

Creative Tendencies in Regional Elites' Activity

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Abstract: The article analyzes subjectivity perspectives of regional elites' as conductors of creative changes in the life of regional community. The author makes a conclusion that having a monopoly on governmental, social and informational resources in the regional space, regional elites are in the state of choosing between the practices of inertial development and the transfer of supporting and implementing stable regional development strategy that is related to including creativity criteria to regional elites' activity and rotation.

Key words: Regional elites • Creativity • Management system • Subjects of the modernization process • Regional society • Regional development

INTRODUCTION

At the present time, with increasing global challenges and modernization tendency in social and social and economic life of the contemporary Russian society, the role of regional elites as subjects of the modernization process has increased. It all actualizes the role of the creative class [1]. There are no doubts that if we mean improvement of various areas of the social life and achievement of personhood of a contemporary type oriented to a strategy achievement, socio-cultural modernization of the Russian society depends on what the state of regional societies will be, what parameters characterize the potential of Russian regions development, what development type the regions will orientate to. It is absolutely clear that the model of overtaking development only increases discontinuity between the regions and Russian regions are negatively influenced by systematic social risks. In this situation reference to the modernization activity of the regional development subjects is not occasional.

Main Part: The existing regional differences related to social and economic inequalities block the transfer to the modernization stage and under current conditions the regional society is in the state of social deconsolidation and does not identify itself with the governmental

structures. It is obvious that vertically-integrated management system demonstrating the advantages of the power centralization and concentration of financial and organizational resources is flawed for the implementation of modernization projects. Firstly, striving for total control leads to increasing and "multiplication" of structures that extends and often slows down the process of making necessary management decisions [2]. Secondly, even postulating the necessity of independence on the regional level, the problem of "appointing" does not disappear: according to the *Expert* magazine, "regional elites are interested in maintaining the official (governmental) resource and relevant filters of the elites rotation to a greater extent than in competing according to the business and creativity criteria"[2]. The current economic model of the regional development supposes stability without development and converting economic growth to improving the level life in the regional society [4] and what is important, the achievement of actual equality of regions as subjects of social development. In this context it is not strange that it does not fundamentally satisfy the population of regions and regional elites. Regional society has problems of social disorder. Almost daily it faces problems related to social infrastructure, local labor market and social safety. Social contradictions accumulate in connection with the fact that territorial (horizontal) population mobility in Russia remains low (it is related to

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the accommodation unavailability and risks of adapting at a new place). Finally it causes overloading of regional governmental structures. The necessity to concentrate attention on current operative tasks does not allow to develop a strategic development model. Besides, great differences between regions according to the density and profits of population, size and structure of people's capital [5] decrease opportunities of differentiated and at the same time efficient approach of the Russian government to regional problems. It is obvious that interrelations differentiation with regions, if occurs, has the inertial model. Investment-attractive regions (Moscow, Leningrad, Samara regions, the Krasnodar Territory) become leaders in the acquisition of financial subventions of the center and obtain organizational, political, informational support in promoting regional projects. The interrelation for regions being in the state of social and economic depression is in maintaining the borders of social stability and committing resources for short-term needs. It creates a situation of difference in terms of the development level among regions because allocating relations do not contribute to promoting investment-attractive projects. Although creating "centers" of modernization, point influence is defined by the enclave tendency of manufacturing and tourist clusters contrasting to the crisis regional environment. For example, the creation of a powerful contemporary cluster on the territory of the Kaluga region related to the machine building does not promise improvement of the life level in the region as, firstly, it does not create the situation of "overflowing vessels" when the development of other areas of the regional economy is facilitated; secondly, this manufacturing does not influence the growth of the population capital as it is oriented to the involvement of qualified specialists beyond the regions.

