

Participatory decision making as an innovative context of urban law: expectations of Russian citizens

Svetlana Martynova¹, Svetlana Kasatkina², Larisa Tsymbal¹

¹ Department of Public Governance, Tomsk State University

² Department of History and Philosophy, Cherepovets State University

ABSTRACT

The study presents the results of a sociological study conducted in three cities of Russia in order to identify the needs of citizens in the legal consolidation of the opportunities and results of their participation in urban decision-making. The survey was conducted in 2020. The participatory principle logically implies the identification of the opinion of the society itself – not only about the subjects, but also about the rules of collective discussions. The data collection method used in the study was a mass semi-formalised interview. It was identified that the global trend towards the participation in urban decision-making is quite consistent with the expectations of Russian residents who already have experience of such participation. It has been determined what rights citizens need, what responsibilities of the city authorities are considered necessary to establish, what procedures, in the opinion of the citizens, should be consolidated as mandatory in participatory technologies. The identified expectations are largely consistent with the legal objectives noted in the world scientific literature in the context of the development of the participatory principle. However, the practice of governance in Russia, especially in provincial cities, is still lagging behind the demands of a modern active, competent, and demanding society. The novelty of the study is conditioned by the fact that the scientific literature has been lacking coverage of such an aspect of the legal support of participatory decision-making as the expectations of citizens themselves related to the establishment of rights and procedures.

Keywords: Participatory principle, Urban governance, Post-industrial society, Sociological research.

Corresponding Author:

Svetlana Martynova
Department of Public Governance
Tomsk State University
634050, 36 Lenin Ave., Tomsk, Russian Federation
E-mail: svet.martynova6495@nuos.pro

1. Introduction

Participatory decision-making, which implies the involvement of citizens, constitutes one of the fundamental principles of modern public governance. The researchers emphasise that although governments continue to play an important role, their conventional centrality is no longer a certainty [1]. The state cedes to society some control over the composition and strategic goals of the governing bodies so that citizens can accelerate change [2].

In the world scientific literature, much attention is paid to the development of the participatory principle [3-17]. Researchers note the following positive impact of citizen participation: improvement of the well-being and quality of life of the population [18], increased transparency of the decision-making process and confirmation of its legality, increased knowledge of civil actors [19].

Negotiations and discussions serve as the main communicative tool for implementing the participatory principle [19; 20]. Accordingly, the governing bodies focus on the activation of actors [20; 21], encouraging citizen participation in decision-making [1].

Therewith, the emphasis is placed on the fact that cities demonstrate the best practice of using modern management technologies. Residents of cities are distinguished by their activity: they present their requirements for improving the quality of life in all spheres [22] and are aimed at participating in making appropriate decisions. In particular, citizens participate in the formation of development strategies [23; 24], the creation of public spaces [25], budgeting [26-30], decision-making regarding public services and public control over their quality [31-33]. Citizen participation is recognised as critical in creating a smart city, and cities themselves are defined as “platforms for joint innovation” [34]. In the implementation of the participatory principle, the role of digitalisation is recognised [35; 36]. The dissemination of social technologies that contribute to increased participation of the population in urban governance is understood as the potential for sustainable urban development. The corresponding dimension is highlighted in the United Nations human settlements programme [37].

In Russia, the documents of the federal level for 2014-2019 also set the task of developing decision-making models based on the active participation of civil society in government governance [38]. In particular, it implies the development of a mechanism for the direct participation of citizens in solving issues of the development of the urban environment [39], the introduction of the digital platform "Active Citizen" in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation to involve citizens in participatory governance practices regarding the problems that are urgent for residents [40].

The development of participatory technologies poses conceptual and particular tasks of legal support aimed at developing provisions for consolidating and regulating new public relations between citizens and public authorities. Researchers emphasise that the emergence of new governance motivates the creation of new forms of legal regulation that differ from traditional top-down, command and control systems, and conventional categories of responsibility and separation of powers require rethinking [41].

Participatory nature creates an innovative context for law, including urban law, and it is precisely because of the innovative nature of the tasks that there is still a shortage of their scientific elaboration. In a small corpus of relevant publications, the conceptual tasks include the establishment of a new regulatory framework based on human values [42], which guarantees people the right to participate in decision-making [43] and presupposes the protection of these rights [44]. It is the guarantees of rights that are the key issue, since the “goodwill” of the governing bodies is not enough: such a system easily ceases to function, especially in cases of conflict of interest [45]. The new public administration does not correspond to restrictive regimes that close the possibilities for dialogue and debate [46], careful control [47]. Even empowering citizens to co-govern is more important to well-being than the actual participation itself, according to researchers [18]. This rule should imply that governing bodies “keep their distance”, creating the necessary space for collective decisions [48].

