SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE GROUNDS OF CITY MANAGEMENT IN RUSSIAN MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to make an analysis of the sociocultural, political and administrative reasons for the introduction of a mechanism for the election of the head of a municipal entity on the basis of competitive admission procedures, which in science is called "city management" by analogy with the formal similarity to the practice of assuming the post of municipal leaders in the United States. The relevance of this problem stems from the fact that the named model of entry into the post of the head of a municipal entity ceases to be one of the legally defined options, becoming due to imperative initiatives of the authorities the mandatory political-administrative order. According to the problem actualization, the following purpose is established: to analyze the validity and viability of this legislative construction as municipal management optimization mechanism. As the result of the study, the authors have come to the conclusion that the order of competitive admission for appointment to the post of the head of a municipal entity is determined by sociocultural and administrative-political grounds. The first refers to meaningful willingness of the population of municipal territories to accept the mandate (legitimacy) to the position on the basis of the relevant decisions of the higher authority. This corresponds to the traditional paternalistic notions of the state in Russian society that have not changed, despite the attempts to hold democratic transformations in the post-Soviet era.

Keywords: city management, competitive admission, sociocultural grounds, administrative and political grounds, municipal authorities.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a sense, the topic of our article can be regarded as a certain private question of forming a model of municipal government in the Russian Federation. Indeed, after the elimination in 1991 of the Soviet organization of local power, the current Russian government is in a permanent search for better principles and structural interactions in the system of local government. A reflection of these searches is the condition of legislation on local self-government, exposed to either global or private alterations occurring almost every year. This clearly indicates the intention of the ruling power elites to solve a number of problems simultaneously, which quite possibly may require consistent articulation and phased-in solution, because some of them are located in mutually exclusive paradigmatic grounds. Such issues include the democratization of the management process (a requirement, the roots of which go back in the late 1980s), the achievement of management efficiency (primarily from the viewpoint of improving the socioeconomic development of territories), the creation of conditions for social stability (this syncretic term refers to the stability of the basic social institutions that have reached a certain stage where the government is able to provide healthy and socially acceptable conditions for the life of the main groups of population).

The history of permanent transformations has shown that the attempt to take a comprehensive approach to solving these problems at this stage is untenable. It faces difficulties both of an objective nature and subjective understanding among communities of the value and the meaning fullness of the proposed reforms. So, the declared values of freedom and municipal self-government enshrined in the Constitution of Russia (1993) onwards became largely alien to the Russian population. Municipal elections in authorities were not particularly popular, and the grassroots forms of local democracy (citizens' gatherings, lawmaking initiative, public hearings, conferences, LCBs, etc.) still do not bring the expected initiative, which has been expected by the developers of the Federal Law "On General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation" [1]. In the end, the concept of municipal authorities as the most important structural core in the system of horizontal ties of civil society, which was built and structured on the basis of the personal initiative of citizens, in practice of the real execution failed.

The consequence of this development has become another round of the reforms of local government. Its target priorities began to shift from the expectations of social development by enhancing the channels of horizontal ties of personal initiatives of all interested segments of local population (voters, business communities, political activists, political parties, local artists) to the use of resources of the power vertical built by the end of the zero years at the levels of federal and regional authorities, politically and structurally ready to absorb the municipal level.

Eventually, the problems of democratization of local self-government faded into the background, and the priority challenges were identified as achieving stability and efficiency in the activities of municipal authorities. The most important core of a new stage of local authorities’ reform was a change in the procedure for entry into the position of the head of local self-government. The legislator had included on 23 June 2014 into FZ No. 131 an amendment allowing the possibility of electing the head of a municipal entity from among candidates presented by the competitive commission by results of competition (section 1, Part 2, Article 36). In the scientific community, this amendment by analogy with the practice in the USA and some other Western countries was called "city management".

In our article, we define the purpose to analyze the validity and viability of this legislative structure as a mechanism of the optimization of municipal management.

To achieve this purpose, the solution of two research tasks is assumed:
1) to consider sociocultural grounds for the establishment and development of the model of city management in the Russian system of municipal management;

2) to allocate a political and administrative basis for the establishment and development of the model of city management in the Russian system of municipal management.

2. REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

In the scientific community, the introduction of the procedure of the municipality's head inauguration through a competitive admission process, contrary to the previously existing system of direct elections, as expected, caused very conflicting opinions. In general, the positions of specialists with a certain degree of assumptions can be divided into two main groups: the opponents and supporters of competition appointment.

