



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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**CONTEMPORARY  
DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA'S  
FEDERAL AND LOCAL  
ELECTIONS: ON THE WAY TO A  
COHESIVE PARTY SYSTEM?**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: POLITICAL SCIENCE  
WP BRP 64/PS/2018

**CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA'S FEDERAL AND LOCAL  
ELECTIONS: ON THE WAY TO A COHESIVE PARTY SYSTEM?**

This research analyzes the differences between municipal elections in large and medium-sized Russian cities (more than 100,000 citizens) and federal elections to representative bodies for the period from 2003 to 2018. The empirical evidence includes 210 municipal electoral campaigns in 119 cities and 4 federal legislative campaigns for comparison. We examine these differences using the notion of the party system nationalization, which is measured by comparing turnout and voting for political parties at different territorial levels in the same cities, and by party system inflation (with the use of the effective number of parties – an index that allows a comparison of election competitiveness at different administrative levels). Most of the cases are midterm municipal elections held separately between the federal campaigns. However, we draw special attention to the differences when federal and municipal campaigns overlap. The results showed some progress in the process of the nationalization of the Russian party system which is indicated by the rapprochement of the degree of competitiveness in the federal and municipal elections and, later, by the likeliness of electoral preferences at different territorial levels.

JEL Classification: D72.

Key words: federal elections, municipal campaigns, electoral support, turnout, competitiveness, the effective number of parties, party system nationalization, party system inflation.

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## Introduction

This research compares electoral support for Russian political parties during elections for municipal representative bodies and for the national parliament. The results are primarily interpreted in terms of nationalizing Russia's party system since it is one of the key concepts in political science for explaining how the party system performs in geographic space.

In political science "nationalization" means "the unification of electoral support for political parties in different territorial entities of a state" [Golosov, Grigoriev, 2015, p. 128]. It is supposed that at the party system's dawn, political support is fragmented and segmented. Later, however, with the nationalization of the party system, which is "a broad historical evolution toward the formation of national electorates and party systems, party organizations and campaigns, as well as issues and party programs" [Caramani, 2004, p. 1], political support becomes more unified and spatially homogeneous. The system is fully nationalized when parties have relatively the same support at federal and municipal levels and the system is not nationalized when parties get significant support only in some regions or are deprived of it or do not run at all in some regions.

A number of research papers on Russia's party system see polyethnicity, federalism (especially when Russia's non-party federal model [Riker, 1964] of the 1990-s–2000-s is applied [Ross, 2003]), presidentialism [Shugart, 1992] and majority electoral system [Rodden, Wibbles, 2011; Harbers, 2010] as factors in the low nationalization. Another factor preventing nationalization is the communist legacy and features of the post-communist transition [Tiemann, 2012]. Given these factors Russia is a case of interest in examining party system nationalization. In Russian political science, nationalization means "creating national characteristics of a party system that are replicated in all the regions" [Turovsky, 2016, p. 163]. In this research we expand the boundaries of this concept and include results of municipal campaigns instead of focusing on the regional level.

Russian research papers on party system nationalization have contradictory results: they talk about *low* nationalization when a single-member district system is used ("super-presidentialism is a plausible explanation for these results: in countries where executive power is not formed based on a parliamentary majority, but relies on a president, there are few reasons for candidates to join national parties, especially if there is no PR that provides important incentives for party formation" [Bochsler, 2010, p. 25]) and about *high* nationalization when it comes to the proportional system. Golosov and Grigoriev examined the nationalization of the Russian party system using the results of the State Duma elections from 1993 to 2011 held with the use of party lists and discussed the following dynamics: the level of nationalization was initially high in 1993 and continued to rise up until 2007, with a slight fall in 1995. In 2011, there was also an

insignificant fall in the level of nationalization. Elections held with the use of a majority system showed an alarmingly low level of nationalization [Golosov, Grigoriev, 2015]. In general, it proved the results of previous investigations.

Nationalization can be measured in different ways. One of them is to analyze to what extent the party is active in the regions. Within this framework a high level of nationalization would mean that a party stands candidates in all the country's regions which is the opposite to regionalization in which regional parties proliferate. The Caramani index is effective; this is the percentage of districts where a party stood candidates in [Caramani, 2004]. Such an analysis has a drawback: it measures whether the party stood a candidate but it does not measure the electoral support for candidates. One of the most popular nationalization measurements is the index by Jones and Mainwaring, which is the sum of the adverse inequality of the territorial support ratio of a certain party (Gini coefficient) which corresponds to the size of these parties [Jones, Mainwaring, 2003]. Nationalization can be also measured through the inflation level. This is calculated by the comparison of the levels of party competition at different territorial and federal levels. The bigger the difference in the competitiveness index at the regional and federal levels, the higher the inflation and the lower the party system nationalization [Simón, 2013].

Often works on nationalization compare the results of national elections to regional diversity. We suggest another approach which considers comparing election results and voting behavior of the electorate at different territorial levels. We have already used such an approach when we compared regional and national legislative elections in Russia [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017]. In the current research we focus on the municipal level. We believe that local elections are an important feature for the analysis of party system nationalization since the differences in voting in different parts of the country (reflected by the ordinary measurements of party system nationalization) overlap with the differences in voting at different territorial levels. Some research papers witnessed that on different levels of the electoral space, there are different systems of electoral behavior and party support, and different electoral characteristics emerge in accordance with ideological cleavages within the electorate [Aksenov, Zinoviev, Pleschenko, 2005]. In this paper we focus only on voting in larger cities, whereas voting in rural areas would undoubtedly reveal different features as noted in many other studies [Petrov, Titkov, 2000; Mikhailov, 2001].

Given the measurements of party system nationalization mentioned above and the features of comparison of local and regional elections we chose two methods of nationalization measurement. The first one compares the electoral support of parties in national parliamentary elections and in elections for municipal representative bodies. We also took into consideration party representation at the municipal level and the discrepancy between the numbers of parties

represented at local and national level. An additional characteristic is the turnout comparison at local and national levels. Municipal elections in Russia are never centralized and their numbers are always very different. For this reason, we also consider the different scope of the sample for each year under examination.

The second method is the analysis of nationalization through party system inflation. We compare party competitiveness in the local elections with competitiveness during national elections. In order to measure competitiveness we use two indices: the widely-used effective number of parties (ENP) by Laakso and Taagepera (LT index) and also Juan Molinar's index (JM index) where competitiveness depends on the size of the leading party.

All local elections are compared with the previous and the next national elections in order to reflect the most relevant electoral dynamics. Both methods are used independently which helps to reach more relevant conclusions about nationalization considering sample limitations. We used the results from party lists which tend to show higher levels of party system nationalization than in case of majority system.

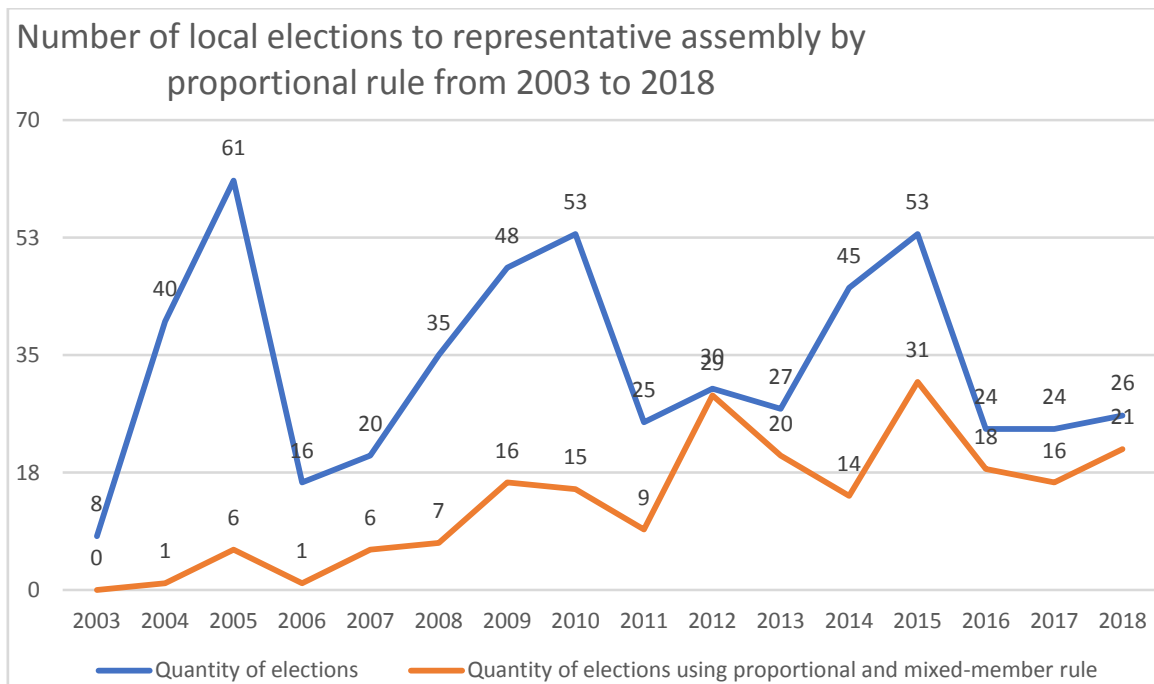
The results of elections for local representative bodies included in the sample were held on party lists from 2003 to 2018 in the cities that are administrative centers of Russian regions and also in all other cities with population over 100,000 people (the 2018 data) and the State Duma elections held from 2003 to 2016. We examined 210 electoral campaigns in 119 cities. We describe in detail the municipal sample in the first section of this research.

## **Municipal elections in Russian cities: the use of proportional system**

In this section we analyze the number of municipal elections in large Russian cities from 2003 to 2018, the frequency of the use of proportional (or mixed-member) system at this level and the tendency to hold municipal and national elections at the same time. Unlike regional and national elections, municipal elections use proportional system less. For this very reason it is impossible to compare the results using large samples. Meanwhile the spread of proportional system in municipal elections is very important in terms of the nationalization of the Russian party system as it shows similar voting patterns and voter affiliations across the state.

### **The number of municipal elections in Russian cities from 2003 to 2018**

First, we examine the number of local elections to representative assemblies from 2003 to 2018 in the sample of cities under examination as well as the number of elections held with the use of proportional or majority rule at the local level from 2003 to 2018 (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1. Number of local elections to representative assemblies with the use of proportional rule from 2003 to 2018.<sup>3</sup>**

As Figure 1 shows, the number of municipal elections differs each year. The most were in 2005 (61 campaigns), 2010 (53 campaigns), and 2015 (53 campaigns). This can be explained by the fact that for the same municipal bodies the elections were held every 5 years and they fell on the same date each time. The same situation holds in 2004 (40 campaigns), 2009 (48 campaigns), and 2014 (45 campaigns). The minimum was in 2003 (only 8 campaigns), and in 2006 (16 campaigns). Between 2011 and 2013 and between 2016 and 2018 there were almost the same number of elections (from 24 to 30 campaigns). As Figure 1 shows, in 2019 and 2020, we can predict more local elections. We should note that the different number of campaigns will affect the validity of the measurements and will put some limitations on the research results.

As we can see on the graph, all municipal elections in 2003 were held by majority rule. In 2004–2006 the first proportional and mixed-member cases occurred, contributing to the nationalization of the party system at the local level. For instance, Krasnoyarsk, in 2004, was the only case of a mixed-member system. In 2005, 6 cities used either proportional or mixed-member system – in Nizhny Novgorod region (Nizhny Novgorod, Dzerzhinsk, Arzamas), Volgograd region (Volzhsky, Kamyshin), and Krasnoyarsk region (Achinsk). In 2006 Saratov also used a mixed-member system.

<sup>3</sup> All the calculations were done by authors based on the data provided on Central Election Commission web-site [www.cikrf.ru](http://www.cikrf.ru)

In 2007, 6 cities used proportional or mixed-member systems (see the full list in Appendix 1). More regions in general started to use one of these two systems (we analyze them together, always considering the results of party list voting). In most cases the choice was in favor of a mixed-member system while the North Caucasus regions used a purely proportional system (Dagestan, Karachayevo-Cherkesia). The same trend was noted during the regional legislative elections in the same regions. In 2008, either of two systems was used in 7 cities. Although the number of elections using proportional or mixed-member rule grew insignificantly, the geography expanded. In 2009, there was a surge in the number of regions abandoning majority rule – 16 cities used proportional or mixed-member system. Then there was a slight fall in numbers again down to 10 cities in 2010 and to 9 cities in 2011.

On March 20, 2011, Federal Law #38-FZ was introduced. It amended Articles 35 and 38 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and rights for referendum for the citizens of the Russian Federation” and the Federal Law “On general principles of local government in the Russian Federation”. According to new amendments “nor less than a half of deputy’s seats in the local elections to representative bodies of municipal *rayons* and townships with 20 and more deputies are distributed among the lists of candidates that were suggested by electoral associations”. Given the new law, 2012 saw a large growth in the use of proportional system in local elections – it was used in 29 out of 30 elections. In 2013, proportional system was used in 20 campaigns out of 27. In terms of nationalization this was a very important step towards building a better environment for this process.

