

## Simulation Practices in Municipal Management

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**Abstract:** The issues of applying simulation practices in both state and municipal management are of interest to the scientific community in Russia and worldwide. This study presents both theoretical and practical research of the corporate researches in the field of institutionalized simulation practices. We have studied the intentionality process of a social action in the development of the society. The study includes data of sociological research “Simulation practices in municipal management: their essence, mechanisms and social consequences” as well as its interpretation subject to the provisions of a social science. Based on the study a simulation orientation of the municipal bureaucracy is revealed. It has been found that the simulation images spreading in the modern society result in strengthening the process of people escape from the reality to visually pleasing, hedonistic and at the same time spiritually inauthentic worlds having arisen from the simulacra and serving as a space for game practices. Researchers state that game practices have a range of destructive effects on the state, municipality, society and an individual (including the identity of an official).

**Key words:** Simulation, society, municipal management, practice, hedonistic

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### INTRODUCTION

A characteristic feature of the new industrial society is the virtualization of social processes which is based on the replacement of institutionalized practices with simulations, when the values and meanings are replaced with signs, symbols and formal rituals. Simulacra are artificially imposed on the society in the form of a social code of conduct, transformed into a self-sufficient reality which means the destruction of social reality through its simulation. This process has significant negative consequences for control systems as a natural rationality of management practices transforms into a formal rationality, a rationality for itself during the replacement. This transformation, painful at all levels of management, comes into very sharp conflict at the municipal level most close to real-life processes of a territorial community. It is important for this reason to understand the way the simulation practices manifest themselves at a municipal level and their consequences for population and municipalities.

A theoretical justification of a tendency “loss of reality” represented in the researches by Deleuze (1995) Lyotard (1992) plays an important role in understanding the phenomenon of simulation. These researchers proposed the concept of a postmodern society where a real life is replaced by simulacra with more

sophisticated simulations of the reality. The concepts of simulacrum of postmodern sociology allowed capturing the phenomenon of total semiotization of a social reality.

The definition of modernity, where the media create certain information by manipulating images, signs, symbols and stereotypes was given in the 60s of XX century by a cultural specialist Debord (2000) who called Western society the “society of the spectacle”. Both J. Baudrillard and Guy Debord have considered the loss of differences between the animate and inanimate, between the sign and the signified to be the first sign of loss of reality, its replacement with a symbolic reality. In this sense, the spectacle at the same time is both the society itself and a part of the society and a tool of the society unification. Being a part of the society, it serves as a sector that focuses any look and any consciousness thereon.

However, due to autonomous and isolating nature of the spectacle, this sector appears to be a center of the mistaken view and false consciousness and the unification, it performs is nothing else than the official language of this generalized separation. In fact, the spectacle notes an existent model of the lifestyle prevailing in society. “Anything that used to be experienced immediately before changes now into representation. Spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation between people, mediated by images” (Debord, 2000).

As Shaljugina (2005) rightly noted, the transformation of social reality into the ephemeral and unstable one correlates clearly with an increased role of different kinds of simulations in people's lives such as stereotypes and images of reality which replace the reality itself.

Anderson and Maks (2012) considered the problems of both rational and intuitive reality in municipal practices in their researches where they noted the signs of the new public administration.

Riggs (1998) and Radin and Cooper (1997) deal in details with the problems of transformation of the municipal and state sectors.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research technique:** The study is based on the development of the simulation concept in the researches of modern researchers. It is known that the term "simulation" appeared in the theory of probability and mathematical statistics as a way to calculate the statistical characteristics of random variables, we are interested in by replicating the implementation of relevant stochastic process with the help of its mathematical model.

The most famous interpretation of the concept of "imitation" is that by Shannon (1978), who defined it as "the process of constructing a model of the real system and setting up experiments on this model in order to either understand the behavior of a system or evaluate different strategies that ensure the functioning of this system". Naylor (1971) gives a similar definition of this concept: "a numerical method of carrying out the experiments with mathematical models describing the behavior of complex systems over long periods of time with the use of digital computers". Simulation as a process is based on the intentionality of social action, contributing to:

- The symbolic legitimization of government entities through the implementation of simulation practices
- Identification of the relation of a "mass man" to the government (if it accepts "quasiparliament", "quasimodernization", "quasielection" therefore, it trusts the government and does not consider all these "artifacts" to be illusory)

The empirical base that allows verifying the theoretical provisions is the results of a sociological study "Simulation practice in the municipal management: essence, mechanisms, social effects" conducted by the author in December 2011 to March 2012 in Belgorod region. The study included a questionnaire survey of the population (N = 700) conducted by the method of multistage quota sampling, a questionnaire survey of the municipal employees of Belgorod region (N = 450) and expert survey (N = 32).

The study showed that one-third of municipal employees, 71.88% experts and 67.43% citizens are convinced that imitations are now an integral part of the municipal management. The most typical manifestation of simulation practices, according to experts, include: formulation of visually pleasing, but unachievable goals (61.11%); imitation by officials of heavy activity at real passivity (38.89%); creation of functionally unreasonable structures (38.89%); production of useless documents (33.33%); conducting of formal procedures having no effect on the decision-making (27.78%) and organization of events for the sake of appearance (27.78%).

