CIVIL APPLICATIONS
IN RUSSIA'S MEDIA COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

ГРАЖДАНСКИЕ ПРИЛОЖЕНИЯ
В СТРУКТУРЕ МЕДИАКОММУНИКАЦИЙ РОССИИ

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The article dwells on the present role of Internet communications in the development of Russia's civil society and social infrastructure. In particular, it looks into the use of civil applications, which have been increasingly popular in recent years. The author touches upon the factors preconditioning the active employment of civil applications, and points out the criteria for their systematization. Furthermore, the author provides an overview of the new types of media communications, and contemplates the prospects and potential problems connected with their development and use in the field of professional journalism.

Key words: *civil society; Russian media transformation; network communications; NGOs' media background; civil applications in the Internet; humanitarian media agenda.*

Статья посвящена роли интернет-коммуникаций в разви-тии гражданского общества и социальной инфраструктуры в со-временной России, а именно практике гражданских Интернет-

приложений, получивших широкое распространение в последние годы. Рассматриваются факторы, актуализирующие их функционирование; предлагаются критерии систематизации приложений, дается обзор практики новых видов медиакоммуникаций; оцениваются возможности, перспективы и проблемы, которые открываются с развитием данных форм гражданской активности для профессиональной журналистики.

Ключевые слова: *гражданское общество; трансформации российских СМИ; сетевые коммуникации, медиаистория НКО; гражданские приложения в Интернете; гуманитарная повестка масс-медиа.*

One of the key trends of today's civil society is the increasing popularity of online social networks. Their use, through mobile applications, meets the communicative needs of groups of citizens sharing their interests and associations via virtual networks. The network society and its experiences have a great impact on democratic processes, cultural changes and personal identity.

With the start of the digital era, both local and global civil organizations have acquired a powerful communicative resource for democratic initiatives and self-management. The Internet, with its 2,5 billion users worldwide (or about 35% of the population by the end of June 2012, according to Internet World Stats[1]), can be viewed as a far-reaching communications structure, with smart mobs, able to speed up social transformations, and thus is turning into a crucial tool for shaping global civil society.

However, mobile technologies today are more than just advanced communicative tools. Many cultural experts, such as sociologists and anthropologists, study the socio-cultural peculiarities brought about by the development of mobile communications.

Manuel Castells conducted comprehensive research of the "Network Society" as the basis for the modern economy, politics and culture.

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[1] *Internet usage statistics.* URL: http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats. html. The service provides no further data.

His book "The Rise of the Network Society" has been published in more than a dozen editions, only in English. It is quite familiar to readers in this country as well (Castells, 2000). As the leading theorist of information society, Mr. Castells keeps studying the complicated interrelation between information technologies, economic activity, and the social and cultural life of the post-industrial world today. In Mr. Castells's opinion, the network communications structure reflects the way of life and way of thinking of individuals finding themselves in the reality of developed information society (Castells, 2003; Castells, 2004; Castells, 2009).

This is a relevant issue for Russia, where Internet users make up more than half of the total population (according to the Public Opinion Fund, by mid October of 2013, this was up to 57%[2]). What role do the new information technologies play in the development of the civil sector? In which media formats is civil activity expressed? What are the problems and prospects of integrating various types of media communications in Russia's information space? What impact do these processes have on the professional life of a journalist? By addressing the practices of employing civil applications on the Internet, the article attempts to find answers to these questions.

Civil communications in the post-Soviet period

When contemplating the social and media transformations of the post-soviet period, the key researchers of Russian Mass Media (Vartanova, 2009, 2013; Dzyaloshinsky, 2012; Ivanitsky, 2010; Korkonosenko, 2010; Fomicheva, 2011; Schepilova, 2010), stress the fact that both in Russia and all over the world, the Internet has become an integral part of national media systems, providing new formats for the development of media and their links to society.

"The new media have defined new aspects in the standard 'journalist – information source,' 'journalist – content,' 'journalist –

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[2] http://www.interfax.ru/russia/news.asp?id=335433

audience' relations. Active Internet users challenge the professionals by mastering the traditional journalists' tasks, such as gathering and spreading the information..." (Vartanova, 2013: 87-88).