The mentioned circumstances can make an impression of predeterminacy of many Russian regions weakness in virtue of the remoteness factor, crisis social and demographic situation, underdevelopment of business culture and decrease of professional potential. If we agree with the fact that there is a sharp discontinuity between the society and government [6], perspectives of socio-cultural modernization of Russian regions can be assessed as visionary. Nevertheless, the path of the Russian society development is characterized by succession and stability, functioning of the existing management mechanisms on the regional level. Regional elites being the main subject of state management

demonstrate the ability to control socio-political and socio-economic situations in their regions: being interested in the regional stability as a decisive condition for maintaining their own monopoly for governmental and economic resources, in spite of the difference in the style of managing regions, the representatives of "governing" groups mastered the strategy of "inhibition and neutralization" of socio-political intensity, gained the experience of anti-crisis management in the context of the financial resources deficit and made a new system of relations oriented to the trust with the active part of population of the regional society. However, it is necessary to mention that we deal with the modality. There are "problematic" regions which are characterized by intra-elite proneness to conflicts, critical level of regional government prestige. However, such "deviations" are fixed by the center and efforts are made to renovate management personnel as it is happening lately.

It is necessary to realize that increasing of the modernization activity of regional elites, transfer to the state of creative management, management focused on unordinary solving of regional problems related to the search for internal development resources, involvement of socially active, creative layers of the regional society to the participation in regional projects have the principle meaning for regional development [7].

The developed model of regional elites' rotation is internally contradictory as it includes both a group of the center "appointees" and those who individually achieved high social status in the regional society. This circumstance must be taken into account when assessing creative potential of regional elites. If a principle of loyalty to the center is important for the first group (it is positive to maintain the regional society integratedness to the all-Russian space; however, it is unambiguous for defining conditions and borders of the regional development independence), the second group can suffer collective selfishness while placing priorities of the regional development. Besides, it can get focused to the limitation of the "appointees" influence. It is absolutely clear that the intra-elite breaks decrease investment attraction of the region and often requires the center's intrusion and leads to postponing regional problems solving. In this situation regional elites display activity only for possessing governmental resources and are not interested in setting a dialogue with the regional society.

As O.Kryshstanovskaya states, elite mobility on the level of a region has a peculiarity being in prevailing of non-formal criteria to formal (professional, educational) [8]. In the elite schedule a system of requirements to a possible candidate is made by the “corporation”. Creativity as a state of “altruistic” professionalism, as an ability of creative choice and striving to develop these abilities externally contradicts to the mechanisms of including and rotating in regional elites. However, if we restrict ourselves to this hypothesis, then it is necessary to acknowledge that regional elites display activity only to achieve their own goals. Meanwhile, facilitating of the social modernization targets the activity of elite groups, expanding access to the resources of influence not only in the regional but all-country level, too. According to M.K. Gorshkov, the most “valuable” features in the mass consciousness include activity and initiative (34%) [8]. As for intra-elite conditions, the necessity to form a single management “team” that is able to “possess” the initiative in the regional development increases here: herewith, the center’s approval is a necessary condition but is not the main one for actual leadership in the regional life. Thus, for example, in the Stavropol Territory in spite of obvious economic growth, there was a conflict between the management system oriented to technological indicators. The actual situation occurred due to worsening the level of people’s capital (migration, crisis state of professional education, underdevelopment of eastern regions of the territory) that caused the resignation of the previous management team. It proves that under today’s conditions forming contacts with the regional society, informing the population about regional managers’ practical actions, recruiting well-educated and creative youth in the elite body are important.

Of course, one should wait for the “managers’ revolution” that could cause failure in managing regions and intensify the contest inside regional elites: if we support the hypothesis of O. Kryshstanovskaya, a “high entrance” to the elite is directly related to the people who have achieved much in their basic profession [8]. The experience of occupying leading positions by “executive managers”, “top-brassers”, “business groups” in regions cautions against excessive expectancies as the growth of the position nepotism, prevailing of corporate interests and conflict with the center are not excluded. A different matter is that regional elites as subjects of the modernization activity cannot be formed according to the “area principle” and make the entrance position free only for “their own” groups.

It is necessary to mention that employees of education and public health service involved in the latest

technological directions on the level of personal and group self-implementation are interested in creative development, including various forms of social participation and social initiative. Assuming that the regional elite is the main addresser of the state services requested by the population, we can say that self-implementation as an actual social request dislocates the elites’ activity. No doubt the trust level of the population to the regional elite is still defined by the level of solving the problems of everyday life in social protection authorities, education and public health service. In its turn it causes the thought about creative turn of the regional elite to the population both through radical renewal and forced rotation of the creative class representatives and expanding independence in routine activities which are related to actualizing the potential of the existing teams, with the implementation of actual regional projects and transfer of problems that do not require big timely and financial expenses to a creative level [9].