Private rules can be associated with the fact that the legal infrastructure should support the use of new management processes in all cycles [49]. Thus, one of the key stages requires legal confirmation – agreements reached with society [50]. In addition, the very process of deliberation, accompanied by compromises, disputes, conflicts, and unforeseen side effects [25], also requires regulation with public participation. Ensuring such transparency is interpreted as the task of the legislative body [21]. The authors propose to pay attention to raising the awareness of citizens about how their contribution will be taken into account, which proposals will be chosen, which ideas will eventually be implemented. Furthermore, participants should disclose their relationship with the governing bodies (contractor, consultant, employee) to avoid conflicts of interest, and programme developers should exclude abuse of voting systems [51].

Another important special provision is the one concerning the use of modern information and communication technologies. When developing the rules related to the choice of communication channels, the researchers propose to provide an opportunity for a broad circle of citizens to express their opinions not only using Internet technologies, but also by appeals to call centres, the use of interactive solutions for voice recording, etc. [12].

Another important aspect of the legal support of participatory decision-making is the expectations of citizens themselves related to the establishment of rights and procedures. This approach is consistent with the theoretical provisions on the social conditionality of law [52]. However, the authors of this study were unable to find such kind of sociological studies in the scientific literature on the new public administration. Meanwhile, it is considered that the participatory principle logically implies the identification of the opinion of the society itself – not only regarding the subjects, but also the rules of collective discussions. Confirmation of such approach is found in the study by C. Skelcher & J. Torfing, who, considering citizens as stakeholders, see the contradiction between this position and the conventional concept of a citizen as a passive carrier of

legal rights [53]. In this regard, the authors of this study define the purpose of the latter as identification of the needs of citizens in the legal consolidation of the opportunities and results of their participation in co-governance.

2. Materials and methods

A mass semi-formalised interview was chosen as a research method. The tasks involved determining the willingness of citizens to participate in decision-making, identifying the scale of existing social participation, identifying problems that arise in the process of social participation; identifying expectations related to public discourse and the legalisation of relevant rights and procedures; identifying preferred channels of communication to gain insight into opportunities and outcomes for social participation.

The choice of a quantitative method of sociological research is motivated by the task of identifying common attitudes about participation in co-governance. The weakening of formalisation is conditioned by a shift in the overall sociological methodology towards the “subjectively understood”, comprehended by qualitative methods [54-56] due to the motivation of all changes in social life by the central position of an unprecedented multitude of individual actors. Accordingly, a semi-formalised interview allows for a deeper and more adequate understanding of the various attitudes of actors and at the same time preserves a quantitative approach to obtain statistically significant data.

The choice of the interview (and not the questionnaire) was again conditioned by the task of a deeper understanding of the respondents' attitudes, which is possible with personal interactive “face to face” contact between the interviewer and the respondent. Note that semi-formalised interviews are used in studies of urban communities, including in order to identify precisely the scale of social participation and the reasons for refusing it [57-65].

The study was carried out in Russia in the cities of Moscow, Tomsk, and Cherepovets in 2020. The choice of these cities is conditioned by the fact that in these territories the population is proactive and already has experience of participative governance. Thus, Tomsk is mentioned as a leader on the initiative of the population [66-70], Cherepovets – as one of the few Russian cities that demonstrated the practice of broad social participation within the framework of foresight in the preparation of a development strategy [59], Moscow became one of the leaders in the global ranking according to the index of e-government development in cities in terms of attracting citizens to e-participation [71-76].

Meanwhile, these cities have a number of differences, which brings the sample closer to the characteristics of the general population [77-82]. Thus, the cities are located in different and remote from each other federal districts (Central, North-West, Siberian), belong to different types of settlements in terms of administrative importance: the federal centre, the regional centre, the city of regional subordination. Thus, the sample includes provincial cities and the capital. Provincial cities are the opposite in terms of economic and social features. Thus, Tomsk is a post-industrial city, a large scientific and educational centre with a high intellectual capital. Cherepovets, on the contrary, is an industrial mono-city. The sample size for each city was about 400 people. This number of observations in the context of cities provides no more than 5% statistical error with a confidence factor of 0.95. The quota sampling was based on the parameters recorded in the statistical data: gender, age, area of residence in the city. Since the study investigates the public activity of citizens, the sample by age included persons with full civil rights (over 18 years old). Groups of citizens are defined by age: 1) 18-34 years old; 2) 35-59 years old; 3) 60 years and older [83-87].