While political dialogue with the authorities has not quite met optimistic expectations, there have been certain positive social dynamics, i.e. the functioning of social infrastructure and various aspects of civil relations. Nowadays, Russia certainly "lacks the so-called 'network culture' and strong civil/horizontal links. It can be characterized by the contradictions or even conflicts between the novelty of Internet-communication and the respective horizontal, non-hierarchical structures; and the social experience, unspoken rules and regulations based on the paternalistic tradition" (ibid: 105-106). All of the above mentioned phenomena make researchers even more interested in the networking experience of various social groups.

Studies of the current state of Russian civil society provide a meaningful context for the understanding of new social practices. The studies are numerous and might contradict each other in the diagnostic aspect. However, at this point we should specify our vision of the matter. No matter how varied the research traditions and interpretations of civil society might be, the category of confidence is essential to all of them (Bourdieu, 2005; Seligman, 2002; Fukuyama, 2004). It is a common conviction that the conditions for human interaction will be met, that people will behave in accordance with some general norms, and that confidence makes up a crucial element of the social and economic development of the society.

Confidence should be regarded as a kind of social capital or social resource affecting the advance of civil society. This, in turn, is defined by the citizens' involvement in social practices (mutual help and support, philanthropic culture, volunteering, participating in NGOs or civil incentives, human rights work and local self-administration), or by using the mentioned patterns as guidelines.

Russian civil society is derived from the country's historical background, and differs from the Western one. In Western Europe, the mentioned process advanced through several centuries of the propagation

of democratic traditions, economic and political freedoms. Up to the 20th century, feudal relations, lack of horizontal links or the culture of social interaction were characteristic of Russia. The Third Estate formed only in the late 19th century. Unlike in the West, the Russian intelligentsia, rather than bourgeoisie, advanced liberal ideas. The post-soviet period was marked by growing demand for civil society, a structure that would balance state power, and be able resist it in certain ways. On the other hand, the newly formed civil society would have to create a new environment for the formation of national values, and the traditions of democratic participation, the informational participation included. (Fomicheva, 2012; Platonova, 2011; Vartanova, 2009). Thousands of non-government organizations have appeared in Russia, however, only a few dozen of those have gained significant popularity and influence[3].

An extended poll (34,000 participants in 68 regions of the Russian Federation) conducted by the Public Opinion Fund has revealed that although no less than 90% of the adult population make up the potential social basis of civil society, but their actual involvement in social practices is quite low, with the "core" adding up to 7,7%; 26,6% are "ready to join" and about 8,8% are the so-called "outsiders," who are disconnected from the social base. We can therefore observe a certain capacity for growth (Civil Society in Modern Russia, 2008: 148-149).

Another factor that should be considered in view of the contemporary history of civil society in Russia, are the complicated relations between the Media and the NGOs in recent decades (NGOs and the Mass Media, 2003; Why Don't They Write about Us, 2012; The Media and Civil Society Formation, 2010).

The media history of NGOs may be considered from two perspectives, representing the two different poles of the communications field, and constituting the totality of the humanitarian media agenda, i.e. NGO's own information activities, and the media coverage of such civil organizations' activities. In the first case, the NGOs act as the subject of

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[3] According to the 2013 data by Russian Federal State Statistics Service, there are currenly 87 028 NGOs registered in Russia. URL: http://www.gks.ru

the information industry, which have created their own segment in the media market. Thus, in the nineties, the so-called "non-profit press," including hundreds of small newspapers and magazines providing an insight into social entities, came into existence. Despite the fact that such editions had never gained public recognition, they still had a certain impact on the development of the social civil sector. At the same time, non-profit press activists were striving to find some sympathy from journalists; however, friendly relations were never established between the two parties. "As a result, only a very limited number of people are aware of the NGO's activities, and it is often a mere coincidence that they get this information", experts claimed (Dorosheva, 2002: 6). Consequently, Russian NGOs obviously failed to attract significant media attention.

However, NGOs would not give up their attempts to access open information space. They have been modifying their ways of dealing with the media and mastering new technologies, and thus have acquired notable influence and power by means of establishing themselves in the network space and addressing society without the media involvement. They create their websites and use them as their own media, initiating their information projects and getting actively engaged into social networks (Stechkin, 2010: 241−244). "They are their own press," experts stated (Ganzha, 2012: 72). Today, this type of activity has become widely popular. Civil society and new technological development have come together at a point that is crucial for Russia's social life and journalism.

Nevertheless, no significant changes can be observed in the sphere of relations with traditional journalism. Current research data show that only 10% of journalists advocate NGOs. In the early nineties, 60% of journalists regarded supporting the civil sector as an urgent task, whereas now only 30% think so.