A group of scientists who are negatively minded against city management can be classified under three dominant positions that emphasize a particular negative consequence that can be expected to take place due to the refusal of direct elections or the introduction of appointment procedure:

1) the accusation of anti-democratic attitude. In particular, it highlights three possible plots: a) the violation of the constitutional principle of independence of the municipal authority from the state [2], and b) ignoring the legislative right of municipalities to choose alternative procedures for entry into the position of the head of a municipal entity and the imposition of convenient for the government competitive admission procedure [3], c) the building up of the power vertical by including the municipal level [4, 5];

2) the statement of managerial inefficiency. Here we can also distinguish three main positions: a) detachment from the real needs and concerns of the people of territories, the dominance of technocracy and simulation practices [6], b) the inability to carry out medium-and long-term planning (the status of "temporary worker") [6], c) high probability of conflict between the administration and the representative body of municipal authorities [7];

3) the occurrence of risks of a socioeconomic nature. In the framework of the probabilistic implications in this respect, attention is focused on two aspects: a) the conclusion of the procedure of inauguration of the head of a municipal entity from transparent and at the same time legal space can stimulate the emergence of the informal practices of corruption nature [8], b) the cancellation of election eliminates such source of the development of municipalities as campaign promises, which were previously a mechanism for obtaining funds for municipal development from the federal political parties and higher-status politicians [9].

However, the position of the supporters of the city management model is also intellectually grounded. In justification of its use and benefits, the argument has been made which can be summarized in five main points:

1) the distinction between economic and political capabilities allows managers to focus priority attention on the socioeconomic development of territories [10];

2) the cancellation of election will lead to savings of funds that can be spent on other operating expenses [11];

3) an ineffective city manager may be prematurely dismissed, which is difficult when power authority is delegated through direct elections [12];

4) the lack of commitment to the population of municipal areas will allow a city manager to carry out unpopular administrative decisions [13];

5) the cancellation of elections is a logical consequence of their transformation into a tool of political technologies that does not have any relation to real democracy [14, 15].
From the analysis of literature, we can conclude that a whole group of questions has been neglected. The opinion of the population concerning the abolition of the mechanism of direct election, removing it from the sphere of municipal policies, has remained unexplored; the procedure and, most importantly, the possible risks of taking the office of the head of a municipal entity to bypass the opinion of territorial communities have not been identified; the issue of the viability of city management from the point of view of prospects of its development outside of the existing power vertical has not been stated. We in our study propose to fill some of these gaps by focusing our attention on the analysis of sociocultural and political-administrative reasons of the model of city management in modern Russia. This will allow understanding how deep and how long this model can exist in the system of Russian municipal administration.

3. METHODS

The given study is done based on general scientific principles of the historical method, comparative historical analysis, comparative analysis, and the classification method. In the application sphere of specifically applied empirical methods, the examination of relevant Internet sites, which host materials devoted to the problems of changing the mechanism of the inauguration of the head of a municipal entity, was carried out. The study involved the data of mass sociological survey on the topic "Mental programs and modal patterns of social behavior in the South of Russia", conducted by means of personal questionnaires in June-August 2017 in 6 constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the South of Russia (the sample was 3,900 respondents). The regions such as the Rostov Region, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, the Republic of Adygea, the Republic of Crimea, the Stavropol Territory, and the Krasnodar Territory were included into the sample. The constituent entities sampled were chosen subject to the laid down criteria for the admission of respondents. They allow us to create the most objective picture regarding such categories as "power", "state", "municipal control" taking into account the following variables: the type of settlement, education, gender, professional activities, and age. The regions are diverse among themselves and consider in this context all the features possessed by the constituent entities of the South of Russia, which makes the research of all of the constituent entities in this region of Russia superfluous. The advantage of such sampling is that it allows creating the most objective portrait of the sociocultural values of the region. This allows drawing a conclusion on the minimum rates of error in the study. As a minus, we can specify that the results of the study cannot be mechanically transposed to the whole of Russia, as the region has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other territories of the Russian Federation. In addition, we have considered in detail the relevant normative-legal acts necessary for the analysis of the mechanism of city management as a way of inauguration of the head of municipal entity. Among them, first of all, we must specify the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Federal Law of October 6, 2003 No. 131-FZ "On General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation" (as amended on March 6, 2018), as well as other legislative acts that regulate the formation of power in the municipalities.
5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Sociocultural bases for the city management model in the Russian system of municipal management.