To systematise data on open questions (about motives, expectations, etc.), the following approach to semantic processing was used: statements that have the same or similar conceptual meaning are generalised. Semantically close statements are listed in the tables as homogeneous concepts in the same line, which corresponds to the cumulative percentage of such responses. Furthermore, statements that differ only in the degree of concretisation of the problem are generalised. These statements are listed in the same line as the concepts included.

3. Results

Analysing the data obtained in the course of the study, the authors note the higher activity of the respondents in provincial cities: they formulated their motives, expectations, and proposals much more often and more willingly than the residents of Moscow. Tomsk citizens particularly distinguished themselves in this respect. In part, such activity is explained by the greater commitment of Tomsk residents to their city (Table 1) [88-91].

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you consider the city in which you live your "lesser motherland"?" (in % of the total number of respondents)

Answer options	Tomsk	Cherepovets	Moscow
Yes	79.9	65.7	64.2
No	16.6	27.8	24.5
Undecided	3.5	6.5	11.3

Apparently, it is even more important that Tomsk is a post-industrial city with high intellectual potential. This circumstance motivates the corresponding features of sociality, including civic engagement.

The survey results indicate the following: the overwhelming majority of citizens believe that city residents should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of answers to the question: "Should city residents be able to participate in decision-making?" (in % of the total number of respondents)

Answer options	Tomsk	Cherepovets	Moscow
Yes	89.7	80.3	71.0
No, let the authorities do it	6	4.9	15.8
Undecided	4.3	14.8	13.2

The majority of respondents also demonstrated their readiness to take a certain part in the development of urban solutions (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of answers to the question "Are you ready to take any part in the development of urban decisions: participate in polls, voting, public discussions, put forward initiatives?" (in % of the total number of respondents)

Answer options	Tomsk	Cherepovets	Moscow
Yes	60.8	69.8	50.4
No	27.6	5.4	13.2
Undecided	11.6	24.8	36.5

The main reasons why citizens refuse social participation are associated with being busy in other affairs and the lack of personal significance of such participation (Table 4). The set of two leading motives and the order of their following completely coincide in different cities. Residents of Moscow and Tomsk also express disbelief in the fact that their opinion will be taken into account in decision-making. The citizens of Cherepovets interpret their unpreparedness as follows: they do not have sufficient information and competence in various issues. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the industrial Cherepovets in terms of social development loses to intellectually advanced territories [92-95].

Table 4. Leading reasons for refusing social participation (open-ended question, in % of the total number of respondents)

Tomsk		Cherepovets		Moscow	
Answer options	%	Answer options	%	Answer options	%
<i>no time: I am busy, I have other plans, I have many other things to do, I have a lot of work, family matters; I have many children, I spend all my free time with them...</i>	8.0	<i>no time: a lot of work, I have no time, I do not have any time for this</i>	2.4	<i>no time: I am busy with grandchildren, there is not enough time even for rest, I have a lot of work, I am busy studying, I am taking care of my health</i>	3.8
<i>I do not need: I am not</i>	7.3	<i>I do not need: I do not</i>	1.9	<i>I do not need: I see no</i>	3.1

interested, there is no point, there is no desire, why should I? I do not need it; I am not active	care, there is no desire, I cannot be bothered, I see no point	point, I do not want, I am not interested
<i>our opinion is not taken into account:</i> the city authorities do not listen to the opinion of the population, they do not hear us, nobody would listen to us; I think that everything has already been decided for us; little depends on Tomsk residents	<i>lack of information and competence:</i> little information, so I cannot make decisions, I am not always competent in various issues	<i>our opinion is not taken into account:</i> there is no hope that the opinion of ordinary citizens will be taken into account; nobody would listen to us; I do not trust the current government
2.8	0.5	1.4

An assessment of the current level of citizen involvement indicated that less than half of citizens have experience in urban decision-making. To the question "Have you already had to participate in a similar way in decision-making concerning the life of the city, municipal services?" 26.4% – 48.7% answered in the affirmative. Notably, the post-industrial territory – in Tomsk – the experience of social participation is recognised by a greater number of residents than in other cities [96].

