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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHORITIES IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC
POLICY: AN ATTEMPT OF SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT***

SUMMARY. This article focuses on the analysis of the relationship between the level and nature of civil society development, public policy and the characteristics of transition to innovative development in Russia. This assessment is based on a small target sample (302 respondents – public policy agents: regional authorities, the employees of state and local government agencies, representatives of business sector and representatives of non-profit organizations (NPOs). The article highlights the specificity of the post-Soviet social system types: the stratification frame is formed by state authorities, covering the bulk of material, labour and information resources. As a result, the authors of the study conclude that the authorities are satisfied with the actual conditions and opportunities for the development of civil society, while members of other communities are rather unhappy about the situation. On the one hand, the elite consider it necessary to apply non-economic control instead of the economic one, on the other hand – democratic institutions are not necessary for either authorities or business. In fact, the social basis of actual mechanisms of public administration is not formed in society, while the economic system has almost completed its formation as an etocratic one providing the merge of economic and political elites practically excluding social and economic mechanisms and social mobility.

KEY WORDS. Administration, economy, region, indicators, indexes.

The famous Polish sociologist P. Sztompka showed that those in power can always achieve the division of labour in accordance with their own private interests or block differentiation when it is contrary to their interests. He brought a lot of documentary evidence that “those who have the greatest power sufficiently determine the efficiency criterion” [1]. The relevance of this statement can be identified at any given time, in real life of individuals and social communities.

Economic inequality is inevitable, but the excessive inequality poses a threat to social integrity. In this sense, the administration functions are included in the fabric of social life. Economic inequality takes the form of social and cultural differences. Individuals, who do not have money and specific products, lack necessary social and cultural basis. The methods of forming power structures constitute the basis of any society. The specificity of the post-Soviet social system was that the stratification frame there was formed by governmental structures, encompassing a vast majority of the

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material, labour and information resources. According to V. Radayev and O. Shkaratan, the key position in the power structure belongs to the allocation of resources [2].

A real social process is when the authorities maintain such social order, that their activities are mainly motivated by the establishment of their own status (power) and by getting political, economic and administrative profit [3]. The bulk of the profit (income, or revenue) is distributed through the system of differentiated prices, taxes and fees. And even those resources that are available to the manufacturer, can be used only in accordance with the regulations imposed by the authorities. It should be noted that in this position, there are significant details researched by M. Weber [4].

Besides the economic dimension of stratification, M. Weber also considered such important aspects as property, power and prestige [5]. Pierre Bourdieu, in his turn, singled out a social pattern according to which not only do people of high social status enjoy financial wellbeing, but they also have more information, more resources, and more opportunities to maintain their social advantage. P. Bourdieu found out that social networks have real monetary value because they provide access to such additional benefits as a good job, good university education, and good accommodation [6].

The analysis of literature and expert interviews showed that in Russian contemporary reality the place of net economic relations is taken by a special kind of relationship, which became known as “power-proprietary” and is being developed by such scholars as L.S. Vasiliev (the phenomenon of power-property) [7], S.G. Kirdina (the institutional matrices theory) [8], Y.I. Semenov (the phenomenon of “protostate” as a type of traditional social structure) [9], R.M. Nureyev (the phenomenon of oriental despotism) [10], V.V. Radaev and O.I. Shkaratan (the phenomenon of power and property) [11], and etacratia relations described by T.I. Zaslavskaya [12].

It is stated that market economy based on free competition gives better results than compulsory regulation of economic activity. However, the same sources emphasize the need to control the socio-economic development. Turning to the analysis of the content of the regional level of socio-economic development, it is significant to stress that it is associated with the manifestation of social inequality in the territorial projection, with the processes of formation of territorial communities and the territorial division of labour.

The main question of sociology “Is there a possibility of social order?” in this article is replaced by the question “Is there a possibility of effective administration of socio-economic development?” In this context the assessment of quality of socio-economic development of the region is particularly important, and it is impossible without examining the significance of these indicators.

The empiric research conducted in August 2012, was aimed at identifying the relationship between the level and the essence of the development of a civil society, public policy and the particulars of the transition to innovative development in Russia, for technological innovation and economic growth, as the world experience shows, occurs in countries where there is development of citizenship and a high degree of trust between the government, business and civil society initiatives.

We used a small target sample for this assessment. We interviewed 302 respondents – representatives of the social groups that are active participants in public policy in

the region. Within the analysis we identified four groups: 1) regional government (the staff of executive units of a city and a district; deputies or members of the staff of representative bodies) – 18%; 2) employees of state and municipal institutions (this group comprised managers and employees of departments and divisions of tax inspection, police, the statistics department, heads of departments of municipal hospitals, heads of departments of educational institutions, etc.) – 17%; 3) representatives of the business environment (the owners of small and medium-sized businesses, and managers at various levels) – 33%; and 4) representatives of the non-profit sector (leaders of nonprofit and public organizations and their employees) – 33%.

