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Civil Online Examination of the Work of Regional Management Systems in the Context of Socio-Cultural Modernization Processes in the Region*



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Abstract. The study is part of a hybrid methodology that combines field and remote methods for collecting primary sociological data. The goal of the study is to verify and show the capabilities of expert online survey in studying the issues of reforming the power and management hierarchy in conjunction with the data from official sources, representative field survey, content analysis of the regional media and online studying of network communities in regions with different levels of socio-cultural modernization, which are used as a whole in the study under a Russian Science Foundation grant. The paper presents summarized results of the initial stage (in four out of twelve regions of the Russian Federation) of this study aimed to obtain representative data on the work of government and management authorities in the context of socio-cultural modernization in individual regions, to identify relations that affect the functionality of regional administration systems, which determine the nature and level of their development, and the ability of regional power and management vertical to effectively solve socio-economic problems. The authors pay attention to the question of methodological verification of expert opinions in the framework of comparing the data of socio-economic and socio-political ratings; the question is raised concerning the necessity of development and introduction of technology of communicative feedback between government and management authorities and the public. The main source of empirical data used in the article is the expert online survey conducted with the participation of the authors in 2015, one more source is the data on socio-economic and socio-political ratings of development of Russian regions in this period. The work, as part of a general research under the RSF grant, taking into account the published preliminary data, continued in the remaining eight regions in 2016–2017. The generalized scientific results are planned to be presented at the final international conference in October 2017.

Key words: regional government systems, socio-cultural modernization in regions expert online survey.

Introduction

The problem set by the authors in the framework of the research under the Russian Science Foundation grant “Civil examination of vertical power structure reformation in the context of socio-cultural modernization processes in the region: from monitoring of state to forecast design” is part of the global discourse in geopolitics and geo-economics regarding the collapse of the neoliberal globalization project (in the spirit of F. Fukuyama [18]) and the search for new ways

of world order organization based on new regionalization of countries and peoples, new global balance of socio-political forces, which became especially evident after the victory of D. Trump at the presidential election in the United States. I. Wallerstein [3], a well-known sociologist considers that the Russian semi-periphery economy should move towards merging with the core of the world system (USA, EU, Japan), while British Academy academician David Line [8] holds the opposite view. In particular, he claims that

the most viable would be building regional integration such as the Eurasian Economic Union in cooperation with SCO and BRICS. The author state what has already become a strategy of Russia's development in recent years, although it should be noted that first publications of this kind appeared back in 2000. Today these prospects of geopolitical development must be treated with caution. Against the background of current global events, Russians continue heated discussions concerning the specificity of transformation processes in the Russian society. First of all, works by S. Kirdina ("institutional matrices" [21]), O.E. Bessonova (on "distribution economy" [2]), S.G. Kordonskii (on "class structure of the post-Soviet Russia" [7]), M.F. Chernysh ("class institutions, mobility and social justice" [19]). They also include the article by O.I. Shkaratan, V.V. Radaev (on "etocratic Russian society" [16]), Yu.S. Pivovarov and A.I. Fursov (on "the Russians' attitude to public and private property" [15]). However, A.I. Lipkin disagrees, claiming that in order to assess transformation processes in modern Russia it is reasonable to use the theory of interpenetration of two models of social organization: "writ", based on a centralized mechanism of population mobilization to overcoming external and internal threats, and "contractual", based on the principles of "social contract" by Hobbes and Locke [13]. In fact, in theoretical terms, the views of all authors are quite interesting; nevertheless, it is important to learn how

to match the scale of theorification and the possibility of empirical verification of certain hypotheses. The greatest potential in this context belongs to anthroposocietal approach in general sociology proved by N.I. Lapin, which considers a human is considered as social subject whose activities are comparable to the actions of social institutions [10]. This subject does not only internalize social conventions and values, but also affects their components according to current needs and interests amid continuous increase (due to scientific and technological progress) in resource availability of both group and individual activity. This approach helps better understand and, most important, empirically examine real and potential trends of Russian society transformation in the historically given circumstances (see "Socio-cultural evolution in Russia and its regions" [10]). The logic of such transformation is revealed in the analysis of theoretically identified inversion pairs of the ongoing processes such as: crisis (recession) – recovery, extensive – intensive (development), confrontation – concord, mobility – stability, control – turbulence, etc. According to this logic, the vertical power structure itself is a real compromise between "writ" and "contractual" models of social organization, between the so-called vertical and horizontal organization and self-organization. Any reforms are also compromises between instrumental results and the social stability of the society, starting with the ruling elite. If the reforms are unilateral they will inevitably give

rise to counter-reforms, which inadvertently takes our country's development back to the old "Manichean" circles: from the Reds to the Whites, from the leftists to the rightists, from antiquity to innovation and back. In this regard, the mechanisms of coordination—mismatch of positions of the opposing parties should be considered in depth and brought to constructive solutions. This issue was raised in the works of P. Sorokin [17], A. Akhiezer [1] and is being developed nowadays by A.P. Davydov [5] as a problem of social and cultural transformation through formation of "middle" socio-mental groups. The hypothesis is as follows: the existence in our society of constantly opposing camps of pro- and anti-reform factions is a consequence of historically developed socio-cultural split, to which we are accustomed to and traditionally try to solve new problems in an old-fashioned way: by destroying the opponents, naïve to believe that the good and just society will soon come, as soon as we kill the last opponent. The fact that the state of mentality inevitably leads to tragic disasters has been repeatedly mentioned in the works of Russian scientists (A. Yanov, I. Klyamkin [1], I. Yakovenko, I. Kondakov, V. Mezhuev, I. Ionov, V. Fedotova and A.P. Davydov). The esteemed authors have never associated the solution of the emerging acute opposition problems, starting from the time of struggle of the Westernizers and Slavophiles, with the changes in the vertical power structure functioning. Perhaps this is why the problem

