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Solvency of the Institute of City Management in Estimates of the Population of the South of
Russia: History and Perspectives

Solvencia del Instituto de Gestión de la Ciudad en Estimaciones de la Población del Sur de
Rusia: Historia y Perspectivas

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Abstract.

This article interprets the results of a mass sociological survey conducted among the population of municipalities of the Rostov region and the Republic of Adygea, in order to determine the social viability of the Institute of city management. Social competence is defined as the achievement of the main goals set for the Institute of city management, primarily, the involvement of professional managers to improve the indicators of socio-economic development of territories. Four aspects are defined as criteria for evaluation: confidence in the reform, goals of the reform, satisfaction with the reform, and expectation of the consequences of the reform. The authors came to the conclusion that a significant mass of the population does not trust the reform, sees in it other goals than the legislator declares, is not satisfied with the results, and fears the onset of negative consequences from its implementation. At the same time, there are other results from the introduction of city management, since there are stable groups of respondents who expressed a positive attitude to it, which is consistently shown in all aspects of the assessment, including the rejection of the significance of the institution of elected mayors.

keywords: Institute of city management, public solvency, city Manager, head of municipal formation, local government, municipal community, socio-economic development, Rostov region, Republic of Adygea.

Resumen

Este artículo interpreta los resultados de una encuesta sociológica masiva realizada entre la población de los municipios de la región de Rostov y la República de Adygea, con el fin de determinar la viabilidad social del Instituto de gestión de la ciudad. La competencia social se define como el logro de los principales objetivos establecidos para el Instituto de gestión de la ciudad, principalmente, la participación de gerentes profesionales para mejorar los indicadores de desarrollo socioeconómico de los territorios. Se definen cuatro aspectos como criterios de evaluación: confianza en la reforma, objetivos de la reforma, satisfacción con la reforma y expectativa de las consecuencias de la reforma. Los autores llegaron a la conclusión de que una masa significativa de la población no confía en la reforma, ve en ella otros objetivos que los declarados por el legislador, no está satisfecha con los resultados y teme la aparición de consecuencias negativas de su implementación. Al mismo tiempo, hay otros resultados de la introducción de la gestión de la ciudad, ya que hay grupos estables de encuestados que expresaron una actitud positiva hacia ella, lo que se muestra de manera consistente en todos los aspectos de la evaluación, incluido el rechazo de la importancia de institución de alcaldes electos.

Palabras clave: Instituto de gestión de la ciudad, solvencia pública, Gerente de la ciudad, jefe de formación municipal, gobierno local, comunidad municipal, desarrollo socioeconómico, región de Rostov, República de Adygea.

Introduction

Formally, the creation of the Institute of city management changed only the institutional order of legitimation of the procedure for taking office of the head of a municipality: from election through the mechanism of municipal elections to election by a competitive Commission. However, these formal changes in practice have led to qualitative transformations of the very principles of the work of heads of municipalities. A new "customer" that evaluates the quality of municipal services. This is the city Duma and the Governor, who form the composition of the Commission. The head of the municipality must also undergo a major update. He is no longer a politician, but an economic Manager hired to improve the socio-economic indicators of the territory. The population itself, which previously had a leading role in the organization of municipal life, has now moved to the rank of a passive observer [Chikaeva, Davydova, Voskoboynikov, et al., 2020; Voskoboynikov, Schukina, et al., 2020]. Is there any reason to think that this position is unacceptable for municipal communities? At present, the vector of reforms has shifted from the search for democratic models of governance to improving its effectiveness. It is in this capacity that the introduction of the Institute of city management in the Russian Federation should be considered. A significant part of specialists rated the mechanism of competitive appointment negatively. Scientists point to many disadvantages of city management, including the fact that it encroaches on the democratic rights of the local electorate to independently elect their own leader, that the appointed, rather than elected, head of the municipality will not have confidence within municipal communities, that he will reduce personal responsibility to the population, etc. Similar concerns have been expressed in the scientific community for five years. The purpose of this article is to assess the viability of the introduced management Institute in terms of its practical usefulness for the recipients of municipal services by evaluating the population of the Rostov region and the Republic of Adygea.

Materials and methods

To achieve this goal, the author's team conducted a mass sociological survey in several Federal subjects in the South of Russia. In this article, we will present the results obtained

during the survey of residents of municipalities of the Rostov region and the Republic of Adygea. We surveyed 1,152 respondents living in the cities of Rostov-on-don, Maykop, Adygeisk, Taganrog, Bataysk, Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, as well as in several municipal settlements of the semikarakorsky district. Criteria such as gender, age, social status, and place of residence were used to select respondents. The sample type is improbability, in the form of a quota sample. Its representativeness was ensured on the basis of the principle of proportional correspondence. The leading criterion for selecting respondents is their place of residence. The information collection period is June 10-August 12, 2019.

