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The modern context of the human development risks

Abstract

The article studies objective preconditions of development of the concept of ‘human development risks’; the most prominent works of sociological science and their contribution to the theory of social risks, with some alternative modern interpretations of the risks of social development, which find their expression in such social movements as ‘anti-consumerism’ and ‘de-growth’. The focus is made on interpretations formed at the junction of two global concepts including ‘human development’ and ‘sustainable development’, as well as their reflection in international documents and activities of international organizations. The results of activities regarding the determination of priorities of sustainable development for Ukraine are presented. The specific features of the risks’ manifestation and their interpretation for the human development of Ukraine on the background of unfavorable socioeconomic dynamics are presented, while the estimates of Ukraine’s human development indices and their dynamics at the regional level are introduced.

Keywords: social risks, human development risks, sustainable development, sustainable development goals, regional index of human development.

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Introduction

The risk of human development is related to the risks, associated with social interactions. The issues of risk evaluation and the search of opportunities for risk mitigation are particularly relevant in the periods of increased social tensions and crisis phenomena, when a society needs to make a choice regarding the ways of its future development, to make decisions and to assess their consequences. That is why the issues of social risks are very important for the present Ukrainian society, characterized by a deep socioeconomic crisis of internal character and, at the same time, experiencing a considerable external pressure.

The aim of the paper is to disclose the essence of the modern interpretations of social risks in the context of ideas of human development, as well as to form approaches to the assessment of risks at the national and subnational levels.

The history of the study of social risks is centuries-old. In the narrow and more pragmatic sense, this concept is used to deal with the need to insure from losses caused by the participation of people in the social production (wages, jobs, health, ability to work and so on), i.e. social insurance. The theory and practice of social insurance are well developed and successfully applied in practice, at least in all developed countries.

A wider interpretation of social risk is proposed by sociologists, who argue that such risks are associated

with all dimensions of social life, not only with its social and labor aspects. In this regard, even bigger attention is paid to uncertainty and inability to make precise calculations.

1. Methodology

In this paper, the risks of human development are studied with regard to both sociology and economics. In the interpretations of risks, we have used the elements of the main methodological approaches to the sociological study of risks. In particular, the modernist approach is used, according to which the emergence of modern risks and dangers results from transformations of a society, caused by human activity as well as the scientific and technological progress. The approach of social management is used for evaluations, as it is more practical and which is associated with the interpretation of risks as deviations from ‘normal’ or ‘desirable’ course of events. With regard to human development, the theoretical foundations of the corresponding global concept are used. Regarding the assessment of the human development risks, the approaches to construction of integral indices for evaluation at the national and regional levels are proposed, being adjusted for local conditions.

2. Literature review

The most considerable contribution to the research of social risks was made by Ulrich Beck (1992), Niklas Luhmann (1991), and Anthony Giddens (1991). One of the most important and original works on the risks in society belongs to the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who was the first to introduce the concept of ‘risk society’ into scientific use (Beck, 1992). One of his basic ideas was related to the principal inability of individuals to avoid risks in the modern world. As a result, it is impossible to consider separately the ‘person and risk’ concept or the ‘society and risk’

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concept, but it is necessary to speak in terms of ‘risk society’, meaning that risks are generated by internal processes inherent to any type of social production.

A society constantly produces risks by itself, and every new stage of development actualizes new risks. For instance, industrialization of the 19-20 centuries, along with its technological growth, led to the problems of poverty of industrial workers in the cities of Europe (in particular, in the initial period), environmental pollution and outbreaks of infectious diseases. The development of the capitalist production was accompanied by increased exploitation of the working people. The conditions of workers were extremely hard till the 1860-70’s. The length of a workday was about 14-16 hours, while the working and living conditions were inhuman; low wages, a wide use of women’s and children’s labor. As a result, working-class riots broke out, which significantly increased the risks of social and political instability. The desire to mitigate these risks forced politicians to initiate the development of social programs for the poor and state regulation of the relations between labor and capital. The legislation was developed, which regulated the workday and introduced some penalties, etc. Thus, the system of state social protection was established, which was able to mitigate the negative effects of the free market.