The questionnaire includes two essential questions. The first contains a set of indicators* characterizing the degree of development of subjects and institutions of public policy in the region. In brief, public policy implies "the programs and priorities of the authorities, mechanisms and technologies for their implementation; these programs were developed relying on and considering the expectations of major groups of civil society – business, non-profit and public organizations via their representatives" [14], i.e. the main focus in the study of public policy is placed on civil and business participation in the interaction with the government while solving social problems.

The experts were asked to evaluate 22 parameters that characterize different aspects of manifestation of public policy and of public sphere in the region, as well as of active subjects of this process – parties, business, non-profit organizations, regional executive and legislative authority, local government, trade unions, etc.

The main criterion of the assessment was the degree of this or that parameter in the regional public policy. The parameters were offered in the horizontal line of the questionnaire. The assessment was conducted according to a 10-point scale, where "1" was the worst index, and "10" – the best one. The second question contained 28 parameters of administration efficiency regarding socio-economic development of the region. The respondents were asked to comment on the value of each parameter to assess the quality of regional governance. The assessment was carried out according to a 10-point scale, where "1" was an irrelevant index to assess the quality of socio-economic development of the region, while "10" was a significant index.

The average rating of development of subjects and institutions of public policy in the region, given by the respondents according to 22 parameters, was 5.17 (almost the middle of the scale), which enables us to make a conclusion about the low efficiency of interaction between the government and society in the region.

The following three parameters, according to the respondents' opinion, got the worst assessment: anti-corruption mechanisms, public participation in the discussion of important issues with the government, the mechanisms of public control over the authoritative bodies. Most of the remaining parameters also received extremely low assessment: the assessment line on most parameters was 5 (on the 10-point scale). The only parameter that got positive assessment was "There is tolerance to religion, to people of other concessions and nationalities" – the average of this parameter was 6.47 (Fig. 1).

* The methodology was worked out by V.N. Yakimets [13].