Before we present the results, we will give a few explanations about the methodology for evaluating them.

As a basic concept, we use the concept of "social solvency". It refers to the achievement of the main goals set for the Institute of city management. First of all, it is the involvement of professional managers to improve the indicators of socio-economic development of territories. Accordingly, city management can be recognized as well-off only if the results of the activities of city managers will improve the socio-economic indicators of the development of territories where the new management model was applied. Two positions serve as criteria for social viability:

- absence of mass manifestations of discontent on the part of the population due to its exclusion from the political process as an electorate for the election of heads of municipalities;
- real improvement of indicators of socio-economic development of territories after the introduction of the Institute of city management.

Analysis and Results

The above-mentioned municipalities have not only created a legal platform for implementing the Institute of city management into management practice, but also have experience in the operation of this model for several years. In this regard, respondents who were asked to take part in the survey evaluate their experience of interaction with city managers, Express their own ideas about how this institution is understood and what to

expect from it. The entire set of questionnaire questions can be divided into four blocks: 1) is there confidence in the reform; 2) for what purposes it is carried out; 3) are you satisfied with the results of the reform; 4) should we expect negative consequences from it ("the price of reform"). If necessary, we will compare the results with those obtained for identical questions during the survey of the population of municipalities of the Republic of Crimea.

So, let's start with the first block, with questions about trust.

Table 1. How do you assess the replacement of the head of the municipality elected by the population at the elections, for the head, working under a contract, in %

Evaluation parameters	the Result
Clearly negative, the mayor should be chosen from among the candidates	13.7
More negative than positive	23.1
Neutral (this replacement means nothing to me)	30.0
Mostly positive	21.9
Clearly positive, it is easier to check the contractor and, if anything, to dismiss or bring to justice	11.3

In regions where city management exists as a reality, trust in it is higher than in Crimea. In the Rostov region and Adygea, about a third of respondents positively perceived the cancellation of the elections, while in the Crimea – a quarter of the respondents. Almost the same number reacted negatively to the reform – 36.8%. And just under a third – 30%, neutral. As you can see, the opinions were divided approximately equally. This is also a different result than in Crimea, where the neutral position was voiced about ten percent more often. Matches in the figures were obtained only on the scale of denial of the Institute of city management as the desired mechanism for legitimizing the assumption of office of the head of a municipality.

It is extremely difficult to comment on the results recorded in table 1 outside the context of other issues. Therefore, at this stage, we only state the equality of opinions on the three positions, in order to further clarify them through more informative questions.

Unit 2 – objectives of the reform.

Table 2. What do you think was the main goal of replacing the mayoral election with a competitive selection procedure, in particular %

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Evaluation parameters	Result
Economic (improve economic development of territories)	20.1
Political (to finish the chain of command) of	21.5
Improve the professionalism of municipal managers	21.8
There were no special goals (reform for reform's sake)	27.2
I can't answer	2,6

Through this question, we have the opportunity to determine how accurately the government's target views on reform correspond to the expectations from it identified in the minds of respondents. The first and third rows of the table reflect, respectively, the goal of the reform (to improve the economic development of territories through increasing socio-economic indicators) – 20.1% and the way to achieve it (to improve the professionalism of municipal leaders) - 21.8%. In total, we get almost forty-two percent of the respondents whose views do not differ from the declared goals of the reform on the part of its initiators. It is significant that the number of people who are convinced that the reform was carried out to complete the political pyramid at the grass-roots, municipal, level is not so great.

Only 21.5 per cent. This is nine points less than in Crimea, where city management is still only in the state of the project. But this is especially significant when compared with the position of the academic community, among which the point of view that city management is institutionalized as a priority for achieving political goals is dominant [Sakhranov, 2019; Grigorieva, Gribkova, 2019]. However, the consistency of respondents' views with government declarations does not yet indicate the success of the reform itself [Velikaya, 2019]. We will return to this aspect later.

Next, we will determine whether the new model of municipal government has the necessary potential to achieve this goal. This should be considered the presence of appropriate professional qualities in city managers [Honey, 2017]. Recall that the reform of the order of taking office, according to the plan of the reformers, was initiated precisely in order to ensure that not "street politicians", but specially trained managers, or, if we look for analogies in the West, managers with ties to business, came to power.