of future formation of "middle" culture in Russia is part of protracted cultural debate and does not reach the empirical stage. The unit of measurement used in the conceptual framework of the present study is groups of respondents connected by different relations towards one and the same subject — to the actions of a specific power structure aimed at considering the content of the objective both as a problem of governance and a problem of coordinating their actions with conflicting interests of actors with joint life and activities. The authors call this unit 'socio-mental triplex' (lat. triplex – triplicity, triple). Mentality (lat. mentalis – mental) is referred to as a complex of the way thinking, moral attitudes and emotional moods, which defines the way of making decisions in the presence of alternatives. It is known that people can differ from each other in many social indicators (sex, age, education, social status) but the differences in mentality often force them to opposite sides. Sociologists know that the behavior in particular circumstances is determined by the theorem of W. Thomas (Thomas Theorem) [22] which, however, does not consider that social reality is not directly explicated by our consciousness, but indirectly, through agreement or disagreement with the others. The logic of "either—or" forms a kind of "static thinking dictatorship" (A.P. Davydov [5]), "fixes" our thinking on one of the opposite sides; the logic of development is reflected in the establishment (opening) of new meanings through creative

search for alternative positions in the conditional middle. The present research project helps recalibrate this very important and interesting debate to sociological dimensions and technology of socio-forecast design. It is a step, though very small, forward not only in management sociology, but in socio-humanitarian knowledge and cognition in general.

When speaking about a specific project objective, the most important is diagnostics of vertical power structure operability in specific historical conditions and forecast of recovery process manageability based on explication of the structure and content of assessment of governing body performance from the point of view of various population groups and experts. Diagnostics is literally understood as a procedure for determining the degree of support from people and experts of a vertical power structure's ability to successfully implement its functions. Hence its name — “civil” or, which is the same, social. Various population groups are reviewed not only in ranked electoral terms (sex, age, education, etc.), but also from the standpoint of place and role of social groups on the scale of socio-cultural modernization [11].

In the context of the stated objective a number of sub-objectives are implemented:

1. Conceptual and methodological – to test the diagnostics ability of the population's assessment of a vertical power structure based on the use of a full dispositional scale: proponents – “median segment” – opponents.

2. Analytical – to determine the socio-semantic content of the relations between governance bodies and administration on the one hand, and the population on the other, depending on the nature of social and political problems solved in the country and its regions.

3. Research – to determine the degree of social sensitivity of different population groups to the authorities and management bodies' overcoming of external and internal threats to survival and development of the country and its regions. This is possible by results of sociological measurements obtained at the previous pre-project stage of the research.

4. Expert – based on social diagnostics of pros and cons of functioning of a vertical power structure, to conduct expert analysis starting from the level of “development” of separate management systems and finishing with the prospects for radical reformation of the sector considering the regions' socio-cultural characteristics.

5. Methodological – the use of cognitive opportunities (for monitoring the vertical power structure) of a statistical model of population reproduction exchange balance (A.V. Zhavoronkov), a new measurement tool of the level and quality of population's sensitivity concerning the work of management and administration bodies (A.V. Tikhonov's “triplex analysis”), as well as methods of combining field and distance methods of collecting initial data (V.S. Bogdanov).

This article deals with the implementation of the fourth level of sub-objectives of the overall study – on expert knowledge acquisition.

On the methodology of the overall study and online expert evaluation as part of it

The IS RAS Center for Management Sociology and Social Technology, develops and widely uses the methodology of management issues distance research thus testing knowledge-oriented procedures which help acquire initial (background) information about the activities of management units of all levels of vertical power structure functioning on a contactless (network) basis. This work currently continues in the framework of the Russian Science Foundation research grant no. 15-18-30077. The present study involves the whole methodological set hybrid methods:

- population survey
- expert online-survey
- online media content analysis,
- social networks analysis
- texts and documents analysis
- electronic respondent method (a modernized method of content analysis, the study websites and electronic documents).

The authors expect that these methods and techniques will help obtain the desired results in accordance with the set purposes and objectives of the research project, identify and analyze the attitude of different population groups and experts to the current state and prospects of domestic management

system development at its various levels and evaluate the potential of reforming the vertical power structure in response to external and internal challenges and threats.

The purpose for the expert online-survey, the results of which are presented in the article, is to acquire additional data on current social and economic conditions in the regions, as well as on the extent and nature of their management system development, their ability to ensure the territory's modernization and development.

The research sets the following objectives of the online-survey:

- *scientific*, which implies theoretical and methodological justification of acquiring and applying expert knowledge in the framework of comprehensive diagnostic research of current issues of the vertical power structure functioning, including regional and local levels of governance;
- *methodological*: justification, development and testing of methods of online data collection, processing and analysis of expert information suitable for the explanation of the necessary and sufficient socio-cultural conditions of optimal management system organization;
- *practical*: acquisition of the missing data on the state and prospects of regions' modernization (industrial and informational) development, their use for further development and adjustment of management strategies, development of appropriate communication technology.

