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Engendering Human Rights Commissioner Institutions in Contemporary Russian Regions: Actors, Factors and Practices

This paper contains results of longitude research (2002-2012) focused on gender dimension of various aspects of activities carried out by regional offices in majority regions of Russia.

The Regional Human Rights Commissioner is new for post-soviet political system, so we can observe underestimates the gender component of this still forming (innovative) institution. Not much of gender analysis of its establishment and activity undertaken yet. Its “gender regime” remains unstudied, no appropriate methodology elaborated, lack of empiric materials accumulated. There has been no systematic study of practices and, as a result, no recommendations for its antidiscrimination activities and rights protection offered. Meanwhile, the institution shows high level of women’s political representation (up to 35%) and potencies of introducing protection of gender-based rights violations via its tools named The Annual and/or Specialized Reports.

Regional HRCs as an institution are “an innovation” having a complex nature¹, and found at the boundary of legal, political and socio-cultural spaces. Legislative consolidation, ideological basis, positioning in the institutional design in the regions, and methods of staffing assignment allow us to identify it as an independent political institution, while its functional characteristics and the repertoire of practices correlate with social aspects of public interests protection. RHRCs are also an instrumental entity (mechanism) for asserting individual rights and freedoms. In order to identify the component of its gender sensitivity, both ways of analysis are important: normative and socio-political (as public), and socio-cultural and psychological (as private).

During last ten years the RHRC is conducting visible volume of socially-oriented functions. Its role could be considered also as the “feedback” from society in cases of social conflicts prophylactics. Taking into account the state concern based on the economic and foreign-policy/home-policy balance, - the ombudsman institute must solve the problem of the government administration modification with the purpose of introduction of the internal security/safety mechanisms², so Ombuds might be marked as one of institutionalized mechanisms of “security technologies”. Nevertheless, level of its resources and real power is low what leave it in the marginal positions in political field. That is the reason why some authors consider women in a position of RHRC “understandable” as more acceptable from both sides – political power actors and population – in executing “traditional” role in political leadership and

¹ I refer on extraordinary fragmentation of the field proper and lack of developed approaches, confirmed by political regional studies, for instance by Vladimir Gel'man in “Beyond Sadovoye Ring: experience of Russia’s political regional studies” (2001)

² Foucault M. *Securite, Territoire, Population*. Cours au College de France (1977/1978). SPb., Nauka, 2011. PP. 25-26.

participation. If to consider RHRC in terms of “symbolical power”, at least in normally functioning (social-)democracy, so all accumulated information on mal-administration or “narrow places” in social policy (incl. legislation opposed Human Rights principles, badly developed reforms, absence of bodies responsible for implementation of laws or social programmes, lack of research, public expertise and scientific critique or policies, etc) has high potentials for supporting or visa-a-verse for destroying symbolical capital of the government, to provide ground for protest discourse.

In realities of Russia not easy to talk about recognition of gender-based human rights just because not formal gender education exist for public administrators and servants, neither official gender policy proclaimed. Recruiting of RHRC’s and their staff based on former *nomenclature* and political elite, which exactly most gender-blind and no competent. The political regime transition in 90ths also added new problems we need to percept and understand some historical connotations.

If we follow the cyclic recurrence of institution establishment, we will face a curious fact that chronologically, any period when a woman takes the office of a human rights Commissioner, coincides with the beginning of “re-Sovietization” in Russia. Eltsin’s period, or “liberal reforms” finished in 2000, caused no increase in women’s representation, but considerably reduced in regional legislative bodies. Though establishment of RHRC started in 1994, the first woman was elected only in 2001. Could it be caused by differences in gender orders, tentatively speaking, in “liberalism ideology” and “socialism ideology” (and “actors of gender transfer” reflecting them)? Construction of market rules targeted by reforms, resulted in new forms of discrimination in respect to both women and men, especially in impairment of political rights of the first group. Return to “socialism ideology” aimed at the mobilizing women to support the state, seemed to provide women with support in various spheres.