After the Second World War, a sharp economic boom took place, which was coupled with previously unseen growth in consumption in most European countries, the USA and Japan. Alain de Benoist said that the peak of the consumption era was reached in the XX century, resulting in the planet’s devastation and, on the other hand, the emergence of environmental concerns (Benoist, 2012). However, along with the prosperity of the welfare states, the problems of intra-country inequality were not resolved, with the issues of security (military, environment) becoming increasingly prominent. According to Beck (1992), the society of income distribution is gradually turning into the society of risk distribution. The risks are becoming global in character.

The study of human development is also quite significant, although it does not have such a centuries-long history as the study of risks. The founders of its theoretical basics are considered to be two outstanding contemporary economists – Amartya Sen (2001) and Mahbub-ul-Haq (1995). Sen substantiated the statement that the process of development is associated not only with the growth in material or economic well-being, but also with the expansion of person’s capabilities, meaning a larger freedom of choice. Ul-Haq was the initiator of the report prepared by independent researchers, which had to offer an alternative to the one-side orientation on the GDP growth, though it was common for international

organizations and economists of that time. He was able to persuade the management of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in his ideas. As a result of realization of these efforts, the Human Development Report 1990 declared: ‘Human development – or the human development approach – is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on people and their opportunities and choices’ (Human Development Report 1990). Since then, the established concept of human development proceeds from the need to find a balance between economic efficiency and social justice.

Since 1990, the UNDP publishes annual global reports on human development; about 1,000 national reports have been published during this period. In this time, the world has achieved a substantial progress in the field of human development, however, it does not mean that the number of problems is diminishing as development itself produces new risks by itself.

The issues of risks in relation to human development remain understudied, although the authors of 2011 Human Development Report ‘Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All’ (Human Development Report 2011) came close to this topic, primary connecting the perspectives of further development with environmental risks and inequality problems: ‘The forecasts suggest that continuous failures to reduce serious environmental risks and deepening social inequalities threatens to slow decades of sustained progress by the world’s poor majority and even to reverse the global convergence in human development’.

In the Human Development Report 2014 ‘Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience’ the attention was focused on sustainability risks. In essence, there was a unification of the two global concepts of ‘human development’ and ‘sustainable development’. The main idea of this unification is based on the idea that ‘the real progress in human development, then, is not only a matter of enlarging people’s critical choices and their ability to be educated, be healthy, have a reasonable standard of living and feel safe. It is also a matter of how secure these achievements are and whether conditions are sufficient for a sustainable human development. Evaluation of progress in human development is incomplete without exploring and assessing vulnerability’ (Human Development Report 2014).

3. Development of the modern interpretations

Considering the risks of human development and relying on its classical interpretation proposed by the UN specialists at the beginning of the 1990’s, the

studies may be conditionally narrowed to three basic spheres of human life: 'welfare', 'education' and 'health'. Without doubt, these spheres do not exist independently, but create a complicated system of relations and interrelations, both between themselves and with external (in relation to them) environment. However, being focused on the current research aims, we would suppose that the risks of human development are placed within the boundaries of these three spheres. Recognizing that a human being is the initial and ultimate goal of development, the concept is based on the following principles: equality and justice, widening of opportunities, active participation of individuals in the development process. The principle of justice is considered to be the striving of people for equality before the law and the equality of opportunities: both material and non-material, both within one generation and between different generations – in this context it is possible to speak of 'sustainable human development', that is a merger of two concepts of 'human development' and 'sustainable development'. The concept of 'human development risk' (irrespectively of the variety of the risk interpretations) can be defined as a probability of some events, which cause losses in certain areas of human development, as well as the influence of these losses on the probability of risks in other spheres. For instance, in assessing the poverty risk for some groups among the population it is necessary to evaluate a further chain: risks for health, for getting an education, for participation in social life and cultural development, etc.

