Decentralization Processes as an Outstanding Feature of the Postmodern Information Society in the Context of a Post-Pandemic Development

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Abstract: The postmodern information society is characterized by the process of decentralization as a phenomenon. Such a tendency is connected with many factors of our time, but the interest in the region as a separate territory and a particular territorial unit are also factors. Regionalism can be considered in two ways: first, how the organization of society is objectively determined by historical, economic and other factors in a theoretical context; second, as the evolution of certain territories, as an integral subject, it analyzes the process of the regional construction of space. Therefore, regionalism is a phenomenon characterized by the intensification of regional interactions, the strengthening of local cooperation institutions, the creation of associations on a regional basis. Most often, researchers define regionalism as a process of conscious expansion and intensification of relations that is limited to the extraneous interactions between countries related to their geographical proximity, the similarity of living conditions and lifestyle in order to obtain positive effects, by group cooperation, in various spheres of life. On the one hand, regionalism is associated with integration processes, and on the other, regionalism, as a scientific discipline, was born in response to the inability of the existing theory of integration to explain the processes of cooperation outside Europe.

Keywords: *decentralization, information, security, post-pandemic, process.*

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1. Introduction

In a political context, regionalism can be considered to have two meanings: regionalism as a study of regional political space and regionalism as a study of regional factors that determine national policy.

Some researchers, in order to avoid a multi-vector consideration of the phenomenon of regionalism, use the concept of regionalization, which is close in meaning. Regionalization is the process of enhancing territorial differentiation at various levels of the social organization. The concept of “regional organization of society” is based on the recognition of the discreteness of life within society, which is due to the localization of human life and the internal needs of reproduction. While regionalism defines the vision, goals and format of a regional project, regionalization characterizes the processes through which these goals are achieved. Thus, regionalism and regionalization are complementary terms. Regionalization is primarily a process initiated by the authorities and contributes to regional projects, reducing the cost of inter-territorial cooperation.

In accordance with the objectives set for this research, these concepts are used by the authors to characterize political processes worldwide and in Ukraine. In recent years, the definition of regionalization as a consequences of the destruction of the industrial society, the formation of global economy, communication, educational networks and the inability of a centralized state to solve global and local problems has been dominant. So, bureaucratic centralism, which provided for the promotion of innovation from the capital-center to the regional-periphery, suffered bankruptcy.

2. The characteristics of decentralization

Summarizing the various definitions given by researchers, it should be noted that “regionalism” is the process of decentralization of the state systems, the movement for ethnic rights and for the rights over the land. That is, regionalism should be considered as the principle for the territorial organization of socio-political and socio-economic processes. Abramov (2018) and Kapoguzov (2007) introduced the term “global regionalization”, which is interpreted as a tendency and a form of the ever-growing “world capitalization of society” and “the highest stage of development of capitalism”. It is assumed that a new stage in the development of capitalism gives rise to a new form of structuring of the socially territorial world.

Regionalization processes in the context of post-pandemic development take place at the macro level, meso scale and micro level. In

the latter case, regionalization processes take place within nation states. In this case, regionalization, accompanied by economic and ethnocultural differentiation, leads to political stratification and instability. Thus, the authors do not reduce regionalization to differentiation, but consider that differentiation is one of its features. In foreign literature, provided mainly by Canadian researchers, the term “glocalism” is actively used, which focuses on the ever-growing importance of locality as a consequence of globalization.

The region is a kind of link to self-organization and communication for development processes and reproduction processes embodied in closed stable structures. The social system is built and developed on three main factors: certain life functions, with the help of which the corresponding human community lives; the territory in which these functions are carried out, and organizational structures that ensure the implementation of the necessary life functions in this territory and to its given population. Such a system is self-sufficient and self-valuable, it does not require external stimulation or restriction and correlates with similar systems outside the political and legal mechanism, relying on the mechanisms of natural socio-cultural regulation. Socio-territorial differences, due to uneven development, historical factors, especially the division of labor etc., determine the formation of similar signs among the residents of a region, based on common problems. The population of the region is becoming a political community (Lyapkina, 2007).

In this case, the region is identified with its population, as a community of interests. According to this approach, a region is always a territory, but not every territory is a region, since a region is a natural-historical category.

Thus, a localized space of norms arises, the boundaries of which are constantly changing in the framework of political bargaining. E. Harrell noted that “natural” regions do not exist, and their definitions vary depending on the topic that is studied.

