GRASSROOTS AND HYBRID CIVIC INITIATIVES: FEATURES OF POLITICIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at conducting an analysis basic model's politicization grassroots and hybrid civil initiates in modern Russia. This problem is particularly relevant in the context of the transformation of the political system in modern Russia. Understanding the scenarios, technologies, and most importantly, the risks inherent in models of politicization of civil initiatives is necessary for the balanced development of the state and society. The identification and subsequent typologization of models of politicization of grass-roots and hybrid civil initiatives can become the basis for the consolidation and modernization of modern Russian society and the state. This, in turn, will make it possible to purposefully influence their relationship.

The conceptual basis of the research is formed by an interdisciplinary methodology. It is based on the following categories of political science-politicization, sociological concepts-civil society and civil initiatives. The subject of research is formed by the interaction of categories of political science (politicization, depoliticization, political risks, political threats, etc.) and sociological theories of civil society and civil initiatives.

The interdisciplinary nature of the research is determined by the set of principles, methods and methods of obtaining new knowledge, and the scientific objectives of the project. Grassroots and hybrid network initiatives are often «sub political». Civic initiatives form a new understanding of citizenship. Citizens are participants in the larger political world. That is why the interdisciplinary approach in this study helps to move away from disciplinary stereotypes and the tried and tested mental models. This opens up opportunities for free transfer of knowledge and theoretical and methodological approaches from one research area to another.

Keywords: Politicization, Depoliticization, Grassroots Civil Initiatives, Hybrid Civil Initiatives, Models of Politicization, Risks and Threats of Politicization.

INTRODUCTION

The modern information society is at the very beginning of deep structural transformations of a socio-political nature. Its structure includes the latest digital institutions that significantly change the existing ideas about the channels and content of interaction between government and society (Mohamed, 2017). Large-scale implementation of information and communication technologies in the modern networked world allows any citizen to take an active part in solving problems of various levels and scales without intermediaries. In the well-known book Cognitive excess: creativity and generosity in the age of communication, K. Shirky provides interesting data about people's attitude to the Internet. So, if in the 1990s the Internet

was seen as a convenient way of finding information, and in the 2000s, mainly used for finding like-minded people and communication purposes, since the 2010s, the online space is viewed in the prism of the threats, phishing, cyberterrorism, cyber activism, regulatory Network and various destructive components. In addition, K. Shirky identifies four incentives for citizen network engagement: first, personal sharing (Shirky, 2010). The ability to coordinate the actions of various actors, and secondly, community sharing (collective interaction). It develops and deepens in groups United by a common task, and third, public sharing. Translating the issue under consideration into the public sphere and giving it a public value, fourth, civic sharing. Coordinated actions of actors related to the satisfaction of public needs, requests and interests.

These circumstances actualize the urgent problem of communication failures (Solovyov, 2019) in the system of built relationships between government bodies and civil society institutions. The contradictory erosion of public dialogue contributes to the emergence of unique conceptual structures. So, Plotnikova and his colleagues suggest using the concept of Truth Decay, which combines four mutually dependent and interrelated trends, to describe the negative processes associated with the digitalization of modern communication relations that contribute to serious deformations of political discourse (Plotnikova, 2019).

The first trend is related to the growing contradictions between facts, objective data and their interpretations. The second is to level the differences and boundaries between facts and opinions. The third is the quantitative growth of emotional opinions and personal points of view distributed in the media space, the influence of which significantly affects the perception of facts. The fourth is based on the loss of confidence of the mass audience in traditional sources of information that were previously considered authoritative.