So, the administrative sense of the Russian model of city management is clearly defined in clause 1 of Part 2 of Article 36 of the Federal Law No. 131, which says that the head of a municipal entity in accordance with the law of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation and the Charter of the municipal entity is elected at municipal elections or by the representative body of the municipal entity from among its members or by the representative body of the municipal entity from among the candidates presented by the selection board by the results of competition. Political meaning has a truncated nature, because the federal government "strongly recommends" to choose from the three proposed options the one that determines the order of entry into the position of the head of a municipal entity by means of the competitive admission procedure.

By formal and legal reasons, the practice of similar kind can hardly be considered democratic. Here there is derogation from the principle of direct democracy, the embodiment of which for a long time has been considered the regulatory procedure for the formation and implementation of the activities of local authorities. However, we do not aim to solve the problem either from the point of view of political aspects or even regarding the legal side of the issue. We are interested in sociocultural reasons for the implementation of this administrative and political management practice. And this puts the problem in a slightly different plane: to determine the readiness of the population to recognize the mechanism of city management as a principle, corresponding to their ideas about the order of interaction between society and authorities, on the one hand, and different levels of government among themselves, on the other hand. In other words, we need to deal with the question of whether democracy, an integral part of which should be considered a model of direct elections, is included into the basic principles of Russian mentality.

We shall refer to the results of study on the mental programs that we stated in the section "Methods". It notes the gradual erosion of democratic values in the consciousness of Russian society. Thus, the authors drew attention to the relatively small number of respondents who chose the answer about the desirability of such a sociopolitical system, where democracy and the guarantee of rights and freedoms would be its main grounds. In the South of Russia, only 24% chose this sociopolitical formation. At the same time, every third respondent selected as the required one of two options: "strong state power" and "independence from the West in politics". The latter option, more valuable for respondents than "democracy" and "rights and freedoms", is particularly noteworthy. It is also important to note that about 40% were in favor of stability and order, which significantly exceeded, in terms of frequency of selection, the values traditionally associated with democratic ones [16, 17].

The similar distribution of responses, formulated with the aim to identify the significance of the political values of democratic nature, could indicate their insignificance in the hierarchy of the values of the population of the South of Russia. This is confirmed by the refinement of this conclusion through a series of other questions containing other democratic positions, always within the framework of democratic principles, constructing the corresponding political regime and typical mechanisms of interaction between the state and society. For example, the most frequently selected democratic value was "freedom of speech" – 18.6%. This, of course, itself is a very low figure. However, the most insignificant was not even this answer, but the "right to choose the representatives of power", the importance of which was declared by only 8.6% of respondents. For our subject matter, this figure is particularly relevant as we are considering, while only potentially, the willingness on the part of territorial communities to
exercise a protest in response to its deprivation of the right to choose the head of municipal entity.

To more fully understand the significance of municipal elections for the territorial communities, we need to take into account the following caveat. In Russia, both in the South of the country and in the framework of the entire population of the Federation, there is a curious dissonance: the minimum of credibility to elected authorities (to the parties – 5.5%, the State Duma – 8%, municipal government – 4.5%) and the maximum confidence in the President of the country, which on average can be defined at the level of 75% [18]. It is no accident that the population of municipalities has demonstrated the extremely low electoral turnout, since they linked the solution of local problems not with municipal authorities, and even not with regional entities, but with the nationwide President.

These political preferences are reflected in general sociocultural paradigms of Russian citizens, which we will present in a tabular format (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative sociocultural elements</th>
<th>The Russian Federation, %</th>
<th>The South of Russia, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State property as the basis of the economic prosperity of country</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public ownership of land</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The approval of current authorities</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence from the West in politics and economics</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire &quot;to be like everyone&quot;</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability and order in society</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from state</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to be an employee and get a stable salary</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal sociocultural elements</th>
<th>The Russian Federation, %</th>
<th>The South of Russia, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of economic activity</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, the protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inviolability and protection of private property</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority observance of individual rights</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income inequality as the norm of market economy</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of conditions for free movement and change of residence</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to participate in public and political life</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to participate in protest actions</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, in tabular data, two dichotomous scales of values were determined, retaining the conservative and liberal behavior models. It should be noted, and this clearly is an absolute fact, that conservative values were more popular among the respondents both in the South of Russia and in the Russian Federation. At the same time, we can talk about rootedness of some liberal economic values. So, the Russians equally recognize the value of both public and private ownership. However, liberal political values have been much less in the focus of the attention of respondents than conservative political values. For example, the conservative idea of social justice was supported by 37.8% of all the respondents in the South of Russia, and willingness...
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to participate in public and political life of society, which corresponded to the behavior in the framework of the liberal model, was supported by only 6.1%. The same significant gaps in preferences were formed also in other positions.