Therefore, probably, observed picture where at the regional level, the model originating from liberal feminism = “equality” in political sphere is gender insensitive, while ideas of socialism on the contrary showed more positive prospects of “equal difference” variant? Does it mean that “innovation” have limits, and there is a backlash to the habitual pro-Soviet “tradition”? Or shall we meet with situation under ultraconservative chauvinism stepping in the rule at last few years in the public discourse and law-making?

Chronologically the context and process may be divided on the following periods:

- **Stage 1 «Discursive proto-institutional»** correlates with 1993 – 1995 the State Duma’s term and may be characterized by legal frameworks development on Federal level, started by the Presidential Order and former dissident S.Kovalyov’s appointment and removal.
- **Stage 2 «Appearance and normative strengthening»** which corresponds with 1996 - 1999 the State Duma’s term when Russian entered the Council of Europe, signing the obligation to establish the Ombud’s institution on Federal level, and with O.Mironov’s appointment on that post in 1998 the institution officially born; process of establishing the Body in regions started at 1996 by introducing it in Bashkortostan and in Sverdlovsk Oblast’.
- **Stage 3 «Rooting in political and legal design and diffusion»** process was going on during 2000-2004 years in parallel with attraction of attention to this institution from the third sector actors, incl. women’s NGOs. First women appointed this position (in Kaliningrad Oblast’ and soon in Sverdlovsk Oblast’ as well) and gender topics just entered the RHRCs’ community (which actually also established as Association during that period). First two Special Reports on women’s rights situation were produced in both mentioned above, but attempts of Women’s NGOs to initiate the process of Specialized (i.e. Gender) Antidiscrimination Ombuds’ Offices were blocked by those who occupied HRHC positions in regions at that time (with the reasoning of saving regional budget money, as the process of institution establishment went with problems on regional level and always was the result of political compromise or struggle).
- **Stage 4 «Stabilization and advanced evolution process»** coincide with electoral circle of 2004-2008 years. Common figures of RHRC achieve 50% of all regions. “Second terms wave” appointments demonstrated growth of authority influence. During this period attempts to

introduce “women’s issues” into RHRC activity intensified also by Women’s NGOs, gender education projects oriented on building-up competence, re-training programmes includes gender knowledge modules run with support of international donors, like MacArthur foundation, Adenauer Stiftung, etc. Thus, at this period in parallel was opened some room for new trends of “internalization” in RHRC activity in the tideway of globalization with its human rights and feministic discourses. New established offices provided more women in occupying this positions (specially on North-west and Far-East territories) who added such issues, like domestic violence and trafficking in human being prevention as “gendered crime” to be focusing on by RHRC, and arranged several seminars/conferences to discuss these issues among community and in regions on the basis of common with WNGOs project activity, supported by donors.

- **Stage 5 «International integration on basis of effectiveness analysis»** interconnected in 2008 – 2011 years of “democratization” process in Russia (Medvedev’s presidency) , so main trend within Russian administrative reform and interest to RHRC’s agency from such international actors, as Council of Europe and European Commission (Peer-to-Peer Project), as well as Russian governmental structures and civil society, allows to move a bit forward in issues of gender rights too. Economic crisis and issues of “succession” in majority of RHRC offices ended with staff reduction in some regions and sometimes with authorities’ attempts to close the office, or arrange scandal resignations and replacement the ombuds person. This period could be marked as the most ambivalent in post-soviet transformations. Anyway, exactly on this stage the first attempt to analyze the institution effectiveness in large scale of regions was implemented on a basis of Annual Reports content. Set of criteria included some indicators on discrimination recognition (gender-based indicators were not included in the analytical tools, but experts’ work reflected). Anyway, this period provided few examples of engendered discourses and practices among regional RHRC community in case of focusing on women’s rights in the labour market and social issues. Some regions with female ombuds produced Special Report on women’s status and rights (for. ex. Arkhangelsk,2011), thus majority of them are still stay gender-blind.