These problems actualize the issue of forming a new explanatory communication model in the digital world with numerous intersperses of fake information. It is also worth Recalling that at the very beginning of 2020, UN Secretary-General A. gutterish singled out such a problem as the dark side of the digital world» as a separate category of universal threats, because despite all the advantages of information technologies, they are often used to commit crimes, falsify news, invade privacy, and increase conflict through network homophilia. Network homophily) and an individualized echo room where the sifted information is located and the corresponding "*user*" news feed is generated.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

It should also be noted an important problem of transformation of political activity: on the one hand, since the mid-2000s, there has been a widespread increase in public distrust of institutions of representative (representative) democracy, state institutions and politicians; on the other hand, the possibilities of social media have stimulated the emergence of completely new non-conventional forms of public and civil participation, demonstrating current practices of civil mobilization and coordination, contributing to The events of recent years have clearly shown the importance of political moments coupled with the growing political involvement of citizens, which destabilizes the established order within the existing institutional landscape. It is important to note that the problem or the issue is politicised when they are considered as the subject of

collective choice-i.e. a political decision that: is made by a democratically legitimate legislator or government, is a probabilistic choice between alternative options for action, and is collectively binding for a particular community (Obolensky, 2019).

Network communications not only create platforms for civic practices for certain communities (including online communities), but also open up potential vectors for their implementation in the political process. Active use of the opportunities of new digital platforms by activists has become an impetus for state structuring of the non-hierarchical space of digital interactions (Crouch, 2016).

In the digital age, networked means of communication can accumulate and coordinate public energy and/or protest potential, which is increasingly evident in real life. Network connections between individuals in an online environment are akin to connections in physical reality, and digital platforms can serve as Central platforms for the formulation of collective goals and identities.

In this paper, we propose to describe three cases in 2020. All three reveal recent protest trends related to restrictions on the media agenda in traditional media, and which show new opportunities for self-organization of citizens. Each case of spontaneous protest had its own political background associated with the lack of coordination of the interests of various groups, as well as the demonstrative adoption of paternalistic political and managerial decisions without involving the General public in a public dialogue.

Describing the above cases, we used the following version of the concept of "*politicization*". Politicization is a kind of synergistic effect resulting from the political "*infection*" of the mass consciousness, the radicalization of the political agenda and the activation of political participation

Politization

Adhering to this approach, we also started from the position that the processes of politicization and depoliticization of public relations can be considered, on the one hand, as natural ways to stabilize the social system, and, on the other hand, as technologies for achieving local goals by political actors, often requiring destabilization of the situation.

The methodological basis of the study was a project approach combined with an institutional approach. This combination allowed us to consider the initiatives of civil activists as creative political projects that have a formal basis. We used content analysis, intent analysis, and event analysis as research methods. The study of models of politicization of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives was based on the analysis of a large body of empirical data. In particular, publications of public activists and socio-political institutions that supported their activities. We used content analysis to quantify these publications. It allowed you to select the necessary publications and organize them. For a more detailed analysis of the content of publication materials, we used intent analysis. It made it possible to identify the semantic intentions of civil activists ' speeches and correlate them with certain models of politicization of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives. In addition, we used event analysis. It was necessary to evaluate the activities and events that civil society activists created in order to support their ideas.

RESULTS

Such modern researchers as Skovikov & Leontieva, (2020), Danilov (2009) and others are engaged in the problems of politicization and depoliticization in relation to civil initiatives of various types and levels. This is how Skovikov & Leontieva examines the problematic aspects of the politicization of social reality in modern Russia, highlights the main directions of this process. They considers the role of mass media in the politicization of social events, analyzes the functionality of modern and classical "*media*" in the processes of politicization. Skovikov & Leontieva consider the specifics of politicization by civil forces of various levels of religious aspects of life in modern society. In turn, M. V. Danilov identifies the key cycles of politicization and depoliticization of Russian society and gives them a detailed description. However, despite a detailed analysis of the conceptual foundations of the politicization of civil initiatives, the regional dimension of this phenomenon remains poorly understood. The relevance of this article is to identify models of politicization of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives based on the study of regional cases.

