ICEST 2021
II International Conference on Economic and Social Trends for Sustainability of Modern Society

TECHNOLOGIES OF SETTLEMENT OF THE PROTEST: KUSHTAU CASE

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Abstract

In today's world, most protests with objective or subjective causes cannot be resolved through administrative directives. Protest cases of a new type are characterized by variability of development and require a meaningful and responsible approach in their resolution, excluding physical suppression of mass actions and based on consensus and mediation. The article explores the strategy of protest behavior, including communications, institutions of influence and techniques of manipulation. Particular scientific attention is paid to the role of digital technologies in resolving social contradictions peacefully. Measures are proposed that can reduce tension in public relations and the mass nature of street actions, as well as increase the responsibility of people through digital dialogue platforms. The purpose of the study is to analyze digital, expert and mass technologies for resolving protests, evaluate their applicability and effectiveness using the example of a specific case (environmental protest in the Republic of Bashkortostan "Kushtau"). It is concluded that digital activism and the involvement of the interested public in the discussion of controversial issues can reduce the level of conflict and prevent protest. The disclosure of the presented provisions was facilitated by the use of institutional, behavioural, systemic and communication approaches used in the study of socio-political phenomena and processes. The scientific and practical significance of the study lies in the modern technology of institutions and conflict resolution practices necessary for understanding the current protests in the world.

Keywords: Protest, settlement, digital activism, public interest, technology

1. Introduction

Resolving the protest and resolving the conflict peacefully requires a detailed analysis of the situation. Public protest of the 21st century, as a rule, is based on three factors: stressor (motive or root cause), incident (case) and information stuffing. If we proceed from this algorithm, then the development of protest should be considered as a negative perception and reaction of society, subject to stressors on the one hand, and on the other, manipulation by sources of information, to specific events or processes. In the absence of an adequate solution to the problem, the incident becomes the root cause of the conflict in any potentially controversial situation that tends to grow and develop according to the law of escalation. It should be noted that in addition to activists who went outside in connection with a specific problem and experiencing a difficult life situation ("forced protesters"), there are specific groups of protesters. In particular, those who use street events and flash mobs as a source of income ("professional protesters") are ready to join any project to receive additional emotions and record their presence on it through cameras and mobile gadgets ("selfie protesters") or want to be aware of recent events and trends ("hipster protesters"). The uniqueness of these subcultures is that they lack direct motives for participating in protests. But this, unfortunately, does not reduce the severity of the problem. Modern protests, modified by technologies and tools, actualize new problems for scientists and researchers related to the sustainable development of society and peaceful ways of resolving contradictions in digital reality.

2. Problem Statement

To begin with, it is necessary to define the basic terminology used in this study, namely, to expand the concepts of "resolution of protest" and "settlement of protest," which are not identical. Protest settlement refers to the achievement of acceptable agreements between the conflicting parties, which gives the conflict constructiveness and brings its participants to possible forms of cooperation, that is, allows for the achievement of a certain understanding between the parties. The resolution of protest (Protest resolution) implies the elimination of the causes of the conflict situation, achieved in the process of mutual analysis and the construction of new relationships. Resolving the protest eliminates the problem, but due to the difficulty of achieving it is not always seen as possible. Therefore, the protest analysis involves choosing the right strategy to assess the prospects for using the selected tools. The settlement of the protest is focused on identifying communications, institutions of influence and techniques of manipulation that form the basis of protest behaviour.

Communications are verbal (performances from the stands, attracting public and famous figures to their side), visual (posters, T-shirts and other attributes for visualizing the protest), symbolic (applying symbols, specific images, cartoons on visual objects), emotional (promoting slogans, poems). Protests in the 21st century are increasingly clearly acquiring the features of reality shows and "live performances" using digital technologies to illuminate its actions. In some cases, anti-rallies are held to counterbalance protests, in which all types of communications are also used. The main goal is to form an anti-protest agenda, support supporters of anti-protest sentiments, and legitimize decisions made. A possible risk is the escalation of the conflict, the strengthening of contradictions between the parties, the transition to a violent confrontation.

So, for example, in August 2020, mass rallies were held in Minsk on Independence Square in support of the current President of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko. As the Belarusian leader A.G. Lukashenko himself notes that he is not a supporter of rallies, and it is not his fault that he had to call them to the square (as cited in Polyakov, 2020). Analysis of the institutional influence on protests ("institutional strengthening") makes it possible not to lose sight of the subjects of protest activity in specific space-time coordinates (Yerznkyan, 2017). Institutions of influence are usually distinguished between public, human rights and structural. Public institutions of influence are protest leaders, well-known public figures of politics, sports, culture, art, supporting protests. Human rights institutions of influence - human rights organizations, NGOs, including international, defending the interests of protesters. Structural institutions of influence - organizations, including foreign ones, representing the interests of protest leaders (initiative groups).