- **Stage 6 «Backlash and conservative reformatting the institutional activity»** followed the last electoral period (2011-2012), after protesting movement raised (with human rights democratic and some feminist slogans, incl. “Pussy Riot” action). During this period new (and wider) gender issue, connected with discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and LGBT-activism, came into Russian reality following the introducing to legal frameworks the so-called “anti-gay propaganda laws” in 11 regions and federal by July 2013. This period just began, but shows the limits of such social innovations, like HRHC, in case of gender-sensitivity of the institute. It becomes clear if to analyze Annual Reports and public discourse: only 2 among 79 regional offices during the year 2013 were openly officially dealing with situation and complains on clear legal discrimination on sexual orientation basis (St.Petersburg, Samara), and few make public statements in 2012 against regional legislations drafts, blaming them discriminative.

To summing up this part, if to look on juridical background of RHRC’s establishment, no formal gender- or sex-based discriminative norms found. Process analysis provides just few data on general political and legal conflicts observations: 1) the initiation of RHRC establishment from the third sector actors was not greeted by executive and legislative bodies (excepting Perm Oblast’); 2) legislation development was easier with official support from the governor or speaker, but not in all regions the law on RHRC was adopted without conflicts, as well as not always the law adopted brought to appointment as a result (in some regions governor’s veto were acting for years, like in Murmansk Oblast’); 3) most “democratic” law models caused majority of problematic situations at the appointment/election stage (Krasnoyarsk Territory, Saint-Petersburg, Kaliningrad Oblast’, special “divergent” case was Arkhangelsk Oblast’); 4) rapid development of legislation for RHRC establishing concentrated in the period between 2000-2004 years, but at 2006 in many regions it was radically corrected toward dilative functions norms (exception was Yakut Republic); 5) Specialized Ombuds for Gender-based Issues had never been introduced, rather than in the year 2010 in all regions was established the Specialized Children Rights Ombuds.

During all stages had been developed empirical research on gender sensitivity of the RHRC activity.

With the purpose to interpret the “gender sensitivity” concept, we can consider the theory of social constructivism by K. West and D. Zimmerman³. It appears important to pay attention to contemporary introduced and developing discursive approaches, whose studying also communication beyond the issue, but different channels of data entry: contacts with NCOs in regions, as actors of “gender” knowledge transfer; preliminary Commissioners` awareness of the topic, participation in conferences and establishment of international contacts, etc. It is necessary to attract tooling from the structural and functional approaches and, specifically after 2011 consider influence of post-modernist & feminist critique directions. Gender theories are used in research of power and labor distribution (including internal rules), which can be used in research of functioning (recruitment and promotion of employees, gender regime formation and practices influencing. Sex- or gender-based discrimination existing in the society though not always verbalized or reflected in complaints submitted. I presume the most adequate an explanatory paradigm including in the field of consideration the gender system, practices, gender order⁴, and developing modern concepts of gender dimension. Publications allowed to emphasize the following set of sections/blocks for the empirical fieldwork, with special attention paid to elaboration of directions for determining the level of gender sensitivity of the RHRC institution.

External-public block of issues includes aspects of general analysis of “gender system” and “gender order” in the society reflected/ reflecting in the regulatory structure and electoral, institutional (political) “engineering” in the state/region:

- State gender policy and gendered ideology, its correspondence with national political regime, public rhetoric of political management and elites, political culture
- Social policy and basic gender contract in the country, as well as gendered citizenship discourse
- Other items related to the issues of establishment of sex discrimination practices due to adoption of laws or politicians` administrative decisions
- Obligation to conduct gender (social) expertise of laws and/or administrative decisions
- Age and sex, religious and ethno-cultural composition of regional population
- Infrastructural development (incl. information networks and high-tech)
- Gender balance in regional legislative bodies (and other governmental departments) at the moment of institution establishment (and in further dynamics), as one of variables for adjustment of the (“gendered”) typology (and correlation with the assessment level of “democracy” of regions)
- Existence and “quality” of gender-competent exogenous actors (what is implied here is the level of development and activity/intensity of women`s movement in the region; existence of strong gender specialists in academia, universities or think-tanks, etc)
- Nature and methods of institution interaction with whose gender-competent exogenous actors (as well with such in international or whole-Russian networks, etc)

