

LOCAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY AS FACTORS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SAFETY OF THE CONSTITUENT ENTITY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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The paper deals with the influence produced by the factors of local identity and social activity of the population of municipal units forming a part of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation on its sustainability and safety. The novelty of the present study consists in the consideration of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation not only as a political and territorial unit of the federal state, but primarily as a mesosystem which occupies an intermediate position between the federal state system in general and the municipal level. Among the characteristics of this system, the emphasis is laid on the cultural unit as a fundamental element, the basis of the social and political (including federative) processes. To identify the relationship between sustainability and safety of Zabaykalsky Krai as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation and factors of local identity and social activity, these factors have been studied within the municipal units that are part of Zabaykalsky Krai. The main methods of research are survey, correlation analysis, factor analysis and cluster analysis.

Keywords: constituent entity of the federation, sustainability, socio-political safety, local identity, social activity, local government, municipal unit

I. INTRODUCTION

The regional space is often a subject of political interests, and the seeking and the achievement of the balance of interests of the Russian Federation and its constituent entities are necessary conditions for the functioning of a stable federal state. The constituent entity of the Russian Federation is considered by us not only as a political and territorial unit of the federal state, but above all, as a local system having its own institutional, regulatory, cultural, ideological and communicative features. In this perspective, it should be noted that the potential of the constituent entity of the federation is based on the land and people. Each constituent entity of the Russian Federation has its own territorial organization, and comprises the territories of municipal units. Therefore, with regard to the model of sustainability and safety of the constituent entity, the factors of local identity of the population and social activity should be taken into account.

In the context of the formation of a new national safety paradigm and socio-political processes taking place in Russia, the study of the relationship between sustainability and socio-political safety of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation and the above mentioned factors has both theoretical and practical

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significance. Significant differences in the development of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation require a differentiated approach in defining safety priorities in each of the Russian Federation constituent entity on the background of the relevant socio-political processes.

In this article, the authors proceeded from the axiological approach to safety, based on the interpretation of safety as the protection of values owned by the constituent entity (country, society, collective, individual) from the significant damage [1]. The study relied on the works of B. Buzan [2], S. Rokkan and D. Urwin [3].

The studies of local identity and social activity are also presented by numerous scientific papers. Furthermore, various aspects of these concepts can be considered in some cases as special cases of influencing on regional processes, including sustainability and safety. A reasonable assumption is given about the causal role of the identification of communities in social and political life at the local level [4]. The authors offer to discuss the concepts of citizenship and civic identity as central issues in terms of political theory and political psychology [5]. The paper deals with the role of collective identity in social movements [6]. The authors attempted to establish correlations between the attitude of citizens toward the local government and the level of social activity [7; 8; 9].

However, there are not enough fact-finding research works concerning the territorial entity sustainability in relation to the presented factors of local identity and social activity, and this actualizes the problem posed.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To analyze the effectiveness and sustainability of the federal state, researchers use different methodological approaches. The authors believe that the analysis of the sustainability and safety of the Russian Federation constituent entity is impossible without the support of known research works. In order to highlight the sustainability and safety factors in this article, the authors proceeded from the methodological research works on the federal systems proposed by Riker, Wheare, McKay, Watts, Deutsch [10, 11, 12].

The foreign approach to the processes taking place in the federal system is distinguished by the isolation of cultural factors. Based on the information-cybernetic model of K. Deutsch's political system, the authors proceeded from the statement that the sustainability of the constituent entity of a federal state is determined by cultural factors; they ensure a common understanding of the federal system basic concepts, such as democracy, rule of law and human rights. General culture is the basis of the federal state, ensuring the sustainability of the federation [12].

These provisions are valid for assessing the sustainability of the constituent entity of the federation.

This article will be based on the methodological approach that analyzes federalism not only in terms of a formal study of the technology of division of power, but from the perspective of how such an arrangement addresses particularly in multicultural systems the concern of the various groups [13]. Federalism is unifying and has a contractual basis, but it is not a “political deal”, it is also based upon mutual recognition, tolerance, respect, obligation and responsibility [14].

