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Views of Political and Administrative Elite of the Region about Its Sociocultural Dynamics

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The current problem of modern sociology is studying sociocultural and cultural changes taking place in the regions and the factors determining them. The purpose of this study is expert analysis of sociocultural changes in one of the largest regions of Siberia. The methodological basis of the study is anthroposociocultural approach (N.I. Lapin) in combination with postnonclassical universum approach (V.G. Nemirovskii, et al.). Representatives of the political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai act as experts. At that, their opinions on a number of parameters are compared with the results of the representative studies of mass consciousness of the Krai population. The study results give grounds to speak about both the contradictory opinions of the political and administrative elite of the region, and their similarity on the basic parameters with the views of the entire region population. The experts believe that the Krasnoyarsk Krai develops more quickly and consistently than the country in general. The representatives of the political and administrative elite of the region point to the importance of the ideas of spiritual revival of Russia and Russian national identity for the integration and positive sociocultural dynamics of society.

Keywords: regional elite, sociocultural dynamics, anthroposociocultural approach, universum approach, principle of minimum universum.

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Research area: sociology.

Problem Statement

A topical approach to the study of sociocultural dynamics of the region is the analysis of the views of the regional political and administrative elite about the changes taking place in it. As we know, the concept of “**social changes**” is the basic category to describe social dynamics. It is no coincidence that theoretical description of social changes is an important element of any sociological

concept. “A well-known specialist in the social changes analysis Polish sociologist P. Sztompka writes, “The study of social change is basic in sociology”. Perhaps, the whole sociology focuses attention on changes. Changes are such obvious feature of the social reality that any scientific social theory, whatever its initial conceptual position, will sooner or later come down to this point”. In general terms, it is conventional to consider social

change as a transition of any social object from one state to another. The innovative approach of V.G. Nemirovskii, who analyzes social changes from the standpoint of postnonclassical universum sociology, taking into account functioning of such previously poorly studied social institution as “secret societies”, should be mentioned. In our view, the concepts of “social changes” and “sociocultural changes” are quite similar in content, although they have certain specificity. We do not set the objective to analyze it; we can only note that in accordance with N.I. Lapin’s approach, it is broader in content than the first concept. In this article, the second concept will be used.

Let us emphasize that the regional political and social elite is one of the important subjects of sociocultural changes in it. For this reason, the analysis of their views about these processes is of great importance both for the study of the specific features of sociocultural and socio-economic development of the region and the role the elite itself plays in them.

Conceptual approaches to the study

In Russian sociology the issue of regional elites’ influence on the changes taking place in a social and territorial subject has been quite actively studied in the last decade, including in the format of dissertation research. General tendencies of the regional elite functioning in the context of social (sociocultural) changes have been studied by a number of Russian authors both on general all-Russian materials, and in relation to specific regions.

Anthroposociocultural approach, formulated by N.I. Lapin and implemented in the methodology of “The Sociocultural Portrait of a Region” formed the basis of the study.

For an overall assessment of the Krasnoyarsk Krai development in relation to Russia, the study is based on the approach to sociocultural dynamics,

developed by V.G. Nemirovskii in accordance with the methodological principle of the minimum universum, according to which any system goes through five stages: birth, development, rise, fall and disappearance.

In this article, the assessment of socio-cultural changes in the region by its administrative and political elite is considered in accordance with the following parameters:

1. Development of the Krasnoyarsk Krai on the background of the corresponding social changes in Russia as a whole.

2. The most “suitable” for the effective development political system and the idea capable, according to the representatives of the regional elite, of integrating Russian society.

3. The results of social changes in the region from the perspective of the respondents’ comparison of their life and life of the population in the neighboring regions of Siberia.

In addition, the assessment of social changes according to the last parameter by the regional political and administrative elite was combined with the comparative analysis of the similar views of the Krasnoyarsk Krai residents, surveyed by the method of representative sample.

Methods of study

The total number of the respondents selected for the study is 30, 15 of them are representatives of the executive authorities of the regional level and 15 – representatives of the legislative authorities of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. The level of the executive authorities respondents starts from the heads of the agencies’ departments of the governor’s administration and higher, deputy ministers and higher; the respondents from the legislative authorities are fully represented by the deputies of the Legislative Assembly of the Krasnoyarsk Krai.

The respondents were surveyed by the use of semi-structured interview, according to the

methodology developed by V.G. Nemirovskii. The last indicator (comparison of life with neighboring regions) was formulated by the authors of the methodology “Sociocultural Portrait of a Region” (N.I. Lapin, L.A. Beliaeva). The analysis of the obtained data was conducted using application programmes software package SPSS 17.

Discussion of the study results

In the course of answering semi-structured interview questions, the respondents had to indicate at what stage of development, in their opinion, the Krasnoyarsk Krai and Russia as a whole are: birth, development, rise, fall and disappearance.