Method of initial information collection

In order to obtain expert evaluation on the issues of dynamic social and cultural management processes in the regions, the authors selected the method online expert survey, which is a synthesis of expert survey of officials and representatives of professional groups with the availability of interactive services for collection and processing of initial information.

The electronic online questionnaire of the expert survey was developed on the basis of a working questionnaire draft, consolidated by experts with other tools (mass survey, media analysis, social network analysis), as well as on gathering benchmark information in the framework of the overall study, and consisted of the following semantic structural units:

1. The appeal of the research group (announcement of the study: goals, objectives, expected results, experts' motivation).
2. Instructions for completing online questionnaires.
3. Introduction to the information card of a particular region, compiled on the basis of official Rosstat data and portals of regional governments.
4. A few general issues about the situation in the region.
5. The situation in the city (settlement) where you live.
6. Evaluation of the governance system in the region.
7. Information about yourself.

The web-architecture of the expert questionnaire was developed with the assistance of a specialized online service – distance research support and development designer SURVEYMONKEY.NET, in which the main research performers could track online the process of expert questionnaire completion and their entrance to the public database; and take action on controlling the engagement of the necessary experts from specific regions and population groups.

Prior to the launch of the electronic announcement of the online survey, the pilot study was conducted, which was attended by 10 people from different regions ("snowball" sampling – the experts were selected on the basis of personal contacts, of the research coordinators) with Internet skills and the understanding of the essence of governance.

The respondents evaluated the form and content of the letter of appeal, determined the dynamic electronic questionnaire functioning: access and visual perception, interface, content and structure.

As a result of distance pilot survey the authors conducted residual work to optimize and streamline the design, structure, form and content of the questionnaire. Thus, the process of the development and testing of the online questionnaire included specific technical, methodical and instrumental procedures, during which an interim version of the electronic questionnaire was developed: the layout of the online expert survey; the data

model, the correlation between the entities; preparation of user-friendly interfaces of the e-questionnaire in terms of completion effectiveness and acquiring the most valid data.

Preliminary results and evaluation of instrument validity

As a result of applying the method of online expert survey combined with the measures of effective control through telecommunication of the database formation and experts' engagement in the process of completing electronic questionnaires, valid data have been collected which included 206 expert questionnaires with 240 viewing of the online questionnaire and 50 experts from each region. In general, database on 325 experts has been compiled and processed: 63.5% (206 experts) gave qualitative answers to open questions.

The validity of the obtained data is confirmed by professional and managerial characteristics of the experts' competence.

95% of experts indicated that they use Internet every day. In turn, this eliminated doubts about the technical difficulties and barriers which could arise when completing the questionnaires and adversely affect their quality.

Selection of pilot regions

The first stage of the research was carried out in 4 pilot territories out of 12 selected according to N.I. Lapin's regional socio-cultural modernization rating [10] (*Tab. I*).

200 expert questionnaires were collected in these regions according to the 10 quota groups with the total of 50 interviews in one constituent entity of the Russian Federation. The following quota groups have been distinguished:

1. Directors and deputy directors of consulting agencies, agencies for strategic development, independent institutions of regional development, municipal units and similar advisory and management organizations.

**Table 1. Constituent entities of the Russian Federation (regions)
which participated in the research (in points)**

Nº	Region	Status of a region	Federal District	Economic region	Geographical zone	Level of socio-cultural modernization (in points)*
1.	Moscow Oblast	Oblast	Central	Central	Temperate	6
2.	Republic of Bashkortostan	Republic	Volga	Ural	Temperate	3
3.	Belgorod Oblast	Oblast	Central	Central Black Earth	Temperate	2
4.	Republic of Kalmykia	Republic	Southern	Volga	South	1

* For more detail on the system of evaluation of the regional socio-cultural modernization system see: Lapin N.I., Belyaeva L.A. *Programma i tipovoi instrumentarii "Sotsiokul'turnyi portret regiona Rossii"* (Modifikatsiya – 2010) [Program and standard tools "Socio-cultural portrait of the region" (Modification – 2010)]. Moscow: IF RAN, 2010. 111 p.

2. Representatives of public organizations.
3. Directors and deputy directors of research organizations.
4. Administration of universities and other educational institutions.
5. Management of industrial organizations (large enterprises and plants).
6. Representatives of business and construction (director, deputy director).
7. Representatives of commerce (owners of shops and salons, etc.).
8. Political leaders (MPs, politicians).
9. Representatives of the environmental community (experts, heads of environmental industries and organizations).
10. Representatives and officers of regional and local government (deputy heads, heads of departments, heads of divisions).

In September – November, 2015 work has been performed on the formation and validation of a unique database (DB) of regional expert-managers (325 contacts have been collected) with the following grounds for its development:

- *the experts' geographical origin* according to the selection of 4 pilot regions: republics of Bashkortostan and Kalmykia, Belgorod and Moscow oblasts;
- *the experts' spheres of activity* in specific areas of production and non-production activity;
- *the experts' status characteristics*, implying either a senior position in an organization/enterprise, or employment as

an expert/specialist in a particular sphere (environmentalists, politicians, MPs, management consultants).

Recruiting was done by regional coordinators through personal connections with particular people, as well as through the search and establishment of communication using the contacts from public sources (official websites of companies and organizations, telephone directories).