However, the requirements for implementing proportional system at the local level in Russia did not last long. On February 2, 2013, the Federal Law #303-FZ “On making amendments to specific laws of the Russian Federation” abolished the obligatory use of party lists in some (but not all) municipal elections. Owing to this, there was a decline in the number of elections using proportional system (14 out of 45 in 2014 and 31 out of 53 in 2015). Although in 2016–2018 the number of elections using the proportional system remained stable both in absolute figures and as a share of the overall number of campaigns. In other words, despite the fact that there were no obligatory requirements, the federal center and the regions still considered proportional system as a necessity for municipal elections but they secured their right to choose where and whether to use a proportional system, following the practice of the “manual” management of local elections.

Let us also look at the tendency to hold the national and local elections at the same time, which is a norm for elections for regional legislatures [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017]. In 2003, there were no local elections under examination that overlapped with the federal ones. In 2007, there were two examples: in Vladivostok (a mixed-member system was used) and in Cherkessk (a

purely proportional system). In 2011, there were 5 cities with simultaneous elections for both levels: Saransk, Grozny, Khimki, Nazran' and Magas. 2016 was the first year when the local and the State Duma elections were all held together.

Table 1 illustrates the overall number of elections held each year, the spread of proportional rule and the number of simultaneous elections. It shows absolute measures and percentages.

**Table 1. Main features of the municipal elections in the cities analyzed**

Year	The number of elections	The number of elections using proportional and mixed-member rule	The number of simultaneous elections	% of proportional and mixed-member rule	% of simultaneous elections
2003	8	0	0	0	0
2004	40	1	-	2,5	-
2005	61	6	-	9,8	-
2006	16	1	-	6,3	-
2007	20	6	2	30	10
2008	35	7	-	20	-
2009	48	16	-	33,3	-
2010	53	15	-	28,3	-
2011	25	9	5	36	20
2012	30	29	-	96,7	-
2013	27	20	-	74,1	-
2014	45	14	-	31	-
2015	53	31	-	58,5	-
2016	24	18	24	75	100



2017	24	16	-	66,7	-
2018	26	21	-	80,77	-

Table 1 illustrates the fact that we face not only a different number of elections each year but also a different proportion of municipalities that use proportional system. Between 2003 and 2007 only a small percentage (up to 10%) of the municipalities used this system. This leads to a reduction in our sample. In 2007–2011, the number of elections which used the mixed-member and proportional systems grew as did the number of cities applying these electoral systems (20–36%). The real surge occurred in 2012 when almost all the cities used a proportional system given the legal requirements. During the next years when these requirements were eased the percentage of such cities still remained high. In terms of nationalization this means that only after 2012 can we judge local elections as a real contribution to this process across the state.

The sample of cities in each time period differs significantly, which may lead to some inaccuracies in our research. Nevertheless, we use the available data considering the limitations of each sample.

### **The number of candidates in the municipal elections**

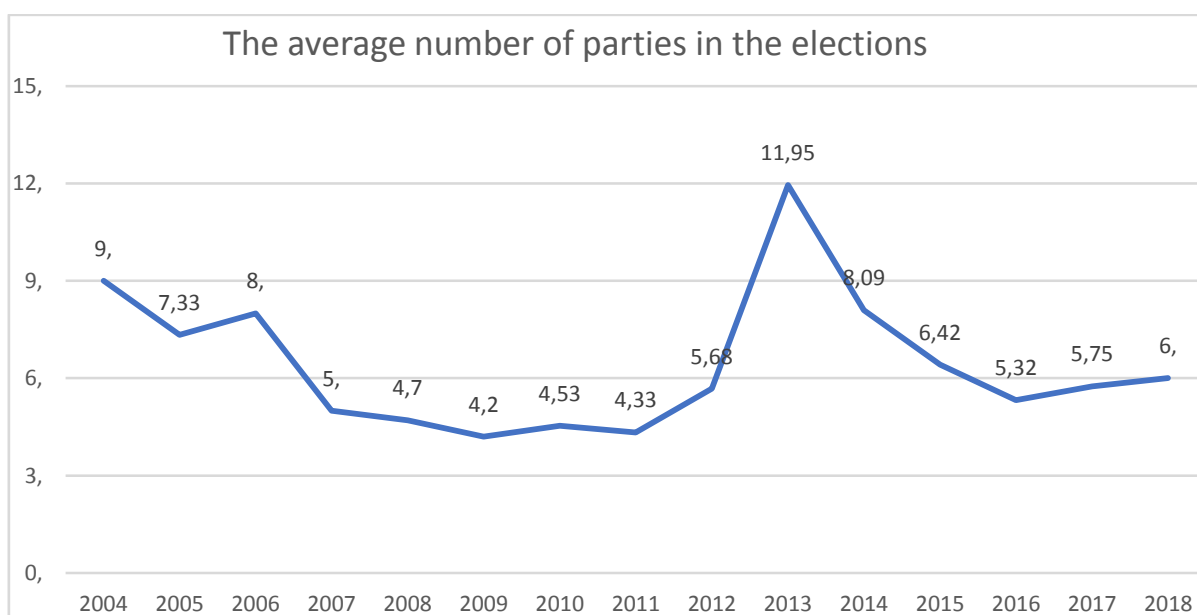
Another important feature of local elections is the differences in the numbers of political actors running for office at national and regional levels by way of party lists. These differences also reveal how parties are institutionalized at the local level. There are situations when the number of actors at the local level is much smaller than the number of those running for office in the State Duma. This can be also proved by the higher percentage of votes for the main parties at the local level since there are no smaller actors which could dissipate the votes. Low party activity at the municipal level can be explained by a number of factors. One of them is the weak party system development at the local level; another is low interest in municipal elections, even for large political parties; and many voters prefer personalized majority rule for local elections. According to the polls “citizens tend to vote for a specific person rather than for a depersonalized party list” [Antipiyev, 2012, p. 54].

To analyze the number of parties participating in elections in each period of time, we start with the period from 2004 to 2007 which we compare to the federal legislative elections of 2003 where there were 23 parties and to the federal legislative elections of 2007 where there were 11 parties. In 2004, in Krasnoyarsk, there were 9 parties at the local level, in 2005 there were 7.33 parties on average, in 2006 in Saratov there were 8 parties, in 2007 there were 5 parties on

average. The average number of parties for this whole period was 7.33. Therefore, the number of parties acting only at the local level was much lower than at the national level.

The next period we cover is 2008–2011 (see Fig. 2). 2007 saw the smallest number of parties (7) in the federal parliamentary elections. The reduction in the number of parties in the State Duma elections reflected the stiffening of the registration rules for parties in general and inevitably affected the number of participating parties. At the local level the number is even lower. For example, in 2008 there were 4.7 parties at the local level on average, in 2009 – 4.2 parties, in 2010 – 4.53 and in 2011 – 4.33. We should bear this in mind for this period because such situation leads to a higher concentration of votes going to larger national parties in local elections. The number of parties at the local level was always lower than at the national level compared with the 2007 and the 2011 elections.

In 2012, the law on parties in Russia changed again which led to a surge of parties entering local politics as well. For example, in 2012 there were 5.68 parties whereas in 2013 the number rose to 11.95. The numbers subsequently fell: in 2014 – 8.09 parties, in 2015 – 6.42, in 2016 – 5.32, in 2017 – 5.75 and in 2018 – 6 parties. Despite the growing number of parties in Russia the situation with the number of parties active at the local level was similar to 2008–2011, when the number was the lowest. Although there was a surge in the number of parties in 2013 and 2014 at the municipal level, the number of parties in each sample during this period at the local level was still lower than in the federal elections in 2016 when there were 14 parties presented. Consequently, the general trend remained the same and most small parties were not active in municipal elections.



**Figure 2. Average number of parties in the municipal elections held on party lists.**

## **Party system nationalization analysis: municipal and federal levels**

We compared the indicators of party support, electoral turnout and competitiveness for municipal and federal elections, collecting electoral statistics for all the cities under examination. For each year's sample we calculated the average electoral turnout and level of political party support for all the cities where the elections were held using party lists (for each sample we used a simple average of the turnout and each party's support which eliminated the factor of different size of big cities and small towns). The indicators were always compared with the same ones for the same samples of cities for the previous and following federal campaigns. The same was done for the effective number of parties (ENP).

### **The 2004–2007 electoral period: details of sampling**

The sample of cities for the period from 2004 to 2007 was small. Owing to the fact that proportional system was not very popular during this period we can only analyze 6 cities in 2005, 5 cities in 2007 and only one city in 2004 and 2006. For 2004 we only had Krasnoyarsk which is a big Siberian administrative center. For the 2005 sample, we have Nizhny Novgorod, Dzerzhinsk, Arzamas, Volzhsky, Kamyshin, and Achinsk. For 2006 we only have Saratov which is an administrative center. For 2007 we have cities of the North Caucasus such as Makhachkala and Kaspiysk in Dagestan, plus Syktyvkar, and also Khimki in the Moscow region. Vladivostok and Cherkessk are examined in the section where we analyze the simultaneous federal/local elections. Given the small sample, we note that the results cannot be fully representative to reflect the differences between the local and national elections of this period but some conclusions can be still drawn.

### **The 2004–2007 electoral period: the electoral turnout**

The turnout in Krasnoyarsk in 2004 in the local elections was 5.68 percentage points higher than during the 2003 federal elections. Compared to the 2007 State Duma elections, the turnout was 5.09 points lower. In the 2005 sample, the turnout was 11.92 points lower than in the 2003 federal elections and 24.26 points lower than in the 2007 federal elections. In 2006, in Saratov the turnout in the municipal elections was 20.55 points smaller than in the 2003 federal elections. It was also 20.33 points smaller than in the following 2007 federal elections. In the local elections in 2007 (held separately from the State Duma elections in same year) the turnout was 49.33% which is 6.5 points lower than in the 2003 federal elections and 29.1 points lower than in the 2007 federal elections.

Krasnoyarsk (2004) is the odd one out because it was the only city where the municipal turnout was higher compared to the 2003 federal elections (although it was lower than the 2007 federal elections).

### **The 2004–2007 electoral period: support for the “party of power”**

Let us look at the electoral support of parties from 2004 to 2007. First, we analyze the support for the “party of power” – United Russia – in local and federal elections. Krasnoyarsk is once again the most unusual case because United Russia did not take part in the municipal elections in this city.

In 2005, in the municipal elections United Russia got 28.61% of the vote which was 1.71 points higher than in the 2003 State Duma elections. The situation, nonetheless, is different from the 2007 campaign because the party got 29.82 points less in the local elections than in the following federal parliamentary elections. This happened due to the general growth of support for United Russia during this period. In 2005 it was a new party, whereas in 2007 it got huge support all over the country. The same trend is seen for other local samples of this period. In 2006, for instance, United Russia got 44.81% of votes in Saratov which is 13.26 points more than in the 2003 elections to the State Duma and 9.9 points less than in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

The 2007 sample illustrates electoral support for United Russia at the local level which was 46.17%, 6.15 points more than in 2003 and 27.22 points less than in 2007. This was observed in the sample of North Caucasian cities which showed great support for United Russia at the national level of elections but in the local elections the support was lower (for Makhachkala in the local elections the support was 46.06% while being 89.7% in the federal elections, for Kaspiysk in the local elections it was 63.5% while in the federal elections – 90.05%).