The data represented in Table 1 indicate that, according to the respondents’ opinions, both Russia and the Krasnoyarsk Krai are in the transitional stage of their existence. The majority of respondents define this stage as “development” and the second in number part of the respondents define it as “fall”.

It is important to note that the representatives of the political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai are inclined to believe that the Krasnoyarsk Krai and Russia are at the same stage. This is confirmed by the results of cluster analysis, which allowed to identify two main groups of the respondents.

1. The first group of the respondents determines the stage of Russia and the Krasnoyarsk Krai development as “development” (38% of the respondents).

2. The second group of the respondents holds the opinion that both Russia and the Krasnoyarsk Krai are at the stage of fall (18%).

It is necessary to emphasize that the majority of the assessments given by the representatives of the regional political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai are positive – 63% of the respondents identified the stage of Russia’s development as “birth”, “development” or “rise”, 73% of the respondents identified the same stages regarding development of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. These results suggest that development of the Krasnoyarsk Krai is estimated by the respondents more positively than development of Russia as a whole. In the author’s opinion, it is connected with the fact that the representatives of the regional political and administrative elite associate development of the Krasnoyarsk Krai with the results of their professional activity. In addition, these data indicate the existence of natural contradictions between the federal and regional authorities. Besides, they are also correlated with the results of mass survey of the Krasnoyarsk Krai population, that demonstrate discontent of the region population with “the colonial policy of the Centre” and more positive attitude to the regional authorities than to the federal ones. The latter are often accused of corruption and lobbying the monopolies’ interests. The part of the respondents’ dissatisfaction with the regional authorities is caused by, above all, in their opinion, its “bureaucracy, incompetence and inaction”. The analysis of the studies’ results carried out by V.G. Nemirovskii with the use of

Table 1. The stages of the Krasnoyarsk Krai and Russia development

Stages	Birth		Development		Rise		Fall		Disappearance	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Krasnoyarsk Krai	1	2	21	53	3	8	12	30	3	7
Russia	2	5	25	63	2	5	8	20	3	7

the same methodology in 14 regions of Russia, has demonstrated similar results.

The important indicators of the political and administrative elite of the region attitude towards social and cultural changes are their views on the political system that best corresponds to the Russian specificity, as well as views about the idea, capable of integrating Russian society. Their study is relevant for the research of both the inherent characteristics of the political elite and socio-political aspects of the sociocultural dynamics of the region.

The respondents were asked a question, “What political system corresponds to the Russian specificity?” The distribution of answers is given in Table 2.

Other: “imperial or Soviet-religious state”, “liberal democratic state according to Ilyin”, “corporate state of liberal type, mimicking for democracy”.

The obtained data indicate that the majority of the surveyed representatives of the political and administrative elite of the region consider such political system as Western type democracy to be the most corresponding to the Russian specificity – 50% of the respondents have chosen this answer. At that, quite a large proportion of the respondents have chosen “public self-government” and Soviet-type political system.

Among the answers obtained, there are also “authors” conceptions of the political systems that correspond to the Russian specificity. These political systems are a mixture of several political systems (Soviet-religious state), established other people’s views on political system (liberal democratic state according to Ilyin) and the respondent’s own views (corporate state of liberal type, mimicking for democracy).

As we can see, the obtained data evidence that the most corresponding to the Russian specificity political system, according to the majority of the regional representatives of the political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai, should combine the elements of Western democracy, “public self-government” and Soviet-type political system.

Political views of the respondents and their understanding of the socio-political situation in Russia reflect to a certain extent their thoughts regarding the idea that can integrate Russian society. Table 3 presents distribution of the answers to the question “What idea can integrate Russian society?”

Other: “freedom of the word and human rights”, “Russian socialism”.

Research shows that most of the regional representatives of the political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai support the spiritual revival of Russia as an idea, capable of integrating

Table 2. The political system that, according to the respondents’ opinions, corresponds to the Russian specificity

Political system	Number	%
Western type democracy	20	50
Authoritarian regime	4	10
Soviet-type system	5	13
Public self-government	7	17
Religious state	1	3
Fascism	0	0
Other	3	7

Table 3. The opinion of the respondents regarding the idea that can integrate Russian society

Idea	Number	%
Communism idea	2	5
Socialism idea	4	10
Religious idea	4	10
Idea of Russia's spiritual revival	18	45
Idea of Russian national identity	10	25
Other	2	5

Table 4. The social situation in the Krasnoyarsk Krai in comparison with other regions according to experts' assessment

Answer option	Representatives of the political elite		Population of the Krasnoyarsk Krai, 2014 [15]
	Number	%	%
In our region people live better than in the neighbouring ones	7	18	20
In comparison with some regions people live better, in comparison with other regions people live worse	28	70	58
In our region people live worse than in all other regions	5	12	10
Cannot say	0	0	12

Russian society (45%). A significant proportion of respondents identified the idea of Russian national identity (25%).