This experience already allows citizens to see problems in public discussion and implementation of decisions. In Moscow, given the high efficiency in terms of implementing participatory solutions, the citizens, first of all, note communication problems. Such difficulties are associated with the development of mutual agreement. In other cities, the main problem looks different. In Tomsk, where citizens have more experience of social participation, the main problem lies in the very lack of action to resolve issues important for the residents. In Cherepovets, in the foreground is the difficulty with the very possibility of participation due to the lack of available information on public debate (Table 5).

Table 5. Leading problems in public discussion and implementation of decisions that were noted by citizens (open question, in % of the total number of respondents).

Tomsk		Cherepovets		Moscow	
Answer options	%	Answer options	%	Answer options	%
<i>the authorities react badly:</i> inattention to proposals, the authorities do not listen to the wishes of residents; the district administration reacts badly, shifting responsibility; do not keep promises; do not take action, only discuss; solutions only "for show"; it is difficult to get anything from the authorities	6.8	<i>little information available:</i> no (little) information, including we do not know about events, about conducting debate; everything is on the Internet, social networks, but I do not use them; such information is rare	1.6	<i>disagreements:</i> many opinions, disagreements, discrepancies in the discussion – it is difficult to agree; all just for their problems and views	1.6
<i>specific problems are not solved:</i> poor landscaping, poplars are not harvested; malfunctioning hot water supply, poorly repaired roads, few sports facilities, playgrounds; medical care is out of order; they built a polyclinic – they did not build it, etc.	5.8	<i>specific problems are not solved:</i> roads, small settlements, bridges, landscaping, provision of amenities, problems are not resolved until an emergency occurs	1.3	<i>the authorities do not react:</i> the authorities barely listen; the authorities listen to people's opinions, but do not take them into account	1.2

<p><i>individual problems are solved: more projects only for improvement, the problems of residents are not taken into account</i></p>	2.8	<p><i>problems during discussions: there are many who want to speak out, there is not always enough time; lack of dialogue, conversation in a one-way format; difference of opinion and clash of opinions between older and younger generations</i></p>	0.8	<p><i>decisions and actions do not match: they vote for one thing, and do the opposite; decisions made are not always executed as intended; promises do not always coincide with reality</i></p>	1.2
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Communicative problems are also noted by residents of provincial cities: lack of awareness (“not everything is said”), lack of opportunities for contact with representatives of the administration and deputies; critical rather than constructive attitude of citizens; stubbornness of people in their opinions, disagreements, including between older and younger generations; a considerable number of people willing to speak out, for which there is not always enough time; lack of dialogue, directive style on the part of the authorities, difficulties with citizen involvement. However, the significance of these problems is still lower in comparison with the difficulty of participation itself and the lack of the results of the implementation of decisions [97; 98].

Citizens expressed their expectations for public comment. In all cities, expectations are primarily associated with the format of the discussion: both online interactions and mass meetings are preferred (Table 6). Notably, the need of citizens to meet "eye to eye" is only slightly inferior to the desire for remote communication. The citizens advocate transparency of procedures and maximum awareness, clarity of messages, provision of opportunities for participation for everyone individually and for groups of citizens, and the effectiveness of decisions made. Attention is drawn to the high activity of residents of provincial cities in formulating their expectations and a large share of decisions requiring efficiency. These observations are quite correlated with the definition of the problems that the inhabitants of these cities formulated, and the high need to see the result of social participation.

Table 6. Suggestions made by citizens when answering the question "How should a public discussion of city decisions take place so that it suits you perfectly?" (open-ended question, in % of the total number of respondents)

Tomsk		Cherepovets		Moscow	
Answer options	%	Answer options	%	Answer options	%
<p><i>online: disseminate information online, conduct surveys, vote online; special sites and portals are needed, including from the City Duma, to render the site "Our City" on public services; there should be information in social networks</i></p>	32.2	<p><i>online: to cover and discuss everything on the Internet (on official websites, in social networks), vote and attract the population, provide reports there; conduct online broadcasts, online conferences, online discussions with the ability to choose the option of interest and offer alternatives</i></p>	14	<p><i>online: in the form of electronic voting, voting on websites, including city sites, social networks; online conferences, meetings, discussions should be held; online surveys, online testing</i></p>	5.6