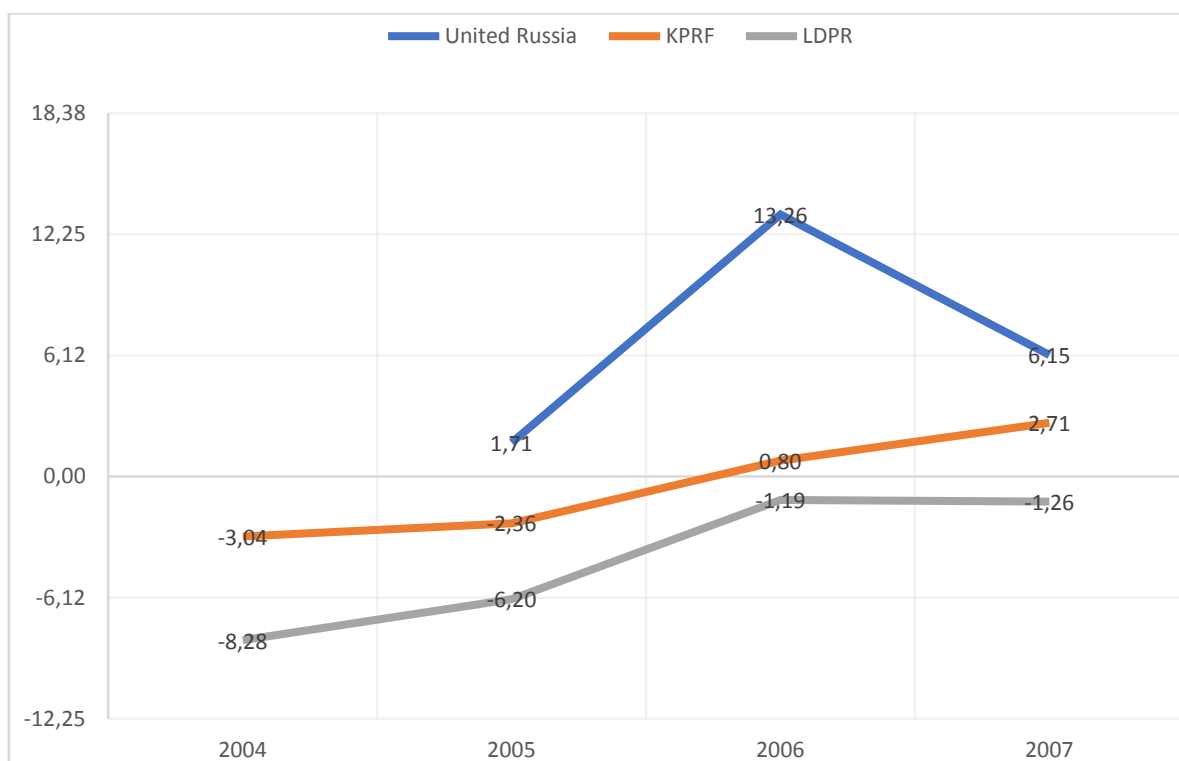
### **The 2004–2007 electoral period: support for the opposition**

Let us examine the voting for the opposition parties in this period (Fig. 3 and 4). In 2004, in Krasnoyarsk, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) got less support at the local level than in the previous federal elections by 3.04 and 9.28 points respectively. Instead of voting for United Russia, which was absent at the local level, people voted for the electoral blocks “With faith and hope” (32.06%) and “For Krasnoyarsk” (24.62%). Compared to the State Duma elections in 2007, KPRF and LDPR also got less electoral support in the local elections by 4.76 and 7.29 points respectively.

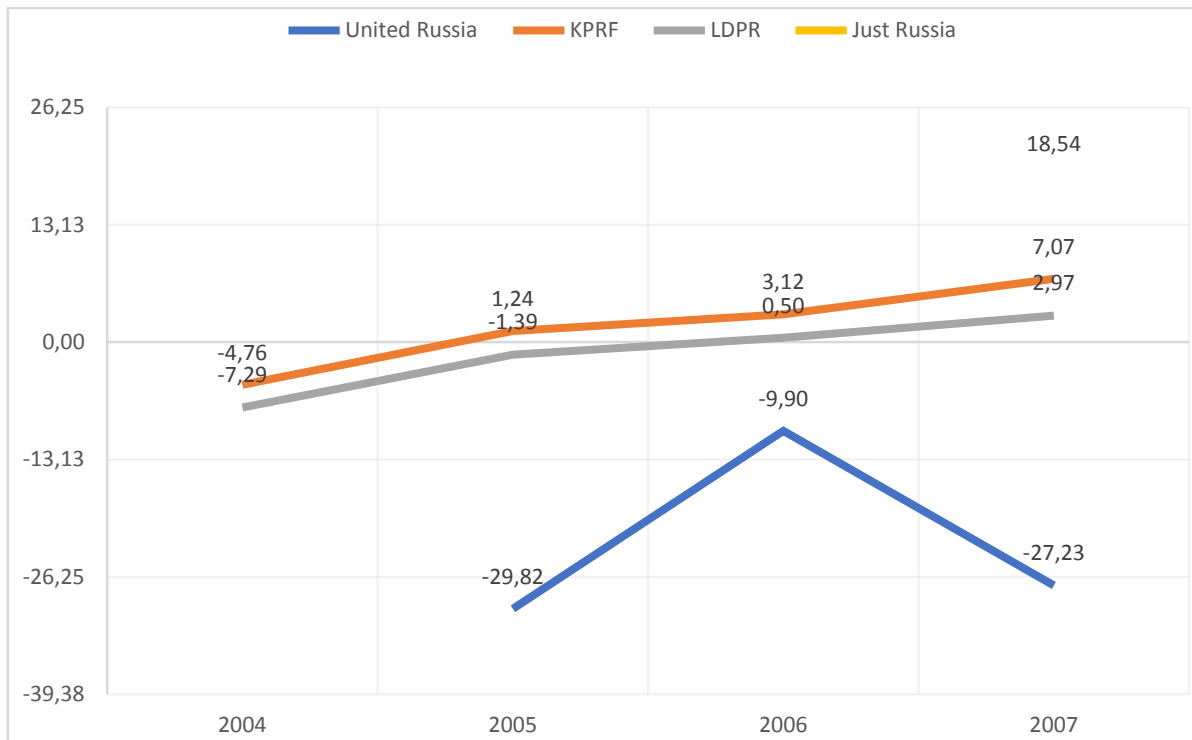
In 2005, KPRF got 14.8% and LDPR got 8.45% of the vote which was less than in the 2003 State Duma elections by 2.36 and 6.2 points respectively. Compared to the 2007 parliamentary campaign LDPR got 1.39 points less while KPRF got 1.24 points more. A significant number of votes in the 2005 elections went to the new party “Rodina” (11.22%) which probably led to the fall in support for KPRF and LDPR.

In 2006, in Saratov, KPRF got 19.3% and LDPR got 7.89%. Compared to the 2003 elections, support grew by 0.8 points in the first case and fell by 1.19 points in the second. Compared to the 2007 parliamentary elections we see that both parties got larger support at the local level. For KPRF it was 3.12 points more and for LDPR 0.5 points more.

2007 saw the emergence of a new political party – Just Russia – but its support developed gradually. In 2007, Just Russia got 22.64% on average which was 18.54 points more than in the following year’s federal elections (4.1%). This happened because in Kaspiysk and Syktyvkar in the local elections this party got 28.88% and 16.4% respectively whereas there was a fall in support in the federal elections (by more than half in Syktyvkar and down to 0.11% in Kaspiysk). However, KPRF (18.25%) and LDPR (7.42%) also got more votes in the local elections than in the federal ones by 7.07 points and 2.97 points respectively. This is explained by the growth of support for United Russia in the federal elections in 2007. Compared to the local 2007 elections and the 2003 State Duma elections, KPRF got 2.71 points more and LDPR 1.26 points less at the local level.



**Figure 3. The difference of electoral support for parliamentary parties in the municipal elections for the period from 2004 to 2007 in comparison with the 2003 federal campaign.**



**Figure 4. The difference of electoral support for parliamentary parties in the municipal elections from 2004 to 2007 in comparison with the 2007 federal campaign.**

Although the graphs look totally different they still lead us to the same conclusion about the general trends considering the growing support for United Russia and the weakening of the opposition in the midterm period. Compared to 2003, United Russia always got higher support in the local elections because the party was gradually gaining strength in the regions. Support for other parties varied significantly. In 2004 and 2005, both KPRF and LDPR were losing support and got a smaller percentage locally than federally. However, in the separate local elections of 2007, support for KPRF in the municipal elections was higher than in the 2003 federal campaign.

If we compare the local elections of this period with the following 2007 State Duma elections we see the same trend: United Russia still gets lower support in the previous local elections than in the subsequent federal ones, which were the most successful for this party. This can be explained again by the gradual growth of support for the party across the country during this period. Support for other parliamentary parties is varied, in 2006–2007 KPRF got better results at the local level than in the 2003 State Duma elections and worse results compared to the 2007 federal elections. For LDPR the same situation holds for the 2007 municipal elections. Just

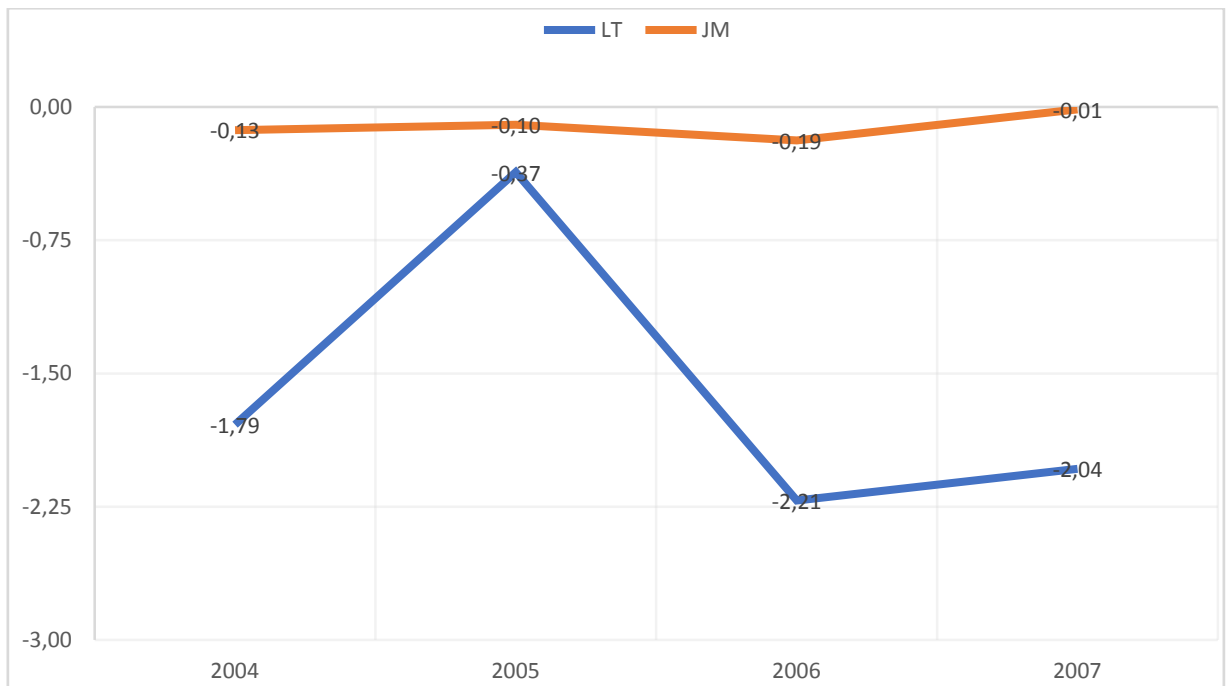
Russia which became a parliamentary party in 2007, got higher support in the local elections than in the federal elections which, however, was determined by the features of the sample we examined.

The results tell us about the gradual nationalization of the party system with United Russia emerging as the dominant party and increasing its support year after year. However, we can still see large gaps in voting for the parties in federal and local elections even in the same year (for example, the support for United Russia and Just Russia was very different in the 2007 local and federal elections which were held separately). This means that nationalization was far from complete in that period.

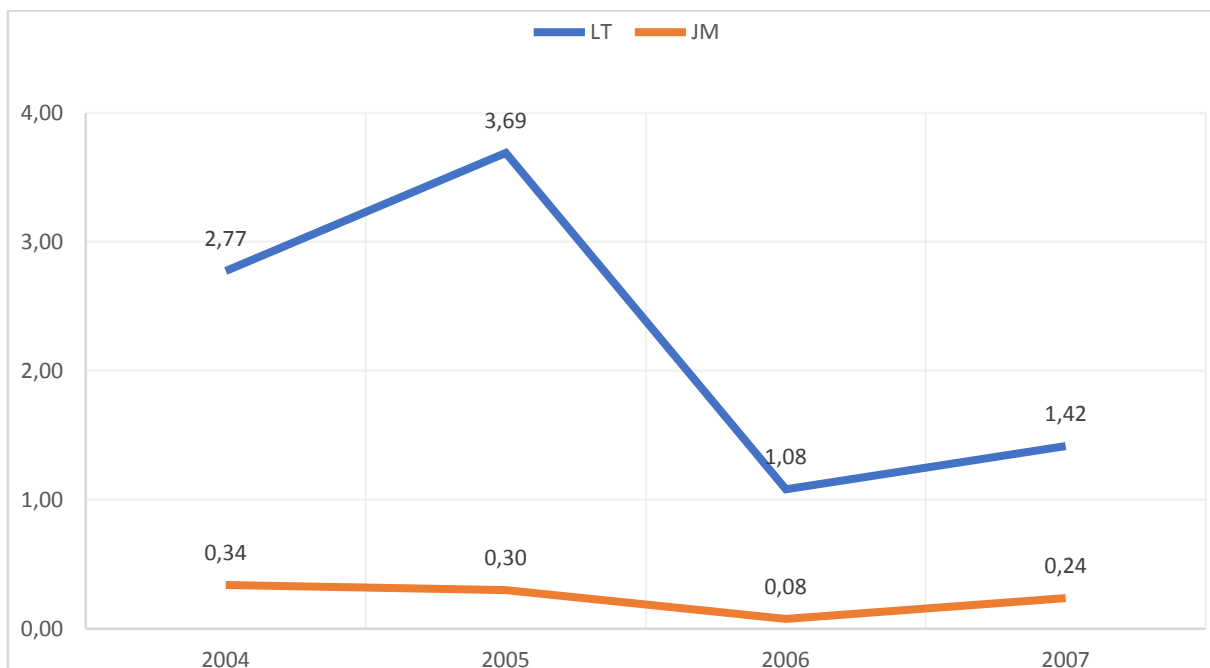
### **The 2004–2007 electoral period: party competitiveness**

In this section we compare the level of competitiveness in the municipal and federal elections (Fig. 5 and 6). In 2004, in Krasnoyarsk in the local elections the level of competitiveness was quite high: 5.48 – LT index and 1.44 – JM index. Compared to the 2003 federal elections, the level of competitiveness fell by 1.79 and 0.13 points respectively. But in comparison with the 2007 federal elections it was higher by 2.77 and 0.34 points respectively.