The first case, illustrating the specifics of the implementation of the protest potential of Russian citizens, is related to the social activity of the population opposed to the unification of the Nenets Autonomous district (NAO) and the Arkhangelsk region. Immediately it is worth noting that the process of unification of the Federal subjects (primarily matryoshka regions) in the Russian Federation is not a new issue. Due to the consolidation of complex subjects of the Federation (an Autonomous district is part of a region or territory), such Autonomous districts as Komi-Permyatsky, Koryaksky, Ust-Orda Buryat, AGINSKY Buryat, Taimyr and Even have become history. However, the unification of the Arkhangelsk region and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (hereinafter NAO) developed in a different scenario.

On May 13, 2020, the Governor of the Arkhangelsk region Alexander Tsybulsky and the acting head of the Nenets Autonomous district Yuri Bezdudny signed a Memorandum On the intention to form a new subject of the Russian Federation by combining the Arkhangelsk region and the Nenets Autonomous district. The news about the potential merger of the two regions immediately caused a resonant reaction from both dissatisfied citizens of the NAO and local elites. With a population of just over 44 thousand. all the protesters demonstrated amazing unity and solidarity, and the very fact that the region could become part of the Arkhangelsk region became a unifying element for all residents of the most sparsely populated subject of the Russian Federation (Vasilenko, 2019).

The chairmen of 31 communities of the NAO signed a collective appeal to the acting head of the district Yuri Bezdudny demanding to abandon the idea of merging the NAO and the Arkhangelsk region. Every day, local residents went to the Central square of Naryan-Mar and sang the district anthem (We sing you, Nenets district, and great Russia support!). on may 23, motorists staged a large-scale rally against associations from the regional capital to the village of Seekers (NAO protest…). A column of cars with NAO flags and regional symbols was greeted and supported by picketers along the roadsides along the entire route. Bright visual symbols of the protest were the slogans «I/We are against the unification of the Arkhangelsk region and the NAO» and «I am against the unification of the NAO and AO, which could be seen on posters of activists, in apartment Windows, on cars, in the form of stickers on phones, on avatars in social networks, and even protective masks from the new coronavirus infection (The head...). Moreover, the deputies of the United Russia faction of the legislative Assembly of the NAO

voted against the merger of the regions. During many weeks of protest, the issue of unification became highly politicized and reached the state level.

All this led to the fact that on July 2, 2020 Yuri Bezdudny said that the topic of unification of the Nenets Autonomous district and the Arkhangelsk region, which caused protest moods and influenced the negative result of voting on amendments to the Constitution in the NAO, is closed, the regions will not be United. The second case is not related to changes in the administrative-territorial division of the Federation, but to environmental issues. This so-called campaign against the development of Sheehan Kustow. Limestone shihans, formed by reaching the surface of ancient barrier reefs, are unique in the South of the Republic of Bashkortostan. Shikhany–unique natural monuments with rich communities of plants and animals, many of which are listed in the Red books of Russia and the International Union for conservation of nature. After the development of limestone parody of Sahtu for the production of baking soda there are only three Shihan of Torato, of yuraktau and Kustow. Local residents have a special sacred attitude to these solitary mountains (The leadership…).

In 2017, (Beveridge, 2017) JSC Raw materials company», associated with the Bashkir soda company (hereinafter-BSK), received a license for the period up to 2039 for the exploration and production of minerals in the Kushtau field. The development of Shikhan Toratau and Yuraktau was refused earlier, because they have the status of natural monuments of regional significance.

Since July 2020, citizens have begun to actively advocate for the preservation of Kushtau, which is also a popular holiday destination for residents of Bashkortostan. In defense of Kustow was made by the members of the Council for human rights and civil society development under the President of Russia, which spring is held in Bashkiria field meeting.

In early August, BSK began deforestation on the slope of Shihan. After this fact, the activists set up a tent camp to prevent the passage of equipment and the import of necessary equipment for geological exploration. On August 5 and 6, the activists were chased away by PSC officers and BSK guards, and the first skirmishes took place. As a result of the clashes, information immediately spread through social networks, which led to a sharp increase in the number of protesters. On August 9, local residents organized a flash mob live chain in defense of Kushat, which was attended by more than 2 thousand people (Kochurov, 2019).