Based on our previous research, the constituent entity of the federation is considered as a mesosystem conditionally divided into five basic subsystems in accordance with the role-playing method of description of processes taking place in the political system:

- Institutional: representing an institutional framework, the structure of the regional authorities in conjunction with the political institutions, agencies and non-governmental organizations operating in the territorial space of the constituent entity of the federation. Sharing the opinion of Burgess, who defines the federation as a particular organizational form including structures, institutions, procedures and methods that differ significantly from other forms of territorial arrangement [15] (Burgess, 2000), the authors believe that this statement is applicable to the constituent entities of a federal state the institutional characteristics of which make it possible to consider them as political decision-making centers;
- Normative: including laws and regulations of the federal center, the legally fixed order of the division of powers between the federal and regional levels of government, regulations of the federal state constituent entity;
- Communicative: which is, on the one hand, a mechanism of the relationship and the division of powers between the federal center and the regions, and on the other hand, a mechanism of interaction between the authorities of the constituent entity of the federation with the municipal units, socio-political organizations and the population;
- Ideological: a system of values, ideological, political and legal conceptions justifying and promoting the values of federalism and making it possible to maintain the integrity of the federation. From this perspective, federalism is often seen as an ideological theory contributing to unification [16];
- Cultural: a fundamental element and the basis for the current political (including federal) processes. Cultural subsystem of the constituent entity of a federal state can be interpreted as an initial condition, making it possible to form some social patterns of self-organization and political participation [17].

Of course, to determine the sustainability and safety of the constituent entity of the federation, it is necessary to give a comprehensive assessment, to formulate an integrated indicator that includes an assessment of these five basic subsystems.

Accordingly, for each subsystem the indicators and variables, which can be subject to measurement, must be identified.

The article deals only with the cultural subsystem, only as the initial condition for the formation of social stereotypes of self-organization and political participation.

The hypothesis of this study is dualistic. On the one hand, the authors assume that the sustainability and safety of the constituent entity of the federation are determined by the local identity and social activity and are directly dependent on them. Therefore, the sustainability and safety growth depends on a high stable level of these factors. If the local identity is formed and the social activity manifestation is medium or high, the degree of sustainability and safety of such territory will be assessed as “medium” or “high”. In this case, all the other subsystems of the constituent entity of a federal state are stable within the federal parameters. And vice versa: if the local identity is not formed and society adopts a passive position, it undermines the foundations of federalism and makes the federal relations fictitious.

On the other hand, the authors can start from the methodological message of G. Livingston, who advanced the hypothesis of the primacy of federal society and the secondariness of relevant state institutions. Thus, there is a direct correlation of local identity and social activity indicators, being themselves determined by sustainability and safety. At the same time, in case of decreasing sustainability and safety, there is a critical level of these parameters, when the decrease of local identity and social activity stops and even takes an opposite direction.

The integrative nature of A. Giddens' structuration theory allows considering the factors of local identity and social activity as “rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action” which “are at the same time the means of system reproduction” – the stability and security of Zabaykalsky Krai as a subject of the Russian Federation [18].

The object of our study is Zabaykalsky Krai as the constituent entity of the Russian Federation having its own administrative-territorial division, which includes the territories of municipal units.

The purpose of the research is to identify the relationship and dependence of the sustainability of the constituent entity of the federal state on such factors as the local identity and social activity of the population.

The main methods of research are: the survey (n=522), the analysis of identified laws (correlation analysis, factor analysis and cluster analysis).

The questionnaire survey was used in the study as the most common method which possesses universality. It allows providing thematic coverage, and at the same time – while keeping mandatory rules – obtaining the reliable information. The survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire using a written handout.

The general totality N was made by the residents of Zabaykalsky Krai aged over 18 years - 881.6 thousand people.