We saw the same trend in the next samples: in 2005 competitiveness in the local elections was at 6.32 (LT index) and 1.41 (JM index) which was also lower compared to the 2003 elections by 0.37 and 0.1, and higher by 3.69 and 0.3 compared to the 2007 parliamentary elections. In the 2006 municipal elections in Saratov, the LT index was 4.03 and the JM index was 1.21 which was 2.21 and 0.19 points lower than in the 2003 federal elections and 1.08 and 0.8 points higher than in the 2007 national elections. In 2007, competitiveness at the local level was 3.42 (LT index) and 1.34 (JM index) which was lower compared to the 2003 federal elections by 2.03 and 0.01 respectively. Compared to the 2007 federal elections the level of local competitiveness was higher by 1.4 and 0.28 points respectively.



**Figure 5. The discrepancy in effective number of parties in the 2004-2007 municipal elections in comparison with the 2003 elections.<sup>4</sup>**



**Figure 6. The discrepancy in effective number of parties in the 2004-2007 municipal elections in comparison with the 2007 federal elections.**

<sup>4</sup> Here and further LT – effective number of parties by Laakso and Taagepera index, JM – by Juan Molinar index.



Summing up, the level of competitiveness in the midterm local elections was always lower than in the 2003 federal elections and it reflects the general trend towards a decrease of competitiveness in Russian elections. This trend continued in the 2007 federal elections. However, competitiveness at the local level has features of its own as sometimes it was closer to the previous or to the following State Duma election. Such fluctuations are better illustrated by the LT index and we conclude that in this period there was a significant inflation in the party system.

### **The 2008–2011 electoral period: details of sampling**

In this section, we analyze the 2008–2011 electoral period. Here we have a bigger sample of cities, and thus more valid results. In the 2008 sample there are 7 cities including Krasnoyarsk (the only example for the 2004 sample), 4 large regional centers but no cities of over 1 million inhabitants: Ryazan', Stavropol', Tver' and Nal'chik, and 2 towns: Khasavyurt (Republic of Dagestan) and Novomoskovsk (Tula region). The sample includes cities of Central Russia and the North Caucasus. It grows larger from 2009 and includes 15 towns (up to 500,000 inhabitants) with 7 of them being administrative centers. Most of this sample is in Siberia and Russia's Far East which were absent in the previous samples (Ulan-Ude, Chita, Blagoveshchensk, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Ussuriysk, Salekhard, Noyabr'sk). In this sample there are also 3 cities from autonomous districts: Salekhard, Noyabr'sk and Naryan-Mar. The 2010 sample includes 16 cities and 2 of them are cities of over 1 million inhabitants: Kazan' and Nizhny Novgorod. There are many cities from the Volga region (Nizhny Novgorod, Dzerzhinsk, Arzamas, Kazan', Nizhnekamsk, Almetyevsk, Izhevsk) and from Central Russia, the North Caucasus and Siberia (Tomsk, Achinsk). The 2011 sample includes 9 cities and is quite diverse but many of them come from the North Caucasus (Stavropol', Grozny, Magas, Nazran'). Although for 2011 we analyze only those elections that were not simultaneous with the federal parliamentary elections held on the same year: Vladimir, Saratov, Stavropol' and Syktyvkar.

### **The 2008–2011 electoral period: the electoral turnout**

In 2008, the turnout in local elections was 55.67%. Compared to the 2007 State Duma elections it was 11.46 points lower and compared to 2011 State Duma elections it was 10.19 points lower. We should also bear in mind that in some North Caucasus towns such as Nal'chik and Khasavyurt the turnout was equally high both at local and federal levels (above 85%) but it was much lower in all other cities at the local level.

In 2009, the turnout was 45.23% which was 20.35 points less than in the 2007 federal elections and 19.32 points less than in the 2011 federal elections. Once again we see the same

trend from the previous year – the North Caucasus towns of Magas and Nazran’ (both in Ingushetia) show a very high turnout at both levels (more than 84%), whereas other cities are more active during the federal elections rather than in the municipal elections including the capital of North Ossetia – Vladikavkaz – where the turnout at the local level was 62.84% while in the 2011 federal elections it was 91.45%. Considering the 2007 federal elections we see that the turnout in Vladikavkaz (55.15%) was lower than at the local level.

The average turnout in 2010 in the local elections was 47.29%. Here we have the same trend: the local turnout was lower than the federal one – compared to 2007 it was lower by 20.43 points and to 2011 by 17.56 points. High turnout is still typical for the North Caucasus – for Kaspiysk and Makhachkala (Republic of Dagestan) – for both territorial levels.

In the 2011 municipal elections (those held separately from the State Duma elections) the turnout was 38.02% which was 21.28 points lower than in the 2007 federal elections and 21.91 points lower than in the 2011 federal elections. In this sample there were no deviations and all the cities showed a far lower turnout in the local elections than in the federal ones.

During this period the most typical situation is that the majority of cities have a lower turnout in the local elections than at the federal level, although, as noted, some North Caucasus towns show high turnout at both levels.

### **The 2008–2011 electoral period: support for the “party of power”**

In this section we describe support for United Russia within this period. In the 2008 local elections United Russia got 61.74% which was 4.05 points less than in the 2007 State Duma elections but 12.56 points more than in the 2011 State Duma elections. While the period of 2004–2007 showed a gradual growth of support for United Russia, the party then lost support, which was illustrated by the midterm municipal elections: compared to the 2011 federal elections the party got larger support at the municipal level. For instance, in 2009, United Russia got 52.45% of vote which was 11.27 points less than in the 2007 federal elections and still 3 points more than in the 2011 parliamentary elections. In 2010, United Russia got 53.5% of the vote at the local level which was 11.12 points less than in the 2007 federal elections but 2.3 points more than in the 2011 State Duma elections. Finally, in 2011 (only for the separate elections), the “party of power” got 43.75% of the vote which was 14.7 points less than in the 2007 parliamentary elections and 4.89 points less than in the 2011 federal elections.

Support for United Russia in the 2011 municipal elections was unusual since it was lower in the local elections compared to both the 2007 and 2011 federal elections (although the sample included only 4 cities). This shows the alarming fall in support for United Russia in 2011 which was reflected even more at the local level (however, only in some specific cities) than at the

federal level. This difference can be explained by the phenomenon of strategic voting, according to which the voters prefer to cast their votes for more stable and major players in the federal elections, while they are more likely to vote sincerely in regional elections, see [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017].

### **The 2008–2011 electoral period: support for the opposition**

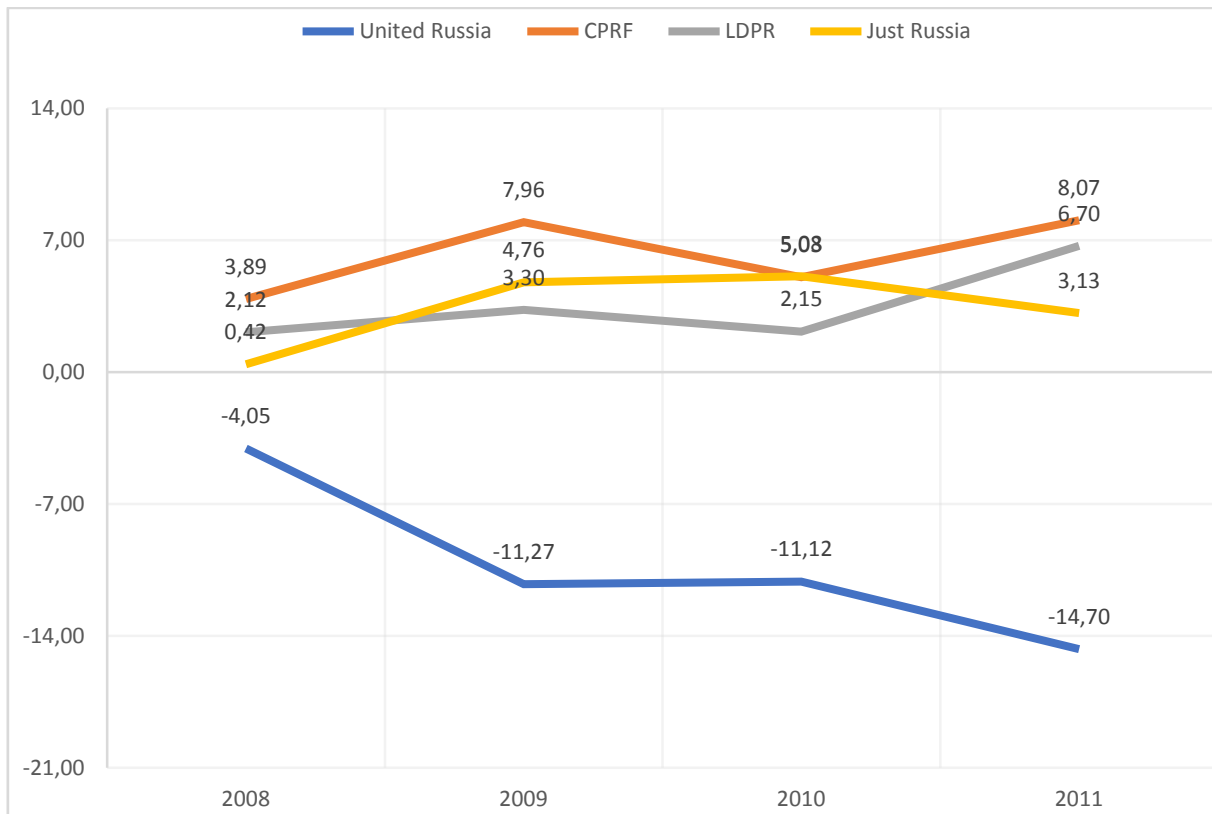
The 2008–2011 municipal campaigns revealed positive trends for opposition parties (Fig. 7 and 8). In 2008, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 16.39%, 8.75% and 7.7% in the local elections respectively. In those elections all three parties delivered better results than in the previous 2007 State Duma elections by 3.89, 2.12 and 0.42 points respectively. Compared to the 2011 federal elections, all three parties got 5.18, 1.74 and 4.79 points less in the local elections. This means that a year after the 2007 federal campaign an inverse trend emerged: compared to the 2011 protest vote the opposition parties gained a smaller percentage in the midterm local elections but compared to the 2007 elections, which were very successful for United Russia, they gained a larger percentage.

In 2009, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 19.53%, 11.79% and 12.67% respectively in the local elections. Compared to the 2007 State Duma elections, all the opposition parties had more support (by 7.96, 3.30 and 4.76 points respectively). Compared to 2011, LDPR and Just Russia got less support (by 0.19 and 0.42 points), whereas KPRF got 0.1 points more. Here we see some shift in the trend as, in 2009, KPRF got an even bigger percentage of votes in the local elections than during the following protest vote in 2011. This could be explained by the lowest number of participating parties in 2009 which was only 4.2. This means that in the local elections there were no other actors except for the big parliamentary parties whereas at the federal level there were 7 parties. Thus, in the local elections the electorate did not diffuse the vote to other parties which led to the relative success of KPRF.

