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EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN RUSSIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND RURAL CITIZENS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

To assess the level of satisfaction of citizens with the work of local authorities on issues of local importance, the quantitative method was taken as the main method - questioning the population on the analysis of the interaction with local authorities, the quality of work with citizens' appeals. The village of Mokhivka in the Talitsky district of the Sverdlovsk region was taken as a testing ground. This locality is a typical rural territory, where the bulk of the population is economically connected with agriculture. Such settlements in the Sverdlovsk region, are an overwhelming majority.

The scientific novelty lies in the fact that the population, on the one hand, does not seek to participate in the implementation of issues of local importance, its rights, and on the other hand, it distrusts the authorities in the ability and desire to solve their problems. In addition, in rural areas, the mechanisms of interaction between the government and the population are poorly developed than in cities, because due to the insignificance of the population there are fewer unique situations and problems of residents. Usually, the solution to problems is subordinated to previously built algorithms that do not correspond to changing legislation and the economic situation.

Disciplinary: Public Administration, Rural Development, Law.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The formation of modern civil society, the further development of local government is associated with the activity of citizens, primarily in the community, when addressing issues of local importance

in such key forms of participation as a local referendum, municipal elections, citizens' meetings, appeals to local governments, territorial public government as well as the law-making initiative of citizens.

The interaction of local governments and the citizens is the main element of the mechanism of social interactions, because the right to appeal to state bodies and local governments is an inalienable right of every citizen.

The main thing for the development of local governments is people's awareness of personal responsibility and responsibility not only in arranging their municipality, but also in the very participation in elections, participation in communication with the leadership and representatives of the city. The problem is the contradictions of society, its nature and attitude to power and vice versa, power to society, contributes to a slowdown in the development of economic, social, political, and even spiritual institutions. This problem of population interaction determines the relevance of the study. In our country, local government is receiving increasing attention as one of the attributes of Russian statehood, a necessary element of the democratic organization of state and public life of each state (Nikitina et al., 2019).

The elaboration degree of the issues of the local authorities work in interacting with the citizens is characterized by the accumulated extensive theoretical, methodological and empirical material containing an analysis of the work of the municipality with citizens.

According to Osipov (2012), the subjects of the process of interaction with government representatives are:

- citizens and relevant public organizations. In most cases interaction with them occurs irregularly, while the initiator of such interaction is most often a citizen who has certain problems and requests that he addresses to the relevant authorities;

- business entities (enterprises, organizations). With them most often the interaction process is characterized by systematic nature, carried out in accordance with regulated protocols using established forms of documents (Osipov, 2012).

Terentyeva (2016) highlights such key forms of interaction between local authorities and communities as mutual information about the needs and problems of local authorities and residents of communities; public participation in solving problems and meeting urgent needs; social partnership; delegation of authority.

Adamskaya (2016) and Gadzhieva (2015) briefly and clearly formulated the main forms of social partnership, referring to them: mutual negotiations (consultations) on aspects of regulation of labor and social relations; collective bargaining regarding the preparation of relevant agreements and also their conclusion. Table 1 presents the structural and functional model of interaction between local authorities and the citizens.

In addition to the above forms of interaction between government and society, at the present stage, various electronic methods and forms of communication are widely used as part of the implementation of the Electronic Russia program at the regional and municipal levels. The Internet portals of state authorities and local authorities are called upon to fulfill the functions of organizing and directly engaging in interaction with the citizens and organizations, providing them with the opportunity to contact various authorized persons to solve their problems and issues and to control the process of applying.