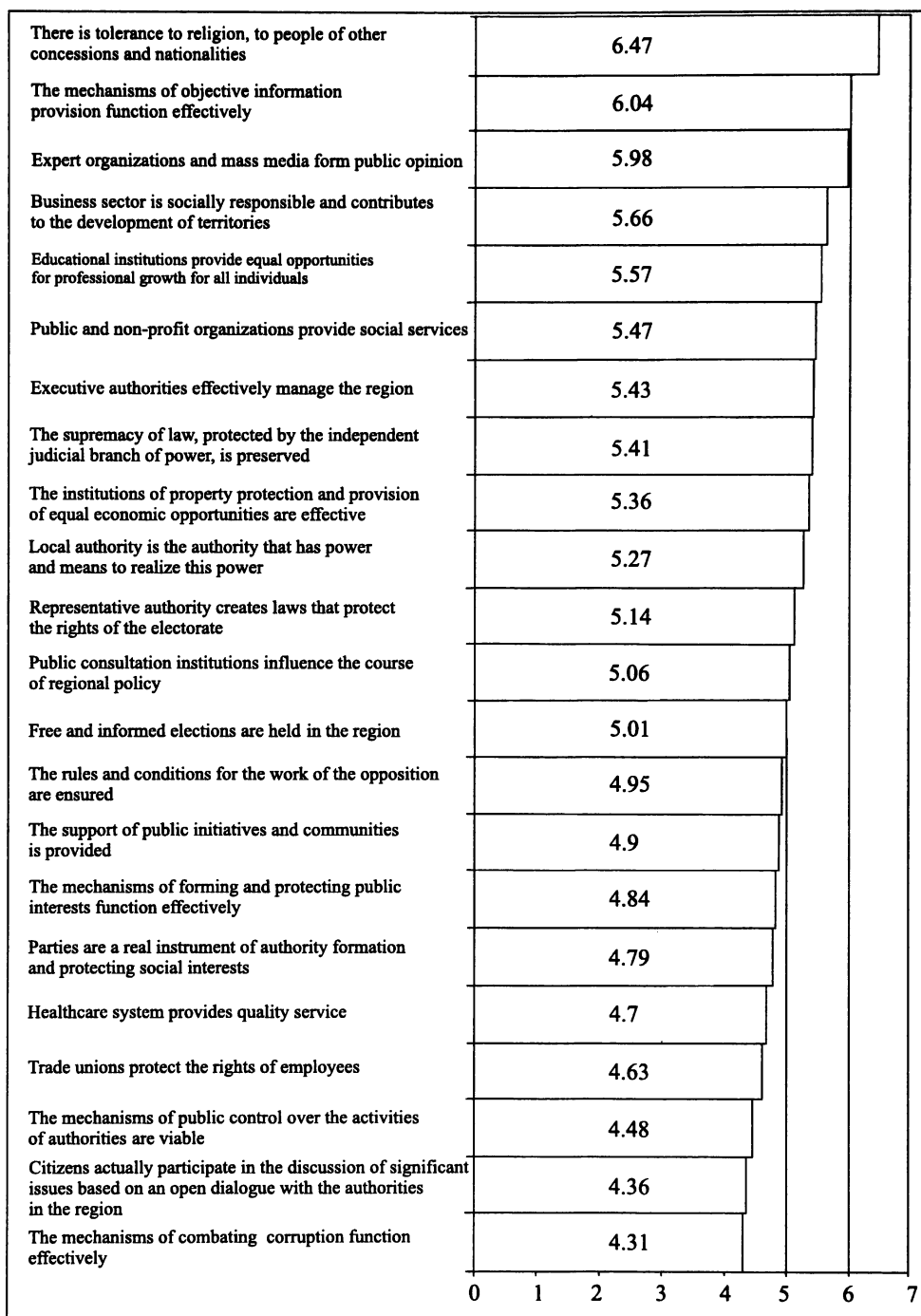


Fig. 1. The average rating of the parameters of development of subjects and institutions of public policy in the region (1 – the worst point, 10 – the best point)

The assessment points were subdivided into three groups: 1. Positive assessment (10, 9, 8); 2. Medium value (7, 6, 5, 4), and 3. Negative assessment (1, 2, 3). The respondents provide critical assessment of the situation on 13 parameters out of 22, more than 25% of the respondents gave the worst assessment. 40 % of the respondents give the worst assessment of three parameters – “the mechanisms of combating corruption are effective” – 44%; “the mechanisms of public control over the activities of public authorities are efficient” – 40%; “people really participate in the discussion of significant issues based on an open dialogue with the authorities in the region” – 38%.

The results of assessing quality parameters of interaction between the government and civil community in the region are significantly different depending on the group of the respondents. Thus, the authorities give significantly higher scores on all parameters (the average on 22 parameters is 6.40). Business community is the most critical group according to the respondents (the average on all parameters is 4.66). The latter give extremely low assessment on almost all parameters, except the following ones – “Business is socially responsible and contributes to the development of the region”, “Educational institutions provide equal opportunities for professional growth and development of individuals”, “There is tolerance to religions, to people of other confessions and nationalities”.

Representatives of public organizations are more cautious in their assessments than the business community. Their assessment is closer to the rated average, but significantly lower than that given by the authorities (the average on all parameters is 5.14). Employees of state and municipal institutions, as estimated by given assessment points, do not associate themselves with authorities, as their assessment of public policy is closer to the assessment points provided by the business sector and non-profit sphere (the average is 5.09).

Thus, the authorities, in their vision of the situation, are distancing themselves from other active subjects of the regional community. Their assessment is biased towards desired, close to the position of «satisfaction» with the real conditions and opportunities for the development of civil community, while representatives of other regional communities are rather dissatisfied with the situation prevailing in the region, for they do not see opportunities for their civil and business initiatives development.

Further, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the 28 parameters that can be applied to assess the quality of socio-economic development of the region. Based on the analysis of the Presidential Decree of June 28, 2007 № 825, the following set of indicators to assess the effectiveness of public administration on the territory of the subjects of the Russian Federation was offered:

1. The indexes of economic development (gross regional product (GRP) per capita, the employment rate in the economy (the index of labour activity); the unemployment rate; the degree of sectoral dependence of regional economy on Russia’s total economic environment; the level of innovative economic development of the region). 2. The

indexes characterizing the investment process in the region (The investment process in the region, the support of entrepreneurship; the level of economic security of business, the development of infrastructure for business). 3. Competence in management of the region (the effectiveness of fiscal policy (budget deficit / surplus); Availability and implementation of the regional development strategy). 4. Living standards; accommodation provision; life expectancy rate. 5. The level of development of the social sphere (the level of social security, the level of healthcare, affordability of education in the region; availability of cultural institutions and sports facilities, the development of social infrastructure). 6. Public safety (crime rate; the dynamics of social problems (drugs, alcohol) in the region; environmental conditions according to main characteristics (the condition of air, water, and soil). 7. Satisfaction of the population with the quality and accessibility of services in the spheres of education, healthcare, and culture (satisfaction of the population with the quality and accessibility of services in the cultural sphere; satisfaction of the population with the quality and accessibility of healthcare services; satisfaction of the population with the quality and accessibility of services in the sphere of education). 8. Human Potential (the quality of human resources). 9. Indexes of the quality of interaction between government and civil community (the prerequisites for citizen's participation in politics and administration). In general, all the proposed indexes were evaluated by the respondents as important and most important ones. The medium assessment line of 24 indexes makes 8 points (Fig. 2). The five most important criteria of efficiency of regional administration included the quality of life, the levels of social development and human security.

