

KEY WORDS: democracy, disasters, civil society mobilization, networks, social movements, Russia

1. Introduction

Not only science, as many social scientists stated, but the very nature are the creators of new, emergent problems in human interaction with nature. On the other hand, the relationships between state and civil society rescuers shifted in favor of latter, especially if they learned to use internet and other IT devices.

It is often argued in political and academic circles both in domestic and abroad that Russian civil society is going to an end. It is not true. This society had existed even in totalitarian era, but in the overt and dispersed form. Nor it extinguished in 2000s. The article examines the changing role and structure of Russian social movements (SMs) under conditions of huge natural disaster. I mean summer fires of 2010 which embraced the territory of Russia comparable with that of the EU. It has been a challenge not only to environmental but to many other social movements and charity organizations and grassroots. The disaster revealed a true disposition of forces in relation to the disaster and showed the actual role played by civil society at large and social movements in particular in mitigation of this eco-catastrophe. Section 1 examines theoretical background for ‘disaster-civil society’ relationships. Section 2 analyses three main phases of an SM mobilization: usual, targeted and critical. In the next Section I consider the issue of framing the disaster by SMs and they changing structure and action repertoire accordingly. Section 4 counts the major positive effects of civil society mobilization, and in Conclusion some general outcomes of this mobilization as well as a set of methodological issues of analyzing it are considered.

2. Theoretical background

The conceptual framework for our field research is based on a set types of sociological thought. Firstly, it was based on theorization of classical sociology (see Weber, 1995; Marx, 1967; Sorokin, 2003) on the state of emergency of a society as it is and in particular of the impact of natural and man-made disasters on human nature, human behavior and social order. I see the Sorokin’s idea of negative selection is central here (Sorokin, 2003). Second-