Another study has demonstrated that, as far as the leading press is concerned, the number of publications covering NGOs' activity adds up to less than 4%. Most of these publications deal with the government-based entities, such as the Public Chamber or the Public Council of the Russian Ministry of Defense. The NGOs tackling society's everyday problems

hardly get any media coverage. It should be mentioned that at the moment that the social infrastructure in this country is quite disorganized and archaic, which makes the solving of public problems slow and illogical.

The amount of texts devoted to NGOs as such is even smaller (less than 1%) (Shiryaeva, 2010, 316–319), and even these few articles often touch upon scandals, sensations or anniversaries[4]. Consequently, a false image of NGOs has come to life, and the relations between civil activists and journalists are still far from a true partnership. The fact that the history of Russian journalism before the 1917 Revolution was marked by extensive coverage of charity campaigns, makes the existing situation even more unfortunate (Gorcheva, 2013; Frolova, 2005).

However, in the last couple of years, there have been positive signs of NGOs in the media. With their active Internet involvement, civil organizations have made significant progress, both in the social and political spheres. Protests changed the political life of the country during parliamentary and presidential elections. Numerous meetings and protest demonstrations could not affect or nullify the election results, but society's mood had changed. Many people feel ready for civil action, and today, when street protests are less frequent, it is a more important factor. Network communications have become the one and only means of free interaction, and the most powerful resource for the formation of civil society.

In light of those conclusions, we should consider the following factor: in the recent months, the media have established two opposing directions of civil development, social and political. Social theorists are familiar with this dichotomy: *polic* and *civitas,* the notions of "political" and "civil" citizenship[5], which have been the source of debate for many

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[4] Refer to the Donors Forum Report on the Status of Charity Funds in Russia in 2010: URL: http://www.donorsforum.ru/reports/ezhegodnyj-doklad-foruma-donorov-o-sostoyanii-i-razvitii-blagotvoritelnykh-fondov-v-rossii-v-2012-godu/.

[5] The civil society (the Third Sector) opposes the state (the First Sector) and advocates citizens' rights, thus creating vertical links. At the same time, it represents the environment where social values are elaborated and members of the society support and help each other, thus building up horizontal links.

centuries. Russia's social history can be regarded as one of the most vivid examples thereof. In this context, we should mention the enormous gap between actual government policies, and the civil ideas of liberal society in this country, as well as between the civil elite and the broad democratic public, contradictions that have existed for centuries. This conflict has led to misconceptions of Russian culture all over the world.

Today, we can observe the revival of this debate in the modern media setting. A *"Kommersant"* newspaper reporter believes that civil actions and projects, which have been carried out through the Internet, are special forms of civil protest. "Today a lot of people turn to charity. Many of those who took part in the recent protest actions wouldn't stop short of sieging the Kremlin at that time, just to change the life in this country for the better," he states. Further on, he argues that this is an efficient way of modernizing the country, "Due to these actions, even the people who have never been involved into politics start contemplating such things"[6]. Regular citizens join the discussion, claiming that the Internet cushions the impact of revolution. "Had it not been for the Internet, the revolution would have erupted a long time ago!" they assure, adding that many anti-government resources have not been closed, just so that people have somewhere to let the steam off.[7]

According to analysts, a new information system, i.e. "society-blogosphere-Mass Media-government"[8] has arisen. The modern vocabulary includes a new notion of **civil applications**, or the websites or services established to solve some of the urgent social problems, or contribute to their solution. These applications include a full range of Web 2.0 sites largely constituted by users' content. Civil applications present are of great interest as a peculiar direction and means of expressing social activism, as a new type of media communications and humanization

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[6] *Charity As a Form of Protest*. URL: http://kommersant.ru/doc/ 2093192 // Kommersant, 18.12. 2012.

[7] *Internet: a Cushion between People and Revolution?* URL: http:// maxpark.com/community/289/content/1946565?utm_campaign= mostinteresting&utm_source=newsletter.

[8] http://www.public.ru/blogsmi2011.

resource. Special Internet-services are employed for project management and promotion, social PR, general cooperation, social engineering and fundraising.