Internal-public block of issues includes aspects of analysis of the gender regime and structure of the institution (as an organization):

A) Gender internal labor distribution (quantitative and functional)

- Availability of regulatory documents on (non)discriminatory rules and procedures of work (recruitment, equal payment, anti-harassment, affirmative action etc.)
- Distribution of executive positions inside the office staff and administration
- Distribution of functional duties among staff
- Labour regime and workplace safety, presentence of necessary facilities, etc
- Occurrence of informal (non) discriminatory practices etc.

³ K. West, D. Zimmerman. Doing Gender // Gender notebooks by A. Kleozin. SPb., 1997. Issue 1. P. 94-124.

⁴ Connel R. Modern approaches // Anthology of feminist texts: translations by E. Zdravomyslova and A. Temkina.

B) Nature and methods of institution gender-sensitive (empowering) interaction with external and/or internal environment and current gender sensitivity of the institution

- Chronology and actors of the process of “secondary transfer” (i.e. gender component hereinafter – actors of introduction and/or creation of gender-based innovations)
- Existence of “mediation structures” like public/expert councils under the RHRC and/or cooperating agreements with other experts in issues of gender dimension of activity
- Participation in or arrangement of special events related to gender issues
- Public rhetoric of the RHRC or staff (i.e. analysis of discursive practices)
- Existence and/or elaboration of gender indicators in functional/thematic spheres of work
- Gender disaggregated statistics of complaints and/or addresses to the RHRC (quantitative gender analysis of complaints flows and topics)
- Methods and issues of civic/gender education in routine & publications/communications
- *Annual reports*: at structural level - titled sections devoted to women’s and/or men’s social groups issues, titled as gendered forms of discrimination, any un/existence of such sections; at the content level – ways of linguistic/visual representation of gendered issues, symbolical connotations and mental interconnected “belongings” of female/male groups with social status and/or professional segments, any attempts to conduct qualitative intersectional analysis of appeals, way of classification of discrimination/violation practices, existence of concrete recommendations for gender awareness, etc
- *Specialized reports*: besides mentioned above, also their existence in general and topicality of issues observed, comprehension of gender dimension of each analyzed topic, selection of gender-based discrimination topic as the theme of the special report (and way of its observance – essentialist or more theoretical grounded), notes about conclusions/recommendation reception/responds by authorities, etc
- Existence or development of monitoring tools, incl. gender indicators, for longitude observing of human rights violations in a whole legal, political and information fields (i.e. sexism elements in advertisement, public speeches, mass-media, visual representations, as well as right for association violation, gendered crime practices focused also on multicultural segments of society (honor murder, bride thefts, clitorotomy, etc), LGBT rights, trafficking and domestic violence issues monitoring, etc)
- Gender criteria/indicators in tools of results assessment and effectiveness evaluation (efficiency criteria)

Personal factors of Ombudsman proper and leading employees of administrations:

- Institutional and personal biography, educational orientation and level of degree
- Personal competence (in terms of various contemporary “global” trends and innovations: project culture and public-social technologies as well, tolerance, human rights study, etc)
- Previous experience, belonging to political elite or nomenclature before appointment
- Popularity and recognition in mass-media
- Involvement in social networks including third sector and women’s movement
- Gender display (as possible resource in public sphere)

In conducting all described research, mostly qualitative **methods** used: a) normative analysis (laws); b) analysis of official documents, Annual and Special reports delivered by a number of human rights Commissioners and analytical publications; c) discourse analysis; d) questioning RHRC and staff ; e) expert interviews; f) method of participant observation and group discussions, materials of discussions and disputes as the results of focus group activity (role games arranged within the set of re-training Courses and online six trainings, number of Internet workshops, “Women’s leadership and partnership” conferences in 2002-2004, and workshops on distant-learning course held by Consortium of women’s NGOs in 2005-2008); Just to the extent the issues of women’s representation in regional legislative bodies, I used the analysis of quantitative data collected at websites of regional legislative bodies during the period from 2002 till 2008.

