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## Power and leadership in small Russian monotowns

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents the outcomes of an empirical study of power and leadership in three small Russian monotowns, conducted in 2011–2015 and 2018–2020. The study demonstrates the variability of power relations in Russian towns, despite the policy of centralization and the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies in Russian politics. The political process in monotowns retains its specificity due to the presence of town-forming enterprises, which largely determine the life of urban communities. Town-forming enterprises retain a high potential for influence in the political space of small towns, especially those enterprises that have solid economic resources and are successfully developing; their presence creates additional opportunities for the formation of an urban regime. The role of these enterprises in local politics varies significantly—from active participation to actual withdrawal. The differences largely depend on their economic potential and development prospects, as well as on a personal factor—the position of enterprise owners and the readiness of the leaders of municipal authorities and enterprises to cooperate.

### KEYWORDS

Monotowns; local politics; political power; leadership; Russia

## Introduction

Monotowns are towns whose economy is dominated by a single industry or company<sup>1</sup> are among the local communities that attract special attention of researchers (Green, 2010; Martinez-Fernandes et al., 2012; Dinius & Vergara, 2011). Due to their nature, monotowns often have narrow and inflexible economies, an immobile work force; many of their businesses are uncompetitive. Since the second half of the 20th century, almost all industrialized countries have faced difficulties in the development of monotowns.

Although problems with monotowns occur everywhere, the severity of the situation and the possibilities for resolving them differ significantly. In this respect, many Russian monotowns are among the most problematic, due not only to their less deindustrialized economy and low living standards compared to European and American towns, but also as a consequence of historical and socio-political factors caused by the inertia of the command economy (monotowns were created to meet the needs of a planned economy rather than a competitive market), and an authoritarian political context.

The problems of Russian monotowns have become most evident since the 1990s, when most of the town-forming enterprises found themselves in a difficult economic situation or went bankrupt. The world financial and economic crisis of 2008–2009 began the next wave of aggravation of the problems of highly specialized towns, which continues to the present, due to the onset of stagnation in the economy.

The decline in production and the financial difficulties faced by the town-forming enterprises create the danger of an increase in social tension and protest, as evidenced by the cases of open protests

by the townspeople.<sup>2</sup> Many Russian monotowns are still “time bombs,” which cannot but worry the Russian leadership. The problem is more than serious, since the number of single-industry towns and the proportion of the population living in them remains very high. Russia is called a “country of monotowns.” Today, there are 321 monotowns, where 13.5 million people live (about 9.2% of the population of Russia). There are monotowns in 61 out of 85 regions of Russia, but they are mostly concentrated in the Volga region, the Urals, and Siberia (Analiticheskiy doklad IKSI, 2017; Nedoseka & Karbainov, 2020).

The search for solutions to the problem has led to the growth of research on monotowns and the development of programs to optimize the situation (Bozhko & Turgel, 2018; Fomin et al., 2020). Both the research and programs have focused primarily on socioeconomic factors. However, the situation in monotowns is largely determined by political factors, configurations of the most influential local and regional actors, the role of town-forming enterprises in urban communities, their interactions with municipal authorities and the population, and the quality of governance (“actors matter”).

Although power and politics in monotowns have become the subject of research (Crowley, 2023; Dinius & Vergara, 2011; Phillimore & Bell, 2005 etc.), they have been less explored in the study of power in urban communities.

The best-known studies of power in the monotowns were in the previous century. The first empirical study of power in a monotown, which has become a classic, was carried out by Crenson (1971) in Gary and East Chicago (Indiana, U.S.). Crenson studied why the municipal government in Gary did not take the necessary measures to protect the environment and came to the conclusion that this was the result of a strong latent influence of the town-forming enterprise (U.S. Steel), which occupied a dominant position in the town’s economy. In the public political space the leadership of the U.S. Steel was rather passive. However, its interests were well represented, since those who made political decisions assumed the possible reactions of the corporation to the adoption of tough antipollution measures (a decrease in production, job cuts, transferring production facilities to other territories, etc.). The power of the corporation was exercised not through the decision-making, but by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively safe issues (“non-decision-making”).

Another study of power in a monotown was conducted by Gaventa (1980) in Clear Fork Valley, U.S. He discovered, that the territory was dominated by a British mining corporation. The corporation exercised power not only in the decision-making process (first face of power) and, like in U.S. Steel in Gary, controlled the agenda-setting (second face of power), but also effectively shaped the consciousness of the population, ensuring its obedience, despite the low standard of living of citizens in comparison with other territories (third face of power).

Both these research projects were carried out within the framework of community power studies, one of the most advanced research areas in political science and sociology (Harding, 2009; Stone, 2017). Since the middle of the 20th century, hundreds of studies of power, influence, and leadership have been conducted in cities around the world.

The study of power and leadership in Russian local communities started only at the beginning of the 21st century, but it has become one of the advanced areas of research in political science and sociology (Chirikova & Ledyayev, 2017). Although certain aspects of the political and administrative sphere of monotowns were studied in the Soviet period,<sup>3</sup> the first empirical study specifically focused on policy in single-industry towns was conducted by Vitkovskaya & Ryabova in 2011. The outcomes of the study showed that in all local communities the town-forming enterprises played an important role in local politics. The interest of the owners and managers in local political sphere clearly delineated in the 2000s were relatively favorable for enterprises. The town and the factory began to be perceived as a kind of common economic, social and political system, and there appeared an understanding of the need for active participation in the urban political process.

In the study of Cherepovets (Bychkova & Gel’man, 2010), quite a lot of analogies with the situation in Gary were found. The economy and politics of this city were dominated by the Cherepovets Metallurgical Plant, one of the main divisions of “Severstal.” However, the power potential of the

enterprise and its influence on political processes were not limited to “the rule of anticipated reactions,”<sup>4</sup> but were largely the result of the active inclusion of its leadership in city politics and decision-making.

Participation of the plant in the social and political life of Cherepovets was very significant and took various forms. The local government was almost entirely dependent on the urban economic elite. The company acted as the main supplier of management personnel: all the mayors of Cherepovets were former employees of the metallurgical plant. The plant formed urban development strategies, defining a range of issues that were included in the city’s agenda. On the whole, the company managed to successfully maintain a positive image and loyalty from residents.

Laruelle (2020) studied urban regimes in three northern Russian cities, including Norilsk. Using Stoker and Mossberger’s (1994) classification of urban she defines the urban regime in Norilsk as organic. This mode is characterized by a tight-knit social fabric, a homogenous population, and high degrees of social consensus; these systems are oriented toward sustaining the status quo, with little aspiration to grow or change. The dominance of the city-forming company (“Norilsk Nickel”) in the community is virtually total. Only “Norilsk Nickel” itself could one day, for profitability reasons, decide to dramatically reduce its activities in Norilsk (by moving them to other regions, as it has already begun to do) and thereby have a life-changing impact on the future of the city. Without this impulse, all the other actors will continue to push for a status quo policy.