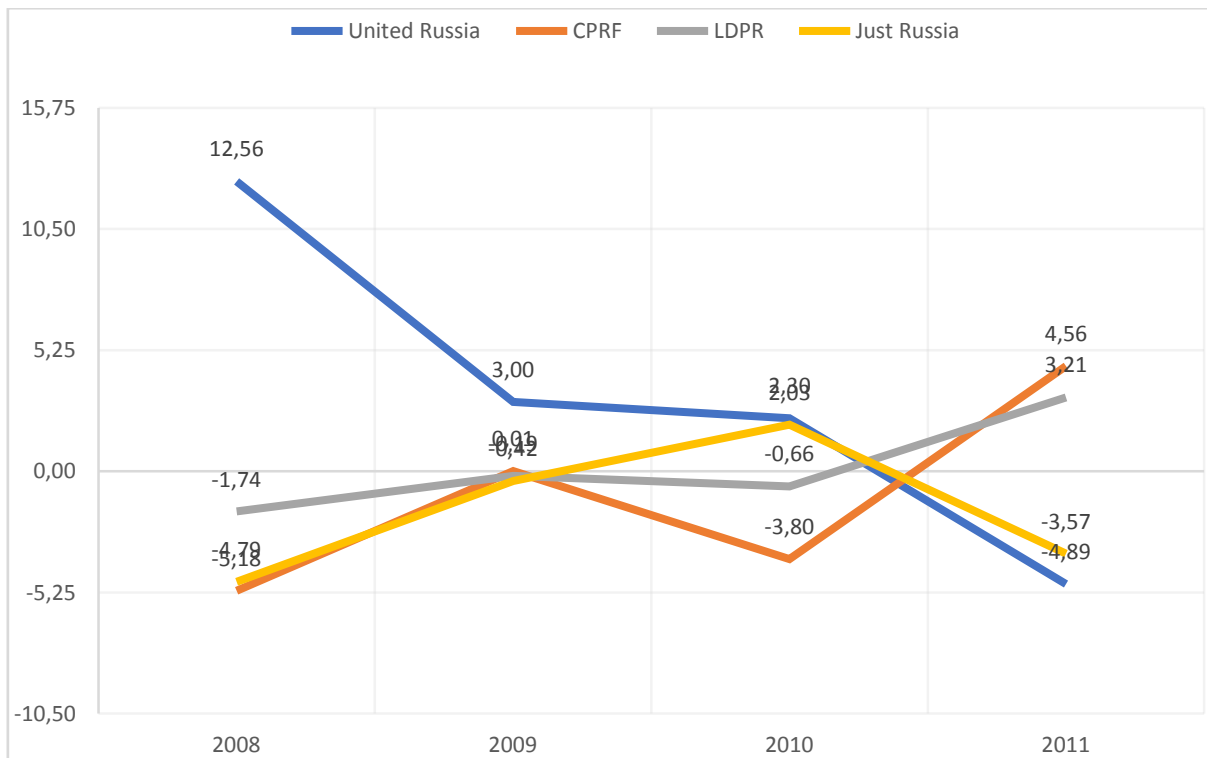
In the 2010 municipal elections, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia had 17.19%, 10.09% and 12.54% of the vote, which was better than in the 2007 parliamentary elections by 5.03, 2.15 and 5.08 points respectively. Compared to the 2011 State Duma elections, KPRF and LDPR fell 3.8 and 0.66 points while Just Russia rose 2.03 points. Such results can be once again explained by the higher concentration of votes in the local elections. However, the previous sample showed that cities preferred KPRF, while in 2010 it was Just Russia that was the relatively strong player.

In the 2011 local elections, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 21.99%, 15.62% and 11.77%. Compared to the 2007 parliamentary elections, the results were better by 8.07, 6.70 and 3.13 points. However compared to the 2011 State Duma elections Just Russia lost 3.57 points,

whereas KPRF and LDPR gained 4.56 and 3.21 points. This at the beginning of 2011 support for United Russia fell while it rose for the opposition parties.



**Figure 7. The discrepancy in electoral support for parliamentary parties in the 2008-2011 municipal elections compared to the 2007 federal campaign.**



**Figure 8. The discrepancy in electoral support for parliamentary parties in the 2008-2011 municipal elections compared to the 2011 federal campaign.**

In this period United Russia performed worse in local campaigns than in federal ones and its support continued to fall. At the same time KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia were more successful at the municipal level but there was no steady trend in their support.

As for the 2011 federal elections, the comparison is debatable. United Russia steadily lost support before these elections at the local level. In 2011 the margin between local and federal outcomes was negative which made United Russia the single actor within the analyzed period that was always weaker at the local level. KPRF and LDPR steadily gained support, although with a slight fall in 2010. Just Russia's support rose in the local elections in 2009–2010 and fell in 2011.

The discrepancy in results at local and national levels is quite large mainly because the results of the “party of power” fell in the local elections compared to the 2007 national campaign, and rose in the 2011 federal campaign.

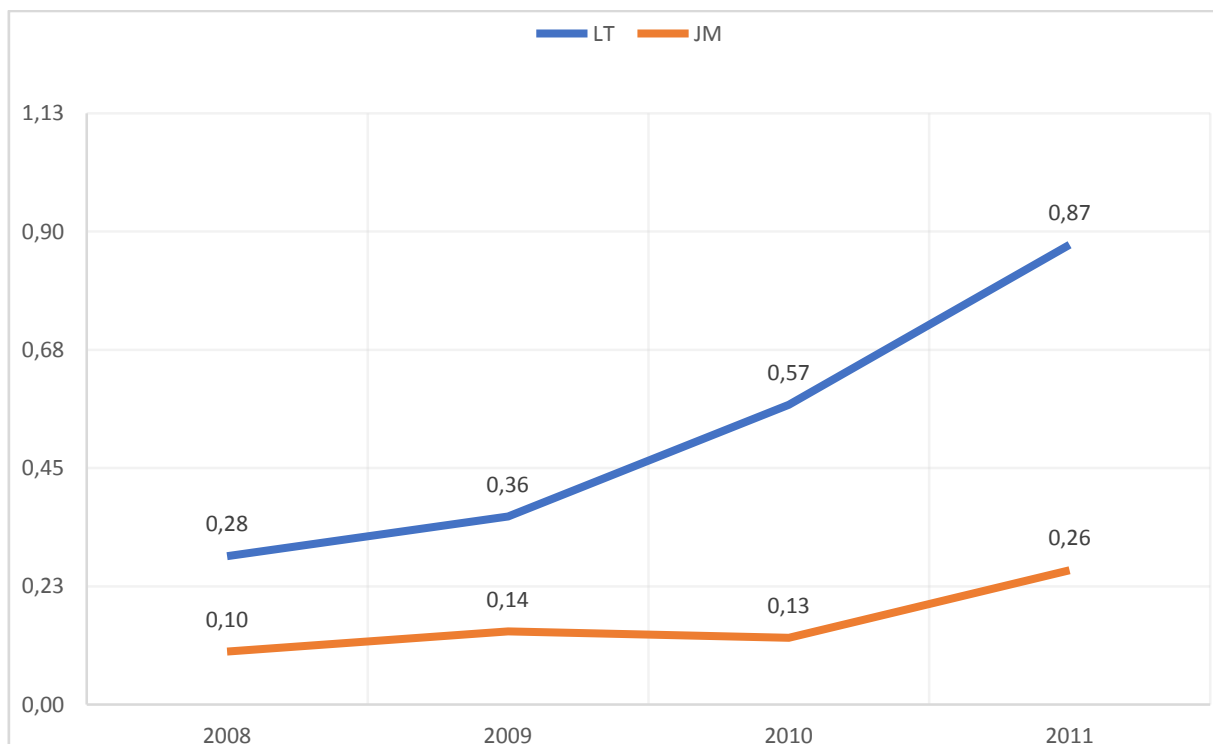
### **The 2008–2011 electoral period: party competitiveness**

In this section we compare competitiveness in the local and federal elections (Fig. 9 and 10). In 2008 in the sample of cities the competitiveness measure was 2.62 according to the LT index and 1.19 according to the JM index which is a better result than during the 2007 federal elections by 0.28 and 0.1 respectively. Compared to the more competitive 2011 election, the

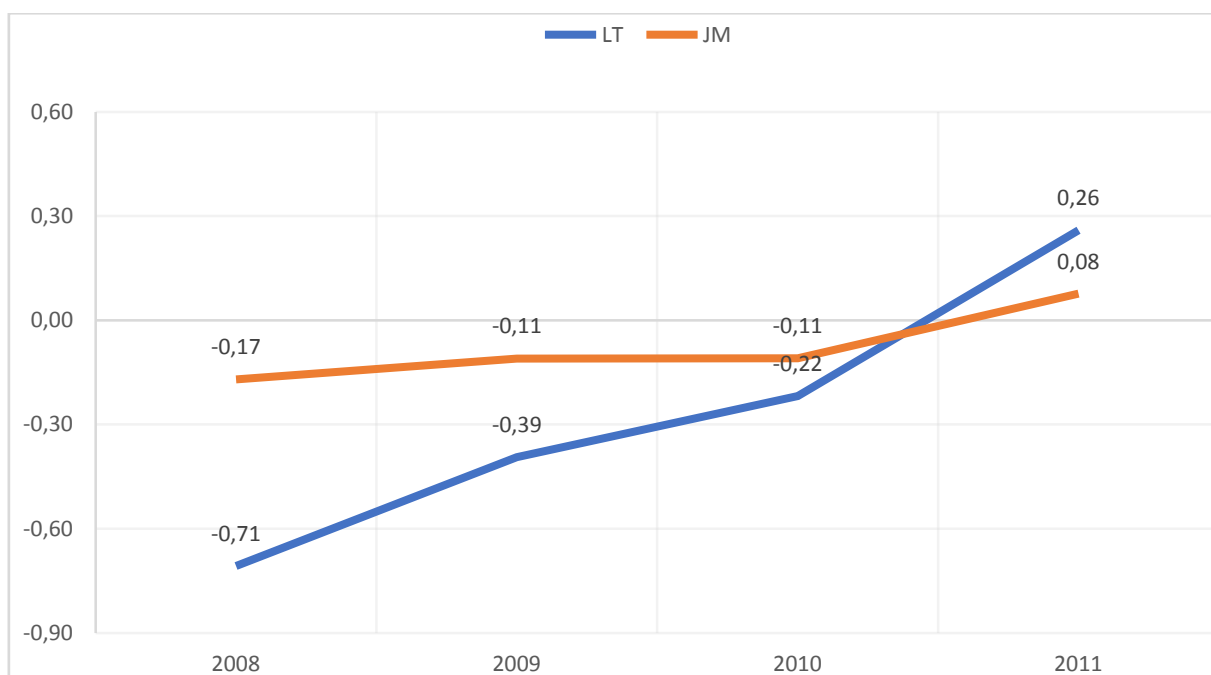
indices in local campaigns were lower by 0.71 and 0.17 points. In 2009 the competitiveness showed better results – 2.85 for the LT index and 1.25 for the JM index. Compared to the 2007 State Duma elections, the level of competitiveness was higher by 0.36 and 0.14 points while compared to the 2011 federal campaign it was lower by 0.39 and 0.11 points respectively.

This shows that competitiveness in the local elections at midterms was higher than in the almost uncompetitive 2007 Duma elections and lower than in the more competitive 2011 elections. The differences correlate with the differences of voting for United Russia. The higher the support for this party, the lower the level of competitiveness and vice versa. The same trend holds in 2010. The competitiveness in the sample was 2.94 for the LT index and 1.21 for the JM index which was 0.57 and 0.13 points higher than in the 2007 federal elections and 0.22 and 0.11 points lower than in the 2011 national elections.

Finally, in the 2011 separate (early) local elections we see a different trend, which is once again explained by the correlation of competitiveness and support for the “party of power”. United Russia got less support in 2011 during local campaigns than in the following federal one. As a result, competitiveness was higher than in the 2011 State Duma elections by 0.25 (LT index) and 0.08 (JM index) points. During this electoral campaign the competitiveness level was 3.52 (LT index) and 1.36 (JM index) which was a better result than in the 2007 federal campaign by 0.87 and 0.26 points.



**Figure 9. The discrepancy in the effective number of parties in the 2008-2011 municipal elections in comparison with the 2007 federal elections.**



**Figure 10. The discrepancy in the effective number of parties in the 2008-2011 municipal elections in comparison with the 2011 federal elections.**

The analysis of the discrepancies between the effective numbers of parties allowed us to come to some new conclusions. Compared to the 2007 national elections, competitiveness in the local elections was always higher while compared to the 2011 federal elections it was lower except for the more competitive separate elections at the beginning of 2011.

We should also note that the discrepancy in competitiveness between federal and local campaigns fell dramatically compared to the previous electoral period. The differences in the LT index were not higher than 0.9 points while the differences in the JM index in the 2008–2011 midterm period did not rise up more than by 0.3 points compared to the 2007 and 2011 federal elections. As the modern party system in Russia was being established with four leading parliamentary parties the competitiveness at the local and federal levels started to coincide. As a result, we can speak about a lower party system inflation rate at the municipal level and thus a higher level of party system nationalization.