As Timiryaev (2021) notes:

> Civilian institutions can have a positive influence on the organization of security inside the country, they can also become a factor for destabilizing political security. That is why it is important to clarify the normative and legal regulation of the process of interaction between civil society institutions and the current government. It is necessary to create a legal field for joint activities and solve managerial problems in this area. (p. 102)

When resolving protests peacefully, it is important to understand with what group of influence and how to conduct negotiating practice. The goals of institutions of influence may be different. It is also necessary to calculate the risks of participating in protests of international organizations, including without causing reputational damage to participants in the negotiation process.

The consideration of manipulative technologies and techniques deserves special scientific attention. Researchers Anisimova and Chubai (2021) ask about the admissibility of using manipulation in different situations and introduce a special criterion for this (motivated use of manipulation).

The main techniques of manipulation include: persuasion, inspiration, emotional charging, contrasting "We are Them," imitation, laying the blame. The initiators and organizers of protests use psychological tactics to influence the masses and, through communication, try to achieve specific goals (destabilizing the situation, drawing attention to the action, bargaining).

All well-known manipulative technologies can be divided into four groups.

Charismatic - based on the personal charisma of the manipulator and his associates. Manipulation is based on influence through straightforward ways of perceiving charisma and sympathy (speech, appearance, confidence, performance tactics).

Diplomatic - technologies built on the diplomatic techniques of influencing the manipulator on the public and individual consciousness of others. The manipulator, through trust, reverence and openness, tries to achieve its own interests and goals.

Logical - manipulations using an informational, logical approach. The manipulator tries to influence people through unstructured, incomplete or redundant information, builds its own logical chain through incorrect arguments.

Expert - the manipulator attracts real or imaginary experts to substantiate his position and arguments.

Opposition. You need to share the attitude to what is happening and the attitude to the manipulator. To determine the true motives that encourage the manipulator to influence others. It is necessary to soberly evaluate the facts, not to give what is desired as real, to possess the completeness of information, not to be submitted for provocation. If possible, understand to whom the benefit of this action and what goals are pursued by interested people.

According to scientists Rodionov and Volkova (2019), the principle of political elitism is at the heart of effective counteracting crisis phenomena and manipulation, when power through political competition and technological progress ensures a balance in society.

The heterogeneity of protests, as well as the complexity and unpredictability of the course in real conditions, create certain barriers in the development of universal technologies for their settlement and resolution. All known directions in this area are relatively new and are formed at the intersection of theory, practice and experience in resolving social contradictions: digital, mass and expert.

In the expert-analytical environment, the opinion is popular that digital technologies can mobilize protesters, radicalize the agenda and bring them to street actions. According to researcher Melnik (2015), "tactical media appeared in the new information and communication environment aimed at organizing various groups and communities to perform destructive actions in order to solve operational problems" (p. 83).

At the same time, there is another approach, according to which digitalization reduces the mass of street protests. This is explained by the fact that in the online era, when communication on the Internet allows you to get acquainted with a wide variety of positions on an exciting topic, the value of street action for a noticeable majority of people is noticeably reduced due to its impracticality. The exception, of course, is specific groups ("professional protesters," "selfie protesters," "hipster protesters"), who are interesting for any possible protest agenda.

Modern social messengers allow you to establish communication with feedback (unlike traditional media), search through the network for your supporters, allies, and thereby form a comfortable environment to indicate your own interests (without street demonstrations).

If, for example, to compare the 90s in the CIS countries, then people went to mass street events (not only protests) to make sure that positions coincided with others. Now there is no such need and many official and even unofficial events are broadcast in open access through various network channels.

Another thing is that specially trained "provocateurs," "ideologists," who attempt to manipulate the audience, also operate in the network space and this, in our opinion, is already a big problem.

It is worth noting that in the network era we are approaching the global digitalization of humanity. So according to the Global Digital report for 2019, the absolute majority of the world's population (57%) use digital technologies. This is about 4.4 billion people. Of these, 3.7 billion people are active users of the Internet and social messengers (Kemp, 2019).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the network space becomes a platform for promoting ideas and organizing various events. Digital activism should therefore not be seen as a negative phenomenon alone. There is a real opportunity to use digital technologies, including to resolve contradictions peacefully.

Mass technology refers to the involvement of the interested public and/or public participation in the settlement, resolution of social contradictions that led to protest actions. Note that the concept of "interested public" is narrower than the concept of "public participation."

The interested public includes, as a rule, the local community - individual individuals and groups united on the basis of administrative-territorial, cultural, value principles (local residents, local and regional media, local authorities and administrations, local enterprises, local non-profit organizations and others).