As a whole, it is difficult to cope with the elite “obduracy” syndrome that is in rather careful and sometimes negative attitude to big and radical changes in the social life of the Russian society. However, basing on the proportions of the obligations imposed on the regional elite in terms of maintaining stability and actual tools of influencing to the processes that take place in regions, moderate conservatism is a guarantee of, at least, a liminal management situation. We mean that in the existing system of the management coordinates the regional elite is responsible for decisions that “do not depend” on it. Besides, under the conditions of the creativity monopolization by expert communities [10] the risk of tendentious and unreasoned criticism of the regional elite’s actions will increase if the situation is related to the interests of “regionals” and “outsiders”. Especially, it is observed in regions possessing prominent socio-resourceful potential. One can show an example of Sverdlovsk and Saratov regions where new appointments of governors show the depth of contradictions related to high level of creative mobilization of active layers of population and striving of the governmental corporation to play according to “strangers’ rules”.

Achievement of social agreement related to basic goals of the regional development and ways to implement them is a condition contributing to creative displacement of the regional elite. Making this provision specific one can say that in order to develop a creative regional environment, it is necessary to make a wide social expertize, form consultancy boards on basic directions of the regional politics. For the activity of new establishments to meet the initiatives scale, it is important

to remember one essential circumstance – the dialogue regime of the regional elite and the population becomes real only when a space for the contest of various projects is created and in the case when the activity of “social” professionals transfers from the “presence” state to social creativity.

The displacement of creativity to near-nuclear or peripheral positions on the system of selection and formation of regional elites is a consequence of associating creativity with spontaneous mobility. In other words, the elite discourse often interprets social creativity as a way out of the existing boards of the corporate behavior. It is related to the perspective of the activity change (more often, the creation of own business). Unlike “non-formalized” creative class, representatives of regional elites are under strong pressing of external, occurring circumstances and have to adapt to short-term motivations which can be criticized for opportunism and routine but which cannot be refused in adjusted adaptive influence [11].

Resume: In our opinion, the *Think Creatively* slogan must be directed to the interrelation with creative layers of the regional society and on the basis of the fact that people are always a key to success [12]. It means that acceptance and implementation of creative initiatives have a real result if organizational and financial influences are focused on people management. Making this provision specific, it is necessary to point at the adequacy of the choice made by that group, or society that can become a conductor of creative projects. It is not a secret that the basic reason for “failure” of creative beginnings in a regional scale, if we set away suspicions of imitations, is the focus on “a circle” of absolutely loyal people or, on the contrary, those who position themselves as fighters with the systematic routine and bureaucracy. In addition to the idleness of the “meeting” environment inherited by some unfulfilled candidates to manage regions, a new circumstance appeared in the 2000s. It includes the regional elites’ adherence not to act in a populist way as “regional barons of the 1990s” did. It does not exclude risks of the management bureaucratization. However, vice versa it often increases such risks. The matter is that in the position of regional elites one can often see the striving to be “believers in a strong state”, carefully assess initiatives that can be associated with “anarchy”, “separatism”, confrontation with the center. Realizing the formula of the country integrity, it is not taken into account that regional society is a social space where mass social practices are implemented and feelings of “a general house” and social partnership are formed.

Assuming that regional elite acts rationally, in accordance with the logics of positions maintenance, one must not leave out of account the fact that goals of self-reproduction and control in terms of the regional space may not obligatorily coincide with the goals of regional development [3]. Moreover, one can assume that trying to protect themselves from the risks of internal breaks, regional elites take a position of quiet confrontation and sometimes of absolute impenetrability while changing main players in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The conception of “four I” (institutes, infrastructure, investments, innovations) was suggested by the highest Russian political government. It facilitates the regional elites’ interest in problems of regional development. However it is necessary to emphasize that, firstly, the prescribed point orienting to the elites’ general activity facilitates the choice of a creative variant of the region development. Secondly, the mentioned tendencies can be realized only subject to the achievement of agreement inside the elite on the basis of positioning the management independence. Thirdly, it is obvious that the choice of an own development strategy that does not necessarily coincide with the general state one [14] is nevertheless included to the priorities of the Russian society strategic development.

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