Moreover, during interviews the respondents provided us with copyright wording of ideas capable of integrating Russian society: 1) expressing the democratic values ("freedom of the word and human rights, rule of law for everybody"), 2) combining national and socialist components ("Russian socialism").

All this suggests that, in the opinion of the interviewed representatives of the political and administrative elite of the region, an idea capable of integrating the Russian society should include spiritual and national elements. Some of its representatives (15%) continue to believe that the ideas of communism and socialism are capable of integrating Russian society.

One of the most important elements of the assessment of socio-cultural changes in the Krasnoyarsk Krai is its comparison with other

regions of Siberia. To this end, the respondents were asked: "Do you think that the residents of the Krasnoyarsk Krai live better or worse than residents of neighboring regions?". The distribution of answers to this question is given in Table 4.

The data presented in the table show: the majority of respondents (70%) think that compared to some regions, the social situation in the Krasnoyarsk Krai is better, compared to the other it is worse. In general, the distribution of answers of the political elite representatives coincides with the distribution of the responses of the Krasnoyarsk Krai population. It is worth noting that only 12% of the interviewed members of the political elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai believe that in our region people live worse than those in neighbouring regions. In our opinion, this is due to the fact that the representatives of the political and administrative elite associate the quality of life in the region, with the results of their work.

The majority of respondents when answering this question, clarified that according to some criteria the population of the Krasnoyarsk Krai lives better, and according to other criteria people live worse. In addition, many respondents cited statistics, proving their answer. In our opinion, people's awareness of the quality of life of in the Krasnoyarsk Krai is an important indicator showing the efficiency of work of the regional political and administrative elite. In general, according to the results of monitoring studies, the social well-being of the population in the region has considerably improved. A comparison of the data obtained using this technique in the regions of Siberia and Russia as a whole, does not speak in favour of the eastern territories.

Conclusions and further research

Thus, the respondents characterize the development of the Krasnoyarsk Krai often more positive than the development of Russia as a whole. Assessing the stage of development of the region and Russia in accordance with the methodological principle of minimum universum, the representatives of the political and administrative elite of the Krasnoyarsk Krai are inclined to believe that the Krasnoyarsk Krai and Russia are at the same stage. The opinions that these social communities are at the stage of "development" are quite common, twice less often the respondents called the stage of "extinction".

The political and administrative elite of the region have quite contradictory views regarding the political system that best suits the Russian specificity. The study results show that, according to most respondents, the most

corresponding to the Russian specificity political system should combine the elements of Western democracy, "public self-government" and Soviet-type political system. It is obvious that such contradictory opinions cannot influence the effectiveness of their professional activities as an important social group in the region.

One of the important conditions for effective development of the country is the integration of its population around some central productive ideas. According to the respondents in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, the modern Russian society can be integrated, first of all, by the idea of Russia's spiritual revival and the idea of Russian national identity. In fact, these are important elements of patriotic ideology.

Finally, more than two thirds of respondents believe: in comparison with neighbouring regions, the social situation in the Krasnoyarsk region is much better. It should be noted that the distribution of the responses of representatives of the political and administrative elite coincides with the distribution of the responses of the Krasnoyarsk Krai population.

In accordance with the results of the conducted analysis, there is no doubt that the responses demonstrate political and social heterogeneity of the regional elite. These factors to some extent define both their ideas and the results of their work. At the same time, let us leave the question of the impact of such heterogeneity of regional political and administrative elite on social changes for future deep investigation. Little studied but important topic of the influence of various kinds of institutional factors, such as different kinds of unmanifested organizations, influence groups, also requires an additional study.

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Представления политической и управленческой элиты региона о его социокультурной динамике

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Актуальной проблемой современной социологии выступает изучение происходящих в регионах социокультурных изменений и детерминирующих их факторов. Целью настоящей работы является экспертный анализ социокультурных изменений в одном из крупнейших регионов Сибири. Методологическую основу работы составляет антропосоциокультурный подход (Н. И. Лапин) в сочетании с постнеклассическим универсумным подходом (В. Г. Немировский и др.). В роли экспертов выступают представители политико-управленческой элиты Красноярского края. При этом их мнение по ряду параметров сравнивается с результатами репрезентативных исследований массового сознания населения региона. Результаты исследований дают основания говорить как о противоречивости мнений политико-управленческой элиты региона, так и их совпадении по основным параметрам с представлениями жителей всего региона. Эксперты считают, что Красноярский край развивается более быстро и стабильно, нежели страна в целом. Представители политико-управленческой элиты региона указывают на важность идей духовного возрождения России, русской национальной самобытности для интеграции и позитивной социокультурной динамики социума.

Ключевые слова: региональная элита, социокультурная динамика, антропосоциокультурный подход, универсумный подход, принцип минимального универсума.

Научная специальность: 22.00.00 – социологические науки.
