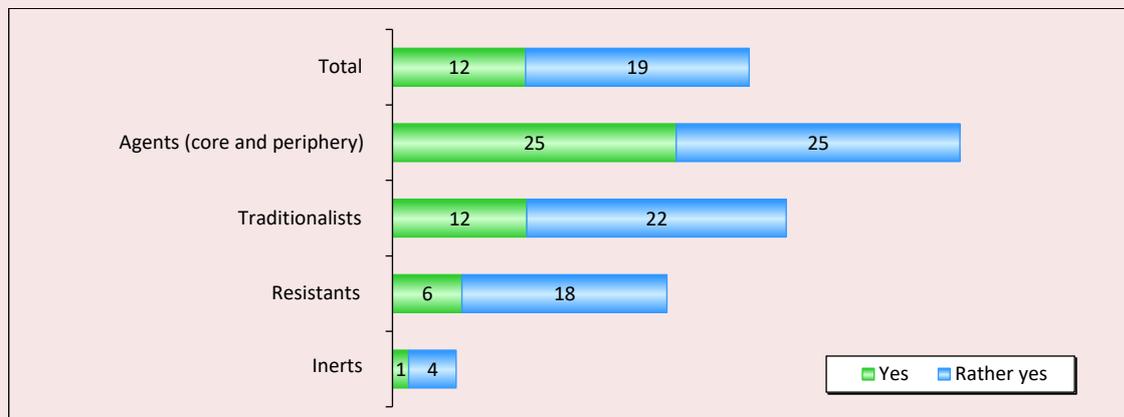
The level of formal social participation – membership in public organizations and active participation in the actions organized by them – is quite low; 72% of citizens noted that they did not take part in any events. Among the agents of social change, there are significantly fewer of them – 39%. The most active is the participation in the events of parent committees of schools and kindergartens, self-government organizations in the field of housing and communal services, physical culture and sports public organizations.

In this context, it is impossible to ignore another feature of the agents of social change – the tendency

to unite in order to defend their rights, to protest against the wrong actions of the authorities. They are ready to support the authorities and become agents of only those changes that correspond to their attitudes and ideas about positive social development.

Those decisions of the authorities that the representatives of the groups consider wrong will be protested. To do this, 50% of the agents of social change are ready to unite. For comparison, answering this question, only 1% of the representatives of the conditionally inert group gave the answer “Yes” and 4% chose the evasive “Rather yes” (*Fig. 8*).

Figure 8. Distribution of answers to the question “Are you ready to unite with other people to protest against the wrong actions of the authorities?” (share of those who answered “Yes” and “Rather yes” in the identified groups), %



Conclusions

The formed indicator model we developed based on the analysis of Russian and foreign theoretical and practical experience can serve as a valid tool for identifying the most active people including measuring the share of agents of social change in the population of a particular city. The heuristic capabilities of the model were confirmed in a mass sociological survey. The research has proved the importance of an integrated approach to the identification of agents of social change, which means the inclusion of both behavioral characteristics and attitudes in the model.

The theoretical part of the article provides a general justification and selection of the values included in the model based on the analysis carried out by Russian and foreign authors of the characteristics of the most active segments of the population in terms of the transformation of social reality as a whole, and in a narrower sense – in terms of those inclined to social participation in its various forms, especially in line with regional, territorial development. We have identified such indicators as the locus of responsibility, the propensity to unite, innovation, initiative, and the adaptation level. They were transformed from theoretical to practical and incorporated into the research tools.

The research results have shown that the population activity level is sufficiently differentiated by its different types, it is impossible to use only one or two behavioral indicators to identify it. Often, the activity level in terms of social participation is determined by membership in formal organizations. However, this approach is not entirely correct. The level of formal participation is low not only in Cherepovets (72% of citizens do not belong to any of the public organizations), but also in Russia and in European countries according to the results of the European social research, and is not objectively measuring the participation level in general. The trend is to shift social activity into informal practices and into everyday life. And their level is significantly higher, already only 54% of residents of the city of Cherepovets have not taken any action within the framework of these practices. Practices of helping behavior are even more widely developed; only 21% of the population is not involved in them. A comparative analysis of the empirical results of our survey and surveys of leading Russian authors on the topic of social activity shows that the all-Russian trends are almost identical to the trends in Cherepovets, especially in terms of the participation level in various forms of social

activity. Consequently, the main patterns identified in our study can be extended to the Russian realities as a whole.

The model is an innovative methodological construct. Unlike most methods of analysis in sociology, when the array as a whole is analyzed and the typology is based on the distribution of responses throughout the sample, here the unit of account is a single respondent. Typologization is carried out by determining the level of social activity and attitudes of each respondent from the empirical base by calculating a common integrated additive index for all included variables. The calculation combines not only ordinal scales, which are quite easily converted into an index, but also nominal multivariate scales which are usually designated as low-order scales and are rarely translated into a numerical index. The algorithm described in detail in the article is an instruction for calculating the level of activity and typologization of the population of any region and can be used by researchers. At the same time, it is unnecessary to adapt it in different regions, the indicators are universal.

The practical significance of the research lies in the interest of small and medium-sized cities in forming the core of active and advanced segments

of the population. We have chosen Cherepovets as a research site, a city with a population of a little more than three hundred thousand people, where the production assets of two of the largest Russian companies – Severstal and PhosAgro – are concentrated. One of the main objectives of the development of Cherepovets is the economic diversification. The task was set based on the results of the Cherepovets-2020 Foresight back in 2009–2010, but remains as relevant as ever (Mekhova, 2017). In 2017, Cherepovets received the status of a territory of advanced socio-economic development. Now the city is implementing an updated development strategy – “Cherepovets is a city of opportunities”, so Cherepovets really needs creative, socially active people. The research provides the city’s leadership and all interested parties with information that allows identifying reserves of motivation for the activity and innovation of urban communities, to develop tools for supporting medium and small businesses, the formation of intellectual spaces, the development of creative industries, which will become a platform for the self-realization of agents of social change and will serve as a driver in the implementation of the city’s strategy.

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Information about the Authors

Irina N. Vorobeva – Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), Associate Professor, Cherepovets State University (8, Sovetsky Avenue, Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, 162600, Russian Federation; e-mail: Vorobyova-i-n@yandex.ru)

Albina A. Mekhova – Candidate of Sciences (Philosophy), Associate Professor, head of department, Cherepovets State University (8, Sovetsky Avenue, Cherepovets, Vologda Oblast, 162600, Russian Federation; e-mail: albina_mehova@mail.ru)

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