Public participation is not limited to the local community and involves the inclusion of other stakeholders in the solution. For example, if we are talking about labor protest, then such interests may be potential investors from other regions, central media or federal bodies that monitor and monitor the implementation of legislation throughout the state.

The involvement of the interested public and public participation in the settlement (resolution) of disputed issues can reduce the level of conflict and prevent protest.

The main communication is public interaction with decision-making groups.

The main goal is to develop the most effective solution and previously identify potential conflicts that provoke protest.

One can also agree with the opinion of expert Smoleva (2020):

The main problem of realizing the potential of civic participation in municipal administration is the unformed motivation of people to public activity. Alienation manifests itself both at the emotional level (indifference, fatigue) and at the substantive level: disbelief in success, misunderstanding of ideas about common interest, distrust of both authorities and social activists. To this is added the lack of experience in joint actions, building agreements, defining goals and means to achieve them. Despite this, in the practice of urban planning and construction, the need for joint design is growing. (Smoleva, 2020, p. 76)

Expert technologies are technologies in which highly qualified specialists in the necessary field are involved in making a decision. To resolve protests, the most significant technologies are the following: expert determination, counseling, mediation. The purpose of the examination is to identify the causes of the conflict and the interests of the involved groups; assessment of the situation; verification of the facts set forth in the appeal of the protesters; finding ways to neutralize a conflict situation.

Expert technologies are generally used in the following cases:

- for a competent opinion on the current situation, which is known to this expert from the experience of work or research conducted by him, and which is not possible to obtain in another way;
- to forecast short, medium or long term events where data may be insufficient or not available;
- to quantify and qualitatively assess the parameters of the conflict situation, the measurement of which is impossible to achieve through other technologies;
- to develop a recommendation for resolving or resolving a conflict situation.

3. Research Questions

The subject of this study are technologies for resolving protests in Kushtau (Polyakov, 2020). This case was an example of the transformation of the regional environmental action into a social protest, which was evaluated at the federal level, with its target audience and peculiarities of course.

3.1. Stages of protest deployment in Kushtau

Mount Kushtau became the epicenter of protest after in August 2020, the Bashkir Soda Company enterprise began felling forests for exploration on the mountain. In response, Shihan defenders organized several protests, demanding to stop work.

The initiators of geological exploration in the Kushtau region associated their decision, including with the economic losses of the region and a significant reduction in jobs at the enterprise (about 10 thousand people). Participants in the protests, in turn, argued that shikhans are unique geological and geomorphological natural monuments (Baimov, 2018). The flash mob in defense of Kushtau acquired a spontaneous character after an open confrontation between the soda company and environmental activists. The first attempted to clear the foot of the mountain for further work. This collision did not solve the problem, but aggravated the situation. Subsequently, the Head of the Republic of Bashkortostan R.F. Khabirov arrived at the scene of the conflict, who advocated a negotiated solution to the current problem. On August 21, 2020, a meeting of the delegation of eco-activists with the leadership of the republic took place. Negotiations, which began with a manifesto of protesters, led to a review of Kushtau's status. After a short pause and a likely consultation with all interested persons of the issue, the mountain received the status of a specially protected area.

3.2. Communications, manipulation and technology in protest actions

The Kushtau protest case demonstrated the use of various communications by participants in the actions. Moreover, protesters used both verbal and visual (speech by speakers from among eco-activists, attracting public figures to their side: M. Galkin, Yu. Shevchuk, L. Utyasheva, A. Galimov and others), and symbolic-emotional (slogans about the sacrality of the mountain) communication tools.

Defenders of the interests of the soda company held anti-rallies in support of the decisions made, trying to focus public attention on the economic losses of employees of the enterprise and the region as a whole. The institutions of influence in the protest under investigation were represented by a wide variety of actors. For example, protesters were able to expand their target audience by attracting both opposition-minded forces and the general public far from politics. In addition, the coverage of protests on the Internet constantly fueled public interest in the current event. To strengthen the social effect, protesters used various logical and expert techniques, referred to studies about Shikhans and their natural value for Bashkortostan and Russia as a whole. Digital, expert and mass technologies were used to resolve the protest, and subsequently resolve the conflict in Kushtau. Digital activism and the involvement of the interested public in the discussion of controversial issues allowed to reduce the level of conflict and prevent the escalation of protest.

Also promising is the comprehensive use of digital platforms to discuss such problems: digital self-government (to involve the population in solving local and regional issues), network voting and monitoring to identify current problems and cut public opinion, promoting digital culture and ethics (as alternatives to protests in the virtual space), digital activism (digital volunteers, digital social assistance centers, digital mediators).