Table 1: Structural and functional model of interaction between local authorities and the citizens

Direction of interaction	Forms and Channels	Performance Evaluation Options
Management of economic, socio-political, cultural and other spheres of life of the municipality	Municipal elections, recall of deputies	The level of trust of the electorate in power The effectiveness of solving social problems
	Local referendum	The number of decisions made by referendum, their effectiveness
	Law-making initiative of the population	The number of civic initiatives, appeals (feedback)
	Territorial public self-government	The effectiveness of territorial public self-governments
	Population Survey	The effectiveness of decisions based on an in-depth study of a social problem through a population survey
Joint activity (with the participation of the citizens) in various areas of public life (economic, cultural, socio-political, etc.)	Meetings, conferences, addresses	The number of solved social problems, the number of calls
	Social and political actions	The number of participants in social, political and other actions; purposefulness of actions to address social, economic, cultural and political issues; satisfaction of the municipality' residents with the results of these actions; number of problems resolved
	Formation and development of the sector represented by non-profit organizations	The level of activity of non-profit organizations; development trends in the number of non-profit organizations; coverage of resolved social issues; government trust in non-profit organizations, etc.

The dependence of the management quality on the level of civic participation is manifested to the greatest extent at the level of local authorities. It is no coincidence that efficiency along with local autonomy and local democracy is one of the main attributes of developed local authorities; moreover, these signs are so interconnected that one is often revealed through the other. The legitimization of local self-government largely depends on how well the results of the activities of the municipal authorities correspond to the interests of the local citizens. On the other hand, the prospects for this institution of public authority are rarely perceived today only through the prism of the development tasks of a particular local community. Global politics and the economy place high demands on the organization of a public administration system, the integrity and comprehensiveness of management decisions. In this sense, the effect of local authorities is a prerequisite for social and political stability (Guskova & Neretina, 2015).

For many Russians, there is an obvious mismatch between the volume and complexity of the tasks facing the local population and the full powers and resources that are at the disposal of the local authorities. In the first place, citizens are concerned about the decline in living standards (low salaries, pensions, higher prices for housing services, inflation), unemployment, low quality of public services, the spread of negative public relations, public relations, corruption (public). In the submission of citizens, the responsibility for solving these problems traditionally rested with the state, but to this day it has been divided between different levels. Those who have a more differentiated approach to determining the role of local authorities, most often relate to the sphere of responsibility of increasing the price of housing and communal services, low wages and pensions, unemployment, poor road conditions, problems with beautification. To the greatest extent, the discrepancy between the volume of compliance and resource limitations is typical for rural areas, as well as for subsidized municipalities and regions, whose residents represent the potential effectiveness of local authorities.

The diversity and complexity of the problems that exist in the territory of a particular

municipality, the specifics and perceptions of residents, certainly affect the level of social activity. However, the emergence of a problem (or awareness of it by the majority of the citizens) is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of social activity. The level of activity of the citizens on resolving issues of local importance is determined by a whole complex of diverse factors: economic, political, cultural, demographic and psychological. One of the complex indicators of civilian activity is the quality of publicly dominant communes. As the studies show, the Russians have sufficient knowledge and competence in the basic issues of the life of their municipality, they know its life from the inside, and thanks to the modern level of information and computerization, it has become possible to obtain, analyze and use the necessary information (Vasiliev, 2013).

Another reason for the low activity of the citizens in solving local problems is the disbelief of the majority of citizens in the ability to influence decision-making and the related distrust of authorities at all levels. A situation in which people, not trusting the administration of the municipality, are refused to provide resources, and without adequate resources, they are unable to properly perform their functions, the researchers call the «vicious spiral» of public administration. It is paradoxical, but the level of trust in the bodies of local authorities is substantially lower than the regional and federal authorities, although the local government is the closest to the population. Moreover, the lack of trust provokes manipulation of public opinion already on the grassroots level, an imitation of civil participation, which in reality should be the basis of a local political process and local democracy. In the absence of developed socio-political communications, the idea of the effectiveness of local authorities is significantly different in the heads of government and society.

2 METHOD

An analysis of the structure and types of local government in the Russian Federation was carried out using the following scientific methods and principles: a systematic method, a questioning method, an included observation method, which made it possible to determine the prerequisites for the occurrence of the phenomenon in question.