More than half (58.75%) of the surveyed experts noted that simulations reflect the state of modern society. 55.56% of respondents named "alienation of government from the people and their real needs" as one of reasons.

It is noteworthy that practically all the participants of management process are bearers of simulation practices. However, their most consistent constructor is a municipal bureaucracy initially predisposed, according to Weber (1990) to the construction of formal rationality. About 44.44% of the experts stressed during our study that the municipal officials are the main initiators of simulations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A number of features of bureaucratic thinking contributes to the simulation orientation of the municipal bureaucracy which include: simplification (primitivization) attitude to social phenomena and processes which stimulates the contrast perception of reality, ignoring the nuances and variety of while the society becomes more variable, the social systems nonlinear which, incidentally, makes them potentially open to strategic breakthroughs.

Deformed corporatism which distorts the system of communication between the groups because it does not involve elementary respect for the position of its counterparty, i.e., a representative of another, less successful corporation. Adherence to this attitude by both administrators and their imitators from other status groups desocialize public practices, because, according to Weber (1990), "only that action is social which, by its nature, is focused on the behavior of others".

Ad-hocratic (for ad hoc) attitude to governance-related objects and social problems if the latter do not affect the personal interests of an administrator. The priority of formal grounds of the administrator's activity makes it poorly capable of both understanding the common issues and identifying the fundamental processes and trends of social development. General questions require understanding of historical perspectives, willingness and ability to make value

judgments. However, an important prerequisite for the functioning of the bureaucracy is a conscious rejection of open discussion of common value-semantic issues, the right to which is transferred to leaders. This results in minimizing the possibility of administrators to master a strategic management technology, despite the fact that this task is set for them by their executives more often, but usually with no success.

Exaggerated symbolic demarcation as a prerequisite for building both internal and external communications. It is expressed in the strict distinction of status, in empowering them with increases value and respectively in transferring the status values to the individual. Demarcation constantly and consistently distinguishes “friends” (i.e., those who are directly involved in the administrative and managerial process or in any way connected with it) and “foes”, remaining “on the other side” of the management apparatus, who are a target object. This positioning is often considered in making which do not always contribute to the solution of real problems. As a result of demarcation, the municipal officials remain “on the other side” of the community and solve their personal problems rather than represent public interests. It is telling that in the course of our study, only 37.42% of the residents reported that municipal officials represent “public interests”

Idealization and universalization of the administrative control practice. The conviction, if not in omnipotence, then at least in a very broad possibilities of control practices is a typical feature of the representatives of a bureaucratic system. At the same time, the officials take control in extremely one-sided manner as a formal act, carried out by the authorities and officials officially authorized therefor. The universalization of control leads to the increased formal requirements to the officials activities (as 64.67% of the surveyed municipal employees noted).

Systemic reproduction of irrationalism or rather “transrationalism” embodied in the practice of quasirational construction of formal systems upon exclusion of rationally sound points. There is a paradoxical situation often occurring in the management practice, characterized by a chimeric combination of the logic of specific technologically aligned where each successive element is more or less organically linked to the previous one and therefore, justified and by their purposeful absurdity in the context of historical perspective.

## CONCLUSION

The resulted situation is determined by the nature of the socio-cultural environment where modern municipal management is functioning. The simulation images

spreading in the modern Russian society result in strengthening the process of people escape from the reality to visually pleasing, hedonistic and, at the same time, spiritually inauthentic worlds having arisen from the simulacra and serving as a space for game practices. Game practices broadcasted on television and the internet increasingly become the only conceivable kind of human leisure.

Breaking the usual stereotypes and legitimized lifestyle, play behavior, at the same time, fills and compensates the reality, creating a new cultural space made of new meanings, values, roles and relations. Creativity is an important and popular quality of a person, it forms and develops especially, during the gaming and leisure activities where routine and normativity are minimized.

Gamization destroys the distinction between social virtual and actual realities, between non-gaming experiences of people. It is inseparable from everyday social practices and is one of their essential elements. In this context, simulation practices in municipal management should be considered as one of the consequences of gamization of public life becoming universal. It is possible that the gamization relies upon the features of the Russian mentality which are a pronounced tendency to paternalism, refusal to follow strict rules, legal nihilism, manifested itself in the full or partial realized rejection of means of legal regulation as unable to both satisfy the interests of social subjects and ensure the achievement of their goals.

As a result of implementing the simulation practices in municipal management, the complexity and contradictions of the municipal space increase. On the one hand, the simulation practices are a kind of adaptive mechanism that facilitates the “stress” release and accompanies the radical management reforms, sharp transitions from one management paradigm to another. On the other hand, they have a range of destructive effects on the state, municipality, society and an individual (including the identity of an official). The main destructive effect of the simulation practices is blurring of the differences between the real and imaginary meanings of the municipal management, its social and strictly corporate functions.

Consequences of simulation activities become more and more negative in the municipal management. They are expressed primarily in the increased social alienation and the crisis of public confidence in the local authorities.

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