These studies exhaust the empirical research of the political processes in Russian monotowns.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the topic remains very relevant. Research interest in the study of power and leadership in monotowns is primarily caused by the specific configuration of the most influential actors in the local community. City-forming enterprises in Russia often become the most influential actors in the local political space, competing with the heads of municipalities. Therefore, it is important to trace whether the shift “from government to governance” takes place (Cruz et al., 2019).

The relevance of the topic is reinforced by institutional reforms in local self-government and the contradictory consequences of centralization (“strengthening the power vertical”). This requires an assessment of current trends in the development of power relations in local communities and an explanation of their features.

## Theoretical bases

This article presents the outcomes of empirical research of power and leadership in three monotowns. In a number of aspects, this paper differs significantly from the previous ones. Most importantly, it draws heavily on international experience in the study of power in urban communities. The agenda, logic and structure of the study are based on urban regime analysis.

Since the 1990s, urban regime theory has been the dominant paradigm in studies of U.S. urban governance since the 1980s is now one of the most prevalent approaches to the study of urban politics (Mossberger, 2009, pp. 40–54; Stone, 2017, pp. 3–39; Glinka, 2020). The theory has overcome the shortcomings of earlier approaches to the study of power in urban communities. At the same time, the theory largely retains traditional issues, focusing on the configurations of actors and their relationships with each other, the possibilities and difficulties of forming ruling coalitions.

The idea of the coalitional nature of power in urban communities reflects the limited capacities of local politicians and public officials to control material and other important resources usually concentrated in the hands of nongovernmental actors. The need for cooperation is strengthened by the growing complexity of the political process: local public institutions can no longer just play the role of a control body or arbiter regulating interest group activities. How is long-term governance achieved in complex systems? This is the key question in urban regime analysis.

The urban regime is:

a set of arrangements or relationships (informal as well as formal) by which a community is governed . . . a set of actors who come together to make governing decisions . . . Individual actors may have their private agendas, but

their coming together involves opportunities and responsibilities to act that are greater than what any individual actor may have had in mind. (Stone, 2006, p. 27)

Regimes are relatively stable, they do not strictly depend on one issue and can span a number of administrations. Regimes are necessarily cross-sectoral; complementary resources along with congruent goals help to shape and strengthen the nature of arrangements. In this regard, the concept of urban regime is wider than the concept of government, since it characterizes the governing process, which involves not only persons occupying positions in the local government system, but also civil society actors. The concept of urban regime is narrower than the concept of governance, since governance to one degree or another takes place in all local communities, while urban regimes do not.

Empirical studies confirm that the most influential actors in (American) urban politics and major members of regimes are (usually) public officials and business groups; in most cases, politicians are not the dominant actors but have to use their limited controls and incentives to forge relationships with business interests. Attempts to apply urban regime analysis outside of the U.S. show that in contrast to American cities, actors from the public sector dominate in urban decision-making though globalization and the transition from government to governance increases the power potential of private sector actors. Urban regime analysis has already been used for the study of power in Russian local communities (Ledyayev & Chirikova, 2019).

The subject of this study is the real power practices in monotowns, the interaction of local actors and their positioning in the urban political space that constitute the essence of local politics. The research focused on the most influential actors, leaders of urban communities who largely determined the situation and prospects for the development of monotowns. The structure of power in a local community, the composition and hierarchy of local actors and institutions largely determine the state and development of the territory, and the effectiveness of its management. Power in the local community is manifested in the ability of actors to direct and control the activities of people (“power over”) and achieve their goals (“power to”; Stone, 1989). Power is exercised by specific people, the most influential and authoritative of which become political leaders. Leadership is a personalized form of power; it is the ability of a leader to direct the activities of other people on the basis of their authority, personal qualities, knowledge, arguments, etc. (Burns, 1978; ‘t Hart & Rhodes, 2014). It is leadership that often makes the difference in politics.

## Empirical data

The basic material was obtained in the course of in-depth face-to-face interviews with influential local and regional actors directly involved in urban politics. We are sure that interviews can provide the most complete information about government practices, relations between actors, and mechanisms of interaction, which are usually hidden from the outside observer and cannot be obtained from other sources. The research was carried out in two stages in 2011–2015 and 2018–2020 in three monotowns of the Perm Region (“Permskiy Krai”): Chusovoy, Lysva, and Gubakha.

### Chusovoy

Population (July 1, 2022) 43,664 inhabitants, 24,545 women (56.12%) and 19,192 men (43.88%). The city-forming enterprise is the Chusovoy Metallurgical Plant. The share of employees in the city-forming enterprise of the number of employees employed in the economy (excluding small businesses; January 1, 2021) is 18.4%. The average number of employees of the city-forming organization is 2,611 (2021). In 2020, the share of the city-forming organization in the citywide volume of shipped goods, work performed and services of its own production amounted to 58.5% (Obshchaya otsenka sotsial’no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Chusovskogo gorodskogo okruga za 2020 god, 2021).

## **Lysva**

Population (January 1, 2021) 59,610 inhabitants, 33,014 women and 26,596 men. Employable population 30,642. Two city-forming enterprises: Metallurgical plant and plant for the production of generators (total 5,943 employees; Itogi sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya munitsipal'nogo obrazovaniya "Lysvenskiy gorodskoy okrug" za 2021 god, 2021).

## **Gubakha**

Population (January 1, 2019) 31,452, 17,528 women and 17,593 men. Two city-forming enterprises: Metafrax chemicals and Gubakhinsky coke. Metafrax chemicals, a European-level enterprise, 2,300 employees, 20% of the workforce in the city, the average age of employees is 40 years; more than 61% of employees are between 30 and 50, which have the highest labor potential (Itogi sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya za 2021 god, 2021).

The choice of the region is due to the fact that in the Ural region, as noted earlier, there are many single-industry towns. Another reason for the choice was the relative accessibility of these towns for empirical research based on in-depth interviews. Interviewees were regional officials and experts, heads of the local executive and legislative branches of local government, members of local legislatures, heads of the local press and television, leaders of town-forming enterprises and entrepreneurs, leaders and activists of local party and civic organizations. A total of 57 interviews were conducted.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, we initially assumed (and this was confirmed by the results of the study), three different patterns of power were formed in these towns. We understand that the comparable-cases method leads just to partial generalizations of universal scope and validity due to the small number of cases. However, it may be useful as a first step and help to outline problems, formulate hypotheses, adjust the tools, highlight the difficulties of research, and formulate preliminary conclusions (Lijphart, 1975).

In accordance with the logic of the study of power in local communities, our research focused on the configuration and hierarchy of the most influential actors,<sup>7</sup> their relationships with each other and with regional authorities. At the center of our study was the key question that actually guided the analysis: how the relationship between local government and the management of a city-forming enterprise is projected onto local politics? Special attention was paid to the role of town-forming enterprises in the local political process. What are the reasons for the differences in the degree of involvement of the management of city-forming enterprises in the local political process? To what extent does this depend on the economic situation, the attachment of owners and managers of enterprises to the territory, and the ability of local authorities to build partnerships with town-forming enterprises?