From the point of view of the respondents, the following indexes are of less importance: "The degree of sectoral dependence of the region on Russian total economic environment", "Ensuring the participation of citizens in political decision-making and administration," "The satisfaction of the population with the quality and accessibility of services in the sphere of culture." If we combine the assessment indexes according to the regional administration tasks, the rating of importance will be as follows (Fig. 2). The priority, from the point of view of the respondents, is given to social development, the quality of life, the development of business infrastructure, and the level of public safety.

In summary, the parameters of the region's economic performance and competence of administration in the opinion of the respondents are significantly less important than social parameters. Citizens' participation in political decision-making received the last place in the rating, which indicates a low level of development of political culture at the regional level.

Let us observe the manifestation of differences in the estimates of the rating of administration quality in the region among the groups. In Table 1, the indexes are arranged in the descending order of significance, there is an average index shown in the brackets in this group (the group average score). The arrows indicate the direction of change in intergroup transition.

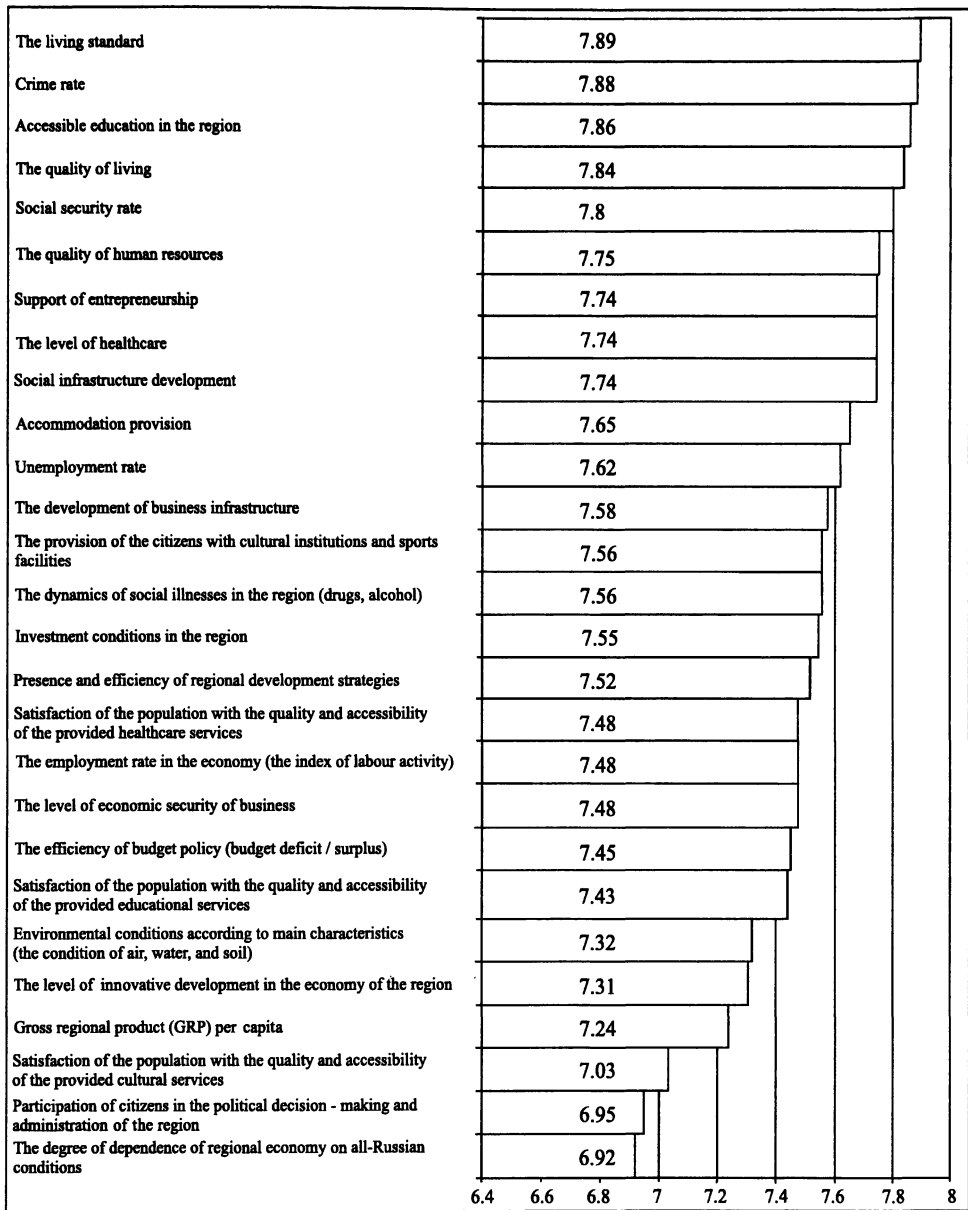


Fig. 2. The rating of parameters assessing the quality of administration in the Tyumen Region, the average value

Table 1

The rating of indicators assessing the quality of management of the region within expert groups (average indicators are shown in brackets)

The authorities	The employees of state and municipal institutions	Business	Non-profit organizations
The quality of people's life (8.2)	The level of development in the social sphere (7.81)	The quality of people's life (8.03)	The level of development in the social sphere (7.39)
The development of infrastructure for business (8.2)	The competence of management (7.65)	The development of infrastructure for business (7.89)	The level of citizens' security (7.37)
The level of development in the social sphere (8.09)	The level of citizens' security (7.64)	The level of development in the social sphere (7.81)	The quality of people's life (7.16)
The competence of management (8.09)	The quality of people's life (7.6)	The level of citizens' security (7.55)	The competence of management (7.13)
The level of citizens' security (7.97)	The development of infrastructure for business (7.45)	The satisfaction of the population (7.37)	The development of infrastructure for business (7.01)
The development of regional economy (7.9)	The development of regional economy (7.44)	The competence of management (7.36)	Ensuring the participation of citizens in political decision-making and management (7)
The satisfaction of the population (7.79)	The satisfaction of the population (7.28)	The development of regional economy (7.3)	The development of regional economy (6.91)
Ensuring the participation of citizens in political decision-making and management (7.58)	Ensuring the participation of citizens in political decision-making and management (6.71)	Ensuring the participation of citizens in political decision-making and management (6.66)	The satisfaction of the population (6.9)