On August 15, the protesters tent camp was destroyed, the activists who lived in it were forced to leave, and representatives of the BSK began to enclose the site with a fence made of metal mesh and barbed wire. However, the next day, the defenders of Kushat managed to recapture the camp and attract the attention of the Republican authorities. Actions of eco-activists began to increase; targeted detentions began for disobeying the police (article 19.3 of the Administrative code) and arbitrariness (article 19.1 of the Administrative code). After numerous videos on social networks, more and more people began to learn about the campaign. Just a couple of days the social media space is filled with information about the protest, using the hash tag of custom, custody, masturbating to the distribution of content has become viral in nature. Famous bloggers made their films in defense of the shikhans: How people defended mount Kushtau, and Live! The story of a struggle. Many posts appeared online with words of support for the protesters, and another unifying element was the song shihans must live! (Protest moods…).

As a result, on August 16, the head of Bashkiria, Radiy Khabirov, arrived at the foot of Shikhan, where the main clashes took place, and promised that mount Kushtau would not be

developed until a compromise solution was found. After this announcement most of the police and the environmental activists began to leave the Sheehan of Kustow. And on September 2, 2020, R.F. Khabirov signed Resolution No. 529 of the Republic of Bashkortostan, according to which Shikhan Kushtau is declared a natural monument of national significance «Mount Kushtau» (Raw materials Company…).

The third case, unlike the first two, includes not a single event, but a number of online rallies as new forms of civic activism. Online self-organization of citizens in response to political, environmental and social challenges has become ubiquitous, largely due to the unique resources of social media. Online rallies are a Prime example of such activism. At the end of April 2020, Russian Internet users, speaking out against the self-isolation regime, spontaneously organized a new form of activity online rallies using the Conversations service of the popular Yandex car Navigator. Any citizen who has the Yandex app installed Maps and Yandex Navigator was able to leave a virtual trace in the form of a comment on a specific map object with a request for additional and immediate support measures from the state during the coronavirus pandemic. Spontaneous online rallies were held in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Rostov-on-don, Yekaterinburg, Saratov, Krasnoyarsk and Nizhny Novgorod (Makarenko, 2020).

The first place of the online rally was Rostov-on-don (April 20, 2020). in connection with the access regime for moving around the city in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection, users left angry comments at the buildings of the legislative Assembly of the Rostov region and the government of the Rostov region. Just two hours later, similar actions began in other cities of Russia, during which citizens demanded direct assistance from the state, the introduction of an emergency regime, the freezing of payments for housing and communal services, support for small businesses, and so on. Yandex engineers quickly removed the tags of online commenters in accordance with the moderation rules, but the news event attracted the attention of both the General public and the authorities. For example, the press Secretary of Russian President Dmitry Peskov said that the Kremlin carefully monitor the emergence of new formats in the Internet space and, whenever possible, will take into account the views of citizens in planning to support economic players (Danilov, 2009).

The series of online mobilizations also includes numerous flash mobs in social networks (Me Too, Ice Kefir Challenge, tangerine flash mob, flash mob of Russian teacher's #Uchitelyatozhelyudi, flash mob in support of journalist Ivan Golunov, etc.) (Filippova, 2018). all this list shows the growing role of online rallies, in which social networks play a key role with their ability to instantly decentralize citizens for a specific purpose. Based on the theory of society by N. Luhmann, when considering online rallies, communication between users with their desire to be heard and create a sufficiently long information occasion in the network becomes of particular importance (Luman, 2005). The success of a protest action in the media is largely determined by the timely creation and subsequent rapid translation of messages and visual symbols. That is why online rallies can serve as a signal of the inefficiency of specific political institutions. The effectiveness of online rallies themselves is enhanced by the participation and promotion of participation from the main subjects of influence, which are most often converged journalists, top bloggers and active creators of online content (Miryasova, 2018).