Some results:

1) Starting point: gender issues knowledge development among RHRC (2002-2004)

Being actively involved since 1997 in the process of RHRCs establishing and development as the public women's organizations' activist, and since 2005 as an analyst/researcher, in number of research⁵ I implemented, provided insights on institute's development processes under the different regional political regimes. RHRC had dramatically difficult ways of institutionalization inside regional design, so that even still they are not exist in all Russian regions (by the end of 2012 were officially established 69 regional Ombuds). A special emphasis of research laid on study "window of opportunities" for women's political participation and primary analysis of RHRC gender sensitivity which author understand as *availability of mechanisms for identification (detection) of violations, control over the situation and prevention of sex- & gender-based discrimination in political, economic and socio-cultural fields, and also in practices of restoration of violated rights*⁶.

It is logical to expect that issues of discrimination should be taken into account in the institution's work. However, pilot mini polls conducted within the framework of the re-training course and distant module developed by "Strategy" Center in 2002-2003 showed that gender component of activity was totally missing. It was obvious from lack of specialized Reports, absence of the relevant sections in Annual reports (there were only few parts of reports prepared within the "maternity and childhood protection" paradigm, men as a group were not considered as a potential object of discrimination even in terms of problems of cultural and social rights, living standards, family relations, etc.). An assumption that women and children as a group (analysis category) were sometimes paid attention to, men as a group were not.

It is quite possible to consider Ombuds as a side result of policies of international foundations unaware of national institutions up to the moment when local experts acquire a sufficient level of competence for independent actions (which can also be referred to the issue of understanding the "gender" as "product of import" to the Russian environment). The IRI supported the first attempt to introduce ideas of institutional structures for observance of gender equality principles taken by public women's organizations in 2002-2003, three workshops with participation of women in position of RHRCs, two books published as a result, and distributed among 17 existed regional offices.

2) Actors of gender competence: results of mini-research among RHRC's (2005-2006)

The results of the mini-research reflected that finding out how regional commissioners understood the issues of gender measurement of their performance, involvement in interaction with women's movement, and needs in raising competence (answers related to existed "gender structure" of the institution are not provided). Out of 30 questionnaires disseminated, 18 returned. Thus, the questions were answered by 8 women out of 10, and by 10 men out of 24,

⁵ Published in: Barandova T. *Upolnomochennyj po pravam cheloveka v Arkhangel'skoj oblasti: politicheskie oshibki pravozaschitnogo eksperimenta* (1997-1998) (The Ombudsman in Arkhangel'sk Oblast: political mistakes of the human rights protection experiment) // in: *Uchastie vlasti v zashite prav cheloveka: komissii I upolnomochennye*. Ed. Sungurov A.Yu.: SPb.: NORMA, 2001. P.105-118. (text is available at URL: <http://www.civisbook.ru/files/File/Barandova.pdf>); Barandova T. *K voprosu gendernoy chustvitel'nosti i gendernoy tolerantnosti v dejatel'nosti gosudarstvennogo pravozaschitnogo instituta upolnomochennykh po pravam cheloveka* (Toward the question on gender sensitivity & tolerance in state human rights protection institute of the Ombudsman) // in: *Tolerantnost': iskusstvo zhit' vmeste: materialy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii* (5-16 November 2006) (Tolerance: the art of living together) / Karelskij filial FGOU VPO SZAGS v Petrozavod'ske.: Izd-vo PetrGU, 2007. P. 178-201; Barandova T. *Gendernoe izmerenie stanovlenija institute upolnomochennogo po pravam cheloveka v regionakh Rossii: k voprosu o formirovanii ego gendernoj chustvitel'nosti* (Gender dimension of the Ombudsman establishing in Russian regions: issues of its gender sensitivity development) // in: *Publichnoe prostranstvo, grazhdanskoe obschestvo i vlast: opyt vzaimodejstvija* (Public space, civil society and authority: cooperation development experience) by Sungurov A.Yu. and others. M.: RAPS; Russian Political Encyclopedia (ROSSPEN), 2008. P.297-308; Barandova T. *Stanovlenie i dejatel'nost' institute upolnomochennykh po pravam cheloveka v regionah Rossii: gendernyj podkhod* (Establishment and activity of Ombudsmen in Russian regions: gender approach) // in: *Institute upolnomochennogo po pravam cheloveka v Rossii: opyt veteranov i pozitsii ekspertov* (The Ombudsman institute in regions of Russia: veteran's experience & experts' positions) by Sungurov A.Yu. SPb.: NORMA, 2011. P. 89 – 124.