When calculating the sample totality using the sampling calculator [19], it amounted to $n = 384$ respondents with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%. During the data collection, the number of respondents was 522 people, which, in our opinion, strengthens the reliability of the data. In addition, the use of the SPSS package in the course of data collection made it possible to control the adequacy of the sample totality n (parallel application of the sequential calculation strategy for the sample size).

Further, the stratified sampling method was applied. At the first stage the number of the sample totality was divided proportionally to the population size of the municipal districts. At the second stage – zoning within the municipal area based on the main feature – division was performed according to the settlement size and its administrative significance. Within the framework of the selected settlements, a certain number of people were interviewed. In the course of the survey sampling control was carried out.

The study was conducted in two stages. In 2011 there was a pilot study. In 2012-2014 the main stage of data collection took place. Students were involved in data collection.

The methodology for questionnaire designing is set forth in the article [20].

III. RESULTS

The specifics of the political and territorial organization of the federal state necessitate the provision of two interrelated levels of serving and protection of the vital interests and needs of citizens: the Federation level and the level of constituent entity of the federation. Being a fundamental principle and a structural unit of the federal state, the constituent entity of the federation not only implements the federal will through the national safety system, but also creates a regional safety system.

The current trend in the understanding of safety of the state is moving emphasis from foreign threats to internal factors. In terms of considering issues, the ensuring of a secure and sustainable development of the federal state and its constituent entities should not be interpreted in a narrow sense as the elimination of the threat of centrifugal tendencies and separatism and territorial claims of other states.

In this study, the federal sustainability is limited with the framework of political and territorial space of the constituent entity of the federation and interpret it in a narrow sense, as a set of internal characteristics of the political and territorial space of the constituent entity of the federation, contributing to the achievement of the main goal of federalism and federal system: serving the vital interests of its population.

The constituent entity of a federal state is a spatial partial unit of the federal medium-sized system, the political and social potential of which is based on the territory, population, and the federative arrangement of political and territorial space.

As a general rule, when studying federal systems and exploring their constituent entity composition, the authors place particular focus on the institutional and constitutional factors. However, the existence of a system of government agencies and regulatory base of the federal structure is not able to ensure by itself the sustainability and safety.

To ensure the safety and sustainability of a federal state means to prevent threats to the welfare of society and quality of life of its citizens. Federative arrangement of political and territorial space lays the foundation for the sustainability and safety of the state. However, the potential of the safety and sustainability of the Russian Federation is based on the territory and people.

As a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, Zabaykalsky Krai has its territory, population, jurisdiction, powers, the Charter, laws, public authorities, property, budget, official state symbols and other attributes of the state subnational entity. The territory of Zabaykalsky Krai is part of the territory of the Russian Federation. The generally recognized source of power in Zabaykalsky Krai is multinational people living on its territory. The territory of Zabaykalsky Krai comprises territories of municipal units: urban and rural settlements, municipal districts and urban districts.

The municipal level of government in the Russian Federation is recognized as independent: the local government in the Russian Federation is a form of exercise by the people of its power, ensuring the local matters solving by the population itself and through bodies of local self-government. In turn, sustainable and secure development of municipal units is the basis of the sustainability of the constituent entity of a federal state.

Municipal level is the closest level to the people, accumulating their interests. Therefore, to identify the dependencies and relationships of sustainability and safety of Zabaykalsky Krai as the constituent entity of the Russian Federation and factors of local identity and social activity, the authors have conducted a study of these factors within the municipal units making part of Zabaykalsky Krai.