These questions were also at the center of our attention at the second stage of the study. The main task was to identify and evaluate the changes that have occurred in the monotowns we studied. How much has the role of the town-forming enterprises changed over the past 7–8 years? What factors caused these changes? How did they affect the composition of the local elite, the relationships within it and governmental processes in the towns? The answers to these questions are the main content of this article.

Our hypotheses:

- (1) The attachment of the owners and top managers of the enterprise to the territory increases the likelihood of their participation in the local political process.
- (2) Enterprises with greater economic potential are more likely to participate in local and regional politics.
- (3) The nature and level of involvement of the owners and top managers of the enterprise in the local political process depend on their relationships with the municipal authorities.

## Chusovoy: Is the town-forming enterprise leaving the local political space?

As in other Russian monotowns, the attitude of the leadership of Chusovoy's town-forming enterprise to its involvement in the political process on the local level have gone through several stages. In the 1990s, after the destruction of the command economy in Russia and the decline in production the town-forming enterprises actually just tried to survive. The management of the enterprises was busy solving purely economic problems and, in fact, moving away from politics at the local level. At this time, there was no understanding that political activity could have economic benefits. The potential for participation was also limited by the lack of free funds.

In the 2000s, the situation changed significantly. In more economically favorable conditions, the owners and management of enterprises showed interest in local politics, and town-forming enterprises from a potentially significant group of interests began to turn into an influential political actor (Vitkovskaya & Ryabova, 2011).

The director of the plant was (along with the leaders of the town and district) one of the three most influential figures in the urban political space. In this "triangle of power," the leadership shifted from one vertex to another. The most influential actor at the time of the first stage of the study was the director of the town-forming enterprise. This was due to the dominant role of the plant in the economic and social life of the community ("The director is the main employer in the town. That says it all"). Our respondents also noted the personal qualities of the director, and the presence of a solid group of deputies in the local legislatures, formally and informally affiliated with the plant.

The main channels of the plant's influence on political processes in the community were the town and district legislatures. In both, the plant had its representatives, and in the district legislature there were about half of them (10 out of 21).

There was a complex relationship between these three centers of power (the three most influential actors); different coalitions were formed and disintegrated, but the management of the plant always participated in them. During the first stage of the study, a coalition was formed between the town administration and the management of the plant ("There is a coalition between the town and the plant interested in each other"). This coalition between the plant and the town administration played an important role in the local political space. It largely determined the agenda, priorities, and prospects for the development of the local community, and, on the whole, successfully realizes its interests. This coalition was joined by local business, interested in cooperation with the two main actors in local politics.

Coalition-building in Chusovoy is largely caused by structural factors since it is not possible to govern a monotown ignoring the interests of the main enterprise. However, both sides sought to maintain a constant negotiation process and achieve collective goals despite remaining disagreements, thereby confirming Stone's (1989) idea that regimes are not formed automatically, but are the result of the joint efforts of its main participants. Thus, it is possible, with certain reservations, to consider the existing system of relationships between the main actors as an urban regime.

In 2020, at the second stage of the study, the situation in Chusovoy underwent significant changes. They were due to the decline in the resource potential of the town-forming enterprise and its involvement in urban politics, the reform of the municipal government, and the coming to power of new leaders.

The most noticeable change in the configuration of the main actors was due to the weakening of the political role of the plant: "The plant today is not an economic and political leader . . . The political influence of the plant on the territory has dropped sharply . . . And this is the main transformation that has taken place," argues the head of the town.

The decrease in the role of the plant in local politics is due to both objective circumstances (a drop in production and a reduction in the number of employees), and a subjective factor. The owners of the plant took a course to reduce the level of plant participation in local politics, demanding from the local authorities only to maintain social stability ("This is a business focused on its own interests"). The



chairman of the Duma (local legislature) explains: “The plant wants nothing from me. The owner wants social peace from me.”

The change in course was reflected in the appointment of a new director of the plant, who withdrew from participation in community affairs. The previous director of the plant was an influential political figure, the current one is not. Previously, the director “himself participated in politics. He had his own people both in the town and district legislatures. The new director does not need this. He is faced with economic tasks and nothing more” (deputy head of the town administration).

Although the economic potential of the plant has noticeably decreased, and its management is much less involved in local politics, this does not mean that the enterprise has completely ceased to participate in the social and political life of the town. The volume of investments in social projects and assistance to the population slightly decreased, but became, as the chairman of the Duma emphasizes, “more transparent and systematic.”

Another important factor in maintaining the political resource of the town-forming enterprise is the emergence of so-called “coordinators”—people who ensure the coordination of political processes at the local level and political support for the enterprise.<sup>8</sup> In Chusovoy, as the political role of the director of the town-forming enterprise declined, the political functions of the plant were gradually transferred to the head of the PR department of the plant, who later became perhaps the most influential figure in the town, heading the local legislature and the branch of United Russia.<sup>9</sup> Thus, there was a transfer of the political resource of the town-forming enterprise from the director to the middle management.

The question of whether the enterprise is leaving the space of local politics remains open. With a certain degree of probability, we can say that the nature and mechanisms of influence of the enterprise have transformed, becoming less obvious and somewhat more problematic, since there is always a danger that the “coordinators” may lose contact with the enterprise.

Along with changes in the political status of the plant, another significant factor that influenced the alignment of political actors in the town was the reform of the municipal government, which ended with the merger of the town and district structures. Previously, there were always frictions between the branches of government, and their representatives often clashed in the struggle for certain positions in the local power structure. Now there is no serious political competition. The head of the town,<sup>10</sup> the chairman of the Duma and other influential persons supporting them now completely control the situation in the local political space; there is no opposition that would seek to change the current situation, and all those who could potentially compete with the current leadership left politics. Our respondents see this as a pros and cons. A local expert, who had previously actively participated in local political battles, explained the situation most clearly: “Previously there was someone to fight against—against me. They won. I will leave aside the methods. Now there is no one to fight.” Although our respondents referred to individuals who criticize the local authorities, they do not have sufficient status, personal resources and relationships to really compete with the leadership of the municipality in the local political arena.

Thus, the changes that have occurred caused the loss of two status figures from the local political space—the director of the plant and the head of the district administration, which potentially reduced the size of the core of the local elite.

Today, almost all respondents consider the head of the town and the chairman of the Duma to be the most influential actors in the local political space. The head of the town controls the administration and influences all key processes on the territory. He actively interacts with the regional authorities and, with the help of his team, provides the town with additional resources. He is energetic and has the support of all significant figures, including at the regional level.

The chairman of the Duma possesses the reputation for power quite comparable to the reputation of the head of the town. He, as we have already mentioned, was the former head of the PR department of the plant and played the role of “coordinator.” All the respondents emphasize his professional and personal qualities. He is a real politician. For him, politics is both a vocation and a profession. He is considered by our regional experts to be the man who “made a fantastic shadow career.”



The power potential of the chairman of the Duma is due to the fact that he has institutional resources of different nature—administrative and party (leadership of the local branch of the United Russia), as well as solid practical experience, managerial skills and authority. If earlier he was more of a shadow leader, now he has become a status political figure. As our expert notes, he “came out of the shadows and became one of the first persons.”

