

## **CITIZENS IN THE MINOR CITY'S CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE PROMOTION**

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### **Abstract**

The change in the structure of the economy leads to several problems in the small cities of Russia. The main ways of exit from the economic crisis of such territories is largely associated with the cultural and historical heritage of these cities, the entrepreneurial and social activity of citizens. This article is devoted to determining the characteristics of different groups of active citizens' willingness to participate in the social life of their city. The report presents the results of an online survey of the industrial Sverdlovsk region's satellite city called Berezovsky.

The object of the study is active citizens with different degrees of social and civic activity. The distribution of the online questionnaire led to the formation of two subsamples: ordinary citizens and those residents of Berezovsky who interact with local authorities. Authors used the method of correlation analysis.

The results of the survey show that citizens with whom the administration interacts more highlight the potential of industrial objects within the cultural and historical heritage of these territories. Differences are also highlighted in public practices in which citizens of comparable groups are ready to join.

**Key words:** citizen engagement, cultural and historical heritage, development of minor city

**JEL Code:** J18, R58.

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### **Introduction**

The development of small industrial cities and their local management in the XXI century is becoming one of the most urgent research problems. The change in the structure of the economy leads to problems in the small cities of Russia due to the fact that the economic life of the townspeople, as a rule, is based on the functioning of one or several industrial enterprises. The crisis in the world economy leads to stagnation of the individual countries' economies, to the problems of individual enterprises in the traditional sector of industry and, eventually, to the stagnation of small towns. According to the conclusion of a number of researchers, the exit

from the economic crisis of such territories is largely associated with the cultural and historical heritage of these cities, the entrepreneurial and social activity of citizens, which should find support from local officials.

The objects of industrial heritage are of certain value. In Russian cities abandoned buildings of plants, mines and old industrial objects may well be considered as historical memory mediums. Basically, the history of appearance and development of this territories is connected with them. Despite the fact that industrial areas are not identical to natural landscape, in the Urals' small cities they (with variable degree of organicity) integrate with each other. Industrial territories and urban environment contain a certain resource which makes changing of local living spaces' functional and aesthetic characteristics possible. In recent decades, urbanists, architects and developers design projects of new urban areas taking into account the properties of such facilities and territories (Bystrova & Larionova, 2017). Economists explore the creative potential of the territory development (Raszkowski & Głuszcuk, 2015). Place marketing is developing intensively. It is increasingly used by local governments to enhance the image of cities (Eshuis, 2014). The researchers prove the effectiveness of community engagement strategy and the rebranding strategy in cities (Bucci, 2015).

A lot of places for citizens' leisure are connected with the symbolic sights which fix the historical development of these territories exactly in industrial objects. In architectural and urban heritage of Ural cities the elements of greening and sustainability may well be found. They connect present times with historical past in the level of daily lifestyle (Bystrova, 2017). Actually, the objects of cultural heritage are included in townspeople's everyday practices. In our opinion, it is them what can give an impulse to the social life or testify to depression or stagnation of small cities. Many conserved or unclaimed objects and territories may start their future development by attraction of the major public's attention to the historical meaning and the centuries-old organic nature of urban spaces. However, this is only possible in case of real officials' interaction with businessmen, investors and these territories' residents. In such interaction mutual concerns meet. Thus, we are talking about a dialogue which shows everyone's benefit. The infrastructure is important for residents' life, it provides opportunities of employment. Local government is interested in maintaining stability, new economical opportunities' development is in the interest of entrepreneurs.

In Russia residents' interaction with all levels of governor structures, in small cities also, often appears to be a one-side process. People are not satisfied with unequal relations, authoritarian style of management; informational space's control; lack of knowledge about local authorities' sphere of responsibility etc. (Klimova & Shcherbakova, 2015). Local

governments are either limited in resources, or do not want to share them. Social media development stimulates the accessibility of information for a wider audience. Townspeople get a mechanism of uniting and solidarization; moreover, it facilitates the protection of their rights (Castells, 2013). Citizens' social activity is often determined by a desire to solve local problems (Klimova & Shcherbakova, 2015). Though, local officials not always fully understand the necessity of interaction with active civic audience even in politically neutral areas of culture, history and leisure. This article is devoted to determining the characteristics of different groups of active citizens' willingness to participate in the social life of their city. Distinctions are distinguished between a group of townspeople who interact with local officials and those who are active in terms of self-organizing into local communities but do not interact with government.