### **The 2012–2015 electoral period: details of sampling**

The 2012–2015 samples are the biggest and this enables us to draw the most valid conclusions. This sample includes almost all Russian territories. In the 2012 sample, there are 28 cities (2 with over 1 million citizens – Omsk and Ufa), 10 administrative centers of Russian regions and other 16 cities and towns. The 2013 sample is less representative and includes 20 cities (3 with over 1 million citizens – Krasnoyarsk, Ekaterinburg and Volgograd), 9 administrative centers and 8 other cities and towns. The 2014 sample is the smallest and includes

11 cities with 5 administrative centers and 6 other cities and towns. Further, in this sample we have towns from the new constituent territories of the federation such as Simferopol', Kerch and Yevpatoria. Finally, the 2015 sample is the largest and includes 31 cities (5 with over 1 million citizens – Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov-on-Don and Voronezh), 17 administrative centers and 9 other cities and towns. In this sample large cities prevail over smaller ones and towns.

### **The 2012–2015 electoral period: the electoral turnout**

In 2012, the turnout in the local elections was 46.78% which was 10.08 points lower than in the 2011 federal elections and 1.31 points higher than in the 2016 federal elections. This is unusual, contradicting the trend towards lower turnout in local elections. This can be explained by the emerging trend towards a general fall in turnout in Russian elections, resulting in a very low turnout in the 2016 federal elections which was even lower than the turnout in the local elections of previous years. Within this sample there were no cities with extremely high turnout. The maximum was reached in Salavat (76.78%), Nal'chik (76.05%) and Nakhodka (71.59%). However, in the 2016 federal elections the turnout dropped in Salavat (56.8%) and Nakhodka (39.33%) but rose in Nal'chik (88.39%) and Cherkessk (from 60.49% to 93.36%). Compared to the previous local elections, in 2016 the turnout in the State Duma elections rose in 14 cities and went down on 14 cities but the overall numbers dropped significantly.

In 2013, turnout in the local elections was 50.42% which was 27.59 points less than in the 2011 federal elections and 17.74 points less than in the 2016 national elections. In all the cities under examination the turnout in the federal elections was extremely high in the cities of the North Caucasus such as Derbent (94% in 2011 and 92.93% in 2016 whereas in the local elections it was 74.54%) and Khasavyurt (91.83% in 2011 and 83.99% in 2016 while in the local elections it was 77.02%).

In 2014, the turnout was 34.31%, not considering the cities of Crimea since those cities did not vote in the 2011 State Duma elections. This turnout is 22.72 points lower than in the 2011 federal elections. If including the cities of Crimea the turnout in 2014 was 39.89% which was 5.40 points lower in the local elections than in the 2016 federal elections. Vladikavkaz showed the highest turnout in the federal elections compared to the municipal campaign (87.56% in the federal elections and 63.67% in the local ones).

In 2015, the turnout was 38.33% which was 22.62 points lower than in the 2011 federal elections and 6.73 points lower than in the 2016 federal elections. The highest turnout was in Kaspiysk (93.2% in 2016 and 96.1% in 2011, and the turnout was even higher in the local elections – 97.05%).



This period follows the trend of lower turnout in local campaigns but the local turnout differs less from the 2016 turnout than from the 2011 turnout. There is only one case when the local turnout in 2012 was much higher than in the 2016 national elections.

### **The 2012–2015 electoral period: support for the “party of power”**

In 2012, United Russia got 50.58% of votes in the local elections which was 9.31 points more than in the 2011 State Duma elections and 6.58 points more than in the 2016 parliamentary elections. In 2013, United Russia got 46.34% of votes which was 1.73 points more than in the 2011 elections and 2.43 points less than in the 2016 elections. In 2014, the party got 54.85% of votes in the local elections (without the cities of Crimea) which was 16.61 points more than in the 2011 campaign. Including the cities of Crimea, the party got 55.76% of votes which was also 1.61 points more than in the 2016 federal campaign. Finally, in 2015, the “party of power” got 54.42% in the local elections which was 8.78 points more than in 2011 and 7.22 points more than in the 2016 election.

To sum up, in this period United Russia became much stronger at the local level compared to the relative failure of the 2011 federal campaign. Excluding 2013, the party was more successful in the local elections in this midterm period than during the previous one. As a result the gap with the unsuccessful 2011 campaign grew.

### **The 2012–2015 electoral period: support for the opposition**

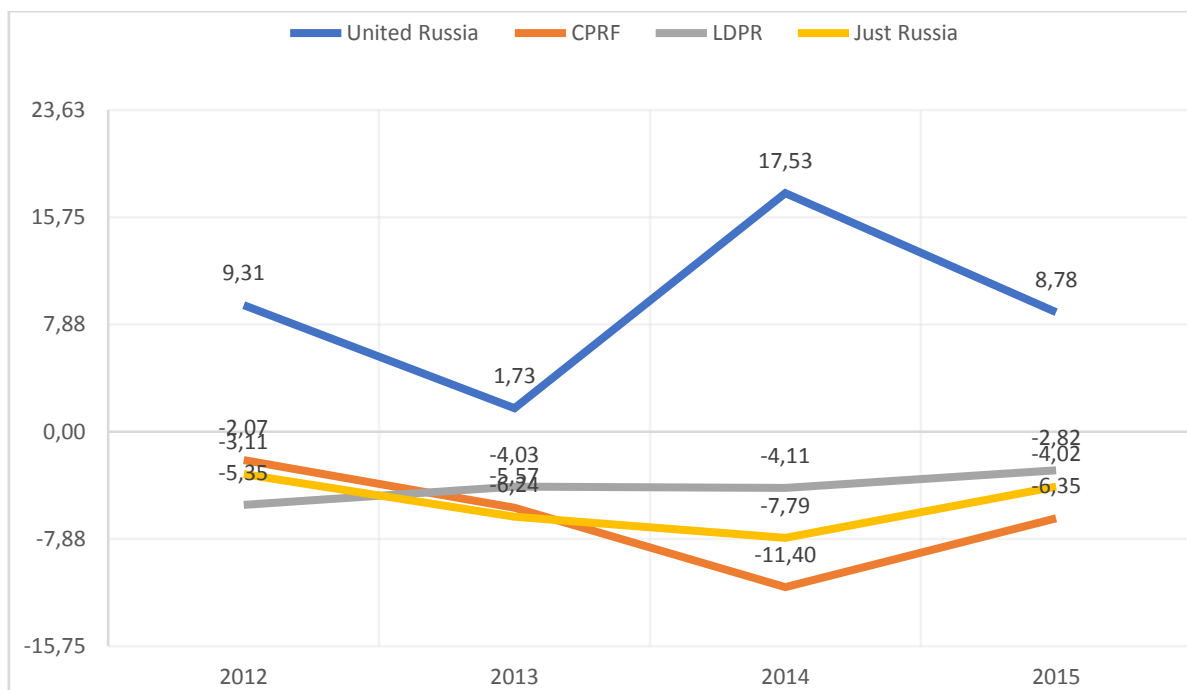
The first municipal elections held after the 2011 State Duma elections reflected the fall in support of opposition parties (Fig. 11 and 12). In 2012, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 19.78%, 8.4% and 12.61% respectively in the local elections. Such results were lower than in the 2011 State Duma campaign by 2.07, 5.35 and 3.11 points respectively. Compared to the 2016 federal elections, KPRF and Just Russia got 2.92 and 3.72 points more while LDPR lost 7.04 points. Thus, in 2012, LDPR was much weaker in the local elections than in the previous and following federal campaigns.

In the 2013 local elections, KPRF got 14.95%, LDPR – 7.46% and Just Russia - 10.29%. Compared to the 2011 elections these parties lost 5.57, 4.03 and 6.24 points respectively. In comparison to the 2016 elections, KPRF and Just Russia came out 0.43 and 1.4 points more successful while LDPR lost 6.21 points.

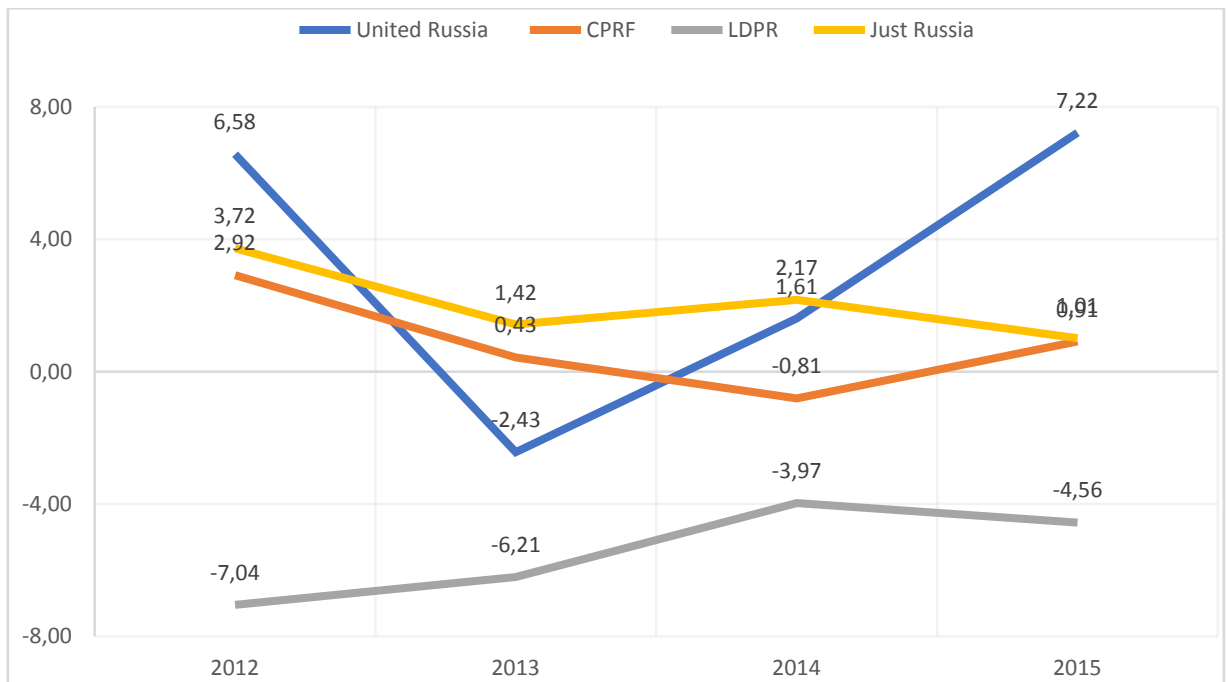
In the 2014 municipal elections, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 14.52%, 8.04% and 7.59% of votes (excluding results in the cities of Crimea). They lost 9.93, 4.69 and 7.21 points respectively compared to the 2011 elections. If we include the results in the cities of Crimea, KPRF got 13.05%, LDPR – 8.89% and Just Russia – 7.01% of votes. That means that KPRF and

LDPR got 0.81 points and 3.97 points less compared to the 2016 elections, whereas Just Russia got 2.17 points more in the municipal elections than in the 2016 State Duma elections. Both LDPR and KPRF poorly performed in the 2014 municipal elections.

In 2015, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia had 15.18%, 9.06% and 9.8% of the votes in the local elections. These results were worse by 6.35, 2.82 and 4.02 points respectively than in the 2011 federal elections. Compared to the 2016 State Duma elections, KPRF and Just Russia improved their positions by 0.91 points and 1.01 points, whereas LDPR lost 4.56 points. Therefore, in this period LDPR was steadily losing its electorate in the municipal elections.



**Figure 11. The discrepancy in electoral support for the parliamentary parties in the 2012-2015 municipal elections compared to the 2011 federal campaign.**



**Figure 12. The discrepancy in electoral support for the parliamentary parties in the 2012-2015 municipal elections compared to the 2016 federal campaign.**

Comparing the 2012–2015 midterm and the 2011 State Duma elections we can see some significant trends. United Russia gained more support in local elections while the opposition lost support at the municipal level. This is explained by the protest voting during the 2011 elections which faded afterwards giving the “party of power” more strength.