The modern discourse on the issues of human development pays more attention to the problems of 'sustainability' coming close to the unification of the two concepts of 'human development' and 'sustainable development'. The concept of sustainable development has its own history. It became very popular at the beginning of the 1980's, when the World Conservation Strategy was developed on the initiative of such organizations as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (World Conservation Strategy). The ideas of sustainable development were launched in 1992 after the Earth Summit in Rio-de-Janeiro and subsequent publication of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 'Our Common Future' (the Brundtland Report).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002 confirmed the commitment of the whole world community to the ideas of sustainable development for the long-term satisfaction of the main human needs with the preservation of the systems. Among different

interpretations of sustainable development, two main approaches may be outlined. One of them insists on the priority of conservation of ecosystems and makes economic growth dependent on it, i.e. restricts economic growth. The second one prioritizes economic development, while considering environment conservation as a condition for ensuring long-term growth. The second approach corresponds to the ideas stated in the Brundtland Report, which speaks of the possibility of a new era of economic growth based on the policy of optimal use of natural resources. This idea is shared by many modern economists.

At the same time, among the modern scientists and public figures there are adherents of the first variant of interpretation. In the economically developed countries there is a growing understanding of the dangerous consequences of excessive consumption. Due to the development of consumer societies there is a growth of such problems as oniomania (compulsive buying disorder), as well as progressive deterioration of environment and social inequality.

In response to these problems, one sees the emergence of anti-consumerism movement and the concept of de-growth. The ideologues of these movements, like the adherents of the first two concepts, declare that economic growth does not always mean social progress. In their view, the world has achieved such levels of production and consumption that threaten to destroy people, and not only because of their impact on the environment, but also on the health of people (problems of obesity, hypodynamia, constant stress). One of the most fundamental works criticizing consumerism belongs to Jean Baudrillard 'The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures' (Fr.- La société de consommation: ses mythes et ses structures;) (Jean Baudrillard, 1998). According to the author, this is a self-delusion society, where neither real human feelings nor culture are possible. There is also an interesting book by such American authors as John de Graaf, David Wann, & Thomas H. Naylor 'Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic', declaring that: '...if we don't begin to reject our culture's incessant demands to 'buy now', we will 'pay later' in ways we can scarcely imagine. The bill is already coming due. At its most extreme, affluenza threatens to exhaust the earth itself».

De-growth also criticizes the fixation of the modern world on consumption. In the opinion of the followers of the de-growth concept, consumerism usually becomes possible due to inequality, leading to environmental degradation and not providing a meaningful and happy life. The time released through the reduction in personal consumption and effective work management could be dedicated to arts, music, family, culture and society (Karl Paul Polanyi, 2001)

‘The Great Transformation’. Giulietto Chiesa (modern Italian publicist and social worker) predicts that the coming wars will not be for territories, and not even for resources that bring profits, but for resources that make it possible for people to survive. First of all, he means the resources of clean water. These factors will primarily determine the processes of migrations. Actually, according to the UN data, about one billion people suffer from a shortage of drinking water, while water-related diseases become one of the main causes of death.

Though the ideas of ‘de-growth’ and ‘anti-consumerism’ are actively discussed in the modern world, they haven’t got sufficient support and even are criticized, especially by the adherents of economic growth through the stimulation of consumer behavior. These ideas are not popular in the Ukrainian society. Suffering from constant economic crises and significant threats connected with the decline in living standards, most residents of Ukraine are not in the position to apply and evaluate the meaning of the risks of overconsumption.

4. Evaluation approaches

The developments in this sphere are limited to environmental protection policy measures (criteria of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) or characteristics of separate development aspects. The most comprehensive system of indicators (more than 130) was proposed by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. Also, the accounting standards on sustainable development were developed (RGI – The Global Reporting Initiative). This reporting is meant for providing stakeholders with balanced information about the results of organization’s activity in terms of sustainable development, including both positive and negative contributions. However, this system of indicators does not have a universal character; therefore each involved country develops its own system of indicators. International accounting standard still needs to be developed. In the coming years a step forward in this direction should become a wide dissemination of non-financial reporting around the world, as well as the standards in the area of social responsibility (ISO 26000).