As a result, 207 questionnaires were collected, data from which were verified by the selected expert selection criteria (geographical origin, sphere of activity and status characteristics) and a good informational content of the experts' responses in open questions.

The generalized results of the online expert survey will be reviewed further. The authors not turn to the description of the socio-status image of the experts the procedure for verification of some estimates through their comparison with socio-economic and socio-political regional ratings.

The expert's socio-status image

The first thing to mention is the validity of the obtained data. It is confirmed by the recorded professional and managerial characteristics of experts' competence. The majority of respondents have management experience – 84%, of which 44% are or were managers of an enterprise, organization, company. 21% of respondents have experience in working in regional and municipal governments. 26% hold or held senior

positions in public authorities and local self-government, 48% acted as mid- and lower-level managers in production.

Most experts refer to the 71% of those who are today top, mid- or lower-level managers (28% and 43%), almost 70% of them consider their management experience as generally successful (*Tab. 2 and 3*).

In general, a large number of experts have higher education and an academic degree: 77.1% – higher education, 18.9% – Doctors of Philosophy, 5.8% –Doctors of Science. These indicators certainly ensure balanced expert assessments in accordance with their skill level.

Speaking of sector profile, the appeal to participate in the research was more willingly responded by the representatives of regional science, education and culture (39%). The

shares of those heads and specialists of production and non-production organizations are almost equal (26%), as well as employees of institutions and companies responsible for the maintenance and development of regional infrastructure (25%). Regulatory and administrative authorities, as well as law enforcement authorities are presented to a lesser extent – 14%.

It is interesting to note that the expert groups are practically equal in terms of gender – 54% are men and 46% – women. Both have a fairly high level of social activity (59.4%) – engagement in public activity (political, charity, religious, etc.). Moreover, 72% of respondents have specific suggestions for regional authorities in terms of improving the regional management system or changing it radically.

Table 2. Level of experts' liability, %

Liability level	Number
Top manager	28
Mid- and lower-level manager	43
Practitioners	28
Total	100

Table 3. Expert evaluation of personal leadership experience according to the liability level, %

Liability level	The expert evaluates his\her management experience, %					
	Successful	Rather successful than unsuccessful	Rather unsuccessful than successful	Unsuccessful	No experience	No answer
Top manager	33	67	-	-	-	-
Mid- and lower-level manager	22	65	-	-	-	12
Practitioners	7	28	2	2	55	6
Total of 100%	21	56	1	1	15	6

A vast majority of experts (95%) mentioned their high level of involvement in the processes of informatization, including daily use of Internet access. In turn, this eliminated doubts about the technical difficulties and barriers which could arise when completing the questionnaires and adversely affect their quality.

Generalized scientific and methodological results of the online expert survey of regional management system development

The authors showed basic socio-demographic and managerial characteristics of the experts, and hope that they can now refer to the validity of the received data. Based on this, they make meaningful conclusions about the performance of government and management authorities in the context of sociocultural modernization in regions, particularly in terms of style, type and level of regional management system development, as well as their ability to solve the problems of territory's modernization in the context of objectives of socio-cultural development.

Considering the assessment of management styles (collegial, authoritarian, clan-based and liberal types have been considered), it has been confirmed that vertical power structure formation is rigorous – the dependence of regional authorities on the centre, which is called “de rigore juris” subordination, on Federal authorities. The Belgorod Oblast (68%), the Republic of Bashkortostan (37%) and the Moscow Oblast (31%) are to a greater submitted to big capital. The Republic of Kalmykia does

not demonstrate such trend due to very low business activity in the region: about 50% of experts note that regional authorities do not rely on big business; 11% were undecided.

Regarding the involvement of the population in the processes of regional governance, only in the Belgorod Oblast 1/3 of experts note that municipal authorities consider the opinion of urban (28%) and rural (40%) population. In other regions, this practice is either not observed or is not very common.

Next, the experts were invited to evaluate the work of management staff in their regions compared to the pre-crisis levels in 2013. As a result, the authors found out that the system of regional management has not changed much, the government still dominates the management, the real control is on the fringes of attention. The authors' data (*Tab. 4 and 5*) obtained on the basis of experts' assessments of execution of traditional management functions confirm the low level of management system development in general. Their activities are not aimed at arraying actual management functions in solving socially significant issues and preparing preliminary forecasts for reducing the uncertainty in such decisions, but at reporting the results to a higher level in the power structure and planning and control the activity of their institutions. On this basis, it should be noted that the quality of regional management system performance is also low, at least taking into account the fact that the experts consider the needs and demands

Table 4. Distribution of evaluations of traditional management functions performance in regions
 (in average points from the average value on a 95% interval;
 $n_{\text{respondents}} = 207$, where 1 – “poor”, 2 – “satisfactory”, 3 – “good”)

Option	N	Average
Reporting on the results to superior authorities	177	2.3842
Execution control from superior authorities	179	2.2905
Decision-making management	181	2.1215
Planning in all management levels	178	2.1067
Decision execution discipline	183	2.0820
Expert research for studying problem situation	174	2.0057
Making preliminary forecasts for reducing uncertainty	171	1.9181
Reporting the results to the population	193	1.8342

Table 5. Distribution of evaluations of regional management system performance quality (in average points from the average value on a 95% interval;
 $n_{\text{respondents}} = 207$, where 1 – “poor”, 2 – “satisfactory”, 3 – “good”)

Option	N	Average
Ability to report to superior authorities	178	2.6629
Administration competence	189	2.2646
Administration’s strategic thinking	186	2.2419
Flexibility, ability to adapt to the changing environment	183	2.1749
Ability to convince and mobilize people to solving common objectives	187	2.0267
Ability to find nonstandard solutions in crisis situations	177	1.8249
Priority of people’s needs and demands in any situation	189	1.7407

of ordinary people in the activities of local government and management authorities the least important. A more objective comparison of regions by selected criteria of functionality and quality of regional management system performance is presented later in a set of 12 regions selected in the framework of the overall study.