The process to determine what a region is, in connection with the nature of the research objectives, is a complex one, since a region is understood as either an economic, a geographic, an administrative unit, a historical and or a cultural area. On the one hand, the region is an integral natural-social formation, within which a certain group of people “used the landscape” and that landscape produces certain modes of activity and stereotypes of behavior. The philosophical interpretation of the region is associated with a special world, which is correlated to its own way of thinking, traditions, worldview and attitude. In this context, a region has a

territorial and socio-historical integrity, possessing a certain degree of internal unity, a sense of community, thanks to which a particular region differs from other parts of the country. The presence of the fundamental foundations of mentality and stable features in the socio-political organization allows us to talk about the existence of an autonomous regional socio-cultural space. On the other hand, the region acts as the result of some kind of division, while all processes associated with it cannot proceed without some coordination and management.

In a systematic study of the issue of regions, the four most widespread paradigm differentiations that contribute to its political cognition are: "region as a quasi-state", "region as a quasi-corporation", "region as a market", "region as a society". Abramov (2018) offers a methodologically open definition, that includes all of the approaches mentioned above. In the author's opinion, a "region" is a general scientific category denoting a concrete historical, territorial and socio-natural integrity, which has the property of resource, technological and ethnocultural self-sufficiency for expanded social growth.

In contrast to the concept of "region", in the context of the post-pandemic development of its definition, the concept of "territory" is poorly structured and is united by criteria like the purpose of education, considering that numerous social groups and economic agents are not connected by formal relations and are not coordinated or guided by their diverging interests. They fight for territorial resources, including imperious ones determines a strive to include competing goals in the territory development strategy. The ones in power make calls for the development of strategic planning, or the marketing of territories, the essence of which is to consolidate the territorial community. The territory is filled with regional content in the process of regionalization, by internal and territorial processes that have the goal of achieving an integrated society and economy, and ensuring political trust and institutional ties. Abramov (2018) believes that the territory becomes a region due to the influence of region-forming factors on all the social qualities of the regional communities, "related to the system of permits and prohibitions" provided by that territory in a self-sufficient settled society.

The content of the concept of "political region" or "regional political space" is formed on the basis of the synthesis and interweaving of concepts such as "region", "social space", "space", as a system of certain indicators (Pollit, 2000; Seabright, 1996). The concept of "region" focuses on the level of political relations, which are reproduced in this article. The political region provides for the formation of a specific political space. Along with

the space of power competence (the space where the rule of law applies, in the narrow sense), it also includes zones of influence and interests for leaders, parties and lobbying groups, that is, the legal space appears as an idea of the very moving borders of what is possible and impossible. A political region is the holistic, spatially organized form of the population's vital activity, managed from a single center of power and united by various and multiple ties.

So, the region is the most widespread level where politics is expressed, where public order democracy is manifested and social aspects of political relations are realized. Of course, we must take into account that this position is the one specific for the beginning of the 2000s. The region was considered as a territorial form of democracy, as well as a sphere for the implementation of social policies (Pestsov, 2009).

Therefore, the region is a synonym for the peripheral nature of politics, in the sense of its provincialism. The region is a metaphor, a collective image that embodies socio-economic phenomena in relation to the peripheral conditions of the functioning of society. In this case, the region is considered in its relations and interrelations with the political center as the core of the political system that governs the periphery. Moreover, in this case, it is not so much about the specific aspects of these relations, but about the methodology and technology of establishing relations. And accordingly, the problems of the "region" should be differentiated depending on the division of political relations into the organizational and social levels. In this case, we have in mind a certain correlation between social and organizational aspects with politics. The region, as a level of political relations, is associated with the social aspects of politics, with the activities of social communities in government and local government (Reason, 2009). Here, the provincial political mentality of the population, the continuity and limited forms of social activity are fully manifested. When a region is meant to be a subject of politics, then its organizational and power aspects, that are related to the functioning and powers of the government and the administration, become dominant. The region, as a subject of politics, must be distinguished from the region as a socio-political community.

Decentralization, in the context of a post-pandemic development of society, includes two areas of activity (if regionalization is a spontaneous process, then decentralization is focused): establishing and maintaining certain relations between the institutions central and regional power poles and forming political communities in the decentralized regions.