The results of sociological research show a fairly high level of understanding of the goals and challenges facing the public and the government for the society life sustenance, critical evaluation of the available resources, and adequate assessment of the necessary professional and personal qualities of leaders. But at the same time, an inadequate social activity of the local population has been identified. It is characterized by:

- low voter turnout. According to the data provided by the Election Commission of Zabaykalsky Krai on the results of the municipal elections of deputies of the next convocation and the heads of settlements (for 2016), the elections were attended on average by 45-55% of the local population. There are municipal districts and villages, where the turnout is high: more than 70%, and where it is very low: 25-30%;

- low rate of participation in social organizations (37% of respondents are members of a social organization: from the parent committee in the educational institution to a political party);
- insufficient personal initiative and skepticism about the initiative of others.

In terms of a social indicator level rating scale: low, medium, high, one can speak of a “medium” level of social activity of the population.

The secondary analysis of previous studies [21; 22] confirms the results obtained by the authors. Delegitimization of the idea of democratic participation in the eyes of Russian community remains a stable trend. “A steady skepticism about the vast majority of forms and channels of political participation is manifested, except for participation in elections.” And this concerns both the real involvement of people in the political process, and verbal assessment of the possibilities to influence the power by population” [22].

Identification of residents with their places of residence, i.e. local identity, mediates willingness/unwillingness to participate in solving local problems. If local identity is regarded as power of local relations, these ties are determined by the size of the territory, population density, significance of the local origins (some studies justify them by means of local patriotism strength), local participation and local political alienation, segregation of community into groups.

To measure the level of the local identity of municipal unities, the authors used the average values of the responses to questions about the prospects of development of the municipal unit and about the desire of respondents to have this place for living of their children and grandchildren.

21.1% of respondents are sure that there are good prospects for the development of their municipal unit, 42.3% feel optimistic about the future, 31.0% are skeptical about the prospects for development and 1.4% of respondents see only dismal prospects (Fig. 1).

Respondents who would like their children and grandchildren to live in the place no matter what are 8.5%; those who would not like their children and grandchildren to live in their small motherland no matter what, are 31.0%; 16.9% of inhabitants would like their children and grandchildren to live in the place upon creation of proper conditions; 40.8% were undecided.

A definite correlation has been established between the indicators of local identity and evaluation of the activities of local administrations (Fig.2).

Local identity is influenced by such characteristics as age (Pearson correlation $r=-0.210$, $p=0.0001$), social status ($r=-0.130$, $p=0.003$) and education level ($r=0.105$, $p=0.017$).

In addition, to assess the local identity, the respondents' answers about the attitude toward the neighbors as “friends” or “foes”, the definition of the local community as “us” or “them” have been analyzed. Pearson correlation of these variables is 0.157 with two-tailed value $p=0.0001$.

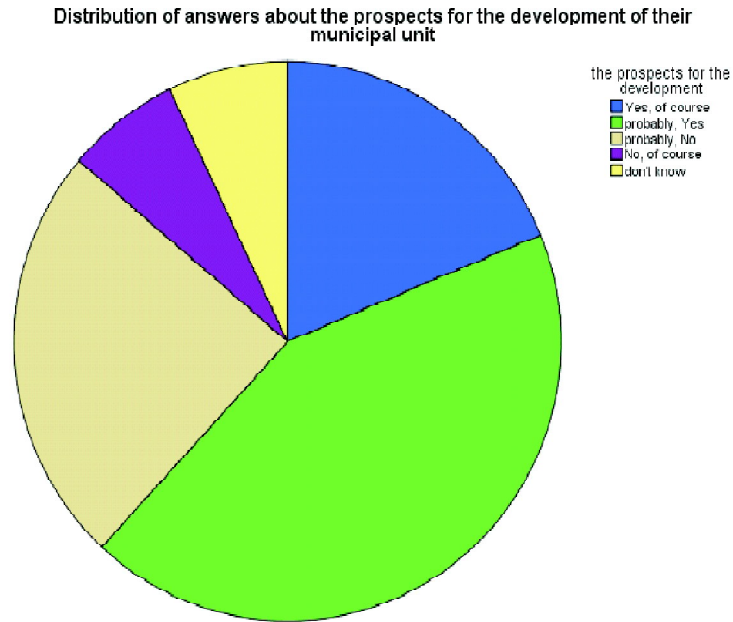


Figure 1: Distribution of answers about the prospects for the municipal unit development

A correlation between the indicators of local identity and evaluation of the activities of local administrations.