⁶ Emphasizing "practices of violated rights restoration" as a special kind of practices is done by V. Kostyushev who adapts the P. Bourdier concept of "fields" to political development in Russia's regions.

which is a bit more than half of the total number of RHRC⁷, it represents enough material enabling to make some conclusions.

Six responding men had no experience of participation in events related to the issues of human rights observance and gender equality before they took the office (against 8 women, 6 out of which emphasized not only availability of such experience, but also its “frequency” and “regularity”). 6 women’s answers showed the experience in gender-oriented events arrangement, while only 3 men’s answers showed such experience. According to answers, organizers of events were governmental bodies: 6 men wrote about experience of participation in the conference held by the Council of Federation in autumn 2005 devoted to the 100th anniversary of parliamentary system in Russia, two mentioned regional administrations. Women provided 7 such answers, in third cases the State Duma is also mentioned and “Yabloko” party, regional legislative and local government bodies.

The questionnaire included issues of interaction with NGOs. Answers shows that organizations inviting regional commissioners to federal level events include: Consortium of women’s NCOs (5 men and 7 women mentioned the entity), “Russia’s Women” movement, “Yabloko” party, All-Armenian Union of Women, F. Neumann Foundation, Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship (in SPb) and Socio-economic Institute each mentioned twice by women. By 5 respondents in both groups described women’s movement in their regions in terms of “weak, but supporting”, 3 respondents as “strong and supporting”, the others did not answer. 13 commissioners used description-lists of women’s NGOs in their work, one more does not use them but considers such information useful. Only 5 prepared own for the public and mass media, but not on the regular basis, while issues related to women’s rights are not covered at all. In 2005 Smolensk Office supervised arrangement of Round table “Domestic violence as mass violation of human rights” (a collection of reports has been issued in printed copy).

By six cases mentioned presence of section (or part of section) in Annual report reflecting issues of human rights observance in terms of gender. Titles vary from “Rights of women and children” and “Social health of the region” to “On securing equality of men’s and women’s rights and opportunities, on family and maternity protection measures” & “On domestic violence, and employment discrimination”. Noted Special reports related to gender issues in 2 regions (Tatarstan and Kalmykia)⁸. The fact that the issue under question is not reflected in reports was explained by respondents as follows: there is no reason; problem is not acute, one cannot embrace the boundless; there are no complaints about the problem; the Law provides four tasks and reports structured according to this principle; citizens rarely complain about sex discrimination & violation, those complaints are not of system mass nature (men’s answers), - and: forerunners approached this problem in such way; problem of women’s rights violation is latent, there is no special research; there are no complaints though there having many children mothers (women’s answers). Analysis of complaints in the sex aspect existed in 10 regions (answers distributed equally). None of the 18 RHRC’s elaborated special document (or formal procedure) stipulating principles of non-discrimination in a workplace.

Eventually, all respondents (except one man facing difficulties in assessing usefulness of such information in work) appeared interested in *mentioning the need in special methodical, educational and informative materials related to the issue of gender dimension & measurement of human rights*.

To sum up, I can conclude that the assumption that the sex of a person occupying the position appears the main factor in determining the level of gender competence did not fully confirm. Just supposedly it was influencing upon the level of sensitivity of an individual (man or woman), or the regional institution, in general. We observe a general picture reflecting the lack of attention in respect to gender aspect of activity of RHRC (as a collective portray). Therefore,

⁷ Among them, only one was an employee of an administration and not a HRC.