Table 3. In Your opinion, do city managers have more potential to improve the socio-economic indicators of territorial development than elected mayors, in particular %

Evaluation parameters	Result
Yes	28.2
No	29.6
The principle does not matter, it all depends on each specific case	41,4

Only 28.2% of the respondents saw opportunities for existing city managers to achieve the goals announced by the reform. This is even less than the already selected group, which consists of a third of the total sample, whose members can be considered active supporters of the competitive procedure for appointing heads of municipalities. This situation indicates that the group of supporters of the reform may begin to blur due to possible failures in achieving the declared goals. A slightly higher number of respondents who did not see the necessary potential for high-quality implementation of the reform in city managers. This group can hardly be monolithic in its composition. With a certain potential for development of the municipal territory, it can be divided into both supporters and opponents of the accepted order of legitimacy of municipal leaders. Finally, the third option was chosen most specifically – "the Principle does not matter, everything depends on each individual case" (41.4%). This is an anti-institutional position, since its supporters are convinced of the special role of the subject factor in achieving high indicators of socio-economic development of territories [Kovaleva, Maslova, et al., 2019; Gafiatulina, Rachipa, et al., 2018].

Next, let's turn to the questions from block 3: satisfaction with the results of the reform.

Table 4. The goal of the reform was that its implementation would lead to an improvement in the quality of life of the population. What do you think, has the reform achieved its goal, in particular %

Evaluation parameters	Result
Yes, the quality of life of the population has improved	27.7
No, city managers have shown themselves to be irresponsible and unprofessional managers	29.6
The change in the principles of assuming the position of the head of the municipality did not affect the quality of life of the population	42.7

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It is expected that the answer "Yes, the quality of life of the population has improved" was chosen by the smallest number of respondents – 27.7%. However, the number of respondents who assess the reform as a failure is not much more – 29%, 6. it is Significant that about half of all respondents (42.7%) are convinced that the adopted procedure for legitimizing the head of a municipality did not affect the quality of municipal management. But if you take the basis of the correlation option "replace at the municipal level, political relations with the administrative and business", which captures the common understanding of the reform objectives between the government and the population, then the number selected the given option number agreed that "Yes, the quality of life has improved" increased to 38.6%. And this is the most frequently selected answer in the specified group. Therefore, we see a feedback loop: the achievement of the reform goals, that is, a real improvement in the life of the population, begins in the minds of the respondents to influence what its goal is.

Table 5. Evaluate the quality of city managers ' work in three ways: %

Evaluation parameter	Result			
	Yes	no	it just got worse	I can't answer
Has the quality of roads in Your city increased since the city Manager took over	32.0	41.5	11.9	14.6

Has the volume of municipal housing construction in Your city increased since the city Manager took over	19.9	37.7	13,4	28,9
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Has the quality of public services (light, gas, water, garbage collection) increased in Your city since the city Manager took over	19.6	42.9	19.4	18.1
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The data presented in table 5 show that at least one saying about the troubles of Russia, voiced by a classic about roads, gradually ceases to be relevant, but the "housing issue" raised by another classic still has the potential to have a negative impact on society. However, when evaluating the respondents' positions in aggregate, we again get the most frequently chosen option – the absence of any changes, both positive and negative, that could be associated with the activities of city managers [Gorskaya, 2015]. *Some adjustment can be made to the results if we take the answer from table as the basis for the correlation, as in the previous cases. 6 "replace political relations at the municipal level with administrative and economic ones". It is significant that even here there is a specific increase in the number of respondents who gave a positive assessment of the work of city managers. 40.8% > 32% - for the construction of highways; 26.2 > 19.9% - for the construction of municipal housing; 23.6 > 19.6% - for the quality of public services.*

In General, we can assume that the majority of respondents negatively assessed the performance of city managers as heads of municipalities. Despite the fact that the "it only got worse" option was usually chosen less often than the others (excluding the quality of public services), the lack of a result is perceived by most as a negative result. This means that the reform basically failed to achieve its goal: either because city managers do not have the expected level of professionalism, or because of their personal disinterest in effective management, or because of institutional barriers that prevent the use of their professional competencies to improve the socio-economic indicators of municipal development. *But for the General conclusion, it is important to accept the presence of*

hidden relationships. One of these is the correlation between a high assessment of the quality of municipal services and a uniform understanding of the goals of the reform between the population and the initiators of the reform. A common understanding of the goals of the reform between reformers and the population is most often formed if the Respondent really feels an improvement in the quality of life, linking it to the fact that the new procedure for appointing municipal leaders makes it possible to install real professionals in the highest positions in the municipal management system, and not irresponsible politicians.