The degree of development of regional management systems from the point of view of solving social issues in the regions is fixed through the authorities’ ability to solve basic local problems.

When considering integrated assessments of issues, the authors relate to the correlation between the most negative indicators and the futility of their addressing by the authorities. Thus, the situation with addressing the most important issues of regional residents’ life support and functioning is the least favorable. These are health and medical care, the issue of labor and employment (*Tab. 6*). They are aggravated by lack of rational systematic management and future development of territories. The experts most negatively assess the process of solving issues compared to others.

Table 6. Integrated expert assessment regarding issues and activities of authorities
in 4 pilot regions (in average points from the average value on a 95% interval;
 $n_{\text{respondents}} = 207$, where 1 – “critical”, 2 – “satisfactory”, 3 – “good”)

Region	Issue of labor and employment	Population's financial means	Issue of population's health	Issue of population's socialization	Infrastructure support in a region	Horizontal social relations between population groups	Vertical social relations between population groups	Issue of territory development prospects
Republic of Bashkortostan	1.7400 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	1.9400 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	1.5714 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	1.8600 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	1.9592 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ →	2.0208	1.9600	1.9574
Republic of Kalmykia	1.9818	2.0370	1.6364	2.0364	1.7347	2.2037	2.1091	1.7647
Belgorod Oblast	2.0200	2.0000	1.8000	2.0600	2.1556	1.8936	2.1400	2.0851
Moscow Oblast	2.0385	2.2115	1.6731	1.9615	2.1111	1.9388	1.9615	2.1136
Total	1.9469	2.0485	1.6667	1.9807	1.9840	2.0202	2.0435	1.9735

A more detailed differentiation of issues in terms of correlation of their state with regional identity confirms the authors' conclusion about Bashkortostan and Kalmykia being underdeveloped regions among the pilot areas under review. Health issues are the most critical in Bashkortostan and Kalmykia, as evidenced by expert opinions of these republics. The experts also give lowest points to the authorities for the maintenance of the regional health system. The same situation can be observed in labor market and stable employment management. The authorities of the Moscow and Belgorod oblasts received the most satisfactory evaluations in terms of addressing the issues. In fact, these data reflect the development prospects of modern management systems in the regions under review, where regional business is more or less developed and the authorities establish satisfactory communication channels with the population.

In current conditions, which are not favorable enough for a modernization breakthrough as an optimal tool of social and cultural development of territories, the experts have been asked to assess their potential level of technical and technological (industrial and information) modernization relying on the scale of socio-cultural modernization developed by N.I. Lapin and L.A. Belyaeva. The integral assessment of the modernization level is an aggregate indicator of many factors for making a socio-cultural image of a specific region, which, in turn, is based on the *10 major problem blocks* (1. Region as a socio-cultural community. 2. Population and settlements. 3. Population's social well-being. 4. Population's cultural potential and capital. 5. Labor motivation and economic activity. 6. Standard of living, quality of living. 7. Social stratification and mobility. 8. Facts of innovation activity. 9. Public order and administrative offences. 10. State

and municipal management) and the *quality of 4 modernization components (technical and technological* – transition to a new technological structure/structures; **socio-economic** – change in the proportions of the main sectors of the economy as “immersed in the society” and adapting to its rules and functions without losing its particular characteristics; **socio-cultural** – includes a set of social and cultural changes; **institutional and regulatory** – changes in regulatory institutions, i.e. formal and informal rules of action for individuals and organizations in economic, political and public sphere) [12, p. 5]. But the authors focused on the first component. It has been researched for a long time in terms of integration and measurement of modernization processes by a Chinese scientist He Chuanqi, who proposed a general theory of modernization as a civilizational

process [20] and together with the Chinese Research Center developed a unique tool for studying the indices of two modernization stages – industrial and informational (including the integrated index of both stages based on international statistics). Since N.I. Lapin adapted this scale to studying the conditions of the Russian sociality, the authors tried to compare the aggregate ranking index of socio-cultural modernization of regions with expert estimates.

As a result, an interesting correlation has been revealed. The regions in the range of 2–6 points on the Lapin’s scale have more sustainable and well-organized management system. Experts from these regions note a high level of industrial and early information modernization (*Tab. 7. A region with critical values – 1 point – has the most deformed management system; expert evaluations*

Table 7. Level of technical and technological (industrial and informational) modernization of a region according to the expert survey. Level of modernization development of a region by integral indicators of the research of the regions' socio-cultural characteristics

Level of the region's modernization development by integral indicators of the research of the regions' socio-cultural characteristics (N.I. Lapin)	Level of technical and technological (industrial and informational) modernization of a region according to the expert survey (in average points from the average value on a 95% interval; n _{respondents} = 207, from the 1st to the 6th level)					
	1. We are at the very beginning of the industrial modernization	2. We are somewhere in the middle of industrial modernization	3. We are at the stage of industrial maturity	4. We are, along with the industrial modernization, at the initial stage of informational modernization	5. We are somewhere in the middle of informational modernization	6. We are at the stage of developed informational modernization
Moscow Oblast (6 points)			3.0698			
Republic of Bashkortostan (3 points)			3.1633			
Belgorod Oblast (2 points)			3.5217 — — →			
Republic of Kalmykia (1 point)		2.5435				

indicate a low level of industrialization and informatization – there is no place for any kind of modernization..