At present, good working, almost friendly relations have developed between the chairman of the Duma and the head of the town. They themselves and our respondents speak about this. The chairman of the Duma: “everyone understands, as long as [the chairman of the Duma] is together with [the head of the town], everything will work out.” He believes that their cooperation will be strong and long-lasting: “I think that he came to power not for 5 years, but for 10. We will definitely not give up power in 5 years. This is one hundred percent.” He is confident that both of them will adhere to the agreements reached between them:

We have agreements that will allow us to follow the same road. We have the same goals. If something changes, and someone starts to confuse the budget with their pocket, then we are not on the way. And he knows about it.

The head of the town thinks in the same way: “He became the chairman of the Duma. I plan to support him. I believe that we are one team.”

Thus, the nature of the relationship between actors has changed significantly. During the first stage of the study, there were constant tensions between the town and district power structures, and there was a “town-plant” coalition, which, in a sense, was opposed by the district administration. Today a relatively homogeneous elite has formed, the core of which constitutes a single team. Therefore, the current situation can hardly be described as an urban regime in the Stone’s interpretation. The elite in the urban political space does not have a significant opponent, as the district leadership used to be. Since the local legislature is controlled by the town leadership, while the party organizations and civil society are weak, political battles in the public sphere are very limited and, in fact, appear only during the election period.

### **Lysva: From competition of town-forming enterprises to their leaving the local political space?**

The current situation in Lysva and the development of the political space of a monotown, as we will see below, have quite a lot in common with Chusovoy. However, there are also significant differences between the monotowns.

Lysva has two town-forming enterprises comparable in terms of their economic potential—a metallurgical plant (M) and a company producing turbine generators (P). During the first stage of the study, local owners were at the head of the enterprises. They were inclined to participate in local politics and competed with each other in various fields, from supporting youth festivals and specialized educational institutions, to electoral competition and influencing decision-making in the urban community. Our respondents recall those times with nostalgia, believing that the town benefited from this competition, which contributed to economic development, improved working conditions, and innovation (“We used to have a competition between company M and company P . . . and this competition was aimed at good things”).

The rivalry in the political realm was most impressive. Both plants nominated pools of deputies to the Duma, while directors ran in the regional parliament (“these people competed, who is more important”). Most of the respondents assessed rivalry in the political sphere positively, considering that it prevented the monopolization of the political landscape and the maintenance of discussions around the agenda and decision-making in the town (“There used to be battles in the Duma . . . there were groups . . . some proved one thing, others another. In disputes, something was always born. This is not the case now”).

The head of the town recalls:

If company P said that there would be five of its deputies in the Duma, metallurgists also said that there would be at least five of them. The directors themselves did not consider it shameful to be in the Duma. And when there are deputies in the Duma who understand exactly what a budget is, it is easier to work. And, most importantly, the director or owner living on the territory always thinks about what else can be done here. They took part in the life of the town.

In terms of their potential influence, both enterprises were quite comparable to the town administration. Our respondents are sure that at that time there were three roughly equal actors in the urban political space; the owners of the plants and the mayor of the town. Each of them possessed leadership qualities (“authority, strength, power, brains”), all strived to have their own pool of deputies in the representative body. “They were the elite of the town, they were individuals! Unfortunately, there are no such people today,” says the former editor of the newspaper.

The relationships between the main actors were complex and dynamic. Political alliances of varying degrees of stability were concluded between them, both between the municipal government with each plant in turn, and between two enterprises (“There were groups that either fought or were friends”). In this respect, the situation was similar to the one that developed in Chusovoy at that time.

Subsequent trends were also quite similar: the enterprises became less focused on participation in local politics and, in general, significantly limited their role in the life of the community. The initial factor was the change in the owners of the plants. As a result, the two industrial giants split into four business structures. Only one of the plants now has a local owner who lives in the town. The other three belong to nonresident owners, and the enterprises are registered outside the region. This circumstance had a serious impact on the alignment of political forces in the territory. “Today incomes are sent to Moscow . . . . In this situation, the status of our enterprises was blown away,” says the former chairman of the Duma.

In contrast to Chusovoy, the decline in the role of town-forming enterprises was due not to a drop in the economic potential of enterprises, but rather a consequence of the optimization of production processes initiated by the new owners. One of its directions was the concentration of efforts on the economic and technical aspects of the activity of enterprises and the reduction of non-production costs, including for political activities and social programs. The directives of the owners to the directors of enterprises in Lysva were the same as in Chusovoy. As our respondents note, the management of the enterprises “is absolutely not interested in the life of the town.” The implementation of the directives of the owners of enterprises is strictly controlled.

The former chairman of the Duma<sup>11</sup> says:

We have had several cases when directors who were too actively involved in the life of the town were simply changed and “put in their place.” They were told that their area of operation was the territory of the plant, and that nothing outside should interest them, since the business did not need it. That is why factories behave so detached.

The most obvious indicator of the detachment of enterprises is their unwillingness to participate in election campaigns. In the current composition of the Duma, out of 20 deputies, only three are employees of the town-forming enterprises. The municipal authorities even tried to persuade the management of the plants to participate in the election campaign.

An expert closely associated with one of the plants says:

We had elections to the Duma. The town authorities asked the plants to send their people to the Duma. They sent factory workers. The workers asked us: why are we going there? What should we do there? . . . They were given materials at the first meeting, and they asked us how to vote. We told them: as your conscience dictates. The plant has no tasks to defend any interests.

Management of the companies explains that they can resolve emerging issues directly in the regional administration. For the same reason, companies distanced themselves from participation in the elections of the regional legislature. The deputy director explains the position of the plant:

We know that the head of the town and the governor are loyal to us . . . If something is wrong, then we declare it . . . We see how the regional authorities are involved in resolving our issues . . . We do not need to elect a deputy of the regional legislature, because we have no unresolved issues with the authorities.

Compared to the situation a decade ago, the involvement of enterprises in social programs has also sharply decreased. The head of the town tries to change the situation, but he does not always succeed. The former editor of a local newspaper cannot name any significant projects implemented in recent years with the support of enterprises: “I don’t know about large investments, or serious support of enterprises in the implementation of projects.” The deputy head of the administration says the same: “Now we see that enterprises have begun to calculate their budgets very well. And their participation in social services, improvement, and construction is only a small sponsorship.”

The town authorities are rather unhappy with this situation, since they hoped for a more active and profitable interaction. They consider the position taken by enterprises to be short-sighted, believing that the owners do not realize the full potential of the territory. The head of the town administration recalls:

It was an anniversary. There was a full hall. We sang the Company P anthem and the whole audience stood up. And sang. We also stood up, everyone applauded. I say to the director: “Look at the expectations people live with!” And when they curtail all events, including for young people, it is absolutely wrong.

The former chairman of the Duma also emphasizes that the management of the factories underestimates the importance of social factors:

They have no interest. I sometimes come across such managers to whom I say: you want your employees to work effectively, but this means that they must relax effectively and live comfortably. Unfortunately, at some enterprises I come across the answer: we pay, let them solve their problems themselves.