In order to identify the features and the effectiveness of the interaction of local self-government bodies with the population, 43 residents of the village of Mokhireva, Talitsky District, Sverdlovsk Region, age 18-70 years old, were examined (based on the methodology of Smorgunov (2017)).

3 STUDY DETAILS

The results of the survey showed a low level of appeals of the citizens to local authorities: 65% of respondents never contacted the authorities, 19% rarely, 15% sometimes and only 2% sometimes. When interacting with local authorities, each second respondent personally addressed a specialized source of information or a means of communication; every fifth person implemented this verbal interaction through a personal visit to officials (20.2%); approximately every seventh - by written request (14.8%), 8.7% - by contacting the mass media (Figure 1). The main goals of the population's appeal to the representatives of the authorities are as follows: 91,4% - asking for help or complaints, 4,9% - expressing one's opinion on any issue.

At the same time, the percentage of the population satisfied with the solution of their problems through local authorities was independent of the channel and the purpose of the appeal, but it does not allow us to talk about the high efficiency of the latter's actions: every fourth respondent was able to

completely solve the problem; about the same part of the respondents did not get the desired result; every second person who appealed had part of the decision.

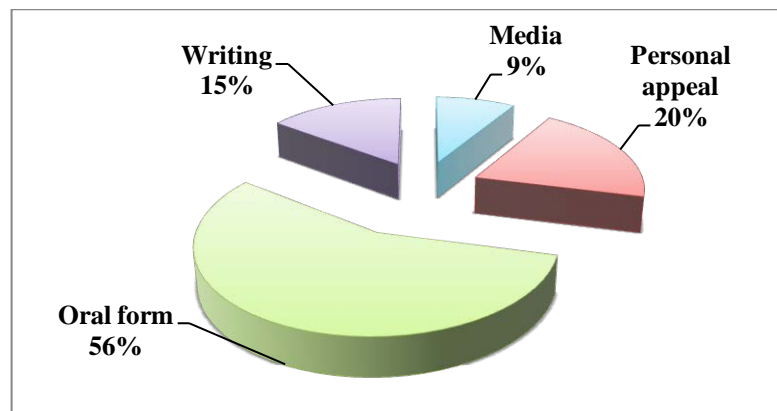


Figure 1: Channels of residents' appeals to local authorities (%)

It can be assumed that representatives of the authorities pay a lot of attention to working with the citizens, but the effectiveness of such activities can be significantly higher. This is confirmed by the answers to the question about the degree of citizens' trust to the local authorities (Figure 2).

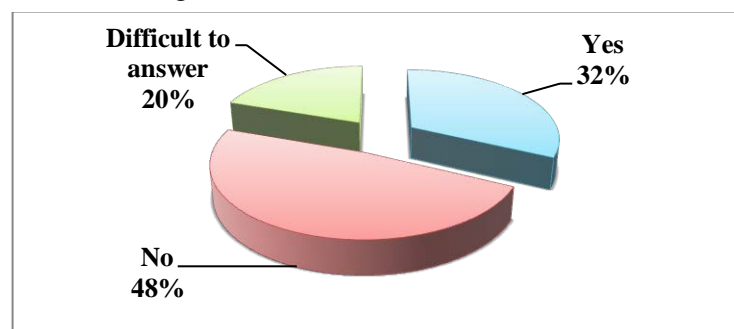


Figure 2: The distribution of answers to the questions was: "Do you think that local authorities are interested in solving your problems?", %

Taking into account that the level of public confidence in local authorities is a rather important indicator of efficiency and interactions, it is interesting to trace the degree of the respondents trust depending on their social and demographic characteristics. In particular, it turned out that men were more inclined to positively assess the interest of the local authorities in solving the problems of the population than women did. Representatives of the young generation (aged 18 to 30 years) generally trust the municipal authority more than they did if they were middle-aged or older (Table 2).