## **1. Theoretical ideas**

The research is based on the conceptual ideas of A. Etzioni about the structure and transformability. According to this theory, the essence of the concept «social system» as used in sociology, it seems, is collectivistic; no relationship makes a system unless there are nontrivial feedback effects among the members. Firstly, a system might be a relatively concrete concept referring to relations among units of action. Secondly, it may have certain boundaries and structures which are not equal. Structures characterize the specific pattern of relationship among the members. Boundaries change much less frequently than structures. Thirdly, A. Etzioni assumes that societal units whose structure includes an over layer can partially guide the change of their nonsocietal situation, their relations to other actors, and their own internal structure (Etzioni, 1968).

In urban spaces the authorities maintain connections with a certain type of citizens. They activate professional and personal relationships. Contingently, the interaction between citizens and local authorities may be considered as a social system which functions within spatial and temporal boundaries of Russian small industrial cities. It may be assumed that this is exactly local governments who contribute to the creation of boundaries between the communities of citizens. They do not engage in dialogue with some units and do not involve these units' members into the interaction on specific issues, which are of particular interest for both groups. Thus, active citizens' units which are interested in cultural and historical heritage of their city are not engaged in constructing and promotion of certain opinions, even though they are more than capable of doing so. Their desires and intentions do not find any response of local authorities.

The basis of such processes lies in the system of building communicational structures – social media as an aggregation of interconnected nodes. According to M. Castells point of view, the nets as several sets of interests and values either cooperate or compete with each other. In the network community the power should be net-creative. It has to control the ability to create and program or reprogram the operation of networks in order to achieve goals. Governments should be able to connect and provide interaction between different nets that is based on the common goals and united resources. Such values may transform according to citizens' interest for their cities' history and culture. At the same time, government's capability of replying to social sphere's impact on the society's demands (responsiveness) as an institutional structure is connected with the society's ability to make such demands. This is called the society's «activist» abilities. Civic activists all around the world use the communicative environment and the instruments of the net unions for the protection of their interests, the realization of various social projects and for the approving of their ideas (Costanza-Chock, 2013). These technologies are redefining the understanding and practices associated with democratic participation and engagement and contribute to improving the structure of the public sphere (Freeman, 2016; Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018).

Within the actor-network theory the objects should be considered comprehensively in the context of their physical location which basically structures the space around people (Ushkin, 2013). Thus, the potential of the small cities' development may well be analyzed through the evaluation of citizens' opinions and intentions in terms of urban spaces where the objects of cultural and historical heritage are naturally included into everyday practices and the structure of the authorities' and citizens' interaction. We assume that certain differences between the units of active citizens who are interested in their cities' culture and history exist.

Hypothesis 1. Social media profiles of active citizens who interact with local authorities differ from the second group of citizens in socio-demographical characteristics.

Hypothesis 2. Interaction with the officials has an impact on the citizens' involvement in the civic practices of socio-cultural life of the city they live in.

Hypothesis 3. Strong connection between the citizens' interaction with the authorities and the higher esteems of the historical and cultural value of the city's objects of heritage exists. This heritage also includes abandoned industrial objects which are of particular value for the saving of historical identity of the city.

## **2. Data and methods**

### **2.1 Basic characteristics of the small industrial city of the middle Ural - Berezovsky city**

The report presents the results of an online survey of Berezovsky's residents – one of the industrial region's Sverdlovsk satellite cities. 57 197 people currently reside there. The city is evolving. Over the recent 10 years it's population has grown by 10 000 people. The city is claimed to be home to the industrial gold mining of the Urals and whole Russia from the middle of the XVIII century. It has its own history which determined the logic of not only economic, but also a socio-cultural development of this territory. The city's modern economy is based on the leading industrial enterprises in the sectors of the metallurgy, the production of building materials, engineering, construction, and also the mining industry, the forestry and the woodworking. There is a big functioning gold-mining plant and various abandoned or conserved mines.