The deputy head of the town explains why a good (by the standards of the region) salary is not a sufficient condition for the effective attraction of qualified personnel, a shortage of which occurs in most Russian small towns:

The employees of the town-forming enterprises have a good level of income, commensurate with the level of salaries in the manufacturing industry in the region, but there are no comfortable living conditions. The global problem is that the decision-making center for enterprises is located in Moscow, and the owners of the company live in Cyprus . . . They perceive people as a resource.

Although the owners’ attitudes in Chusovoy and Lysva regarding the (non) participation of the plants in local politics turned out to be similar, the situation in terms of representation of the interests of enterprises in the local political space is different. The difference is due to the absence of a “coordinator” in Lysva who acted in the interests of the factories. In this respect, the plants in Lysva are indeed leaving the space of local politics, while in Chusovoy the indirect presence of the town-forming enterprise remains.

Thus, the alignment of political forces is now significantly different from the alignment 10 years ago. In fact, only one serious actor remained on the political field: the head of the town. Since Lysva became the first territory in the region where the merger of town and district municipal structures took place, the emergence of alternative leaders in the municipal government and potential conflicts is unlikely.

The attitude of our respondents to the leader of the urban community is different. Everyone, without exception, recognizes his leadership qualities, noting “the ability to manage people, to ensure that the staff work, to knock out additional money wherever possible and to participate in all important programs,” as well as a productive dialogue with regional authorities (deputy head of the town administration). However, other respondents note the explosive nature of the head of the town, low authority among the population, his “fatigue from office” and “lack of a team.”

Nevertheless, the respondents consider the management in Lysva to be effective. At the end of 2019, the town took sixth place in the competition of municipalities of the region out of 46. It is the

leadership qualities of the head of the town and active lobbying at the regional level that largely ensure a relatively stable economic situation in the community and the absence of open conflict and protests.

The relationship between the head of the town and the management of the enterprises can be described as a “restrained dialogue.” Our respondents are confident that today they have absolutely no reason for conflict. The town administration manager says:

There are no conflicts because these two structures [municipal authorities and factories] are autonomous. If everything is fine in the town, there are no force majeure events, there is no need to urgently do something, there are no elections, then, in principle, we don't need to contact them.

As noted earlier, the local authorities in Lysva are more likely to be dissatisfied with this situation, while the heads of enterprises consider it quite acceptable. From this point of view, today there are no prerequisites for the formation of an urban regime in Stone's (1989) interpretation.

The lack of political competition has affected other political institutions as well. The local Duma, according to our respondents, is the most unprofessional in recent years: there is not a single deputy with the necessary work experience (“strange, incomprehensible people entered the Duma”). It is not surprising, therefore, that “it is not the deputies who initiate the discussion, but the administration tells the deputies what to do” (deputy head of the town).

Party organizations of United Russia (the rest do not count), formally existing associations (Public Chamber, Council of Veterans, etc.) do not have serious political influence; therefore, the administration, represented by the head of the town, dominates in the absence of serious competitors, which could be the representatives of the town-forming enterprises.

### **Gubakha: Town-forming enterprise as a strategic resource for the development of the local community**

As in Lysva, in Gubakha there are two town-forming enterprises—Metafraks (M) and Gubakhinsky coke (K). However, only M actually plays a significant role in the political process in the town, while K occasionally participates in some social projects, without taking any significant position in the local political space. In the following discussion we focus on M, as K's influence is marginal.

Over the past ten years the role of town-forming enterprises and their interaction with municipal authorities has changed significantly. Until 2012, there was a sharp confrontation between them. The main reason, according to our respondents, was the weak head of the town and the lack of professionalism of his team. The editor-in-chief of the local newspaper recalls:

Just 10 years ago, the relationship between M and the local government was not going very well . . . The head of the town was a man who was few months away from retirement . . . An underground war was going on, which negatively affected everything.

The confrontation between the local authorities and the town-forming enterprise was accompanied by conflict within the town administration, which aggravated the situation. The current head of the town explains:

Before the current regional minister came to the post of the head of the town, there was a confrontation here. A very strong confrontation. Some members of the administration tried to turn off the Internet in order to harm those who were sitting in other rooms . . . It was a madhouse . . . The head of the town did not understand what the company and everyone else wanted. And the company did not want to help such a weak and disinterested head.

In 2012, the situation began to change dramatically. The position of the head of the town was taken by the head of the personnel department of the company M. He was energetic, initiative, one of the first in the Perm region to start creating an urban district (the merger of town and district municipal structures). During the implementation of this project, he worked closely with M company, which allowed him to overcome the confrontation between the local authorities and the town-forming enterprise. The building of new relations was based on the trust of the political and economic elites

in the new head of the town and their common vision of how the territory should develop. The head of the town radically changed the composition of the management team. An important personnel decision was the invitation to his team of a city-manager, who later became the head of the town and continues to be at the present time.

After that, the architect of changes in Gubakha went to the regional state power structures, first to the regional legislature, then to the post of regional minister. Until now, despite his work in the region, the local elite considers him one of the leaders in the urban political space, who managed to reverse the negative situation in the town and built a team led by a new strong head of the town. One of our respondents says:

He stopped the war between the authorities and company M. He tried to make the government effective and he succeeded. He had to take very unpopular measures. He shook up the administration . . . He found a city-manager who, after his departure, became the head of the town. Since then and until today, the town has been among the first to enter various projects.

Another major contributor to the creation of new relationships between business and local authorities was the chairman of the board of directors of M. In his interview, he did not deny that participation in urban politics is not just altruism and a gesture of goodwill. This is, first of all, a strategy for increasing the company's power. By taking care of the town, he creates acceptable living conditions for his employees, which will bring profit to the company: "For a large European enterprise, it is important not only how many products it sells, but also to understand the environment in which the company's employees live. Human resources are the most valuable thing," argues the chairman of the Duma.

The economic necessity of investing in social programs in Gubakha is due to the fact that enterprise M requires highly qualified staff corresponding to the status of a European-level enterprise. Therefore, unlike Lysva, where the management of enterprises considered increasing economic efficiency by reducing non-production costs, in Gubakha the plant is interested in creating comfortable living conditions for the employees of the enterprise, without which it is hardly possible to attract and retain highly qualified personnel. In addition, M's income in Gubakha is significantly higher than that of the enterprises in Lysva, which allows M to be freer to direct funds for infrastructure development. Thus, the vector of influence of the economic factor in Gubakha is different than in Lysva.

Therefore, M is actively involved in housing construction, the development of the urban infrastructure, cultural and educational projects. This activity is not episodic, but systemic in nature: "The company seeks to attract the people to the enterprise, pays great attention to the training of young people. It invests a lot of money in a college of chemistry, education, libraries . . . It is really focused on the future," the head of the town states. Constant systematic assistance to various social groups allows the town-forming enterprise to feel confident in the local political space.