The correlation was especially pronounced when analyzing the level of confidence of the respondents in the local government depending on the level of income. In particular, it turned out that a population with higher incomes had a greater confidence in the municipal government than citizens with low incomes (Table 2).

It can be assumed that personal security of citizens is often associated with economically sound development of the municipality, in which the merit of local authorities is. On the contrary, among people with low incomes, local authorities can be associated as «the culprit of all problems and troubles», completely uninterested in «benefiting the people».

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: “Do you think that local authorities are interested in solving your problems?” (%)

Sign (criterion) of distribution by social groups	Subgroup share, %	Distribution of answer options by subgroups and characteristics,% of the total population of respondents (% to a specific subgroup of respondents)		
		Answer options		
		Yes	No	Difficult to answer
General distribution of responses	100.0	32.1	48.2	19.7
Depending on gender:				
Men	48.2	18.6 (38.6)	20.9 (43.4)	8.7 (18.1)
Women	51.8	13.5 (26.1)	27.3 (52.7)	11.0 (21.2)
Depending on age:				
From 18 to 20	3.0	1.8 (60.0)	1.2 (40.0)	-
From 21 to 30	21.4	9.3 (43.5)	10.1 (47.2)	2.0 (9.3)
From 31 to 40	23.6	8.4 (35.6)	12.1 (51.3)	3.1 (13.1)
From 41 to 50	17.3	5.1 (29.5)	6.4 (37.0)	5.8 (33.5)
From 51 to 60	15.7	3.2 (20.4)	7.4 (47.1)	5.1 (32.5)
Over 60	19.0	4.3 (22.6)	11.0 (57.9)	3.7 (19.5)
Depending on the average monthly income per family member for the last year				
Less 5 000 rub.	21.7	4.2 (19.4)	16.4 (75.6)	1.1 (5.1)
From 5 000 to 9 999 rub.	36.3	8.8 (24.2)	16.7 (46.0)	10.8 (29.8)
From 10 000 to 19 999 rub.	32.8	14.3 (43.6)	12.3 (37.5)	6.2 (18.9)
Over 20 000 rub.	9.2	4.8(52.2)	2.8 (30.4)	1.6 (17.4)

An assessment of the activities of local authorities by the citizens showed that the utmost dissatisfaction of the population was caused by utilities, environmental protection, the level of development and accessibility of healthcare, and transport services (Table 3).

Citizens' assessment of the socio-economic situation in the village of Mokhireva showed their positive attitude: according to 70.2% of respondents, the socio-economic situation in the village has improved over the past 10 years, 14.8% has worsened, 15.0% has remained unchanged.

Table 3: Citizens' assessment of the activities of local governments of the Mokhireva administration (on a five-point scale)

Estimated score	Rank	Average score
Catering services	1	4.62
Fire safety	2	4.45
The work of cultural institutions	3	4.36
The quality of primary education	4	4.24
Domestic service	5	4.14
The development of physical education and sports	6	4.07
Secondary education quality	7	4.06
Communication services	8	3.97
Road condition	9	3.78
Landscaping and landscaping	10	3.62
Trade organization	11	3.61
Work with children and youth	12	3.47
Public Guard • dka	13	3.35
Information transparency of administration	14	3.34
Transport service	15	3.24
Level of development and accessibility of health care	15	3.24
Environmental protection	16	2.62
Housing services	17	2.38

Obviously, such favorable factors as active development, improvement of the district, reconstruction of roads, etc., have been noticed and appreciated by the majority of local residents,

which in general is associated with an improvement in the socio-economic situation in the village.

About one in seven respondents speaks of serious changes in the relationship between representatives of local authorities and the citizens in connection with the ongoing transformation processes in various areas of the life of the village (15,2%). Approximately one in three (34.8%) believes that the changes have occurred, but they are not significant enough; every fifth (25.2%) is sure that the transformation processes did not affect the relationship between local authorities and the citizens.