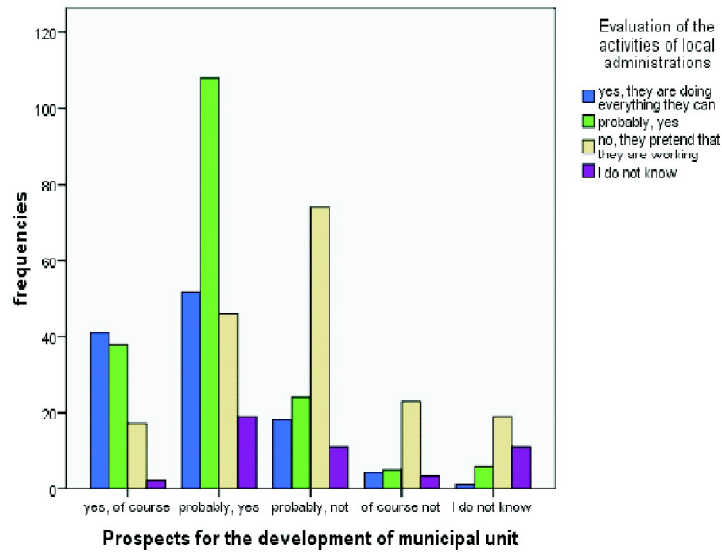


Figure 2: A correlation between the local identity indicators and evaluation of the local administrations' activities

The results of the responses received can be interpreted as an indicator of identity with local community formed in residents of municipal units. However, the formation level is uneven.

As a result of the data analysis, three groups were identified in the composition of population of municipal units that differ in the level of social activity and local identity. The segregation was based on the three factors: the variables selected and combined as a result of factor analysis of an array of questions presented in the questionnaire. In our opinion, the obtained factors can be interpreted as elements of the cultural subsystem, forming certain social stereotypes of self-organization and political participation.

The first factor, being defined as the potential of social activity, combined questions about willingness to work in local government, willingness to take the initiative and take responsibility, to assess one’s own knowledge and necessary skills.

The second factor included questions about the frequency of communication with neighbors, sufficient assistance rendered by members of the community, the readiness and the ability to respond to calls for assistance, the nature of relations in the settlement. This factor was defined as the level of local identity.

The third factor included questions on the evaluation of local governments, the prospects for the development of settlement and was defined as the evaluation of the local authorities.

Determination of factors was performed using the analysis by means of principal components, rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is 0.762 at a statistical significance of 0.0001, which allows applying the factors for differentiation.

Further observations were clustered by K-means, and three clusters were obtained (see Table I).

Description of clusters has been made with account to the fact the table presents rotated components.

TABLE I: OBTAINED CLUSTERS WITH FINAL CENTERS

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Clusters</i>		
	<i>1 cluster</i>	<i>2 cluster</i>	<i>3 cluster</i>
Social activity potential	-1.132++	0.733-	0.344-
Local identity	-0.301+	-0.709+	1.123- -
Evaluation of local authorities	0.013+ -	-0.226+	0.244-

The first cluster (171 persons) includes people with high social activity potential, i.e. willing to work in local government “right now”, ready to take the initiative and to take responsibility in decision making. The identification rate in this group is average (neighbors, fellow villagers). People are willing to live and work in the

settlement, would like their children and grandchildren to live there, but... upon creation of the appropriate conditions. When evaluating the activities of local authorities, this group is cautious: probably, most likely, the local authorities manage their powers.

The second cluster (187 people) is characterized by low potential of social activity, the average (but higher than in the first cluster) degree of identification (family, neighbors) and “satisfactory” evaluation of local authorities: “they are trying to do their best”.