<i>hold face-to-face meetings: people need to meet – on the streets, in the yards; hold meetings of deputies, representatives of the administration with residents, meetings are needed, the eyes should be opposite, the administration should be in the city more often</i>	23.1	<i>hold face-to-face meetings: talk with the citizens, meet and discuss live, meetings in microdistricts, the authorities often communicate with the people, in the park on a large platform, conduct everything collectively, hold general meetings, publicly</i>	6.7	<i>hold meetings: everything should be done collectively, massively; hold public meetings, meetings of citizens, general meetings of residents; seminars with residents; meetings with discussions</i>	4.9
<i>information should be everywhere and in abundance: mass media, TV, radio, newspapers, booklets, leaflets, information should be extensive, inform people about everything, listen to the administration more often, reports on TV</i>	9.8	<i>so everyone can participate: universal suffrage, open so that every resident of the city can participate</i>	6.2	<i>accessible, understandable: make it accessible to everyone, easy to understand for ordinary people; concisely and informatively</i>	1.4
<i>effectively: residents must be heard and promises be kept</i>	2.0	<i>more information: campaign, everyone should be aware of the discussions; information on information boards in the entrances, everything should be open in an accessible form</i>	4.6	<i>transparently: everything should be honest and transparent; openly so that there is awareness of everything that is happening; inform through the media</i>	1.2
<i>hold meetings with a provisional agenda, forums, referendums</i>	1.8	<i>discuss on TV: open air on TV, live</i>	1.6	<i>hold meetings with the council</i>	0.7
<i>residents need to be more active</i>	0.5	<i>create initiative groups: in the form of initiative groups on various urban problems, create initiative groups of residents in the microdistrict</i>	0.5	<i>hold public hearings and round tables</i>	0.4
<i>teleconference and call-backs must take place more often</i>	0.3	<i>surveying</i>	0.5	<i>effectively: collecting opinions of residents and fulfilling the wishes of people as accurately as possible</i>	0.2

Residents of cities proposed the statutory consolidation of the following rights, duties, and procedures:
– the right of every citizen to participate in making city decisions on a wide range of issues (through voting or submitting a proposal);

- the corresponding obligation of the city government to involve residents (including through the creation of initiative groups) in decision-making;
- mandatory and prompt implementation of participatory decisions by government authorities with the introduction of liability for non-compliance;
- ensuring transparency of decision-making and implementation using all mass communication channels, multi-channel operational communication with residents;
- holding meetings;
- the establishment of accountability of the city government to citizens and the introduction of public control over the implementation of decisions;
- the use of various methods of motivating residents to social participation (Table 7).

Notably, despite the similarity of proposals in cities, the rating of the significance of certain procedures differs. Thus, residents of provincial cities predominantly insist on consolidating decision-making as a participatory procedure. In Moscow, where city authorities actively engage residents, the implementation of participatory decisions is more significant [99].

Table 7. Suggestions made by citizens when answering the question "What rights and procedures need to be consolidated for citizens so that you are more willing to participate in urban decision-making?" (open-ended question, in % of the total number of respondents)

Tomsk		Cherepovets		Moscow	
Answer options	%	Answer options	%	Answer options	%
<i>make decisions with citizens: we need to be involved, nothing should be decided without us, we need to listen in and ask questions, conduct polls, involve the masses, the right of citizens to participate in the discussion should be exercised, the rights should be consolidated</i>	12.6	<i>everyone's right to participate in decision-making: the right to participate in decisions, each vote and opinion must be considered in decision-making</i>	2.7	<i>execute decisions: the authorities should listen to the opinion of the citizens; carry out the decisions made during the voting; regulate the strict implementation of the decisions taken; the decisions made should be implemented as intended</i>	1.6
<i>authorities must react, implement decisions: the authorities must respond promptly, fine officials for non-compliance; if nothing has been done in half a year – dismiss officials, consolidate it in the document; do not do things just "for show", no to falsification</i>	8.1	<i>record and take into account the proposals of citizens</i>	1.1	<i>make decisions together with citizens: democratic, modern approach; collective urban decision-making</i>	0.5
<i>motivate citizens: interest citizens with something; give extra days off; show how the residents will benefit; give certificates to activists and participants, encourage, organise everything festively, cheerfully, with contests; pay to volunteers; award</i>	7.3	<i>create initiative groups: in the form of initiative groups on various urban problems; create initiative groups of residents in the microdistrict and work with them, create working groups from the population</i>	0.8	<i>with an entertainment programme: after brain work one needs a rest; at the end of the meeting with discussions – an entertainment programme for all ages</i>	0.5