Certain civil applications can exist in form of mobile ones, this being a technical solution for the expansion of their functionality. The notion of mobile applications has become vastly popular, however, not every mobile application can be granted "civil" status; in some cases, they concern purely consumer projects, and inter-consumer information exchange. Such parameters as the informational content, the peculiarities of using the information and its functional vector, i.e. handling the most urgent social issues and the development of the civil sector, allow us to conclude that civil applications belong to a group of their own. We can define them both as a type of media communication, and sometimes as civil projects. With reference to civil initiatives, the applications can be regarded as a means of realization (there is usually a website for a offline functional options), or as of projects in their own right (the application in itself becomes a project). Civil applications cannot be viewed as journalism in its conventional meaning representing a different type of communication. Nevertheless, the media often take part in their development, while the tasks of professional journalism embrace not only the media coverage of NGOs' activity, but also their involvement in projects development and realization with civil activists (Dzyaloshinsky, 2006; Khlebnikova, 2011).

Civil applications: practical activities overview

On the whole, civil projects are quite varied. They touch upon all spheres of social and private life. In some social niches, civil action substitutes for official institutions, although the amount of Internet applications that actually contribute to the development of horizontal engagement, and the improvement of the social environment, is also quite high. By attempting to systemize them, we make a step towards the

academic evaluation of this phenomenon, still new to the Russian media agenda. We can highlight the following criteria:

Topical: reflects the links to different spheres of social life and highlights social problems (administrative abuse, insufficient support for families and children, poor medical care arrangements and funding, unfairness of courts, traffic and communal services problems, urban land improvements etc.). We can't help mentioning that all of the spheres of public life are now covered by social applications. However, the potential for new projects based on the needs for particular social services is truly unlimited.

Goal-oriented: stresses the functional purpose of projects, such as problem identification (claim, request, report), petitions and addresses, assistance in emergency situations, volunteer programs, fundraising, personal help to those in need, protest, the attraction of public attention, joint support arrangements, enlightenment initiatives and propaganda. Fundraising and crowdsourcing are the two fastest developing trends.

Organizational and technological: demonstrates the variety of forms of interaction between citizens, citizens and government entities, as well as the numerous aspects of project initiation. A project may be launched by means of private observation, a letter, a personal, public, or NGO initiative or address, media information, an idea by an individual or an organization etc. Another factor that should be considered is the great number of social connections in the process of project realization, with NGOs, individual citizens, business representatives, government entities and experts participating therein. Their methods of interaction differ in each case.

Certainly, in reality most of the connection may overlap, which makes the review of civil applications, a new and promising type of communication in Russian society, particularly interesting. Surely, there were large civil projects in the past (the movement in support of the Khimkinsky Forest, the Blue Bin Society, Bloggers against Garbage, etc.), besides, Russians were familiar with successful foreign movements. However, the summer of 2010 was marked by significant

changes to this situation. Civil applications received broad recognition, which demonstrated the citizens' readiness to communicate, to act, and thereby see results. It should also be mentioned that not only the young and technically advanced, but also the middle-aged and senior citizens get actively involved in civil projects.

The review of civil applications below demonstrates that the functional parameter is dominant.

Crowdsourcing. The purpose of this type of application is providing help to those in need. *«Karta pomoschi» ("The Help Map")*[9] was the starting point, and the first project of the kind. It became widely popular due to efficient cooperation in the face of forest fires in 2010, and has been operating ever since. Those in need post their information on the website, and volunteers can get in touch with them. The website makes it possible to select excerpts from various sources (blogs, social networks, traditional media), post them on to the map and systemize them. Furthermore, more civil applications employed this approach, for example the well known "*Liza Alert*"[10], or "*Zoopatrul*" ("*The ZOO Patrol*")[11].

The given resources provide help in the cases of daily needs and emergency situations (for example, the famous *«Virtualnya Rynda» ("Virtual Watch Bell")*[12], professional assistance (such as *«Neopofigizm: soobschestvo neravnodushnyh ludey» ("Do Care: Community of the Involved")*[13], which provides free legal counseling).

"Complaint Books". The most famous project in this aspect is *«Democrator» ("Democrator")*[14]. A registered user can post a detailed description of his or her problem on the website. If other users believe this problem is urgent, they express their support. With 10 or more users' responses within 28 days, the site administration sends an electronic address to the corresponding government agency. With 50 responses or

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[9] http://russian-fires.ru/

[10] http://lizaalert.org/

[11] http://petonik.com/

[12] http://rynda.org/

[13] http://nepofigizm.ru/

[14] http://democrator.ru

more, a paper copy of the claim is sent with the list of signatories. The officials' reply is posted on the website for further discussion. Should the majority of the users find it satisfactory, the case gets "closed," otherwise a new claim is compiled and further official entities are appealed to.