The idea of society as a hierarchically organized structure is being formed in the public consciousness of Ukrainian citizens. With respect to

most state entities, federalism and decentralization are interchangeable; federalism in this case is only a legal form of separation of power and property. However, the concepts of “federalism” and “decentralization” are incompatible, since decentralization is a transfer of power within a hierarchically organized system, and classical federalism should rather be understood in the spirit of “non-centralism” of power dissipation (Hollis, 1995).

Noncentralism (literally “decentralization”) is based on the fact that, in the conditions of an open competition of systems and free communication, due to the competition of liberal neighbors, the societies that are not able to support expensive systems of non-economic coercion can move backward (Negrier, 1999; Parker, 1995). The delegation of rights should go from bottom to top. Noncentralism is a “method of political cell division,” which means that the way to go from centralism to noncentralism remains to be discovered. In Ukraine, where the delegation of authority has gone and goes from top to bottom, the concept of “non-centralism” poses the nature of a scientific abstraction, which allows us to study the dialectics of centralization and decentralization with concrete examples (Trofimova, 2010).

Centralization tends to intensify, since there is the option of moving the problem to a higher level as soon as the price lowers, than to turn to the lower level (effective-scale economies). In turn, there is the limit of transaction costs to such a transfer. So, “centralization” and “decentralization” are processes that move in different directions. In this case, the “center” is understood either as the authority in the hierarchical system or the place where any activity is concentrated. Centralization and decentralization are the principles of building and managing any system.

In any federation, integration and disintegration interests were originally laid down. Centralization is immediately laid down in the structure of the system as a natural condition for its creation, but this necessitates further decentralization, through which the system is brought to a working state. Of course, reverse processes can also take place within the framework of constitutional choice. Both of these are not an end in themselves: the task of centralization and decentralization is efficiency. The format of this article does not provide an analysis of the concept of efficiency within the framework of the main political and economic approaches, and it should only be noted that the Ukrainian choice is in tune with European processes in matters of relations between territorial units, so that we can talk about the effectiveness of this redistribution, which is determined by the amount of transaction costs. An exception to the principle of efficiency is the situation

when centralization and decentralization become necessary political tasks. True, in this case, one should take into account the dependence on previous development.

3. Decentralized Management in a Post-Pandemic Development

Decentralized management in the context of a post-pandemic development, even in its most optimal form, is more complex than centralized management, since it is more difficult to maintain a complex system in a stable state. Despite technological progress, such processes retain their significance and informational limitations. In addition, it is technically impossible to justify the proportions of centralization and decentralization. Difficulties are also associated with the fact that in the process of decentralization, multi-level structures are formed: decentralization develops, turning the “subject” into a “sub-center”, which transfers part of the received authority to the roots of these structures (Tikhomirov, 2007).

As a rule, a distinction is made in the scientific literature between the concepts of “decentralization” and “deconcentration” (“functional decentralization”). During decentralization, functions, resources, jurisdictions, property rights are distributed among the subjects of decentralization, which are independent within the limits established by the constitutional framework. Therefore, in principle, decentralization destroys the linear hierarchy (although in Ukraine the system is hierarchical at all levels). In case of deconcentration, the center keeps property rights, and only executive mechanisms are redistributed. In this case, the “monocentric hierarchy” is maintained. Deconcentration is just a form of decentralized governance. In connection with the foregoing, it is also customary to distinguish between political decentralization and managerial decentralization, and it is believed that the potential of the latter is extremely limited (Tokaev, 2012).

Decentralization in the context of a post-pandemic development can only go on as long as the center remains. In addition, the possibility of the subjects of decentralization to return on this scale should remain open, and the costs of a transactional nature should exceed the benefits. If everything is centralized (virtually impossible), then the subjects of decentralization become nominal. Worldwide practice has provided certain boundaries for the centralization and decentralization of functions within management levels. It is based on the rational principle according to which the distribution of responsibilities for the implementation of functions that require spending budget funds is combined with areas of their use.

The thesis on the effectiveness of decentralization does not shy away from the fundamental expediency of centralizing the functions regarding certain budget-provided services. The decentralization of budget system reduces the concentration of budget revenues in the center and the volume of redistributed funds, increases the interest of subjects in expanding their own revenue potential, but does not eliminate the need for budget equalization. It is practically impossible to ensure full compliance between the amount of income and the volume of expenditure obligations. In addition, there is a need to direct the policies of individual territorial authorities towards a nationwide policy, in accordance with national priorities.