In general, the indicated measures are designed to reduce tension in public relations and the mass nature of street actions, as well as increase the responsibility of people through digital technologies and communications. Since 2018, the Incident Management monitoring system has been operating in a number of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, which allows you to monitor the reaction of regional authorities to public appeals. The system monitors appeals on social networks, according to keywords, (VKontakte, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Odnoklassniki) and sends them to the regional administrator. Later they are filtered by profiles at the level of regional ministries and municipalities. In the Republic of Bashkortostan, this system has been operating since October 15, 2018. If we consider mass technologies on the example of protests in Kushtau, then it is necessary to pay attention to two levels of public involvement in the settlement (resolution) of controversial issues: indirect participation (cutting public opinion, delegation of authority and dissemination of information on relevant decisions) and direct participation (discussion, cooperation, dialogue platforms). Both levels were represented in their own way in the Kushtau protest case. At the same time, the basic principles on which public participation in the resolution of public conflicts should be built are trust, transparency, flexibility, high professionalism and feedback. Only by ensuring a full cycle of public inclusion in the problem can serious results be achieved: identifying the stakeholders of the problem and their opinions, discussing, making acceptable decisions, informing the general public about the decisions made, and feedback.

In May 2020, the Agency for Strategic Initiatives and the Ministry of Construction and Housing and Communal Services of the Russian Federation developed a standard for involving the public in solving issues of urban environment and infrastructure development. Such experience can also be useful in solving environmental problems. Expert technology is also a priority in resolving protests. Case Kushtau revealed the significance of counseling and mediation.

Data collection was important for resolving the protest.

- Regulations and available documentation necessary for the analysis of the conflict situation. Determination of the legal side of the issue.
- Analysis of the interests of the local community and other protesters recorded in the conflict zone. Understanding the parties to the conflict, their interests and objectives.
- Identification of other parties whose interests may be affected in a conflict situation.
- Collection of statistical, sociological and other data related to the conflict situation.
- Analysis of systems for ensuring the interests of protesters and identification of direct or indirect impact from planned decisions.
- Assessment and monitoring of the current conflict situation and its changes.
- Identification and evaluation of possible changes in the lifestyle of protesters in planned decisions.

- Analysis of economic aspects of protest action.
- Forecast of the development of the conflict situation when making different decisions. Finding alternatives and trade-offs.
- Development of comprehensive measures to reduce the negative impact of planned solutions on the conflict situation.
- Advice to the parties.
- Mediation. Reconciliation. Resolve or resolve conflicts in a conflict situation.

Thus, the listed technologies are not only a socially significant way to resolve/resolve potential conflicts and disputes, but also a strategy for the modernization of life facilities and infrastructure.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze digital, expert and mass technologies for resolving protests using the example of environmental actions in Kushtau (August 2020, the Republic of Bashkortostan), necessary to understand current conflict situations and problems of sustainable development of society in the Russian regions.

5. Research Methods

The study uses different methods and approaches (institutional, behaviourist, systemic and communication) used in the study of socio-political phenomena and processes.

The institutional approach allows to identify the institutional content of the protest, to determine its relationship with other political phenomena and processes. The behavioral approach determines the behavioral practices of participants and stakeholders of protests, establishes causal relationships and motivation in decision-making. The systemic approach is based on the identification in political theory of the structural components of the protest and their role relative to each other. The communication approach facilitates the comparison of links and contacts in protests. The scientific and practical significance of the study lies in the modern technology of institutions and conflict resolution practices necessary for understanding the current protests in the modern world.

6. Findings

The protest in Kushtau is an example of the transformation of the regional environmental action into a social protest, which was evaluated at the federal level, with its target audience and the peculiarities of the course. Events in the Republic of Bashkortostan related to the protection of Shikhans demonstrated the imposition of a variety of protest subpoenas, which ultimately led to a systemic solution to the problem.

7. Conclusion

The settlement of the protest in Kushtau, in addition to the use of the above technologies, was made possible thanks to the observance of the three main rules of negotiation practice: consciousness, control of the situation and the possibility of leaving it.

Consciousness implies a conscious attitude to the current conflict (controversial) situation at all its stages: emergence, development, completion. The protest agenda, as well as the interests of the soda company, were clear and meaningful to all participants and interests of the actions. Another thing is that the reasoning of one of the parties turned out to be more convincing to the public and attractive to the majority of residents of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Control of the situation - an objective understanding of your own interests and the consequences of participating in actions. Despite even the open confrontation that unfolded in August 2020, the situation remained under control. And the reduction of tension was made possible thanks to the inclusion of regional and federal authorities in this process.

The way out of the situation is to preserve the capabilities (maneuvers) to get out of the current situation and/or return to a level lower (level before the conflict begins). The assignment of Kushtau the status of a specially protected area allowed us to get out of the current conflict situation and solve the problem.

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