Of particular interest for the study was the level of information openness of local governments for the population, as well as the level of awareness (awareness) of the latter about the activities of the authorities.

Only 3% of respondents were fully satisfied with the informational openness of local authorities bodies for the citizens, 17% were fully satisfied, and 35% were «more likely than not». It is alarming that 45% of the respondents who were «not satisfied» and «found it difficult to answer».

Concerning the awareness of the activities of local authorities bodies, the citizens of the Mokhireva administration expressed mixed opinions. So, 58% of respondents are either not informed or are not informed much. Only 2% of citizens were fully informed (Figure 3).

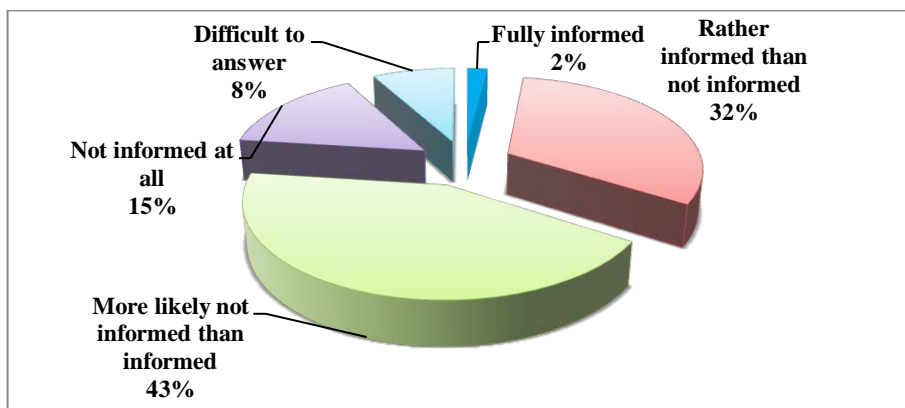


Figure 3: Distribution of answers of respondents to the question about the degree of citizens' awareness about the local authorities activities, %

This low indicator can be explained, among other things, by the passivity and indifference of some villagers, because in order to be informed, one needs to have interest (curiosity) and the intention to receive information, while the variety of sources of receipt of such information is steadily increasing.

The main information about the activities of government bodies is provided by respondents: from local television programs 10%, local radio 23%, conversations with relatives, friends, neighbors 23%, materials from city and regional newspapers - 43%, conversations with work colleagues, business partners 12%, central newspapers 8%, Internet 67%.

Among the effective forms of interaction with local authorities, the citizens identified such as municipal elections, gatherings and meetings, as well as appeals to local authorities. The rest of the forms — conferences, public hearings, local referenda, a survey, and law-making initiative — were not described by the respondents as effective, not because they did not consider them as such, but because they had no idea about them. This is because, in practice, local governments practically do not apply these forms.

At the final stage of the study, the degree of readiness of the citizens to assist the authorities in resolving issues of local importance was revealed. The results of the survey showed that 72% of the citizens are not ready to provide any assistance to local authorities. This fact indicates low civil liability, passivity of the citizens, as well as unwillingness, in addition to participating in elections and appeals to authorities to solve personal problems, to cooperate with them.

Drawing conclusions on the study, it should be noted that, despite the presence of some negative points, in general the municipal government in the eyes of the residents of the Mokhireva administration of the Talitsky district of the Sverdlovsk region appears to be quite capable, within the framework of existing rights and powers, to solve everyday problems of the municipality, however, the degree of effectiveness its decisions, according to a significant portion of respondents, may be significantly higher.

The nature of municipal authorities in the perception of the citizens seems twofold. So, on the one hand, the positive changes in the life of the village over the past ten years have affected the presence of a significant share of the population, who positively assess the local authorities in the village. On the other hand, in the view of a certain part of the respondents, it is in some way a formal institution that does not respond quickly enough to the needs of the local citizens and does not take into account its needs.

