

## REVIEW

of the member of the dissertation council for the dissertation of Petukhova Irina Sergeevna on the topic: "Interaction of the state and social institutions in the service of the elderly", submitted for the degree of candidate of sociological sciences in a scientific speciality 5.4.4. Social structure, social institutions and processes.

The thesis submitted for a review approaches topics that are important both scientifically and from the perspective of social policy. In many countries, the welfare models of social services are based on a mix of state/municipal services with those from the commercial sector and non-profit third sector. Organising services for ageing populations requires new forms of collaboration between various social institutions in all developed countries. Therefore, the theme of the thesis, the interaction and coordination between various social institutions in the service provision for the aged Russians, is timely. This general topic of the PhD work is accompanied with an additional interest in rural environments, where provision of social services is more challenging due to long geographical distances and less developed infrastructure. This is also a topical theme as in many countries younger generations are leaving the countryside due to lack of jobs and opportunities for education, as a result of which rural areas are ageing more rapidly than towns and cities.

The thesis consists of a literature review and an analysis of empirical data. The literature reviewed in the study covers work by Russian and international scholars. The author reviews relevant sociological theories but in some cases a more careful consideration of their adequacy would have strengthened the analysis. For instance, considering Jürgen Habermas' and Niklas Luhmann's theories more thoroughly in relation to their historical contexts might have given a chance to deepen the author's thoughts about their use in contemporary Russian society, given the variety of social changes that Russia has gone through after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some other concepts and ideas that are widely used in international literature would similarly have benefitted from a more critical consideration (e.g. active ageing).

On pages 25–27 (of the English translation of the thesis) the author introduces the policy of "ageing in place" – meaning that older people are supported at their homes instead of institutional care. The author is right in saying that many European countries prefer such policy, both because most often older people want to stay at home as long as possible, and because providing home-services is usually considerably cheaper than institutional care, at least in urban environments. However, it should also be noted that in many countries such policies have resulted in a growing number of very frail older people living at home, causing suffering due to lack of home-services, and therefore such policies are increasingly criticised (e.g. in Finland). Similarly, an often presented idea that competition between various service providers improves quality of services (see page 32) is a debatable conception. First, it has turned out to be difficult to measure "quality", which is a multifaceted concept. Secondly, if competition is primarily based on price (as it often is), it may even make quality worse as various providers aim to organise the services in the cheapest possible way. This is not to say that the thesis includes incorrect claims. But a more thorough and critical reading of international literature on social services for older people would have provided the reader with a richer and more nuanced picture of these complicated issues.

The empirical analysis is based on large research material, which consists of various regulations, observations and interviews. The data collection is described very briefly. On page 13



it is said that the empirical data is approached using thematic analysis method, without a reference. Since Braun and Clarke's influential paper (Braun, Virginia & Clarke, Victoria (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), 77–101) thematic analysis has been an increasingly used research method in social sciences. Despite this, compared to such traditional methods as content analysis, thematic analysis is a relatively new method and would thus require more introduction (why the method was chosen instead of some other methods, how it was used, how the "themes" were identified etc).

The empirical analysis of the thesis consists of detailed analyses of the ways in which various institutions, such as state institutions, commercial and non-commercial organisations, neighbours and families interact and take part in service-provision of older people living at home. The study pays particular attention to barriers and opportunities related to the interaction between these institutions that have their effects on collaboration between state and other sectors. The analyses include several very interesting findings and sharp-sighted observations, and identify a number of practices and procedures that should be developed in order to promote true competition between various service-providers. From the sociological point of view the study very interestingly also shows that in situations in which social structures do not support people's action and agency or appear even to be counter-productive in reaching the goals set for the work (e.g., regulations and procedures do not support social workers in reaching their aims), people are often very creative in finding alternative ways to get their jobs done and to cope with the restrictions. Unfortunately, the author considers her findings very little from the perspective of previous sociological research. From the perspective of developing public policies regarding the organisation of services for older people based on a welfare mix model, the empirical analysis of the thesis offers a substantial number of concrete issues for future development. However, the scientific impact of the analysis sections remains more limited as the author does not tie up her results to the literature.

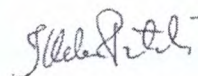
Both the review of previous scientific literature and analysis of empirical data are carefully done but the two chapters (1 and 2) are not fully interconnected. The empirical analysis would have benefitted from a wider use of concepts and theories introduced in Chapter 1 as well as consideration of empirical findings in relation to previous sociological literature on service systems. The findings are relevant and useful for developing public policies in the field of social services for older people. In spite of some critical remarks presented above, the work in review undoubtedly meets the scientific standards.

Dissertation of Petukhova Irina Sergeevna on the topic: "Interaction of the state and social institutions in the service of the elderly" meets the basic requirements established by Order No.11181/1 dd. 19.11.2021 "On the procedure for awarding academic degrees at St. Petersburg State University". The applicant Petukhova Irina Sergeevna deserves to be awarded the academic degree of candidate of sociological sciences in a scientific speciality 5.4.4. Social structure, social institutions and processes. Paragraphs 9 and 11 of the specified Order have not been violated.

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Ilkka Pietilä, 3.6.2022