Mr. A. Bogdanov, who has conducted research on "Democrator," believes that it is an authentic project that has introduced European ideas to Russia.

Similar crowdsourcing projects are «RosYama» *("Russian Pit")[15]*, *RosZHKH ("Russian communal services")[16],* and *«Dom. Dvor. Dorogi» ("House. Yard. Roads")[17]* (the winner of the Civil Applications Awards of 2012). The resource named *«Moya Territoriya» ("My Territory")[18]* provides an efficient communication tool for citizens, city authorities and service entities. The complainant just outlines the issue, while all the further control is carried out by the resource. In case of a problem remaining unresolved, the application coordinators compile a legal application on the matter.

«Initiatives». *«Podari-Derevo.RF» ("Donate a Tree. Russian Federation")[19]* is an ecological initiative suggesting a new way of preserving and expanding forests and green spaces. The project plants trees in the Moscow and Leningrad regions, which need help maintaining their forestland. Each tree is registered under a certain number, and each participant gets the respective certificate.

«Yopolis» ("YoPolis")[20] **stands out among other civil applications. The Russian businessman M. Nogotkov launched this ambitious project in autumn 2012. The project provides a politically neutral platform for the cooperation of citizens in resolving urban problems, and interacting with the authorities.** "YoPolis" embraces a full range of functions, allowing each individual to participate in the social life of the city, such as putting

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[15] http://rosyama.ru/

[16] http://roszkh.ru/

[17] http://domdvordorogi.ru/

[18] http://www.streetjournal.org/

[19] http://podari-derevo.ru/

[20] http://yopolis.ru/

forward district and infrastructure development initiatives, or getting in touch with likeminded people. The project gives everyone a chance to prove oneself based on one's actual actions and proposals, to gain support of the neighborhood, district, city or even the whole country. Besides, the resource coordinators conduct media monitoring on social topics expanding its potential as a communications tool.

Crowd funding. Crowd funding, which presupposes raising funds for particular initiatives, plays a special role among civil applications. We will look into some examples thereof: the project *«Tugeza» ("Together")*[21] raises funds for orphanages, retirement homes, hospital renovation and the purchase of medical equipment. The *«S miru po nitke» ("Every Little Helps")*[22] application collects funds for a variety of ideas and projects. Thus, a project may be paid for, or closed. In case closure, the collected funds are returned to the donators.

"Governmental". These applications provide mechanisms for interaction with the authorities, voicing citizens' stances and expectations. Examples of the applications in question are provided below: *http://www.zakon.profsro.ru/*, a website for the public discussion of draft laws founded by the auditors' labor union. *«Otkrytaya policia» ("Open Police")*[23] is a project in an open data format that provides information from internal affairs agencies. The project coordinators stress the work of social activists, and claim they are ready to share their data with the media champions of civil society *«Portal otkrytyh dannyh pravitelstva Moskvy» ("Moscow Government Open Data Portal")*[24].

Informers are applications that contain useful information on healthy diets, ecological planning, and similar topics. In this connection, we can draw the following examples: *«VMoskve» ("InMoscow")*[25], a project by the RIA News agency, a multipurpose directory for tourists and local

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[21] http://together.ru/

[22] http://smipon.ru/

[23] http://openpolice.ru/

[24] http://data.mos.ru/

[25] http://www.inmsk.ru/

citizens providing the information necessary for a comfortable stay in Moscow. *«Perekryli» ("Blocked")*[26], a location-based online service, informs users of road blocking events. *«Zarplata uchiteley menyaetsa...»* *("Teachers' salary being changed...")*[27] is an online resource for navigating Russian teachers' salaries. The project looks into the gap between official and actual salary levels, and makes an attempt to bring the professional community together to deal with the issue.

The range of civil application activity is also quite wide, from national resources, such as the *http://www.zakon.profsro.ru/*, to local ones, for example, «Zalivaet» *("Leaking")*[28] and «Lokolo» *("Locolo")*[29] St. Petersburg-based projects that tackle hyper-local level initiatives, such as keeping entrance halls clean and etc.

We can see that the civil applications are quite varied and may differ by topics, functions, technologies, subject matters, range of operation etc. However, all of them have a so-called "civil marker" and thus contribute to the development of civil communications and the formation of the humanitarian information agenda in this country in its broad meaning (Frolova, 2013).