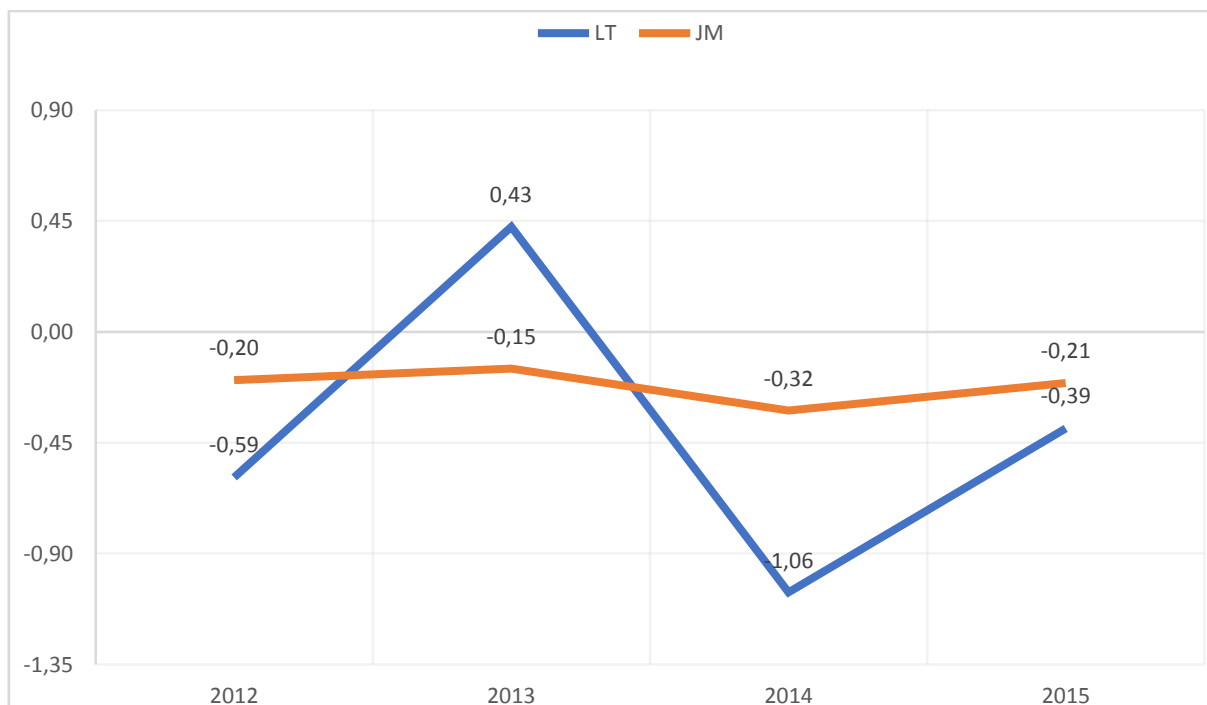
However, there is no such trend if we compare the 2012–2015 midterm local elections with the 2016 federal elections. Just Russia had always performed better in local elections, revealing itself as a relatively strong player at the municipal level. It lost some support in the 2016 federal campaign, however. The weakest party in the local campaigns was LDPR. Just Russia and KPRF usually got more support at the local level with the exception of 2013 for the former and 2014 for the latter.

Compared to the 2011 elections, the gap between the local and the federal voting remained significant. The trend changed by 2016, when there was a gradual rapprochement of the results of the local and federal campaigns. The largest gap was for United Russia (in the 2015 campaign) which was 7.22 points, whereas in the previous periods the gap was up to 30 points. This tells us that party system nationalization was successful given the similar results for the national and local elections.

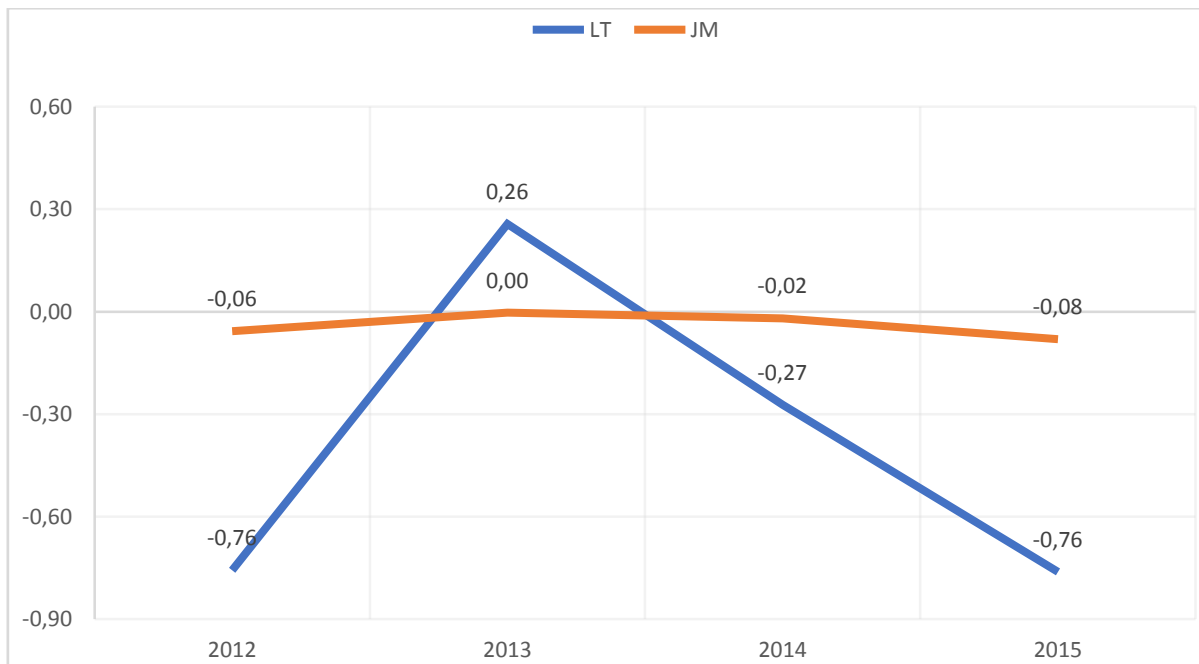
### The 2012–2015 electoral period: party competitiveness

This section compares the level of competitiveness within this period (Fig. 13 and 14). In the 2012 local elections the LT index was 3.19 and the JM index was 1.24. Compared to the 2011 elections, competitiveness fell by 0.59 (LT) and 0.2 points (JM) and compared to the 2016 elections, it fell by 0.76 (LT) and 0.06 (JM) points. In 2013 the LT index in local elections was 3.96 and the JM index was 1.25 which was 0.43 (LT) and 0.15 (JM) points less than in the 2011 elections. Compared to the 2016 State Duma elections, competitiveness was slightly higher 0.26 (LT) or the same (JM). In 2014, competitiveness (without the cities of Crimea) was 2.95 (LT) and 1.17 (JM) points. This is a worse result than in 2011 by 1.01 (LT) and 0.3 (JM) points. Including the cities of Crimea, 2014's competitiveness was 2.91 (LT) and 1.15 (JM) which was 0.27 and 0.02 points lower than in the 2016 elections. In 2015 competitiveness was 3.09 (LT) and 1.18 (JM). This is worse by 0.39 and 0.21 points as compared to 2011 and by 0.28 and 0.08 points as compared to 2016.

Summing up, this period is marked by low competitiveness at the local level compared to both federal campaigns. The exception was 2013, when the local competitiveness was higher (according to LT index) than the 2011 and 2016 federal elections because the 2013 local elections were highly successful for United Russia.



**Figure 13. The discrepancy in the effective number of parties in the 2012-2015 municipal elections in comparison with the 2011 federal elections.**



**Figure 14. The discrepancy in the effective number of parties in the 2012-2015 municipal elections in comparison with the 2016 federal elections.**

The discrepancy in competitiveness plunged for local and federal elections. In this period the local elections were always less competitive (with the exception of 2013) but the discrepancy in the effective numbers of parties was low and sometimes the results almost coincided. This indicates that there was some progress in halting party system inflation witnessed since 2007. Thus, we can conclude that the nationalization of the party system was in progress.

#### **The 2017–2018 electoral period: details of sampling**

The 2017 sample comprises of 16 cities (1 over 1 million – Omsk), 9 administrative centers and 6 other cities and towns. The 2018 sample includes 21 cities (3 over 1 million – Ekaterinburg, Volgograd and Krasnoyarsk), 11 administrative centers and 7 other cities and towns. Both samples are average in scope but fairly representative in terms of territorial entities presented.

#### **The 2017–2018 electoral period: the electoral turnout**

In 2017, the local turnout was 26.85% which was 14.11 points less than in the 2016 State Duma elections. Cherkessk had the highest turnout: 73.18% in the local elections and 93.36% in the federal elections. Other cities had the turnout less than 50% at both levels. In 2018, in the local elections, the turnout was 36.03% which was 15.15 points less than in the 2016 federal elections. The highest turnout was in Prokopyevsk in Kemerovo region (92.93% in the federal

elections and 77.23% in the local elections), and Derbent in the Republic of Dagestan (92.93% in the federal elections and 68% in the local elections).

### **The 2017–2018 electoral period: support for the “party of power”**

In the 2017 local elections, United Russia got 44.31% of votes which was 4.59 points more than in the 2016 federal elections. But in 2018 the positive trend came to an end and the party got only 43.52% of votes in the local elections which was 4.43 points lower than in the federal elections. After the previous State Duma elections there was no stable support for the “party of power” at the local level and there is a descending trend after the unpopular pension reform although not much time has passed to come to firm conclusions yet.

### **The 2017–2018 electoral period: support for the opposition**

In the 2017 local elections, KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 19.65%, 13.73% and 9.75% of votes respectively. KPRF and Just Russia performed better by 3.22 and 0.6 points than in the previous national elections while LDPR lost 3.85 points. In the 2018 local elections KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 22.76%, 14.22% and 10.89%. All these results were better by 8.21, 0.15 and 2.31 points than in the federal elections.

In 2018, Russian localities experienced a new upsurge in the protest vote and in some municipalities the opposition even took over United Russia for the first time in history (KPRF in Dimitrovgrad, Togliatti and Syzran', LDPR in Krasnoyarsk) which could be explained by the start of the unpopular pension reform. Actually, the growth of support for KPRF and (to a lesser degree) Just Russia began a year before. However, 2017 was successful for United Russia in general and 2018 was not.

In 2017, the decrease of the discrepancies between the voting for parties at different territorial levels continued. The largest difference in party voting between the local 2012–2015 elections and the previous federal results was 7.22 points, and for the 2017 local elections and the 2016 federal elections it fell by 4.59 points. However, 2018 marked a new rise of protest voting and the discrepancy grew to 8.21 points.

### **The 2017–2018 electoral period: party competitiveness**

In the 2017 local elections, the LT index was 3.65 and the JM index was 1.3. Thus party competitiveness fell by 0.74 (LT) and 0.05 (JM) points. In the 2018 local elections, the trends changed, the LT index was 3.43 and the JM index was 1.35. For the 2018 elections competitiveness was 0.35 (LT) points higher and 0.08 (JM) lower. In other words we can talk about new small-scale rise of party competitiveness.

Today, Russia has low party system inflation since the difference between local and federal competitiveness is below 1 point. However, the trend for lower competitiveness was broken in the 2018 local elections because according to the JM index the elections were more competitive than the 2016 federal elections.

### **Analysis of simultaneous elections**

In this section we analyze the municipal elections held simultaneously with federal ones since such elections have specific features. This aspect was a focus of our previous paper in which we concluded that in simultaneous elections United Russia gets a lower percentage at lower territorial levels than at the national level whereas the opposition parties get more support at the regional level [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017]. The current research will show if we see the same trend for municipal and national elections.

Only Cherkessk and Vladivostok had simultaneous federal and local elections in 2007. The average turnout was 66.74% at the municipal level which was 1.04 points less than at the federal level. On average United Russia got 63.95% (36.9% in Vladivostok and 90.99% in Cherkessk) which was 2.25 points less than in the federal elections. KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 11.43%, 6.52% and 7.42% in the local elections. Compared to the federal level of elections, LDPR lost 3.69 points and appeared weak at the local level. Contrary to that, KPRF and Just Russia had a better local performance by 3.39 and 0.74 points respectively. Competitiveness in the local elections was higher than in the federal elections by 0.46 (LT) and 0.6 (JM) points.

In 2011, Russian cities held 5 simultaneous elections. Most of them were in North Caucasian cities (Grozny, Magas and Nazran') where the turnout is usually high. Saransk also showed high turnout in 2011. Thus, the average turnout of these cities was 86.04% which was 0.56 points higher than at the federal level. All other trends stayed the same. United Russia got 76.92% which was 6.71 points less than in the simultaneous State Duma elections. KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia got 15.52%, 6.54% and 6.77% respectively and their results were better than at the federal level by 10.35, 4.13 and 3.62 points. Competitiveness in the 2011 local elections was higher than at the federal level by 0.05 (LT) and 0.01 (JM) points.

The 2016 simultaneous elections were held in all the cities where there were local elections. The sample included 19 cities (2 cities over 1 million citizens – Perm' and Ufa, 8 administrative centers and 9 other cities and towns). The average turnout at the local level was 55.32% which was 0.45 points more than at the federal level. This unusual higher turnout in the local elections was experienced in 2011 and replicated in 2016. As for the party support, the trend was unexpectedly different. In the 2016 local elections, United Russia got 55.39% of votes

which was 1.55 points better than in the federal elections. Support for LDPR (13.23%) and Just Russia (10.11%) was also higher at the local than at the national level by 2.19 for the former and 3.28 points for the latter. On the contrary, support for KPRF was lower at the local level by 0.19 points at 15.4%. Competitiveness in the municipal elections was 0.26 points lower (LT index) or was the same (JM index).

Ultimately, the results are inconclusive. Only the 2011 case leads us to the same conclusions as in the previous paper (when opposition parties always get more support at the local level) but at the local level in 2007 and 2016 there is no such trend. The results of the 2016 elections differed significantly from our expectations that there would be more oppositional vote at the municipal level since United Russia got greater support in the municipal elections than in the national elections while KPRF was stronger at the federal level.