Finally, let's look at the results of the fourth set of questions aimed at assessing the social viability of the Institute of city management. These are questions about the possible risks of this model, in other words, the "price of reform" at the initial stage of its implementation in the municipal government system.

Table 6. What management risks have occurred (may occur) as a result of the introduction of the city management model, %

Evaluation parameters	the Result
The population's distrust of the appointed, rather than elected, Manager	47.8
Increase in the corruption component in government structures	36.9
Decrease in the effectiveness of the head of the municipality	18.3
Reducing the personal responsibility of the head of a municipality to the population	30.1
There are no grounds for the possible occurrence of the above risks	22.3

Respondents were asked to assess the likelihood of several variants of management risks, or to conclude that the possibility of their manifestation is insignificant. The results showed that the relevance of these risks is considered very likely. The greatest danger is seen in the "distrust of the population to the appointed, not the chosen Manager" - 47.8%. The threat of such a development is seen by almost half of the number of respondents. This result can also be interpreted as a General distrust of the authorities. In fact, city management is only a mechanism for taking office, a different procedure for its

legitimation. Mayors and city managers have the same amount of authority and legal capacity to manage territories. The new model assumes the possibility of selecting professionals (city managers) by professionals (competition Commission). However, this puts the procedure for appointing a municipal Manager outside of public control. Lack of trust in these conditions is an indicator of disbelief in the professional potential of a city Manager. This is easy to show if you build a combined table of conjugacy, comparing the results for the General sample with those obtained only for the group of respondents who chose as the actual option the possibility of growing distrust in the municipal community to the appointed, rather than the chosen Manager.

Table 7. In Your opinion, do city managers have more potential to improve the socio-economic indicators of territorial development than elected mayors, in particular %

Evaluation parameters	the Result		
	Yes	No	the principle doesn't matter, it all depends on everyone particular case
Total number of respondents	28.2	29.6	41.4
Respondents who chose the answer option in the table. 9 "distrust of the population to the appointed, not the chosen Manager"	19.3	33.0	47.7

It is easy to see that the risk of distrust of the appointed, rather than elected, municipal leader is transferred to his professional qualities. And if this relationship persists for several years after the institutionalization of city management in the Rostov region and in the Republic of Adygea, then city managers have not done the necessary minimum, which would be the basis for overcoming distrust.

Table 8. How important do you think the legal order is taking office as the head of a municipality, in %

Evaluation parameters	the Result
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I will accept the cancellation of elections only positively, often elections are money laundering or a mechanism for obtaining privileges and immunity	29.7
I am tired of politics and will accept the head of the municipality in any capacity if he successfully solves socio-economic problems	47.3
I assess the cancellation of the mayoral elections very negatively, because for me, democratic principles are of great importance	23.0

The wording of the answers offered to the respondents, we believe, reflects the most typical range of ideas about elections that have developed in the mass consciousness within the modern Russian society.

The choice on the first line unites respondents who have a generally negative attitude to the procedure for electing authorities: either because of conservative-paternalistic ideas about power, when the maximum degree of tolerance of the electoral process is recognized as necessary only in relation to the head of state, or because of disillusionment with the features of Russian democracy, which are manifested, inter alia, in the formalization of democratic institutions such as municipal elections. According to the results of the study, these were 29.7%. By social composition, this group has the largest number of state and municipal employees (43.5%). Other social strata are more or less evenly represented.

The second line selection is aimed at identifying a social group in which the need to improve the quality of social life for the population of municipalities is articulated as a leading focus. Political values take a back seat here. This group is the most numerous – 47.3%. It has a larger share of workers (26.5%), entrepreneurs (27.3%) and employees in non-governmental institutions (26.2%).

Finally, the third choice is a set of respondents who are unambiguously focused on the values of democracy, and on this basis deny the institution of city management as anti-democratic, depriving the population of their right to give the head of a municipality legitimacy through a legally defined election procedure. The third position received the

least attention from the respondents – 23%. Students (33.6%) and employees in non-governmental institutions (39.2%) were most often guided by it.