The active role of the company in the political space is manifested in control over the most important power positions in the local community, including the town administration, the Duma, and the local branch of the United Russia. The head of the Department of Internal Policy of the town explains:

M and the local authorities, in fact, simply act as a single entity. The deputy chairman of the Duma is the secretary of United Russia and the deputy general director, while the chairman of the Duma manages the personnel department of the company.

As in Chusovoy, in Gubakha a significant role is played by "coordinators" who ensure the participation of the town-forming enterprise in the political process. Their importance is growing, despite the direct involvement of the chairman of the board of directors in political life at the local level. They are the deputy general director of M for human resources and social affairs, an advisor to the chairman of the board of directors, and a deputy of the regional Duma responsible for interaction with regional authorities. The deputy general director of M for human resources and social affairs heads the local branch of United Russia, as does the chairman of the Duma in Chusovoy. The electoral successes of

this party in Gubakha also look impressive: all 20 deputies are members of United Russia; almost half of the deputies (9) are affiliated with M.

Thus, the situation in Gubakha, with some reservations, can be described as an urban regime (in Stone's terms): two key actors form a cross-sectoral coalition that ensures the progressive development of the town. In a sense, it is even more than a coalition, since in fact all key figures are members of a single team ("we are one team with the company").

It is obvious that the leading actor is the management of the company. Although the chairman of the board of directors does not advertise his leadership in the town, everyone is well aware that it is he who makes decisions on financial assistance to the community, especially on financing social projects. Therefore, our respondents are sure that "the figure of the Chairman of the Board of Directors in the town is the key one," and "everything is thanks to this person."

His leading role is also manifested in the fact that it is he who largely ensures the successful interaction of the town with the regional authorities. Starting to help the community, he and the CEO of M soon understood that the company's resources alone were not enough to implement all the necessary projects. Therefore, they took the next important step: they became deputies of the regional legislature. This expanded their ability to find additional resources for the town.

Relationships within the urban elite are not rigidly hierarchical, as might be expected given the status and economic potential of the company. Our respondents noted that there was no overt or covert pressure from M, and the relationship between municipal authorities and M is usually described as partnership: "I think that the head of the town does not depend on the company, and should not depend on it. The government is completely independent," argues local businessman. The press-secretary of the head of the town agrees with this assessment: "the company coordinates its vision of the situation with the administration. We have established a dialogue."

The head of the town also notes that the company does not need to resort to pressure on the leadership of the municipality, since he is sure that he and the company have formed a common vision for the future of the community:

There is absolutely no pressure on me from company M . . . The chairman of the board of directors influences some decisions, but he influences them as part of our joint agreements. We don't fight under the carpet . . . We are always looking for a compromise.

There are no serious conflicts between the town and the plant, and both parties receive benefits. The chief editor of the local newspaper notes:

They have interaction, there are no conflicts. They agree. They have a partnership. This is not to say that the authorities are an appendage that does not have the right to vote. It is clear that M is like an older brother. It is not worth getting into a conflict with him . . . And everyone understands this well, although they do not talk about it.

It could be assumed that the dominance of the enterprise may lead to an imbalance between the interests of the enterprise and the residents of the town. Gubakha's experience shows that it is quite possible to achieve a balance. The possibility of a balanced relationship between the town-forming enterprise and the municipal authorities has become real, since the head of the town is a person who has both leadership qualities, responsibility, and who knows how to negotiate. The head of the internal policy department argues:

He is creative, builds partnerships, supports team members . . . He is still an old school man. He is very responsible. If he promised something to someone and didn't do it, this bothers him . . . He does not allow himself a boorish attitude towards people. On the whole, he is an authoritative person . . . The head of the town knows how to create a team and make effective decisions.

The head of the town himself does not doubt his leadership:

This is my main goal, to work effectively and be a leader. If I hadn't done this, then I would not have worked here. We have a very strong team, and one cannot work in it irresponsibly, ineffectively, without creating levers for interaction, without taking responsibility. Otherwise, it would be difficult for me to work here, and I would not have achieved the results that we have today.



Our respondents consider the current urban regime to be quite effective, and in contrast to other towns, where the range of opinions is quite wide, in Gubakha the respondents are practically unanimous. This is confirmed by the victories that the territory achieves in all kinds of competitions. The town has been competing for prizes for several years, and confidently wins from year to year (2016, 2017, 2018, 2020). Therefore, unlike other monotowns we studied, where generally pessimistic assessments of their future prevail, Gubakha retains the optimism associated with M. “Company M cares about its employees, it has a future. So the town also has a future. We have people working, getting paid. And they believe in the future” (a well-known local businessman). Even the leader of the local communists is quite optimistic:

I believe that the town has a future. The plant is under construction now. They want to build houses not only for factory workers, but also for resettlement . . . If they build, there will be new jobs. There will be an influx of people. Isn't this the future?

## Discussion

The three cases considered, of course, do not allow us to make broad generalizations and firmly state the confirmation or non-confirmation of the hypotheses. However, we can outline some preliminary conclusions.

In our opinion, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed most confidently: local owners and top managers are more likely to participate in local political processes and vice versa. This was especially evident in Chusovoy and Lysva, where it was a change of owners and top managers that led to significant changes in attitudes toward participation in local politics.

The economic potential of the enterprise (Hypothesis 2) is also important: the management of M in Gubakha, which is significantly superior in its economic potential to enterprises in other towns, has the most interested in the development of urban infrastructure and cooperation with local and regional authorities, considering this as a direction for the development of the enterprise.

The case of Gubakha also most clearly confirms Hypothesis 3: M's involvement in local politics increased significantly after relations with local authorities were established, which became partnerships. In Chusovoy and Lysva, this pattern manifested itself to a lesser extent.

The study confirms the thesis that the role of town-forming enterprises in the political space of monotowns is a factor that largely determines the configuration of the most influential actors in the local community, the nature of their relationships, and management efficiency. The main source of influence of town-forming enterprises is their economic potential and the maintenance of the social sphere. Local governments often do not have significant resources and are dependent on enterprises.

Another important resource of town-forming enterprises is their ability to quickly and efficiently mobilize enterprise employees to participate in elections and other political activities (Ikeda, 2019). The management of the enterprises can send the required number of their representatives to the local government structures, as evidenced by the situation in Chusovoy and Gubakha, where there are many employees of enterprises in local legislatures acting under the control of “coordinators.”

Owners and top managers of industrial enterprises can use the dependence of their workforce to generate votes for United Russia. This was most noticeable in Gubakha, where the local elite had maximum control over the political process, and to a lesser extent in Lysva and Chusovoy, where elements of party rivalry still persisted.

To what extent is the resource potential of town-forming enterprises realized in local politics? There may be different options here. The interests of enterprises can be represented purely by virtue of the structural factor, even without the active participation of enterprise management or their representatives in urban politics. To some extent, this is confirmed by Lysva's case, where town-forming enterprises have actually left the space of local politics, but are quite satisfied with the activities of the municipal authorities and there are no serious conflicts between them.

However, more often the structural factor was reinforced by the active participation of enterprise managers in local politics. This took place in all towns during the first stage of the study and in Gubakha at the second stage.