Ukraine officially supported the whole range of international agreements on sustainable development, including ‘Agenda 21’ (Rio-de-Janeiro, 1992), ‘The future we want’ (Rio-de-Janeiro, 2002), Johannesburg Declaration and Realization of Plan of Decisions of the UN’s World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). Unfortunately, there hasn’t been any national document, which would ensure the implementation of decisions on sustainable development.

As a positive step, the acceptance of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 should be emphasized, where the UN defined its global vision of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ukraine also joined these goals, becoming the first country in the post-soviet area, which adopted the MDGs in 2003, taking into account the national specifics. This document clearly defined aims, target indicators and timeframes for reaching these goals. According to the UN report, on the global scale it was possible to achieve good results in meeting the set goals, in particular, the world’s extreme poverty rate declined two times, as well as the infant mortality rate, while the number of children attending schools also increased. About 2.6 billion people got access to the improved sources of drinking water. The target investments for eradication of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis saved the lives of millions of people. Ukraine also achieved a definite success, in particular, with regard to the decreased infant mortality and improved maternal health (Tsili rozvytku tysiacholittia, 2015).

In 2015, the start was given to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the period after 2015, which were focused on the mitigation of the climate change, transition towards the low-carbon and climate resilient economy, and eradication of poverty. The working group on the Sustainable Development Goals, created by the United Nations General Assembly, proposed 17 goals and 169 tasks on sustainable development. At the moment (2016), the works on adaptation of these goals to the national specifics and development priorities are taking place in Ukraine. Among seventeen formulated goals, at least five goals directly relate to environmental problems, while the rest of goals are also associated with environment in some way.

In the process of SDG’s adaptation in Ukraine in 2016 a series of public discussions were held, including on the regional level, as well as consultations with representatives of the state authorities, scientific, non-governmental and international organizations. As a result of these discussions, consultations and surveys, we got the vision of Ukraine’s development priorities by different social groups. The most important development goals in the regions (which got the maximum scores by regional participants) were associated with economic growth and health, including stimulation of economic growth, provision of viability of cities and communities, creation of sustainable infrastructure and assistance in industrialization and innovation; provision of a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, assessing the development priorities, regional experts emphasized the importance of building a peaceful and open society at the national level. The goals, which got the least scores, included

those that had a more global character: mitigation of the climate change; conservation and rational use of oceans and seas; provision of access to cheap, reliable, sustainable and modern sources of energy, mitigation of inequality between and within the countries (Tsili staloho rozvytku, 2016).

The group of experts also defined 4 priorities associated with economic development and health, including: assistance in economic growth (4.27 scores from 5 possible); poverty reduction (4.17 scores); creation of a sustainable infrastructure and assistance in industrialization and innovations (3.095), and health (3.91). The goals deemed least important by the experts included: gender equality (2.96); conservation and rational use of oceans and seas (3.07); mitigation of the climate change (3.014), and strengthening of the means to carry out and activate work within the framework of the Global partnership (3.2). That is, we may point out that the perception of development risks in the Ukrainian society is associated with internal economic problems rather than with the problems of global character. The consequences of economic recession are becoming more evident. Even in the last five years, a significant drop in the GDP was observed in most economic areas. The volumes of construction declined more than twice (in comparable prices), while the volumes of manufacturing industry – three times, the volumes of mining industry – almost by one-fourth. The absolute poverty rate (a share of people, whose incomes are lower than the actual subsistence minimum¹) reached the level of 60%. Globally, based on the criteria of the World Bank, Ukraine belongs to the group of middle-income countries (per capita GNP in the range from 726 to 2,895 US dollars). When using the criteria of relative poverty for inter-country comparisons (such as 50% of the median income in the nominal terms without PPP), Ukraine finds itself among the poorest countries. Ukraine's per capita GDP barely reaches 30% of the median level (according to the IMF list). The negative effect that restricts any further possibilities for human development is the continuous growth of financial dependence of Ukraine. The state debt continues to grow; in the first half of 2016 only the expenditures for its repayment and servicing constituted a third of the total expenditures of the state budget².