Special attention should be paid to the social educational project ***«Teplitsa sotsialnykh tekhnologii» ("Social Technologies Conservatory")***[30]aimed at forging cooperation between the non-profit sector and IT-specialists. The Social Information Agency-based project, founded in 2012, may be viewed as one of the first attempts to contemplate new Russian civil and communications phenomena. Its purpose lies in helping NGOs, activists and would-be volunteers use information technology, online tools and applications with maximum efficiency. One of the key tasks of the project is interaction with technical experts, who have all the necessary skills to contribute to social life, but

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[26] http://perekrili.org/

[27] http://opensalary.info/

[28] http://zalivaet.spb.ru/

[29] http://lokolo.ru/,

[30] http://te-st.ru/

are unsure of how to act. A strong team of journalists, web developers, civil sector and private activists has come together through to run the project. Besides, the project reaches out to many Russian regions. *"The Conservatory"* strives to spread the acquired information among as many users as possible. Therefore, the project focuses on distributing the best practices and truly useful tools. The project's website provides a directory of civil applications, which amount to dozens of initiatives, including those launched in the former CIS countries, and worldwide.

These practices demonstrate that the development of social activity based on civil applications is an undeniable trend in communications. Network technologies have helped the society move from theories and to actual projects, and provided powerful resources for their promotion, thus making social incentives more convincing.

Civil applications and professional journalism: problem areas

New technologies involve both civil and professional journalists in social activities. On the one hand, we differentiate between traditional journalism, civil communications, and acknowledge the differences in the nature of various applications (not all of them bearing the ability of civil application), but on the other hand, we cannot help mentioning the parallels between the two notions. By this we mean teams of professional journalists, who combine media and NGO activities. There are not many of such journalists, but their experiences are quite meaningful for the social sector, with the above previously mentioned Social Information Agency heading the list. The extensive SIA data base has helped its coordinators to see the prospects of civil applications, organize application contests, and contribute to the development and fostering of new ideas and projects, and the "upbringing" of civil applications and culture formation. *The "Conservatory"* website includes numerous interviews with founders of civil applications, which accumulate the detailed information on this phenomenon. This can be viewed as one

of the first attempts to analyze new Russian civil and communications phenomena, and is a bright example of cooperation between civil activists and professional journalists. This is the new reality that is expanding the concept and social role of media communications.

"Studio-Dialogue" is another team promoting civil initiatives in the media, and along with SIA, set up the daily *"Charity Address"* radio show. The first broadcast took place on October 31, 2000 at the *"Mayak" ("Lighthouse")* radio station. Nowadays, along with *"Mayak"*, the show is aired by *"Radio Rossii" ("Russia's Radio")* and *"Golos Rossii" ("Russia's Voice")*. In 12 years, there have been 3,844 episodes, 15 books on the media and NGOs' cooperation, and about 10 000 phone calls processed by the program hotline (Why Don't They Write about Us, 2012: 5). With their unique experience of combining the NGOs' and media's functions, the journalists have a profound understanding of the matter, and strive to energize social agencies to distribute information, and to establish and enforce Russian civil relations.

Unfortunately, few media resources address the issue of civil application. However, journalists have been able to highlight the following problems based on their experiences:

The problem of unawareness of the new media reality, and of why and how the means of communications should be developed;

The problem of goal-setting, putting forward a question of whether it is justified to replace government entities in their functions by initiating active public involvement via civil applications;

The problem of solidarity focusing on why social interaction is crucial and how it should be arranged;

The problem of defining the scopes of responsibility concerning the responsibilities of various structures;

The problem of confidence striving to make crowd-funding services more transparent and combat fraud;

The celebrity problem of trying to find balance between the national tradition of discreet activism, and the need for publicly attracting attention to charity and volunteer issues;

Undoubtedly, professional journalism could play a significant part in tackling such problems; moreover, it is impossible to find answers to these questions without broad media discussion. As far as the structure of the humanitarian media agenda is concerned, it is obvious that all of its components may be improved by employing civil applications. By this we mean the broadening and diversification of the thematic field, and the introduction of new personalities and formats to the media arena. Will this create a new resource for generating content in the traditional media? As Mr. I. M. Dzyaloshinksy, a civil communications researcher, noted ten years ago, "The professional community servicing the press is definitely one of the advanced layers of the society" (Dzyaloshinsky, 2001: 27). Can this role be preserved today with the tough competition in the communications sphere? There is no definite answer to this question; however, the risk of professional journalists losing their dominant position is higher than ever today.

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