Finally, the lack of involvement of enterprise management in urban politics can be compensated for by the growing role of “coordinators” acting in the interests of enterprises. Of course, in this case, there is always the danger of their separation from the town-forming enterprises, the desire to replace its interests with their own (Podvintsev & Ryabova, 2018). But both in Chusovoy and in Gubakha (there are no “coordinators” in Lysva) they followed the line of the plant’s management.

The outcomes of the study indicate that in two towns (Chusovoy, Lysva) out of three, the role of town-forming enterprises and the involvement of their management in local politics have significantly decreased. However, in Chusovoy this was to some extent compensated by the activity of the “coordinators,” while in Lysva the withdrawal of enterprises from local politics is more real.

On the contrary, in Gubakha, there was an intensification of the political activity of the heads of the enterprise, who formed the strategy for the development of the enterprise and the community; “coordinators” also played an important role in ensuring its implementation.

The reasons for the decline in the political activity of the plants in Lysva and Chusovoy are mainly in the economic sphere; the political activity of the city-forming enterprises is still secondary in nature. Apparently, for the owners and top management of enterprises, control over the activities of the municipality has not become less relevant. Enterprises have already almost completely transferred to municipalities or sold their “non-core assets” utilities, transport companies, social facilities, etc. The complication of budgetary schemes has led to the fact that the management of the city-forming enterprises has largely ceased to see municipalities’ expenses as “their own,” forcedly assigned funds and, accordingly, “worry” about the effectiveness of these expenses (Vitkovskaya & Ryabova, 2011, p. 81).

It seems to us that this process may be quite typical for small Russian small monotowns, where town-forming enterprises usually experience serious difficulties and seek to reduce costs. Gubakha is an exception in this respect, since M has an economic potential that is incomparable with the enterprises of Chusovoy and Lysva and is developing successfully. It is the stable position of the enterprise that seems to be the most important factor in its integration into local and regional political processes.

The study showed that the degree of attachment of owners and top managers of enterprises to the community significantly affects the involvement of enterprises in local politics. The situation in Lysva and Chusovoy is indicative in this respect. The new owners and heads of enterprises are not affiliated with the town in any way and distance themselves from large-scale participation in politics. But in Chusovoy this is compensated for the activity of the local “coordinator” who identifies himself with the community.

A decrease in the involvement of the management of town-forming enterprises will apparently stimulate the arrival of “coordinators” and, thereby, an increase in the number of professional politicians and political managers fully focused on socio-political functions. It is important that enterprises, at least to some extent, feel the need for those who will represent their interests at the local level. The lack of such motivation among enterprises in Lysva led to their de facto withdrawal from local politics.

What are the implications of the changes we found? How have they influenced the governance of towns? The decline in the direct participation of town-forming enterprises in urban politics in Lysva and Chusovoy led to the formation of a different configuration of the most influential actors. In both communities, the heads of municipalities have become the centers of power and influence. Due to the reform of local government and the formation of urban districts, the municipal elites, united around the heads of the towns, practically had no opponents. Although the heads of both towns are somewhat dissatisfied with the indifference of companies to urban politics, one cannot but admit that the heads’ influence on urban processes has become more noticeable than it was 8–10 years ago. This took place to a greater extent in Lysva, while the decline in the role of the plant in Chusovoy was compensated by

the activity of the “coordinator,” who eventually became perhaps the most influential actor in the local political space.

Thus, the structure of power has become more typical for a modern small Russian town, where the leaders of the municipal government are usually the most influential actors (Ledyaeв, Chirikova & Seltser, 2014). However, the withdrawal of enterprises from urban politics did not significantly affect the efficiency of governance, although it led to a significant decrease in resources for the implementation of social programs.

A different situation has developed in Gubakha, where the town-forming enterprise plays a leading role in the local community. It could be assumed that the dominance of the enterprise leads to an imbalance between the interests of the enterprise and the residents of the town. Gubakha’s experience shows that it is quite possible to achieve a balance. But this happens if a town-forming enterprise is headed by people with strategic thinking and who identify with the town, while municipal leaders have the ability and skills to build stable relationships with business, citizens, and regional authorities. Gubakha’s case also shows that effective interaction between local authorities and the dominant economic actor can significantly improve the situation, although the danger of conflict and imbalance of interests between business and territory cannot be ruled out.

The presence of a town-forming enterprise creates additional opportunities for the formation of an urban regime; it largely removes the problem of collective action and the formation of a cross-sectoral coalition, since the enterprise is able to mobilize resources comparable to those of any possible coalition of local business. Therefore, unlike other small towns, where, as studies have shown, urban regimes in the terms of Stone were not found (Ledyaeв & Chirikova, 2019), in Chusovoy (during the first stage of the study) and Gubakha (during the second stage of the study), the configurations of the main actors can, with certain reservations, be qualified as urban regimes or quasi-regimes. In both towns, there was stable cooperation between the municipal authorities and the town-forming enterprises, to which other business actors interested in cooperation with the authorities and with the enterprises also joined.

However, we still have some doubts about the possibility of using the concept of urban regime in relation to these two cases. To a lesser extent they relate to Chusovoy, to a greater extent to Gubakha. They are due to the fact that the relationship between the management of the enterprise and the municipal government is more similar to intra-elite relations, rather than the relationship between coalition members. The main participants in the local political processes consider themselves members of one team, and in the local legislature, representatives of the town-forming enterprises set the tone.

The reason for doubts is also the high role of the individual component in the regime, on which its stability and main features largely depend. For this reason, at present, it is hardly possible to speak of the urban regime in Chusovoy, where the cross-sectoral coalition we observed at the first stage of the study actually disintegrated after 8 years, turning into a narrow group of individuals, while power (decision-making and non-decision-making) is concentrated in the hands of a few key figures in the municipal government.

Nevertheless, the formation of regimes (or “quasi-regimes”) in other monotowns seems quite likely, since the structurally given configuration of the most influential actors stimulates the establishment of stable ties between local authorities and the management of the town-forming enterprise.

The more or less active participation of city-forming enterprises in urban politics can hardly be considered as evidence of the transition “from government to governance,” or that governance can be considered without reservations. In our opinion, in Russia as a whole, and in local politics in particular, this transition is seen to a much lesser extent due to the fact that the composition of participants in the real political processes in small Russian towns is extremely narrow, primarily due to the weakness of democratic institutions and the authoritarian nature of the political regimes that concentrated power in the hands of a very narrow layer of people.

## Conclusion

The main outcome of the research is that it demonstrated the variability of power relations in Russian towns, despite the policy of centralization and the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies in Russian politics. Power practices in the three towns differed significantly in terms of the configuration of the most influential actors, their interaction with each other, and the consequences for the development of local communities.

The outcomes of the study also show that town-forming enterprises retain a high potential for influence in the political space of small towns, especially those enterprises that have solid economic resources and are successfully developing.

This potential is used in different ways. In two towns, the involvement of enterprises in local politics has generally declined. The main reasons, as our research confirms, are in the economic plane. Of course, we can assume that the decrease in the activity of enterprises in the local political space is caused by the completion of the “power vertical” to the municipal level, the absence of elections for the key municipal figure and the general strengthening of authoritarian tendencies in society. However, the question of the extent to which the space of local politics has narrowed under the influence of these factors remains open, since local politics in Russia is less controlled by the ruling elite than political processes at the regional and national levels.