¹ The subsistence minimum is the calculated value of the cost of living, obtained on the basis of actual prices for goods and services for a certain time period. It is estimated by the Ministry of Social policy of Ukraine.

² Institute for budget and socioeconomic researches. Budget monitoring / <http://www.ibser.org.ua/news/558/>

The aggravated economic problems are reflected in the worsening crime situation. In 2015, on average Ukraine's crime rate increased by 100 crimes per 100,000 of the population, while it reached 400 crimes per 100,000 of the population in some regions (Zaporizhzhya, Lviv, Kyiv, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv oblasts), and exceeded 500 crimes per 100,000 of the population in the Chernihiv oblast.

5. Regional level

Regional studies have become particularly relevant for Ukraine because of the increased disproportions and contradictions between different regions of the country. Serious external challenges, social consequences of significant differentiation of economic development and imperfect regional policy provoke sociopolitical conflicts and create threats for the safety and integrity of the state. To monitor the level and the dynamics of human development, as well as to study its risks at the regional level, the experts of the IDSS NASU (Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) developed the methods of calculating a regional human development index (Metodyka vymyriuvannia regionalnoho liudskoho rozvytku). These methods are based on the three-level structure: the 1st level – initial indicators, integrated into 6 different sub-indices at the 2-nd level, reflecting such aspects of human development as 'population reproduction', 'social environment', 'decent labor', 'education', 'welfare', 'comfort of living'. On the 3rd level, sub-indices are integrated into one Regional Human Development Index (RHDI). Figure 1 presents the system of parameters for RHDI calculation.

The dynamics of indices by various aspects of development is presented in Figure 2. Here one can see a definite progress by all aspects until 2014, except in the field of labor. In the last two years (2014-2016), the situation has worsened for all aspects (except education). With regard to social environment (the lowest score among all aspects of human development), no substantial progress has been observed. Unfortunately, Ukraine remains the European leader according to the rate of HIV prevalence. According to the estimates of the UNAIDS experts, up to 250,000 persons live with HIV in Ukraine. And only every second person is aware on his/her diagnosis – as of April 1, 2016, there were 132,714 HIV-positive patients registered in Ukraine. The most HIV-infected regions are Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kyiv, Mykolayiv and Odesa oblasts, as well as the city of Kyiv.