with a badge "Active Tomsk Citizen"				
<i>transparency on the internet</i> : everything should be on the Internet, upload everything to the website: problems and solutions, people should see positive changes, people need a single website for voting and information about the work done; reports and ads on social networks	6.3	<i>transparency</i> : not to hide anything, inform in stages, glass-clear voting, without "deadwood voters" and "turning a blind eye"	0.8	conduct polls 0.2
<i>transparency in mass media</i> : publish the results and reports on TV, cover all problems in the mass media, report on everything	4.0	<i>encouragement</i> : awards, certificates, diplomas, gifts, benefits	0.8	introduce incentives, benefits 0.2
<i>accountability and public oversight</i> : quarterly administration report on implementation, after solving the problem – report; reports on the work performed, on the funds spent, select representatives from the public to verify the work performed; select those responsible for monitoring the solution of the problem	2.5	<i>holding meetings</i> : personal communication is a must, meetings and public hearings should be held	0.5	
<i>fast and multi-channel communication</i> : feedback via SMS, a single telephone number for contacting the authorities, so that there is a quick response; hotline	2.1	the right to put forward a proposal or a draft solution to any problem	0.3	
<i>holding meetings and gatherings</i> : meetings with deputies and the administration, appeal to the masses, close communication between the leadership and citizens	2.0	<i>multichannel communication</i> : hotline phone number, online inquiries	0.3	
consider issues important to citizens	2.0	discuss pressing issues	0.3	

Internet and TV are the preferred channels of information about public discussions in all surveyed cities. A substantial priority of electronic reporting was identified in Tomsk (Table 8).

Table 8. Distribution of answers to the question: "How would you like to receive information about public discussions and the results of the adopted decisions?" (several answers are possible, in % of the total number of respondents)

Answer options	Tomsk	Cherepovets	Moscow
Online, including on websites, in social networks, by e-mail	91.7	53.1	49.6
On TV	47.5	61.2	40.9
From personal meetings with government officials	31.7	32.9	12.6
From newspapers	7.0	27.0	12.0
From leaflets, posters	6.0	16.7	2.6
On the radio	5.8	10.0	18.8
By SMS, phone, WhatsApp	5.5	-	-

4. Discussion

First of all, the authors note some observations consistent with the conclusions of other scientists. Thus, the above-mentioned evidence of the activity of urban residents is confirmed by the example of Russia. The majority of city dwellers are demonstrating the upholding of the right to participate in urban decision-making and the willingness to exercise it. The demotivators of such participation are also in many ways similar to the circumstances noted by scientists from other countries. Thus, V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett & G. Stoker, in the context of the development of participatory principle in Britain, note the presence of a negative attitude towards public authorities and officials, citizens' lack of faith in the fact that decisions taken jointly will be implemented [61]. Among the citizens of Russia there is also a widespread notion that the city government does not want to cooperate with society, the belief that the opinion of citizens will not be taken into account [100-108].

Many of the tasks of legal support for participatory governance, noted in science, find their confirmation in the expectations of Russian citizens. Above all, it is the expectation of the statutory consolidation of the right of any citizen to participate in urban decision-making. The categories of responsibility and separation of powers are also presented in a new way in the opinion of residents of Russian cities: it is proposed to statutorily consolidate responsibility for non-implementation of participatory decisions, establish appropriate public control and accountability of city authorities to citizens.

The need to consolidate the agreements reached with society can be traced, both in science and in the expectations of the inhabitants of Russia. They consider it necessary to record the proposals of citizens and strictly implement the decisions made in the form that was jointly determined. The introduction of provisions establishing transparency in decision-making with public participation, which is noted in the works of scientists, is also reflected in the legal expectations of residents of Russian cities. Citizens demand maximum openness in covering all stages of decision-making and implementation using numerous channels of mass and personal communication, available to those people who do not use the Internet [109-111].