The prevailing opinion, which is rather intuitive and is based on a level of public consciousness rather than on science, is to sacrifice economic efficiency in order to maintain national integrity, for which it is necessary to organize comprehensive top-down management. However, the concentration of powers not only complicates innovation to start with (if there is a desire to engage in innovations), but also increases the center's responsibility for local failures (Bird, 2015; Harrel, 1995). There is a strong view according to which it is decentralization that improves management efficiency. This issue is considered in Europe mainly in the context of optimizing the activities of the public sector. The economy of the public sector is considered in the framework of the theory of public choice, that stemmed from a branch of economic sciences that studies the provision of public goods. In the framework of this theory, a sub-territorial unit (the subject of a federation) is an organization that occupies a monopoly position in the market for the production of public goods. The assortment of such benefits should vary depending on the preferences of consumers, that always remain unsatisfied. By “cutting” the territory in a certain way and by transferring decisions regarding the production of certain goods to a single unit allows for costumer demands to be satisfied more accurately and, most important, without attracting additional means of production (Goptareva, 2002). Of course, this approach can only be a theoretical guideline, since it is impossible to endlessly redraw administrative boundaries following a change in social, demographic, and other systems (Cleveland, 2000).

In addition, in the case of decentralized management, the relationship between the taxes that are being paid and the public goods that are received becomes clearer. As a result, the population of specific areas can be more rational in choosing alternatives offered by various regional policies. In turn, politicians that are coming to power begin to cut unreasonable

expenses in the public sector and make additional efforts to administer taxes and expand the basis for collecting taxes.

In general, the theory of public choice emphasizes the rationality of the behavior of voters and politicians, the existence of an effective mechanism for identifying the preferences of consumers of public goods and a mechanism for controlling the officials who decide on their production. It can be argued that the trend towards centralization is associated with the failure of the democratic project in a country, as well as the lack of institutional mechanisms within the political system that can stimulate inter-level interaction of power. Such societies show an obvious inability to form civil structures, which makes democratic control virtually unrealistic. Thus appears another problem of regionalization such societies, and the problem of the possibility that citizens have regionally for collective action is changing and transforming.

Federalism can be interpreted as non-centralism in this case, all political structures larger than communal structures must be justified. Federalism can be understood as an alternative to "autonomy" and "confederalism." In this case, federalism expresses the tendency of centralism, although in opposition to centralism, towards the idea of decentralization. The term "federalism" is understood differently in different languages and countries. For example, in France, it is used as a synonym for separatism, in Germany, as a counterweight to centralization and unitarization. In the United States, the "federalists" have historically defended centralist tendencies, opposing the unlimited autonomy of the states within the free confederation. In England, there is still a centralist understanding of federalism. When the term "federal" was intended to be used in the draft Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s in order to express the independence of EU member states, Britain rejected it because, in the British view, it expressed a desire for centralism. Then we had to resort to the concept of "subsidiarity", which proves, with a certain stretch, that these concepts can act as synonyms (Wurtenberger, 2005).

Federalism can be defined as a regime of political and administrative management or a type of political and legal order for regional administrations. This interpretation of federalism is characteristic of the French tradition, where federalism is placed on the same level as self-government, decentralization and deconcentration. Some Ukrainian authors also support this view, based on the fact that federalism, in its European version, is just a different combination of decentralization and deconcentration.

The same approach is supported by economists. At the same time, "federalism" and the so-called "results-based management" are compared. Federalism presupposes a consistent division of functions with a selective responsibility of power at different levels. "Results management" is a technology of selective use of information. Under federalism, citizens, defining the goals of the state, collectively address some functions to the central government, while other functions are exercised by territorial communities, which provide a form the the goals of the subnational authorities.

4. Conclusions

Studying and summarizing the main approaches to this study on the processes of regionalization, decentralization and federalization of a state, we note that it opens the way to studying the mechanism of the development of Ukraine as a complex of structures and institutions of political power, due to the social, economic and political traditions of its population and territorial units. Decentralization opens up significant prospects for providing local self-government entities with the tools needed to independently solve local issues, in particular, while increasing the role of citizens and their influence on the process of adoption and implementation of decisions, in order to ensure the conditions for social and economic development in society.

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