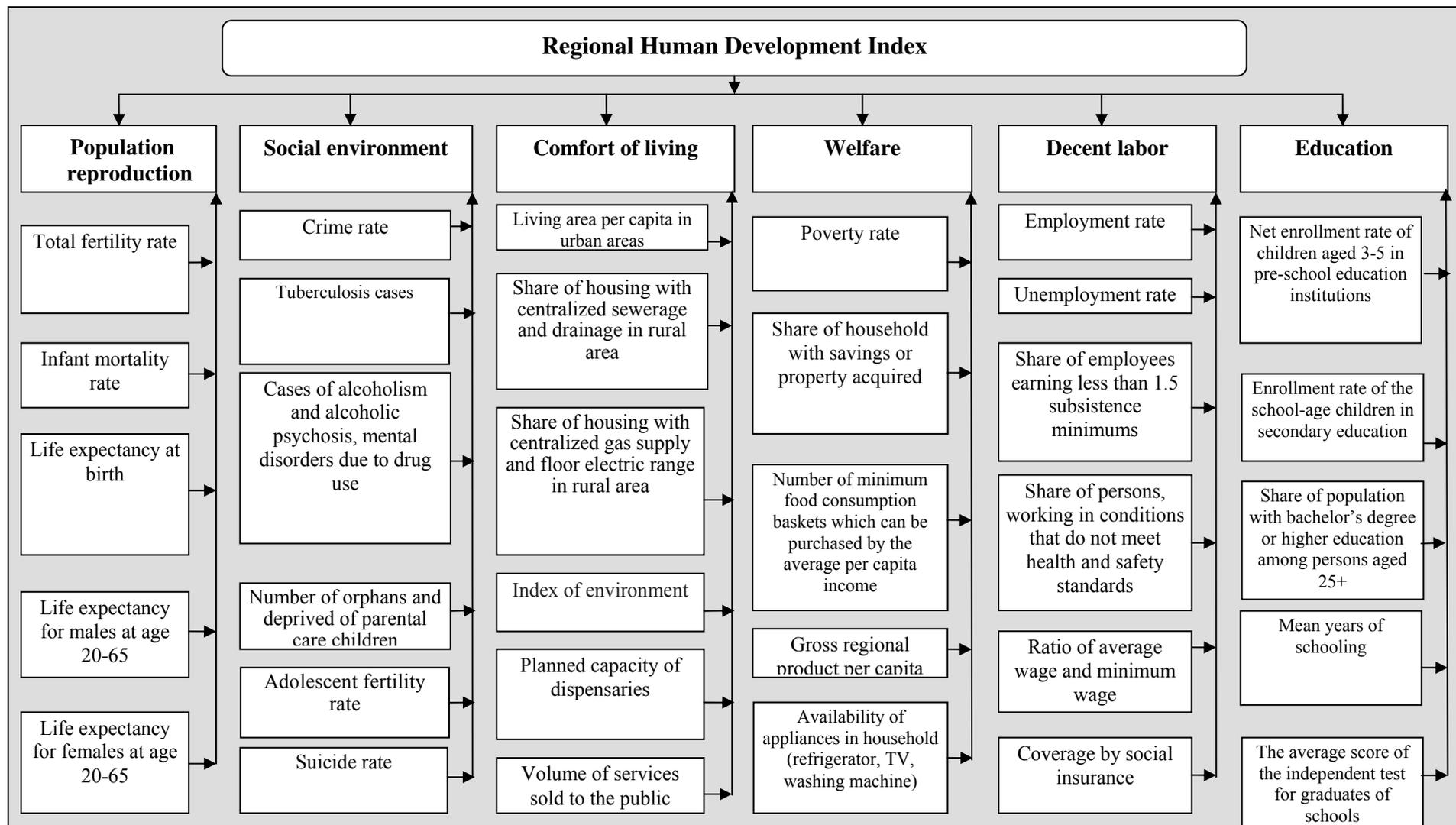


Fig. 1. The system of indicators of regional human development index

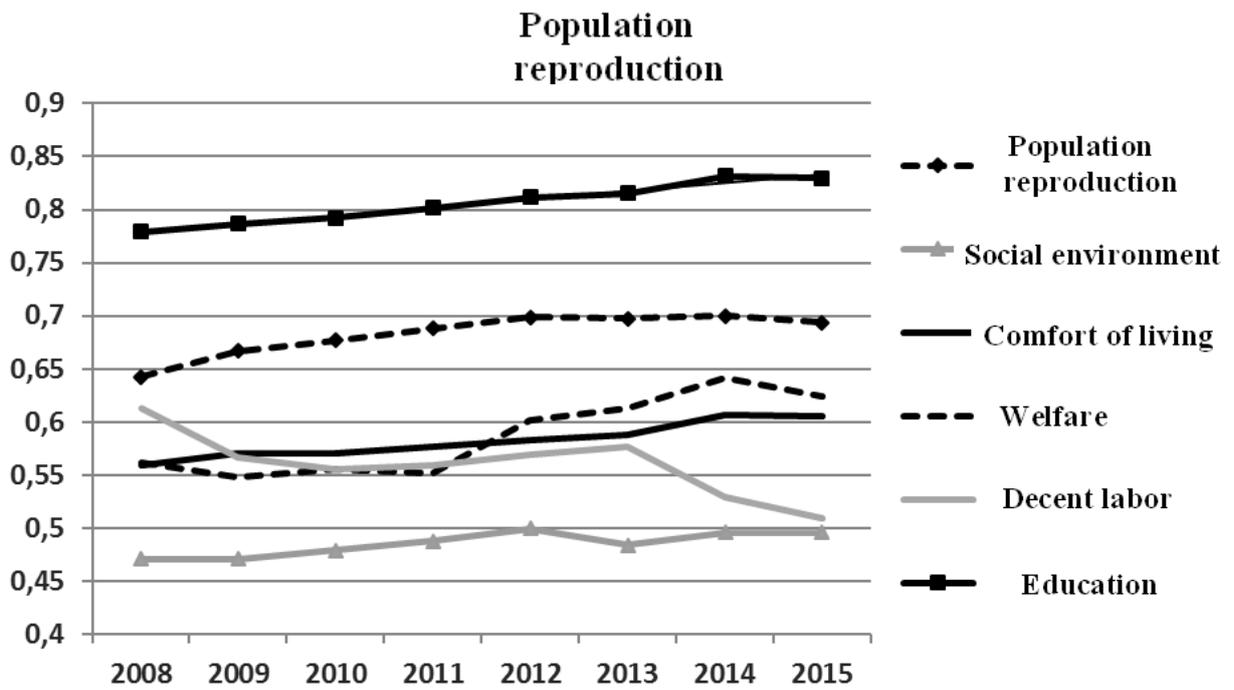


Fig. 2. Dynamics of indices by various aspects of human development in the regions of Ukraine, 2008-2015

Source: figure is developed based on the methods of calculating a regional human development index [17].