## **Conclusion**

In this section we compare the described periods by turnout, party support and competitiveness and draw conclusions about the nationalization of the Russia's party system.

We clearly see that local elections in Russia draw much less attention from the public. The turnout was a lot smaller in the local elections than during the national campaigns with the exceptions of 2004 and 2013. Under such circumstances, it is important to analyze how the low turnout affected voting patterns and whether it led to any significant gaps between federal and local voting thus preventing progress in the nationalization of the party system.

In 2004–2007, United Russia gradually strengthened its standing at the municipal and federal levels. As a result, it got more support in the local elections compared to the 2003 federal elections which were its first elections, and less support compared to the 2007 elections which were its biggest success. The 2008–2011 municipal elections showed the opposite result: United Russia got fewer votes in the local elections compared to the 2007 national elections and more votes compared to 2011, indicating a general downward trend (in 2011, in separate local elections, it got even less support at the local level). Thus, in 2004–2011 support for United Russia at the municipal level climbed initially and then fell significantly. So, there is no difference in the trends between voting at local and federal levels. Moreover local elections demonstrate a gradual strengthening of United Russia across the state and a weakening after that.

In 2012–2015 when conditions for the nationalization of the party system that emerged were created at the local level by federal law and Kremlin policy, United Russia strongly focused on building support at the municipal level and was very successful. This created a new trend: excluding 2013, the “party of power” was stronger in local elections compared not only to the previous period but also to the even more successful federal elections of 2016. In other words, in



2012–2015 support for United Russia grew at the local level, which seemed to be the target for the party. As a result, the domination of United Russia at the local level became much stronger than before.

As for the opposition parties in 2004–2007, their support at the local level could be at times positive, sometimes negative, compared with the federal elections. KPRF was stronger at the local level in 2006 but there was no sustainable trend for this party. It became clearer in 2008–2011 because KPRF, LDPR and Just Russia started getting more support in local elections compared to the 2007 federal elections, when United Russia dominated fully. Within this period, opposition parties sometimes performed better in the local elections than in the previous and even next (more successful) federal elections (KPRF in 2009 and 2011, Just Russia in 2010 and LDPR in 2011). However, 2012–2015 were rough for the opposition parties at the local level since none of them performed better than during previous and following federal elections.

After 2011, United Russia secured its position in municipalities while KPRF and especially LDPR lost out. The same cannot be said about Just Russia because it got higher support at the local level in 2012–2015 and 2017 compared to the 2016 State Duma campaign. This can indicate the support of the local elites for Just Russia which allowed it to get higher results at the local level while being deprived of it at the federal level. 2018 saw a new rise of protest activity and it led to more electoral support for opposition parties in the local elections and even brought opposition to the first place in some cities where there was party list voting.

Following the nationwide trend, party competitiveness in 2004–2007 was lower than in the 2003 federal elections and higher than in the 2007 federal elections. Reflecting the 2008–2011 trend, competitiveness in this period at the local level was higher than in the 2007 elections and compared to the 2011 elections it was lower (except for the high competitiveness at the beginning of 2011). Due to the strengthening of United Russia's positions in 2012–2015 competitiveness at the local level fell, and was lower (except for 2013) than in the previous and following federal elections. But in 2018 competitiveness, measured by the JM index was higher at the local level again which can possibly indicate the emergence of a new trend – the growth of competitiveness given the fall in support for United Russia.

The analysis of differences between municipal and federal elections allowed us to identify some important trends.

First, turnout in local elections is always smaller, although there are some exceptions, for example turnout in 2004 compared to the 2003 federal elections and turnout in 2012 compared to the 2016 federal elections).

Second, a comparative analysis of local and federal elections did not allow us to identify the strongest and weakest players in local elections. The results differed significantly from one

electoral period to another. Valid conclusions can only be made about specific time periods. For instance, after the unsuccessful 2011 federal campaign, in 2012–2015 United Russia strengthened its position at the municipal level given also the use of proportional system in all the local elections and almost always got more support in local elections than in federal ones. In the same period, LDPR was the weakest municipal player. For other parties there is no general trend.

Third, the discrepancies in voting for parties at local and federal level were large and this brings us to idea that party system nationalization has not come to an end. However, this situation changed in 2012–2015 when the discrepancies became less significant. This trend continued in 2017 which means that party system nationalization increased. In 2018, owing to protest voting, this trend shifted and the gap between the local and federal level increases again. As a result, the party system is not robust to social risks and party support depends on the changing social environment.

Fourth, the change of party system inflation tells us that party system nationalization is still successful in Russia. Comparing competitiveness at local and national levels, we concluded that inflation was downward. In 2003–2007 the gap between competitiveness at local and federal level was enormous and in 2007–2011 the differences were smaller though sometimes in the local elections it was higher, sometimes lower. In 2012–2016, this trend strengthened and competitiveness at the local level was always lower than at the national level; in 2017 this trend continued. If we compare this result with the previous paper we see that they are almost the same [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017].

Fifth, simultaneous elections did not show the same results as in our previous paper [Turovsky, Sukhova, 2017]. When we compared regional and federal elections we concluded that United Russia gets less support in regional elections while the opposition performs better. However, simultaneous local and national elections did not replicate this trend and showed no specific trend at all. This means also that opposition parties do not perform well on the municipal level and sometimes see this level as unimportant which leads to the concentration of their efforts on federal elections. Some smaller parties prefer not to participate in municipal elections whereas United Russia promotes its candidates at all levels. Thus, in 2016 it performed even better in the local elections than in federal campaigns.

To sum up, we see that the process of party system nationalization is a relative success in Russia given approximately the same results at local and federal levels of elections. This is also reflected by party system inflation, measured by the competitiveness indices. The differences in competitiveness in the local and federal elections decreased in 2007 and it signaled the starting point of more successful party system nationalization. In part this happened because United

Russia strengthened its positions in local elections. The analysis of nationalization by comparing support for each party at local and federal level proved the same but for a later period. From 2012 United Russia secured its positions at the local level and the gap in its support at local and federal level narrowed. However, the 2018 elections proved that reversals are still possible. Nevertheless, party system nationalization has been initiated and for the last 5 years the Russian party system at local and federal levels has become more alike than it was in previous years.

### Appendix 1

Year	Cities with elections carried out with the use of proportional or mixed-member system
2003	-
2004	Krasnoyarsk Krai (Krasnoyarsk)
2005	Krasnoyarsk Krai (Achinsk), Volgograd region (Volzhsky, Kamyshin), Nizhny Novgorod region (Nizhny Novgorod, Dzerzhinsk, Arzamas)
2006	Saratov region (Saratov)
2007	Dagestan (Makhachkala, Kaspiysk), Karachayevo-Cherkesia (Cherkessk), Komi Republic (Syktyvkar), Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok), Moscow region (Khimki)
2008	Dagestan (Khasavyurt), Kabardino-Balkaria (Nal'chik), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Krasnoyarsk), Stavropol' Krai (Stavropol'), Ryazan region (Ryazan'), Tver' region (Tver'), Tula region (Novomoskovsk)
2009	Buryatia (Ulan-Ude), Ingushetia (Magas, Nazran'), North Ossetia (Vladikavkaz), Zabaykalsky Krai (Chita), Primorsky Krai (Ussuriysk), Amur region (Blagoveshchensk), Bryansk region (Bryansk), Volgograd region (Volzhsky, Kamyshin), Moscow region (Dolgoprudny), Sakhalin region (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk), Tver' region (Tver'), Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Naryan-Mar), Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Salekhard, Noyabr'sk)

2010	Dagestan (Makhachkala, Kaspiysk), Tatarstan (Kazan', Nizhnekamsk, Almetyevsk), Udmurtia (Izhevsk), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Achinsk), Ivanovo region (Ivanovo), Nizhny Novgorod region (Nizhny Novgorod, Dzerzhinsk, Arzamas), Orenburg region (Orenburg), Tomsk region (Tomsk), Tambov region (Tambov), Tula region (Tula)
2011	Ingushetia (Magas, Nazran'), Komi Republic (Syktyvkar), Mordovia (Saransk), Chechen Republic (Grozny), Krasnodar Krai (Krasnodar), Stavropol' Krai (Stavropol'), Vladimir region (Vladimir), Moscow region (Khimki)
2012	Bashkortostan (Ufa, Sterlitamak, Salavat, Neftekamsk, Oktyabrsky), Kabardino-Balkaria (Nal'chik), Karachayevo-Cherkesia (Cherkessk), Altai Krai (Barnaul, Biysk, Rubtsovsk), Kamchatka Krai (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Noril'sk), Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Artyom), Belgorod region (Stary Oskol), Vologda region (Cherepovets), Kirov region (Kirov), Kursk region (Kursk, Zheleznogorsk), Moscow region (Kolomna, Domodedovo), Omsk region (Omsk), Pskov region (Pskov), Sverdlovsk region (Nizhny Tagil, Kamensk-Ural'sky, Pervouralsk), Tver' region (Tver'), Yaroslavl' region (Yaroslavl')
2013	Adygeya (Maykop), Dagestan (Khasavyurt, Derbent), Tuva (Kyzyl), Khakasia (Abakan), Yakutia (Yakutsk), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Krasnoyarsk), Arkhangelsk region (Arkhangelsk), Belgorod region (Belgorod), Volgograd region (Volgograd, Volzhsky, Kamyshin), Novgorod region (Veliky Novgorod), Rostov region (Novoshakhtinsk), Ryazan' region (Ryazan'), Samara region (Syzran'), Sverdlovsk region (Ekaterinburg), Tula region (Novomoskovsk), Tumen' region (Tumen'), Ulyanovsk region (Dimitrovgrad)
2014	Kalmykia (Elista), Crimea (Simferopol, Kerch, Yevpatoria), North Ossetia (Vladikavkaz), Primorsky Krai (Ussuriysk), Amur region (Blagoveshchensk), Bryansk region (Bryansk), Irkutsk region (Bratsk), Moscow region (Korolyov, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Dolgoprudny, Zhukovsky), Murmansk region (Murmansk)

2015	Dagestan (Kaspiysk), Ingushetia (Magas, Nazran'), Komi Republic (Syktyvkar), Tatarstan (Nizhnekamsk, Almetyevsk), Udmurtia (Izhevsk), Chuvash Republic (Cheboksary), Krasnodar Krai (Krasnodar), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Achinsk), Stavropol Krai (Yessentuki), Astrakhan region (Astrakhan), Vladimir region (Vladimir), Voronezh region (Voronezh), Ivanovo region (Ivanovo), Kaluga region (Kaluga), Kostroma region (Kostroma), Lipetsk region (Lipetsk), Moscow region (Podol'sk, Elektstal'), Nizhny Novgorod region (Nizhny Novgorod), Novosibirsk region (Novosibirsk), Orenburg region (Orenburg), Oryol region (Oryol), Rostov region (Rostov-on-Don), Sverdlovsk region (Ekaterinburg), Smolensk region (Smolensk), Tambov region (Tambov), Tomsk region (Tomsk, Seversk), Ulyanovsk region (Ulyanovsk)
2016	Bashkortostan (Ufa, Sterlitamak, Salavat, Oktyabrsky), Kabardino-Balkaria (Nal'chik), Karelia (Petrozavodsk), Mordovia (Saransk), Chechen Republic (Grozny), Perm' Krai (Perm'), Stavropol' Krai (Stavropol', Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk, Nevinnomyssk), Kaliningrad region (Kaliningrad), Kemerovo region (Kemerovo), Moscow region (Khimki), Saratov region (Saratov), Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Khanty-Mansiysk)
2017	Karachayevo-Cherkesia (Cherkessk), Altai Krai (Barnaul, Biysk, Rubtsovsk), Kamchatka Krai (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Noril'sk), Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok, Nakhodka), Belgorod region (Stary Oskol), Kirov region (Kirov), Kursk region (Kursk), Omsk region (Omsk), Pskov region (Pskov), Sverdlovsk region (Nizhny Tagil), Tver' region (Tver'), Yaroslavl' region (Yaroslavl')
2018	Adygea (Maykop), Dagestan (Derbent, Khasavyurt), Tuva (Kyzyl), Khakasia (Abakan), Yakutia (Yakutsk), Krasnoyarsk Krai (Krasnoyarsk), Arkhangelsk region (Arkhangelsk), Belgorod region (Belgorod), Volgograd region (Volgograd, Volzhsky, Kamyshin), Kemerovo region (Prokopyevsk), Moscow region (Krasnogorsk), Novgorod region (Veliky Novgorod), Ryazan' region (Ryazan'), Samara region (Togliatti, Syzran), Sverdlovsk region (Ekaterinburg), Tumen' region (Tumen'), Ulyanovsk region (Dimitrovgrad)

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