Such a small number of respondents who have chosen liberal values reflects the characteristic feature of the present time, its symptoms, manifested in the erosion of the confidence of population that the democratic transition started in the early 1990s is now able to lead Russia to the standards and norms of life that emerged in the West during the entire period of its development [20].

At the same time, we must understand that the consciousness of modern Russians is of eclectic, in a sense, antinomic nature. Therefore, too categorical division into conservatives and liberals to a certain extent can be considered as conditional, since in reality the intertwining of values of variable nature takes place. In this sense, we are willing to recognize as reasonable not a double, but four-dimensional classification of the sociocultural values of the modern population of Russia, including liberal, conservative, liberal state, and state-liberal behavior models.

Table 2 The comparative analysis of the models of sociocultural behavior in Russia in general and in the South of Russia [19].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The models of sociocultural behaviour</th>
<th>The Russian Federation, in %</th>
<th>The South of Russia, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal model</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative model</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal-state model</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-liberal model</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state-liberal model assumes the recognition as important of some of market principles (private property, the protection of rights and freedoms), but defending them with methods, typical for the traditional Russian conservatism: the maintenance of stability, strong state, emphasis on justice, etc.

The analysis of sociocultural behavior models, most typical of Russian society, including the South of Russia, gives the right to assume that municipal democracy is not perceived by Russian society as something meaningful for them (see Table 2). In general, one can be sure that the population of municipalities will not actively protest and express otherwise their regret regarding cancellation of direct elections to the post of the head of a municipal entity, especially if the authorities manage to find sufficient funds for socioeconomic development of territories.

Political and administrative grounds for the city management model in the Russian system of municipal management.

The adoption of the principle of competitive selection for the post of the head of a municipal entity cannot be considered in isolation from the more general process of building a unified power vertical management, which was initiated by the current President in fact, since his first victory in the presidential election of 26 March 2000. Before Vladimir Putin at that time there were many problems at different levels, each of which required close attention, and sometimes operational decisions [21]. It is possible now to recall the high level of poverty, the lack of a social security system, legal nihilism, the weakness of government, the deterioration of socioeconomic development indicators, etc. It was all inherited from the previous President, Boris Yeltsin [22].

Meanwhile, none of the tasks of that period could be solved outside of the strengthening of presidential power, not so much in the institutional aspect (Yeltsin had full authority to implement an active policy), as in terms of the increase in resource potential, or to put it more
precisely and categorically, overcoming the negative challenges posed by the three most energetic at the turn of 1999-2000 political players: parliamentary opposition, oligarchy and national elites [23-27]. Many at that time imagined that in the country there was a stalemate, in which each of the active political actors balanced each other due to the equality of forces and capabilities, so that the society instead of moving forward treaded water [28]. Vladimir Putin decided to liquidate the balance due to a sharp increase in the funding of prerogatives and political capacities of his own power. The result of this decision became the formation of the "power vertical" [29].

In short, the model of the vertical of power comes out of the idea of "managed democracy". Perhaps with some simplification and arbitrary assumption of the number of points, its roots can be seen in the views of philosophers of the 18th century of "enlightened monarchy". The entire outer antidemocratic nature of this concept, taking into account the specifics of Russia, where the struggle of elites, economic crisis, the lack of the tradition of democracy, etc. have intertwined, the choice in favor of a political entity, receiving additional powers, whose activity is based on trust of the society, does not seem so wrong, as it seems now to the Western world community [30]. Therefore, in Russia there were no significant protests, when Vladimir Putin held legal reforms and political transformations with the aim of establishing control over the main government bodies at the federal and regional authorities [31]. Without encroaching on the constitutional foundations, remaining always within the legal space, the current President was able to cut "the Gordian knot" of political contradictions of the 1990s due to the fact that he established administrative control over the activities of the State Duma, Federation Council, General Prosecutor's office, high judicial authorities, as well as relevant cores at the level of the Federation [32].