The authors continued the research and studied in detail what changes the experts expect in terms of restructuring management systems, improving the functional qualities of all components of the vertical power structure. Its functionality or dysfunctionality will greatly affect the way modernization processes are configured. However, as it turned out, regional authorities have no regard for structural and content changes neither in the short, nor in the long term. This idea is supported by own estimates: for example, 60% of heads of federal, regional and local regulatory and administrative authorities believe that the situation in the system of regional administration in the next 5 years, given the upcoming election, will not change. As they say, hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

But would it not be better to think about what should be done to reduce the emerging manifestations of social tension and potential conflict in advance? What should be changes today in the relations of power and management in order to at least reach the initial stage of socio-cultural and socio-managerial modernization in regions? These questions still remain rhetorical.

Methodological verification of expert opinions in the framework of their comparison with data of socio-economic and socio-political ratings

In order to ensure “experiment integrity” and determine the validity of the obtained data the authors performed a procedure of verification of some aggregate expert assessments by comparing them with data from public sources – socio-economic ratings of regions, which provides an opportunity to talk about the similarity or difference of expert estimates with other indicators of socio-cultural and economic activities of the regions. All in all, seven ratings of different analyst companies have been selected which, in the authors’ opinion, reflect the socio-economic and socio-administrative situation in the regions: the rating of the Ministry of Economic Development on the socio-economic development of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, the governors rating (Civil Society Development Foundation – CSDF), the UN human development index rating (HDI), the territory fiscal capacity rating (RIA rating, the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation), the quality of life rating (RIA rating) and the management efficiency rating in constituent entities of the Russian Federation in 2015, according to the Agency for Political and Economic Communications rating (APEC).

The first rating which the authors turned to is the official monitoring of regional performance evaluation according to the Ministry of Economic Development. It is interesting to note that by the end of 2014–2015, the Moscow Oblast is among the leading regions in terms of balanced development, but

the Republic of Bashkortostan lost its leading position and moved to the “inner circle” with some differences in sufficiently high values of the indexed indicators in general [14, p. 67], which, in fact, resonates with the expert evaluations of the activity of the Bashkiria authorities in solving the region’s socially important issues. The Republic of Kalmykia is now among the “outsiders”. In general, the indicators of regional management system development are aligned with the official rating of the Ministry of Economic Development; however, official data did not help locate the position of the Belgorod Oblast. It holds leading positions in terms of management system development.

Next, the authors used the governors rating according to CSDF which, according to its developers, has a high composite structure, based on data from the research of Public Opinion Foundation Georating, as well as on the characteristics of the economic situation in the region according to data from the Federal State Statistics Service, indices of media effectiveness calculated by the National Monitoring Service and on expert assessments and indicators of social well-being of the Russian regions¹.

Speaking of the governors’ position in ranking, the positions of three regions in 2015 are *very high* (on the developers’ gradation rating): the Belgorod Oblast (3rd place),

the Moscow Oblast (19–20), Bashkortostan (21–23). Oddly enough, the Kalmykia governor’s rating is considered *high* in contrast with the low rating of the level of regional modernization (1 point – low index, N.I. Lapin), though the expert’s statement clearly explains the situation in the region: “The current governor is trying to overcome the republic’s economic crisis created by the previous governor. He managed to establish communication with all opposition forces except for those owned by the previous governor. This contributes to the increase in the rating. However, the region’s economy is weak and the resources it produces are not enough for a breakthrough. There is still distrust in the governor’s team mostly consisting of old staff. The previous governor’s team drags the current government through the mud and smear campaigns, including for their own mistakes. Finally, suspicions of corruption have become traditional, which are almost impossible to avoid in modern society. That is why the growth dynamics is very slow”. This opinion reflects a set of socio-cultural, economic and socio-political factors which prevent the governor and the region from building an adequate management system and making a modernization breakthrough.

In general, the governors’ rating is followed by almost 2/3 of the experts (72%) who identical evaluations, equivalent to the indicators. This correlation is remains in the distribution by constituent entity: 92% in the Belgorod Obkloast, 85% in Kalmykia, 78% in

¹ Governors’ efficiency rating for 2015. Issue 12. Official CSDF website. Available at: <http://civilfund.ru/mat/95> (Accessed: 28.08.2016).

the Moscow Oblast, 74% in Bashkortostan. It is interesting to note that 96% of those interested in the rating commented on the current positions and their dynamics with not just a one-word answer such as “a good man, manager” or “a bad governor”, but with meaningful detailed comments assessing the situation in the socio-economic and socio-political state in the region, as well as in the context of the implementation of the governor’s managerial skills and his team’s activities. As an example, the authors provide the statements from the Belgorod Oblast: “The Governor of the Oblast is the guarantor of the region’s social stability in the mass consciousness of Belgorod citizens. Over the past 10–15 years the Oblast’s population associates the region’s socio-economic development with the governor’s effectiveness. Ye. Savchenko has an excellent reputation both within the region and beyond, which produces the feeling of pride and creates a high level of territorial identity among Belgorod citizens”. There ia also a quote from Bashkortostan: “The rating has improved due to works on the improvement of information transparency of the region’s head, as well as due to election at the appropriate level. The region also earned the right to host the SCO and BRICS summits and some sports and cultural events on an international level. There are some improvements in the economy, but they are of a more selective nature. The deteriorating economic situation prevents the republic’s head from becoming

one of the top ten heads of regions. The most severe issues are connected with the decline in activity of machine-building and chemical enterprises”.