The city is a satellite of a major industrial megapolis of the Middle Ural (Yekaterinburg). Informational field's analysis in the Internet (the evaluation of the city's official website, a number of websites of local lore, historical and cultural associations, several tourist sites with reviews and travelers' materials, a variety of thematic groups in social networks) allowed us to distinguish 20 most popular zones and objects which townspeople consider to be the most important cultural and historical sights of their city. The thing is that the only one of them (a Christian temple) is officially included in the list of cultural and historical heritage.

### **2.2 Description of the object of empirical research and methodology**

The object of the study is active citizens of Berezovsky city (target sample – 488 respondents) with different degrees of social and civic activity. Limitations of the study – the sample is not representative, it reflects the views of only interested active citizens of one small city of Sverdlovsk region. SPSS 22.0 was used to process and analyze the data. The online questionnaire's distribution led to the formation of two subsamples reflecting the potential of ordinary citizens and those residents of Berezovsky who interact directly with local authorities. The respondents of the first subsample were interviewed through the questionnaire distribution in the urban thematic communities of the social network "VKontakte" (210 respondents). The second sub-sample was formed by the placement of a link to this survey on the website of the Administration of the Municipality and mailing on the social networks of the municipal administration (278 respondents). It has to be mentioned that the target selection of respondents was carried out by communities in the social networks of those residents who have an interest

in the cultural and social life of their city. The questionnaire, which was distributed by the «snowball method», received a very quick response from interested respondents.

Using the method of correlation analysis, it was found out that the independent variable «interaction with local officials» has an impact on such variables as «willingness to accept there is a relationship in different social events» and «evaluation of old abandoned gold mines as an object of the cultural and historical heritage of the city».

### 3 Results

The survey results outline that the local officials more often interact with particular type of active residents. The data shows that the groups analyzed differ in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, education, gender, how long have they been living in the city).

Respondents' age has a strong connection with their involvement in the interaction with the officials (Gamma coefficient 0,64, p-value 0, 001). The younger active residents interested in their city's culture are, the more narrow is their range of possibilities to be involved into the social networks of the authorities (Tab. 1).

**Tab. 1. The distribution of age among respondents of two compared groups of active citizens who are interested in the problem of the cultural life of their city (%)**

Groups of active citizens	Social network profiles of independent residents (1 group)	Social network profiles of the administration (2 group)
15-17	21	7
18-30	54	25
31-45	21	45
46 - 60	4	23
Overall	100	100

Source: author's calculation

Along with age, a directly proportional relationship between the analyzed variable «interaction with officials» and the variable called «level of education» is revealed (Gamma Coefficient 0.50, p-value 0, 001). The higher active citizens' level of education is, the more likely they are included in the social network of the authorities. Among respondents of the 1 group there are 67% of women and 33% of men. In the social media of the administration 85%

of respondents appeared to be women and only 15% are men. The variable called «gender» is related with the variable «interaction with the authorities» (The Fisher coefficient 0,25, p-value 0, 001).

The survey's data show there is a weak directional correlation between the variables «interaction with the authorities» and «time of living in the city». Essential statistical differences were found among those who have been living in the city from 10 to 20 years and those who have been living there from 10 to 20 years. In the first group there are 10% of such people. In the second group the number is 20%. 70% of the first group's respondents have been living in the city since birth or for a very long period of time. In the second group there are 60% of such respondents. (Gamma Coefficient 0,50, p-value 0, 001)

To check the second hypothesis the answers of the 2 compared groups were analyzed in terms of what civic practices they would like to take part in. Out of 5 suggested types of activities only 2 of them differed in both groups (Tab. 2). Readiness to help in organizing important events, readiness to tell tourists about the city's history and show them sights are do not depend on the respondents' involvement into the social networks of the officials.

**Tab. 2. Two compared groups' respondents' readiness to be involved in different civil practices**

Types of social involvement	Number of positive responses (%)		Evaluation method
	Independent residents' social networks	Officials' social networks	
Donate money for the restoration of churches and cultural sites	6	17	Coefficient of Cramer - 0,170, p-value 0, 001
Participate in cleaning a park, planting flowers in the city	31	57	Coefficient of Cramer- 0,270, p-value 0, 001

Source: author's calculation

To test the third hypothesis by the correlation analysis method, we estimated the relationship between the variable «valuation of old abandoned gold mines as an object of the cultural and historical heritage of the city» (evaluation method - coefficient of Cramer -230, Gamma - -0,420, p-value 0, 001). The connection is strong, inversely proportional. Hence the involvement in interaction with officials has a greater impact on the respondents' evaluation of the value of industrial objects of the cultural and historical heritage (Tab. 3).