Local authorities have long been outside the sphere of political attention of the President. Therefore, the latest core of management system, covered by a single power vertical, can be considered the municipal level. Until relatively recently, the theorists of constitutional law have not considered municipal power as the state one. It was positioned as the varieties of social power, containing elements of public and state power, simultaneously. Currently, the position of lawyers has changed. Municipal authority loses in their theoretical constructs its own peculiarity and uniqueness. It is no coincidence that this, the grassroots level of public relations, becomes included in a single system of public administration. This happens due to the refusal from the election of the heads of administration (mayors) in favor of appointing city managers. As it has already been indicated, the essence of city management is to ensure that the local community is given the opportunity to abandon the direct election of the head of administration and refer to his selection by the special competition commission.

The supporters of the liberal model of government subject this order to serious criticism. If we operate liberal concepts of constitutional law, established on the basis of the Anglo-Saxon political and legal traditions, it is possible even to indicate the lack of legitimacy in the procedure for the appointment of city managers, recalling Article 12 of the Russian Constitution, which proclaims that the local government is not included into the system of public authorities [33]. Meanwhile, the structure of competitive commissions everywhere includes the representatives of regional public authorities. In the end, the people in municipalities cease to be a source of power, because the head of a municipality receives power authorization from deputies, representing the regional authorities, but not from the territorial community. It narrows the scope of the forms of direct democracy in the local government system, which is under the direct administrative control of administrative structures.

Indeed, extending the procedure for the appointment of city managers reflects the desire of the state (the federal center) to strengthen the vertical of power to the detriment of the democratic origin in management. Many experts see in this a danger of the rupture of horizontal
ties necessary at least to ensure that in the municipalities there are political organizations interested in open and competitive means of achieving power. The new order makes the procedure formal, closed to the public.

To adequately assess the position of the critics of the institute of city management is possible only in the context of the overall conservative reforms in our country. By itself, the power structure is nothing but a statist rod for the construction of the Russian civilization. The state of such a civilization is reproduced as the axis that permeates all levels of social relations. The approval of such status is connected with the dominance in the national consciousness of paternalistic values, which, being conservative in nature, because the people of Russia did not know any other reality of the interaction between the state and society, are understood and can be accepted by the entire population in the Russian Federation.

The most important result of the presidential reforms in this area can be considered the abolition of the political component in the form of a power struggle from the sphere of municipal relations. First of all, public power actually turned into a monocratic system based on the functional division of responsibilities among government institutions functioning under the control of the President or the relevant divisions of his Administration. The liberal principle of the separation of powers, being for a long time the most important criterion of democracy in assessing the functioning of state power, in fact, reflects a more generic view of liberalism on the competitiveness of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic environments of society, which, consequently, must cultivate competition in the divisions of the state system. The refusal of the principle of competition at all levels of society in favor of conservative ideas about the paternalistic nature of the government, resolving the existing social representations on the basis of equity, has resulted in the leveling of the separation of powers among the three branches of state. For paternalism, competition is equally unacceptable both in public governance and in the social interactions of the actors of politics. The result of its abandoning was the formation of the power hierarchy as a necessary core for modern statist civilization in Russia. City management was just incorporated into this system as its organic constituent part.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the competitive appointment of the head of a municipal entity is determined by both sociocultural and political-administrative grounds. The introduction of the mechanism of city management became possible because, first, the concept of a strong state, implementing the paternalistic functions, is inherent to the Russian political consciousness. There are reasons to assume that the vast majority of the population of municipalities excluded from the procedure of the election of the head of local government will not only nonparticipate in the public protests against "punching" convenient for the government tender procedure, but instead will adopt a new mechanism as the most acceptable. Second, the inertia of public participation in the actual affairs on the management of municipalities has actually blurred the essential difference between municipal and state authorities. At the grassroots level of management, the necessary horizontal links, without which social participation in management cannot be effective, have not been developed yet. The natural consequence of this condition was the incorporation process of municipal management core into the state one. In other words, the model of city management was a completion of the power vertical of political power; the first two levels – federal and regional – have long been in the mode of "manual" control by the President. The consistency of the analyzed reform of municipal management must be recognized and acknowledged. But its effectiveness, of course, will have to be verified over time.
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REFERENCES