As can be seen, such statements require special decoding so that it is possible to study in detail the problem structure of regional system organization and consider them when developing the integrated indicators of monitoring studies.

To verify expert assessments the authors used comparative data from HDI rating which has been published in the framework of the UN Development Program in annual reports on human development since 1990. The basic criteria for calculating HDI of a particular territory under study are comparing and measuring the standard of living, education and longevity. According to data of the Analytical Center under the Government of the Russian Federation presented in the Report on human development in the Russian Federation for 2015 [4], the leading positions in the integrated indicators are taken by the Belgorod Oblast (0.939; 11th position) followed by Bashkortostan (0.902; 20th position), the Moscow Oblast (0.892; 29th position) and Kalmykia being the last (0,760; 75th position). The authors asked the experts a correlated question which does not only reflect the problematic state of human resources in the region, but also describes the possible future development based on the existing potential of an individual: “Does the region possess sufficient resources,

primarily human potential, for accelerated development?" As a result, data similar to the rating results have been obtained. Thus, the regional capacity is estimated as the most sufficient in the Belgorod Oblast (60%). The second position, just like in the ranking, is held by Bashkortostan (56%), and the third and fourth, respectively, the Moscow Oblast (54%) and Kalmykia (only 25%). The authors make a conclusion, based on the studies of socio-cultural situation in the region by N.I. Lapin and L.A. Belyaeva, that the regions require a transition from the former state of the individual's total subordination to the socio-cultural environment, particularly government, to a modern relatively free liberal interaction of an individual with the environment. This will require a long evolution of the structure of the population's basic values "from the domination of basic values to an increase in the influence of liberal values (*authors' note: in the context of phenomenology of consciousness and human behavior in the system of relations between the authorities and the society, we would most likely speak about the need for a dominant of moderately-conservative values*); at the level of behavioral orientations – the evolution from paternalism to activism of individuals when solving vital problems" [9, p. 13].

As for the rating of donors and recipients on the budget supply of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, then the estimates are more comparable and similar. However, based on the obtained data it can be concluded that

experts have not yet detected the rapid trend of the regions' public debt downfall because regional budgets seems to be growing amid import substitution, but inflation consumes all incomes. According to the Ministry of Finance, the total state debt of the RF constituent entities (budget and commercial loans) has increased by 11% and as of January 1st, 2016 amounted to 2.318 trillion rubles², which is 229 billion rubles more than the year before. For comparison: in 2014 the national debt increased by 20%, in 2013 – by 28.6%, in 2012 – by 15%³. Among the analyzed regions, the "leader" in the amount of national debt is the Belgorod Oblast (106%), the second place is occupied by Kalmykia (64%), the third – by the Moscow Oblast (33%), the minimum amount of debt is in Bashkortostan (24%) (*Tab. 8*). The expert evaluations generally coincide with the trends recorded by RIA Rating. The greatest amount of debt is recorded in Kalmykia with minimum budget capacity (36.2%). The evaluations in the Belgorod Oblast are a little higher since the region is improving its economic performance; its budget capacity is 2 times higher despite the fact that both regions are subsidized in terms of the agricultural sector support. The minimum amount of debt is in

² Regions more and more often live in debt: RIA Rating briefing note. *Official website of RIA Rating Agency*. Available at: http://www.riarating.ru/regions_rankings/20160225/630011011.htm (Accessed: 12.08.2016)

³ Quality of Life Rating among Russian regions – 2015. *Official website of RIA Rating Agency*. Available at: http://www.riarating.ru/regions_rankings/20160225/630011011.htm (Accessed: 20.08.2016)

Table 8. RIA Rating of Russian regions by level of debt load (based on data from the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation) – end of 2014*. Data from expert survey

Rating of Russian regions by level of debt load – end of 2014					
Position in the rating among 85 regions/ RF constituent entity	Ratio of region's state debt as of January 1st, 2015 and region's budget tax ad non-tax revenues in 2014, %	Ration of the region's state debt As of January 1 st , 2014 to region's budget tax ad non-tax revenues in 2013, %	State debt change in 2014, %	Share of tax and non-tax returns in total budget revenues in, %	Expert evaluations of state debt (1 – high, 2 – average, 3 – low) (average of n=207), points)
Republic of Bashkortostan	24.7	21.1	24	75.2	2.4324
Moscow Oblast	33.4	31.2	23	84.6	2.1667
Republic of Kalmykia	64.3	51.1	36	36.2	1.7209
Belgorod Oblast	106.1	110.3	-2	63.5	1.9429

* Quality of Life Rating among Russian regions – 2015. *Official website of RIA Rating Agency*. Available at: http://www.riarating.ru/regions_rankings/20160225/630011011.htm (Accessed: 20.08.2016).

the Moscow Oblast and Bashkortostan. It should be noted that although the budget debt of Bashkortostan in percentage terms is lower than that of other regions, it is much higher in absolute terms (in rubles) (24631 million) than in Kalmykia, – 11 times (2057 million); as a result, many analysts put Bashkortostan from the group of donors to the group of recipients.