In conclusion, we should state the following. The respondents from all the groups give priority to the indexes of social sphere development and of the standard of living. The index denoting participation of citizens in political decision-making and administration became an outsider for all the surveyed groups, except for the non-profit community. It is especially important to emphasize this fact in the background of extremely low assessment of the quality of administration in political institutions: the mechanisms of public control over the activities of the authorities function effectively (4.48), the population participates in discussing important issues on the basis of an open dialogue (4.36), the mechanisms of combating corruption are effective (4.31). The results are given on a 10-point scale (see Figure 1).

The respondents from the groups of business and authorities generally have similar priorities on the regional level. The respondents from the authorities' group, unlike other respondents attach greater importance to all considered indexes. The respondents from the business environment emphasize the importance of indexes characterizing the creation of favorable conditions for entrepreneurship. The respondents from the non-profit community and the employees of state and municipal institutions emphasize the level of social development. Gross regional product per capita, being the main parameter of assessment in the world economics, in our case (Fig. 2) sharply decreased in the rating of importance.

The minimum intergroup changes occur in assessing citizens' participation in political decision-making and administration and in development of the region's economy. Both indexes remain at the bottom of the rating in terms of their importance as well as in terms of their quality. We consider this fact also because in a freely changing system the worst indexes automatically increase their importance in a rating because people notice the lack of opportunities to realize their needs in this sphere. In our case this does not happen – the lower part of the rating (according to the quality of administration, as well as the degree of importance) is occupied by economic and political institutions having the most importance for the developed democratic countries.

The respondents can be subdivided into two groups according to the assessment of importance of administration quality parameters – the first group of the respondents focuses on creating the conditions for business development as a guarantee of the region's development, including its social sphere (this group usually includes the representatives of business community and authorities); the second group to a greater extent assesses the success of administration through social commitment of the authority (this group was formed by representatives of non-profit organizations and employees of state and local government agencies).

In conclusion, we can say that, on the one hand, the elite consider it necessary to apply non-economic administration strategies instead of economic ones and democratic ones; yet, on the other hand, democratic institutions are not in demand among any authority or business. In fact, the social base of viable mechanisms of public administration has not been formed in the society, and, as a result, the economic system has almost completed its formation as an etocratic one, providing fusion of the economic and political elite and completely excluding socio-economic mechanisms and social mobility.

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