The third cluster (164 people) has united people with a low potential of social activity, quite a low degree of identification (“every man for himself”, “I rarely communicate with my neighbors”). When evaluating the local authorities, this group is of the opinion that “the officials pretend to be working”, that the prospects for the development are dark and “the authorities cannot do much”.

Analysis of variance of segregated groups has revealed statistically significant differences between the groups, so one can talk about the presence of three clusters in the population of municipal units of Zabaykalsky Krai, which differ from each other by both the level of social activity and the level of local identity.

The results suggest the following conclusions, confirming the hypothesis advanced:

1. The characteristics and level of formation of local identity and social activity (or inactivity) of the population determine the formation of local political space in the political and territorial limits of municipal units and region (the constituent entity of a federal state) as a whole. Only in case of controlled process of corresponding “horizontal” and “vertical” identification and “identification network”, the constituent entity of the federation and, accordingly, the federation itself are capable to maintain their integrity and sustainable development.
2. The characteristics and level of formation of local identity and social activity (or inactivity) of the population make it possible to segregate the population of municipal units into groups. To ensure sustainability and safety, in the development of socio-economic policy of the region, essential requirements are the consideration of social expectations of each of these groups, enhancement of “positive” characteristics and smoothing of “negative” ones through the taking effective management decisions.
3. The results have revealed the presence of the potential of the local population of municipal units to effectively mobilize its social activity. Indeed, it can be assumed that an important prerequisite strengthening the relations of the local community, i. e. municipal unit, is the quality of the work of the authorities, not only local but also regional. The work of local politicians and authorities in accordance with social expectations will increase the likelihood of strengthening of social ties of residents with

their homeland, not only as their place of birth, but also as the main space of their civil activities.

4. The results of the analysis suggest that the cultural subsystem is the initial condition for the formation of social stereotypes of self-organization and political participation.

IV. DISCUSSION

According to some authors [23], the term “identity” is used not just actively, but even excessively. This has an impact on the language of social analysis, and, of course, on its qualitative content, as “social analysis involves the use of relatively unambiguous categories” [24]. We agree with the authors that the concept of “identity” is still too vague, and it torn between “strong” and “weak” notions, between essentialists’ connotations and definitions of constructivists.

But they also recognize “ambiguity and the irreplaceability” of “identity” category in certain practical contexts. It is in terms of practical context, that the term “identity” was used in this study.

As a category of practice, identity is used in certain circumstances to determine the purpose of the existence and activities of the people, determining their similarity and difference comparing to the others [25; 26]. In our study the emphasis is laid on the understanding of identity as a tool for proper organizing and justifying collective actions [6]. For this purpose, it is necessary to convince the community to achieve self-understanding, to realize their own interests and understand that the people (the community) are identical with each other, but at the same time, they are different from the others. Thus, for the operationalization of local identity, the authors resort to the concept of “identity” as a category of social and human sciences, which is used to describe individuals and groups as relatively stable and “identical to themselves” unities.

To determine the local identity, the following characteristics were considered.

Local identity is not a property inherent in the individual, but a relationship. It can be configured, transformed, fixed and redefined only as a result of social interaction. But everyone is aware that the local identity as a group one exists only as a metaphor.

Furthermore, local identity can be regarded as a “social” level in the structure of identity, i.e. as the result of the identification, the identification of the individual with the expectations and standards of his social environment. Local identity involves self-identification with a specific territorial and cultural community.

Thus, in our research the local identity is understood, first of all, as a result of social activity, which serves to identify procedural and interactive development of that kind of self-understanding, solidarity and group cohesion, which makes any

collective action possible. Second, it is understood as a result determined by social activity, and at the same time, as the foundation or basis determining next actions.

Identity, as multiple and multilevel phenomenon is both the key parameter and factor of the formation of political spaces of different levels (local, regional, national, macro-regional and global). As noted by I. L. Prokhorenko, the configuration of political spaces establishes common values, or, vice-versa, under the influence of differences of values these political spaces can disintegrate. Core values are the prerequisite for the formation of a political space, or the orienting point, an important element of the dynamics of the political space [27].