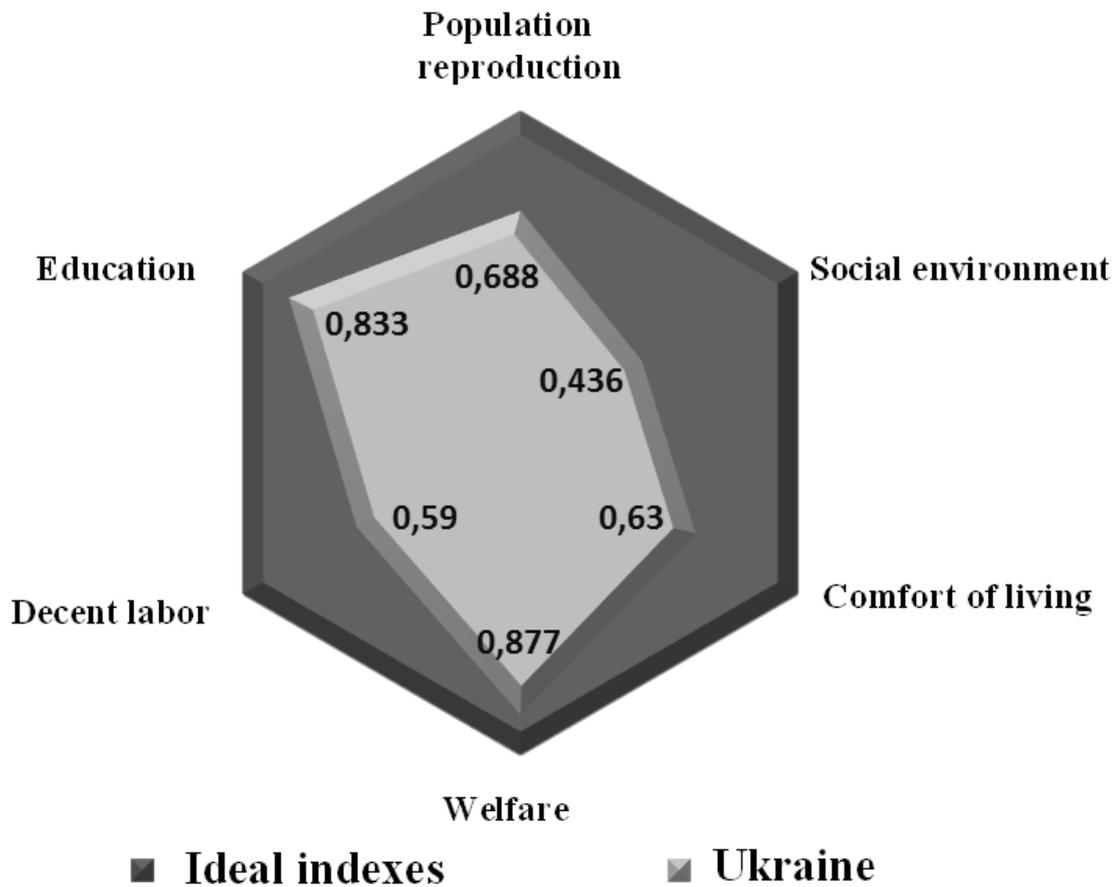


Fig. 3. The lagging from the target parameters for certain aspects of the regional human development

Source: figure is developed based on the methods of calculating a regional human development index [17].

Figure 3 demonstrates the lagging of indicators of the regional human development from the ideal (or target) parameters.

In spite of some improvements, there is still a difficult situation with the epidemics of tuberculosis. Ukraine's burden of multiresistant tuberculosis significantly exceeds the same indicators in European countries. In the ranking of countries according to this indicator Ukraine is situated between Brazil and Somali (Global Health Estimates 2014).

In the field of labor, the situation deteriorated during the last economic crisis (2008), while the fall was even worse in 2014. A significant decline in the real wages had a large impact on the employment situation. As a result, the share of the employed people receiving a salary below the level of 1,5 subsistence minimum, has risen by more than 10 percentage points.

After a relatively successful period (2004-2013), when Ukraine demonstrated though small, but definite growth of incomes of all groups of the population in all regions, there was a break in this successful tendency in 2014. In 2015, per capita incomes declined by 11.4%.

In spite of the relatively favorable situation in the field of education, some dangerous tendencies can be observed, which may cause serious problems for the formation and development of human capital in the future. Firstly, one can observe a devaluation of higher education, i.e. the reduction in the rate of material returns (expected wages). In spite of the retained positive influence of the received education on the level of wages, the results of the modeling for different time periods confirm a significant decline in the 'norm of return' (Makarova, O.V., 2014). Secondly, the immigration sentiments of the youth are increasing both in relation to education and working abroad. In 2014, according to the data of the Polish educational organization 'Perspektywy', almost 10 thousand Ukrainians entered the Polish educational institutions (in 2013 – 5 thousands). Besides, the vast majority of young people going to get an education abroad

intend to stay there forever at every opportunity. Both these factors form significant risks for preserving a high level of education as part of the human development in Ukraine.

With the exception of the mentioned socioeconomic problems, Ukraine has a wide range of unsolved environmental problems. In spite of the availability of the rich natural resources in the country, their use does not correspond to the principles of sustainable development. Waste utilization is a nation-wide problem. Members of the working group on the preparation of the first report on the Sustainable Development Goals for Ukraine note that the volumes of the produced waste keep increasing, and only a small part of this waste is recycled.

The practice of dumping the waste on overflowing landfills is a threat for environment increasing the risks for human health. There are also significant problems with land use, quality of drinking water, reduction in the diversity of flora and fauna.

Conclusions

The task of overcoming the deep economic crisis, which leads to the losses in human potential, is particularly acute for Ukraine. Both direct demographic losses (the prevailing of deaths rates over birth rates) and losses caused by labor migrations are taking place, leading to the continuous 'brain drain' and aggravation of 'social health' in the society (low levels of trust, increase in subjective poverty rate, the perception of the total unfairness in the distribution of resources). The negative social phenomena are exacerbated by unfavorable environmental situation. The military conflict taking place in the east of the country has permanent threats to life and safety of the population. Therefore, the risks to sustainable human development are increasing. The situation needs some urgent solutions aimed at developing a clear and consistent development strategy, as well as the implementation of meaningful actions, primary directed at eliminating the threats to human lives and realizing the policy of the growth recovery based on the principles of sustainability and fairness.

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