**Tab. 3. Distribution of respondents' answers of two compared groups of active citizens to the question: "Do you think old factory facilities, buildings and mines in your city represent a cultural and historical value for future generations?"**

Possible answers	Independent residents' social networks	Officials' social networks
Yes	74	89
Not sure	15	10
No	24	5
Overall	100	100

Source: author's calculation

In the study respondents were asked to assess the importance (from 0 to 5 points) and the significance for them personally of 20 cultural, historical and natural objects and zones. The ANOVA method revealed differences in mean values in the compared groups for only 4 items. Respondents interacting with officials are higher than active citizens of the 2nd group appreciated Christian churches, the most popular and famous museum in the city and beyond, as well as the central cultural and historical zone in the city center.

**Tab. 4. Estimates of the significance of cultural and historical objects of their city by respondents of two compared groups of active citizens**

Object of evaluation	Independent residents' social networks		Officials' social networks		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Average difference in groups
	Average value	Standard error of mean value	Average value	Standard error of mean value		
Assumption Cathedral	2,54	,132	3,33	,104	,000	0,79
The Church of the Holy Martyr John the Warrior	2,30	,131	2,97	,103	,000	0,67
Museum of gold and platinum industry in the Urals	3,70	,125	4,16	,087	,002	0,46
Park of Victory	3,73	,124	4,14	,084	,004	0,41

Source: author's calculation

## Conclusion



Subjects of culture and history of the city are interesting to a special type of inhabitants of a small industrial town. In general, it can be noted that the community of «active citizens» of Berezovsky is represented by its «female face». Moreover, the probability of men being included in the social networks of the officials is much lower than that of women. In the problem area of the cultural life of the city, local officials interact only with a certain part of the community identified and analyzed by us. In the risk zone for the exclusion of such communication mainly consists of young townspeople from 15 to 30 years old. The lower is the level of education of active citizens who are interested in the culture of their city, the less is the opportunity for them to be included in social networks of the officials.

The second hypothesis was partially confirmed. Active citizens who interact with the officials are more likely to participate in city ‘subbotniks’, which traditionally are organized by local governments. City officials are stepping up their managerial staff, professional, business and personal environment voluntarily and compulsorily. The difference between groups of active citizens in terms of monetary donations is most likely due to age differences between the respondents of the groups compared. Other types of civil practices related to the cultural life of local communities are the individual choice of active citizens who do not depend on the availability of communication with the officials. Russian sociologists have shown that the signs characterizing attitudes toward civic participation are related to the satisfaction of the work of city authorities in the local community (Klimova & Klimov, 2015). The environment works better if people who depend on its changes are actively involved in its creation and management, and are not perceived as passive consumers. The participation of the population is also necessary for the development of the cultural and historical space of small towns, their reorientation, and the transformation of urban architectural spatial design of the city (Kiyanenka, 2010). All cultural and historical objects and zones are rated higher by those citizens who interact with officials, than by those who are not included in these social networks. The latter are less consciously approaching the evaluation of the value of old factory facilities, buildings and mines that form the ecological character of the environment (Bystrova and Larionova, 2017) due to the development of infrastructure and the creation of public spaces where objects of historical significance have been included in the vital world of the inhabitants of a particular city for many decades.

At the moment, active citizens interacting with officials, above others appreciate the traditional and most popular places of recreation and leisure. They estimate christian churches much higher than the townspeople of the second community. It seems to us that not here the notions of historical value worked, but personal value guidelines, since one of the selected

objects was built at the beginning of the XIX century, and the other appeared just over 10 years ago. The most popular and advertised (in the city and beyond its' border) museum and the most attended leisure zone are estimated higher. These studies show how the physical space intersects with the social (Chernyavskaya, 2012). In this integration a special role is played by knowledge about space, personal experience and the allocation of objects with subjectively meaningful meanings.

## Acknowledgment

The article was prepared with the support of the Russian State Scientific Innovation Fund, project No. 17-22-07001 «Complex algorithm of cultural regeneration of small industrial cities (minor cities) in the context of agglomeration processes in Russia and Europe».

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