Federal sustainability of the constituent entity of the federation is the ability of the political and territorial entity to exist within a particular federal system. Sustainable development of the constituent entity of the federation is also multidimensional, including: socio-demographic development, industrial development, cultural and educational development, infrastructure development, civil society development, legal and political institutions development, etc.

Determination of the level of federal sustainability is associated with great difficulties and relativity of the application of the theory of sustainability to the federal system. The very theory of sustainable development still contains many unresolved issues, among which are:

- 1) absence of a unified approach to the understanding of the term “sustainable development”;
- 2) absence of an established, generally recognized systematization of conceptual apparatus of the sustainable development theory;
- 3) variety of views on the methods of sustainable development (strong economic growth, peaceful sustainable development or stable equilibrium state);
- 4) difficulties in the quantitative assessment of the sustainable development of the system;
- 5) absence of a generally recognized mechanism for achieving sustainable development of the system;
- 6) ignoring the relationship and interaction of various aspects of sustainable development of the territory and possibility of safety provision [28].

Also, the indicators of the federal sustainability of the constituent entity of the federation can be divided into quantitative and qualitative ones. Quantitative indicators will be the size of territory, population, national and religious composition, composition of municipal units (smaller territorial units) within the territory of the constituent entity.

Qualitative indicators of federal sustainability are associated with both the established procedures of development and taking of political decisions and with the effective functioning of the basic institutions of federalism and government of

the center and constituent entities. Ultimately, the qualitative indicators of federal sustainability can be not only political, but also economic, social, cultural, etc. Composition of included municipalities may be considered as a qualitative indicator, if it is not their number that is analyzed, but the specificity of their segregation (segmenting principle) or the level of socio-economic development.

Despite the fact that the federalism is attractive to researchers, common indicators of federal sustainability have not been identified and “essential characteristics”, “indicators”, “parameters” and “factors” have not been terminologically demarcated.

This terminological ambiguity has led to quite a diverse interpretation by modern federalism researchers of federal sustainability factors. Thus, A. Przeworski says that the key to the development of a stable political system is the ability of political institutions to “adequately overcome the crises in those cases where the purposes of the main political actors have not yet been fully accomplished” [29].

J. Lemko indicates that there is only one significant factor of the stability of the political system of federal states: the centralization of power: “centralization is strongly and positively correlated with stability” [30]. Given that the work was written in 1977, it can be said that this refers more to sustainability than stability.

In [31] the researchers calculate factors of federal stability on the basis of the constructed mathematical models of distribution of benefits: in the case of a monistic system, strong constituent entities of federation have little incentive to maintain the federal agreement. The USSR can be mentioned as an example of a monistic, one-party, non-pluralistic system.

Thus, in the analyzed studies and methodology there are prerequisites for consideration of local identity and social activity as cornerstones of sustainability of a certain political and territorial space (including the constituent entity of the federation).

To ensure the federal sustainability of the constituent entity, the local people should identify themselves with the local and regional political space, take a proactive stance in addressing the social and political issues, as it is the priorities, interests and social activity of the population (local, regional community) that create basic conditions for the strength of the political and institutional bases of federalism and socio-political safety.

The authors hope that the presented results of the study will complement and increase the already existing knowledge in the field of political science, theory and practice of federal construction and management sociology.

V. CONCLUSION

The article demonstrates the influence of local identity and social activity factors on the sustainability of the constituent entity of the federal state. Identity is the basis and the factor of the formation of sustainability of political space, including regional. Depending on the level of identity and social activity of the population of

both the constituent entity of the federation as a whole and local spaces, entered in its composition (municipal unities), there is an appropriate level formed of federal sustainability of the constituent entity of the federation, its ability and capacity to ensure the safety and the serving of the vital interests of the population.

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