The opinions of Russian citizens are also consistent with the tasks set in science regarding the need for legal regulation of emerging conflicts and disputes in the process of implementing the principle of participation. The communication problems associated with reaching agreement (between citizens and in relations between citizens and the administration), as in the scientific literature, are noted by Russians. Problems of this kind are among the leading in the opinion of residents who have experience of participatory decision-making. Notably, some difficulties in the process of joint decision-making are formulated by Russian citizens in a way similar to that of citizens of other countries: "the administration is talking in a one-sided format, there is no dialogue" (Russia) – "They (representatives of the local government) try and dominate with their own agenda" [112-117].

In the context of the goal and objectives of the sociological study, the following results can be noted: a high willingness to participate in urban decision-making is supported by the accumulated experience. The scale of participation in individual cities reaches about 50% of the citizens involved. It can be assumed that citizens receive such a massive experience, including in the course of the widespread practice of public control over housing services for apartment buildings, public discussion of improvement projects under the federal programme "Comfortable Urban Environment", etc. The accumulated experience allows citizens identify the problems of participatory interaction. The most active are residents of post-industrial cities, who, thanks to

their intellectual potential, also feel competent in the issues discussed. This observation is consistent with scientific theses on the social activity of post-industrial actors [62], the presence of common interests in a wide public domain [118-122].

The main problem in the provincial cities of Russia is the lack of real action on the part of the governing bodies to resolve issues important for residents, the difficulty with the very possibility of participation due to the lack of available information on public discussions. Residents of Moscow, where the effectiveness of the implementation of joint decisions is higher, experience, first of all, communication problems associated with the development of consent. For residents of provincial cities, such problems are also significant.

The expectations associated with public discussions and the legal establishment of the corresponding rights and procedures were discussed above in the context of the legal tasks described in the scientific literature. Furthermore, the improvement of participatory decision-making procedures based on the preferences of citizens is possible with an increase in information, reporting by public authorities, and regular surveys of citizens. In this regard, Internet resources (government and public) are the preferred channels, which is quite consistent with the state tasks of Russia on the development of appropriate digital platforms. Notably, the greatest preference for Internet resources was found in post-industrial territories. However, the need of citizens to meet "eye to eye" is only slightly inferior to the desire for remote communication. And in this respect, conformity is found with the opinions of residents of other countries: citizens of both Russia and Britain put forward the demands of citizens that representatives of public authorities more often visit urban neighbourhoods and meet with residents [122-129].

Residents of Russian cities have proposed to consolidate the following rights, obligations, and procedures as well:

- a) with regard to the rights of citizens to participate in making city decisions, it was emphasised that these rights should cover a wide range of issues: "nothing can be decided without us". Thus, citizen participation is an overarching principle;
- b) city authorities are obliged to involve residents (including through the creation of initiative groups) in decision-making, and the technology for developing a participatory solution should include procedures for motivating residents to social participation both at the expense of material, and, more often, non-material incentives. This expectation of residents of Russian cities is quite consistent with the practice of other countries, where government bodies focus on activating citizens to participate in urban decision-making and encouraging them;
- c) city government bodies are obliged not only to execute jointly adopted decisions, but to do it promptly and prevent falsification in the reporting on execution.

5. Conclusions

The main conclusions of the above study can be formulated as follows: the global trend towards the participatory principle in urban decision-making is quite consistent with the expectations of the residents of Russia, who insist on the right to participate in governance and already have experience of such participation. The potential for broader involvement of society exists: so far, not all citizens who are ready for such interaction are included in the processes of social participation. From the standpoint of citizens, statutory consolidation is necessary in relation to their right to participate in decision-making on a wide range of issues. Accordingly, it is necessary to consolidate the obligation of the city government to make decisions jointly with residents and on issues relevant to them, to respond quickly and implement such decisions. For non-performance or falsification of information, in the opinion of citizens, it is necessary to introduce specific penalties.

To expand participatory practices, urban governments must make efforts to engage citizens and implement decisions, removing barriers to social participation and overcoming residents' scepticism that their views will be taken into account. Mandatory procedures for participatory technologies should be conducting surveys, meetings, publishing all information, operating a single telephone and hotline, sending SMS messages, and public control over the work performed.

In general, the need of citizens for the legal regulation of the participation in urban decision-making can be defined as the creation of a regulatory framework that consolidates the rights of city residents to participate in the making of a wide range of decisions and the responsibility of government bodies to consider public opinion and ensure transparency of procedures. The identified expectations are largely consistent with the legal objectives noted in the world scientific literature in the context of the development of participatory

principle. However, the practice of governance in Russia, especially in provincial cities, is still lagging behind the demands of a modern active, competent and demanding society.

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