4 DISCUSSION

An analysis of the practice of interaction between the Mokhireva government and citizens showed that, despite a rather high level of development of such forms of interaction and public activity of citizens as citizens' appeals, participation in elections, the real social activity of citizens in solving local problems remains extremely low. One of the main reasons for such a low real level of social activity in solving local problems is the lack of a proper level of trust of citizens in local governments and confidence in the possibility of their effective participation in local self-government. People do not believe that due to their activity they can change their lives for the better and that there is no real possibility to influence the decisions made.

Therefore, the absence of existing mechanisms of local governance, the traditional distrust of citizens in power and disbelief in the possibility of active participation in governance, have developed appropriate stereotypes, social passivity and humility among citizens of Mokhireva.

Obviously, in fact a scanty number of manifestations of the civic activism of the Mokhireva administration is associated with a low level of legal culture and people's awareness.

This study results allow us to conclude that at present the potential of such effective forms of citizen participation as the law-making initiative and public hearings has not been fully realized in the Mokhireva administration.

Indeed, despite the legislatively provided opportunity for citizens to implement the law-making initiative, the residents of Mokhireva do not always strive to take an active part in public life for various reasons: distrust of public authorities; lack of free time due to work, study, etc. unwillingness to take responsibility in case of adverse consequences of the proposed initiative. And if citizens have a desire to take part in the rulemaking process, they most often do not have information about where to apply with questions and suggestions.

In addition, the procedure for introducing a law-making initiative is characterized by extreme complexity. Citizens should prepare an inconceivable number of supporting documents for the draft

normative act, make it a financial and economic justification, provide a certificate of the state of legislation in this area. These requirements are unjustified from the point of view of the real capabilities of the initiative group. But that is not all. A huge number of signatures are required to support the legislative initiative.

In Mokhireva, there is great potential, and this kind of participation of citizens in local government is like public hearings.

5 CONCLUSION

Due to the fact that Law No. 131-FL «On the General Principles of the Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation» provides for the obligatory holding of public hearings to discuss draft municipal law projects: charters of municipal formations, amendments and additions to them; local budgets and reports on performance; plans and programs for the development of municipal formations; rules of land use and construction, planning projects and land surveying projects; as well as the issues related to the transformations of municipalities, they are spent quite an hour, but often there is a change in purpose and implementation: instead of an objective discussion of the problems, it is used to formally approve in advance certain it has been resolved.

Meanwhile, there are still prospects for improving the institution of public hearings today, in particular, the possibility of expanding the variability of the forms of holding them should be recognized as an actual direction.

To solve this problem, we propose the following to increase the involvement of citizens in the process of managing the municipality: citizens who want to express their opinion, but cannot attend public hearings due to employment, can send a text appeal to the official website of the city district and discuss it with the deadline chat participants or speak at a public hearing in the form of a web conference.

In a similar way, it can be implemented into practice to use local polls and citizens' appeals at the local level, which will provide an opportunity to express opinions on the issues discussed at public hearings for those residents who, for one reason or another, are not able to participate in them.

A study of documents and the results of the sociological survey of residents of the Mokhireva administration revealed a number of problems in organizing the interaction of the local government of the municipality with citizens: a decrease in the frequency of citizens' appeals to the administration, the prevalence of complaints in appeals, insufficient use of information and communication resources of interaction, almost half of the respondents do not have a clear opinion about whether they are ready to interact with local authorities and whether they need such interaction.

As noted by modern researchers, in particular O.V. Telegina (2010), in the practice of municipal bodies, not the most effective measures to enhance the participation of citizens in governance prevail. In this regard, the federal program Sustainable development of rural territories for 2014-2017 and for the period until 2020, as the task facing authorities at different levels, indicates enhancing the participation of citizens living in rural areas in the implementation of socially significant projects.

6 AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Information can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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