The study shows that the decrease in the participation of enterprises in local politics did not lead to serious negative consequences for the representation of the interests of enterprises at the local level and thus did not affect their economic potential. The structural factor ensures that the interests of enterprises are taken into account or, at least, does not allow for harsh pressure from the authorities, as is the case in Lysva. If it is supported by the effective activity of the “coordinators,” as in Chusovoy, then the situation for the enterprise in the local community remains quite comfortable even without the active participation of enterprise managers in urban politics. Therefore the leadership of the enterprises reduced political activity.

A different situation takes place in Gubakha, where the high power potential of the enterprises is successfully realized and is supported by the activity of the company’s leaders and effective “coordinators.” Their successful interaction with local and regional authorities contributed to the formation of conditions for the successful development of the enterprise, and for the implementation of programs important for the community. This, apparently, not quite typical case for a small Russian monotown, shows that not all of them are doomed to gradual degradation and dying. At the same time, in Gubakha, there is no obvious dominance of the company over the municipal authorities, as is the case in cities with strong economic actors (Cherepovets, Norilsk), but stable coalitions are being built that are beneficial to its participants and residents of the town.

It can be assumed that it is the high economic potential and good development prospects that are the most important factors stimulating the active involvement of the enterprises in urban politics. At the same time, a lot depends on the individual component, which is more typical for Russian politics. Therefore, in comparison with American and European cities, where there is a stable institutional context, in Russian towns there remains a higher risk of the corrosion and degradation of coalition relations between business and municipal authorities when personalities change both in the government and in the management of enterprises.

This is convincingly evidenced by the outcomes of our study. In the period between the first and second stages, significant changes took place in all towns, both in the involvement of town-forming enterprises in the local political process, and in the nature of their interaction with the leaders of the municipal government. It is obvious that the variability of power and leadership will remain, as will the need to study them.

## Postscript

Already at the stage of reviewing the text of the article, events occurred (Russian military invasion of Ukraine) that significantly changed the general context and, of course, influenced (and will affect) the

situation in small Russian towns, including socioeconomic and political processes in single-industry towns. In addition to information obtained from open sources, we took several expert interviews, which focused primarily on how the change in the situation affected the city-forming enterprises, their economic potential and prospects, and also what strategies the local elites adopted to the new reality. The positions of experts in this regard are unequivocal: at present, there is an obvious increase in uncertainty and an understanding that the situation in the economic sphere will worsen. This forces enterprises to look for new strategies for surviving in the current conditions, and so far they have been generally successful in this.

PR specialist of the city-forming enterprise in Chusovoy commented:

In the first half of the year, the market for the main product decreased by 10%. Faced with export problems not only springs, but also vanadium due to restrictions on the purchase of Russian products, due to difficulties in logistics and payments. But we are solving the problem. For example, we open temporary storage warehouses in Turkey in order to sell from outside Russia, we offer different options for payment terms and currency.

According to the respondent, the plant tries not to draw attention to its problems and works in a “silent mode” so as not to fall under sanctions. The main news agenda of the plant now is social programs and ecology.

In Lysva, the management of enterprises is also trying to solve the problems that arise, and in general, not without success. This is the opinion of a specialist of the administration of Lysva: “Enterprises have encountered logistical problems, but at the moment the supply chains have been restored, enterprises are operating as usual. No forced vacations, production downtime. Some businesses are even hiring new employees.”

In Gubakha, difficulties are not advertised and do not penetrate the media. However, one of our experts is convinced that the sanctions have significantly affected the work of the city-forming enterprise: “Metafrax has opened a new production facility. They fell under sanctions, and this greatly affected the development plans of the enterprise. The future has become uncertain. Although now there is no future for anyone.”

However, so far there have been no significant changes in the strategy of inclusion/non-inclusion of city-forming enterprises in the political process. It can be assumed that the consequences of the sanctions, as well as the effectiveness in overcoming them by the city-forming enterprises, will become more pronounced later.

## Notes

1. A monotown (the terms *one-industry town*, *single-industry town*, *company town*, *mono-industrial company town* are also used for their designation) is a town where there are one or two enterprises (town-forming enterprises) that determine the economy of the town and well-being of its citizens.
2. The most striking example is the conflict in Pikalevo in May–June 2009.
3. In this regard, the Shomina should be noted (See: Shomina, 1992). In particular, she developed a classification of various types of interaction between city-forming enterprises and municipal authorities, including the following four types: “the enterprise as landlord,” “the enterprise as neighbor,” “the enterprise as sponger,” “the enterprise as partner.” Our study showed that at least the types “neighbor” and “partner” are relevant to the current situation in Russian single-industry towns.
4. The term was used by Friedrich (1937) to cover cases when the subject of power acts in accordance with a power holder’s will in fear of the repercussions for doing otherwise.
5. Also noteworthy are the texts of Zubarevich (2010), Tev (2012), Reisser (2013), Maliy and Gusev (2014), and Evans (2016).
6. We were assisted in the organization of the interviews by our friends and colleagues working in the chosen region. Among them were local political scientists, employees of the town administrations, and members of the local councils. Their personal and professional ties and active involvement in local politics gave us an opportunity to interview selected individuals as per our plan, who may not otherwise have been accessible to us. Local contacts made sure that none of our requests for an interview were turned down.
7. We use a simplified combination of the three classical (positional, reputational, and decisional) methods of identifying community leaders recommended by scholars. Through the interviews with positional leaders of the two communities, we collected information about their power reputation and role in decision-making processes.

8. In the structure of the “factory lobby” in the local governments of single-industry towns, Podvintsev and Ryabova (2018) distinguish “extras” and “coordinators.” “Extras” are ordinary performers, members of the deputy corps, whose functions are reduced to the execution of instructions received, voting in an appropriate way, introducing initiatives developed for them, etc. The vast majority of employees of city-forming enterprises, who become deputies of local legislatures, play the role of “extras.” The work of “extras” requires constant organization on the part of the “coordinators.” At present, these people mainly occupy the post of head of the public relations department or one of the deputy directors in charge of relations with the authorities. Coordinators, of course, can be guided by their own considerations, but in general they realize the interests of the enterprise.
9. United Russia is the leading party in Russia, “the party of power,” formed by the ruling elite to be used as an instrument of control and domination in the political process. Local and regional authorities use local party organizations to control local deputies and municipal officials, many of which are members of the United Russia.
10. As a result of the merger of the two branches of municipal government—town and district—the head of the territory received the status of “head of the urban district.” In the following to facilitate reading, we will use the term *head of the town*.
11. It is interesting that the hands-off owners in Lysva still demand from local officials social stability and “social peace.” All the owners and managers of enterprises, both those living in the territory and those located far beyond its borders, do not want there to be social tensions and protests in the town, or that the actions of the authorities create problems for the enterprises. From this point of view, Lysva’s case is not unique.

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