After using RIA Rating of the population's quality of life, the authors realized that they cannot yet make a comparison because the integrated index of the research which consists of 30 issues does not include the scale of demographic indicator made by the RIA Rating Agency. However, the issue of demographic growth and its dynamics is reviewed in more detail in the mass survey since this problem is the most sensitive and requires major quantitative data from people who feel all the seriousness of the situation affecting the demographic constants.

The authors are satisfied with the fact that they have been able to compare their research with another important rating which was reviewed and which is directly connected with the central discourse of the authors' research, namely, with the issues of governance efficiency in Russian regions. APEC which developed a system of indices, distinguishes the political-administrative block as a separate component of the integral indicator⁴.

Along with this block, the social and financial-economic blocks have been reviewed, as well as work of the regional bureaucracy. Based on mathematical methods of analysis, estimates of efficiency have been made (where 1 is as a positive maximum). As a result, evaluations of effectiveness by direction of the political-administrative

⁴ Governance efficiency rating in Russia regions in 2015. *Official website of Agency for Political and Economic Communication*. Available at: http://www.apecom.ru/projects/item.php?SECTION_ID=91&ELEMENT_ID=2362 (Accessed: 27.08.2016)

block indicate that the most favorable political and administrative climate is in the Belgorod (0.79; 5th position) and Moscow oblasts (0.703; 10th position). Below, with an average indicator, are Bashkortostan (0.649; 17th position), and Kalmykia, with minimum score – holding the last position (0.542; 66th position).

Speaking of the present research, in order to have an objective image of regional administration performance, the authors asked the experts to evaluate the authorities' activities in terms of solution of 30 most important social issues. The comparison was held in comparison with 2013 (was stated in the question), i.e. taking into account crisis phenomena which occurred during this period.

A positive observation is that the authors had an opportunity to conduct the

examination precisely on the background of crisis conditions and obtain the most accurate results, with minimum errors, on the regional power structure units functioning. With an overall consideration of the obtained data it can be stated that the regions' evaluations produced by the experts are quite similar to APEC final rankings. Thus, in the Moscow (1.88) and Belgorod oblasts (1.87) administration performance is assessed as rather positive (or without any change) compared to 2013, and in the republics of Kalmykia and Bashkortostan business the situation is clearly becoming worse (*Tab. 9*). If we turn to integrated data on the activities of the authorities in dealing with 30 social issues most important for the region, the effectiveness in this regard in the two republics will also be the lowest (*Tab. 10*), and in the Belgorod and Moscow

**Table 9. Evaluation of regional administration performance compared to 2013
(in average points from the average value on a 95% confidence interval;
 $n_{\text{respondents}} = 207$; 1 – improved, 2 – remained unchanged, 3 – deteriorated)**

Region	Average	N
Moscow Oblast	1.8837	43
Belgorod Oblast	1.8723	47
Republic of Kalmykia	2.0769	52
Republic of Bashkortostan	2.0238	42
Total	1.9674	184

**Table 10. Integrated indicators of authorities' activities in 4 pilot regions
in 2015 (in average points from the average value on a 95% confidence interval;
 $n_{\text{respondents}} = 207$; 1 – worse, 2 – satisfactory, 3 – better than in 2013).**

Region	Average	N
Moscow Oblast	1.8679	53
Belgorod Oblast	1.9796	49
Republic of Kalmykia	1.9111	45
Republic of Bashkortostan	2.2326	43
Total	1.9895	190

oblasts, respectively, higher. In general, after reviewing all the selected regions the authors conclude that addressing these issues at the regional level of the vertical power structure is not implemented in a proper way, at least the situation is not getting better but remains at the same level. This raises the question about the quality of local management systems.

A more detailed differentiation of problem solving by the authorities in relation to regional identity the authors conclusion about Bashkortostan and Kalmykia being the most critical regions from the point of view of local management system organization and functioning is confirmed. These regions, as well as other regions under review, demonstrate a very negative situation regarding the solution of socially important issues such as population's health, labor market management, employment stability. In fact, a delay in their solution has already deformed the resource base of socio-cultural and socio-economic modernization and now leads to further alienation of power from the population and, as a result, to the escalation of social tensions.

On the prospects of using data of online examination for increasing the level of governance system development in regions

As has already been shown, the authors compared various methods of obtaining knowledge about the problems of

management in the regions, the nature and level of management system development for fully and quickly assessing the level of regional management system development amid general and local problems of territory's modernization development. In this context, the most effective, in the authors' opinion, channel for receiving the missing data and information about the state and prospects of modernization (industrial and information) development of regions is the channel of online examination, which, of course, still needs to be improved by clarifying the criteria for the selection of experts through accounting mechanisms and introduction of expert opinions in management decisions at different levels of vertical power structure functioning.

The authors demonstrate their readiness to move to action: to pilot tests of new data collection and processing methods; technologies of improving management structures in Russian regions; to move, together with expert structures, towards science-based management taking into account the influence of socio-cultural factors and peculiarities of each region's development; to developing feedback technology and forming socially active subjectivity (of groups of social action), as well as to developing new social management technologies based on logical-cognitive research programs.

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