DISCUSSION

The analyzed material allows making the following summaries. The addition and development of the theory of civil activism with conceptual models of politicization of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives implemented in the context of the transformation of the political system of modern Russia has a significant heuristic potential. It is possible to associate scenarios and mechanisms of politicization of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives with their basic models. The characteristics of scenarios and mechanisms for the politicization of grass-roots and hybrid civil initiatives should be correlated with their socio-economic, legal, spiritual, social and household nature. The risks inherent in the basic models of politicization of grass-roots and hybrid civil initiatives are associated with the rapid and uncontrolled inclusion of new participants in these models. The result of the research is a typological model of grassroots and hybrid civil initiatives in modern Russia. This model is based on both unique and universal scenarios and technologies. It also contains a definition of risks and threats to the politicization of civil initiatives. Based on it, it is possible to create a motivational map of factors for citizens' participation in grassroots and hybrid network initiatives. Behavioral mechanisms of politicization and depoliticization of public relations determine the level and scale of citizens' involvement in political life, the functioning of positive and negative feedback loops in the cycles of politicization and depoliticization of society. The mechanics of this process is that the technological intensification of political participation, most often unfolding under the pressure of the so-called administrative resource, is first expressed in the growth of citizens' involvement in politics, and then due to the accumulated negative potential, citizens are «pushed» out of the political sphere. This fact should be taken into account when building strategies for involving civil activists in political processes of various levels and scales.

The scientific and practical significance of the results obtained lies in the possibility of systematic use of the potential of grass-roots and hybrid network initiatives at all stages of the formation and implementation of public policy. This will significantly improve the degree of rationality and optimality of public administration, the overall effectiveness of decisions, as well as the public administration system as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Protest moods in society are typical for all polities in any period of time. If we turn to our reality, in recent years there has been a steady increase in the public demand for change. However, this request often remained depoliticized and concerned the issue of post-material values and improving the overall quality of life. As of August 2020, only 24% of Russians are ready to personally take part in rallies, demonstrations, and protest actions (it should be noted that this indicator remains stable throughout the year). Nevertheless, the protest activity of Russians in recent years has been undergoing dynamic politicization, due to the inability to solve priority problems with conventional forms of political participation, which is especially evident in the conditions of increasing communication gaps between the government and society. From our point of view, with a stable state of protest potential in Russian society, it takes on veiled forms and smoothly moves to new online platforms (Telegram channels, messenger chats, etc.). As a result, a new network political field is formed, within which constantly changing actors construct alternative strategies for the transformation of real political and socio-economic spaces.

It should be noted that the existing political mimicry that hides real problems without a timely response can lead to an avalanche of dissatisfied citizens, which will lead to serious challenges for the existing political system. Another important circumstance is characteristic of modern Russia: the possibilities of legal protest as a tool for expressing the position of society on certain issues are severely limited and compromised both by the state and by the systemic and non-systemic opposition. All this leads to widespread networking of protest moods and their departure to the poorly controlled space of social media.

We believe that successful and well-publicized civil initiatives at the regional and local levels do not become a model for similar civil activities in other regions and localities. The precedents created within their framework rarely get a "*second life"* in subsequent socio-economic and spiritual projects designed and implemented by civil society activists. As a result, the process of typologizing models of politicization of civil initiatives becomes difficult and requires taking into account numerous "*exceptions to the rules*".

We also came to the conclusion that the "*power*" of the protest potential of self-organization of Russian citizens is directly dependent on the own goals of key leaders of civil initiatives at the local and regional levels. Civil initiatives that quickly overcome the self-serving goals of their key leaders are capable of rapid politicization and significant expansion of the membership. In turn, initiatives that are associated with the realization of the material interests of their key leaders, even if at the initial stage they were politicized, are rapidly depoliticized, losing supporters and sympathizers.

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