The results were somewhat expected. However, we can not say that the mayoral elections in all major cities of the Rostov region have not previously aroused interest among the population. Even before the era of city management, the last mayoral elections in Rostov-on-don had a turnout of 51.81% of voters [Resolution, 2010], in Taganrog-63.32%, in Kamensk-Shakhtinsky-53.59%. Against this background, the situation with the turnout at the polling stations in the last mayoral elections in Bataisk on September 8, 2013 looks much worse – 36.53%, as well as in two cities of Adygea included in our sample: may 26, 2013 in Maykop – 27% and September 15, 2014 in Adygeisk – 28.8% [Medovyi, 2017]. As we can see, the situation with voter activity in municipal elections can be described as ambiguous. Therefore, in the years that have passed since the cancellation of the procedure for direct elections of heads of municipalities, we can record a drop in interest on the part of the population of municipalities in the practice of electing mayors.

A systematic analysis of the main author's positions on the issue of interest to us allows us to highlight the following negative opinions of specialists about the Institute of city managers. A. N. Neustroev draws attention to the lack of legitimacy in the procedure for appointing city managers [Neustroev, 2015]. L. V. Akopov points out that the status of a city Manager is not accountable to the population, whose interests it should represent, but to a representative body of municipal power. Hence, the problem of ignoring the interests and opinions of voters may potentially arise [Akopov, 2015]. Vasiliev emphasizes that the widespread procedure for appointing city managers reflects the desire of the state (Federal center) to strengthen the power vertical at the expense of the democratic beginning in management. In addition, he also writes about ignoring in the new model such a constitutional guarantor as the right to judicial protection of local government, since the city Manager can be removed out of court [Vasiliev, 2012].

There is another group of scientists that evaluates the Institute of city management in a positive way. A. A. Shmelev convinced that the city Manager is a division of political and

economic functions, which allows the administration to fully concentrate on addressing the current issues of life of the municipality [Shmelev, 2014]. L. K. Sagieva draws attention to the fact that the appointment procedure under the contract, in which the active role played by regional authorities, will allow to unite efforts of all levels of government on joint managerial functions [Begieva, 2016]. A. Volodin proposes to introduce the Institute of city management everywhere, since the abolition of municipal elections will save money for more productive use [Volodin, 2012]. V. A. Ochakovsky, I. N. Ivanenko, Ya.a. Krutova and V. S. Korobkov proceed in their positive assessments from the presumption of depoliticization of the population, referring to the low turnout in the elections of heads of municipalities. In this regard, the transition to contractual appointment of heads of administrations, in their opinion, is the legalization of a more thoughtful procedure for the formation of local self-government bodies [Ochakovsky, et al., 2015].

Conclusions

The conducted sociological survey was aimed at studying four main aspects related to establishing the social viability of the Institute of city management in the municipalities of the Rostov region and the Republic of Adygea: confidence in the reform, the goals of the reform, satisfaction with the reform and the expectation of consequences from the reform. For all the stated positions, with a certain degree of assumptions, we can distinguish three groups: 1) supporters of the reform and 2) its opponents, each of which has from a quarter to a third of the number of respondents, and 3) an undecided majority that agrees to any management model, as long as it leads to an increase in the level of socio-economic development of the territories. Among the respondents, motives of distrust of the reform prevail, which raise questions about the feasibility of its implementation. One third of the surveyed population disagrees with the legislator in defining the goals of the reform [Panfilova, Dyatlov, et al., 2019], seeing it as exclusively political, and the other third does not see any goals in it at all. A little more than a quarter of respondents are satisfied with the results of the reform, less than a third give them a negative assessment, and a little more than forty percent did not see any results for themselves. Almost all respondents fear that the reform will have to pay a high price for one aspect or another, pointing to the

possibility of potentially dangerous risks of a managerial and socio-economic nature. The least significant are political risks, since less than a quarter of the respondents expressed a clearly negative opinion about the cancellation of municipal elections.

Making a conclusion about the social viability of the Institute of city management in the municipalities of the Rostov region and the Republic of Adygea, it is very important to pay attention to the fact that its achievement is directly dependent on the quality of the reform. This conclusion is based on the identification of a number of correlations between the degree of satisfaction with the work of city managers, the assessment of their professionalism, on the one hand, and the attitude to the target characteristics of the reform, on the other. In contrast to the scientific community, which is dominated by a simplified attitude to the institution of city management, as the completion of the power vertical, the society is dominated by a more differentiated perception of it, in the structure of which there is also an idea of city management, as a replacement of political relations with economic relations. In this regard, it is very important to avoid imitative forms of activity in the work of municipal authorities, to get involved in juggling indicators of socio-economic development, as well as other similar actions that can undermine confidence not only in the reform, but also in the government that initiates it.

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