⁸ List of special reports on gender dimension is not complete, the reports was prepared also in Kaliningrad and Sverdlovsk regions.

an important in this area might be the study of general competence level in modern tendencies of democratic changes, incl. competence in gender aspects (focusing above all staff on analysts and experts responsible for reports preparation). The role of women`s movement appears important by initiatives of information exchange development and support of RHRC activity both on regional and federal levels, as well as educating and enlightening population, authorities and RHRC staff.

3) *Factors: in search of correlations between political regime and Ombuds gender sensitivity*

In 2005-2008 working hypothesis was that occupation of position by woman, level of women`s political participation and representation, development of women`s movement in region, are interrelated and contribute to higher level of gender sensitivity of RHRC. So, several additional comparative research had been conducted.

3.1. *Primary analysis of data on institution establishment and sampling of regions (1.06.2006) as an intermediate conclusion implies* that establishment went dynamically in regions with high federation status (territory and republics). It could also be explained by the fact that political elites of these regions see the presence of RHRC as one of national statehood features (on the edge “sovereignization” processes?). There is an opinion that the institution is regarded by governing elites as “covering of authoritarianism with a declarative democratic screen or as a compensatory instrument (for regime self-protection) in the eyes of citizens and businesses⁹. However, in Bashkortostan and Kalmykia, originally designed as a “screen”, RHRC was gradually transforming into effective structure assisting individuals. In Chechnya the situation reduced to an “imitation”. With a great degree of coincidence, the process of institution establishment depends on the factor of national-ethnic diversity in region. Discussions inside the RHRC community were often related to features of national factor, seems due to the Council of Europe supports this area of activity in the Russian environment unlike the gender component of human rights observance.

Development of the RHRC institution went slowly in Moscow & St.Petersburg (probably due to a great number of interested actors involved) and in autonomous areas (for unknown reasons, since “the ethnic factor” should be working here, however, it rather works in combination with other factors, such as proportions between Russians and other nations, entry of regions in the list of densely populated and border regions with a substantial level of migration processes etc). There is no clear picture of interrelations between “ordinary” regions, different in terms of characteristics of socio-economic development. Probably in this case a more profound study requires other aspects of research and additional independent variables to be included, for instance institutional design in region (positioning of legislative bodies), electoral engineering and factor of inter-budget relations (“donators/donors” or “recipients”) and other indicators of political regime. In terms of dynamics a tendency is observed for quantitative growth in 2000-2004 electoral cycle. Researchers are still to find explanation (V. Putin`s first term probably important in understanding by elites “completion” stage).

3.2. *Typologization according to regional political regimes models (1997 - 2005)* were conducting for purpose to construct complex analytical scheme. Russian regions` political development index proposed by Nikolay Petrov using “Freedom House” indicators, even taking into account that the model faces a number of serious problems, sufficient to use data for demonstrating the obviousness of general trends in 2001-2005 for their distribution along a simple scale: democratic / non democratic. The scheme implies dynamic reflection of the rating based on two approaches: expert assessments and instrumental approach based on elections and electoral behavior. So, even if findings demonstrated that in eight regions where the RHRC was established in the period of 1996-2000, no woman elected/appointed this position. Besides, 6 regions can be characterized as “authoritarian” – monocentric regional political regimes, the institution is not established in regions within the “regime uncertainty” category (according to

⁹ Interview with expert Alexander Nezdnyurov (“Strategy”).

Gel'man). Analysis of Petrov's index allows to make the primary conclusion: the equal number of regions (by four) which established the institution corresponded to polar categories: "democratic" and "authoritarian", while the majority of regions falls within the medium module between the poles. Both above-mentioned variants do not consider the women's political participation factor.

3.3. Attempt to draw up a typology with allowance for gender representation in a legislative body in 2004. Regarding women's political participation, referring to A.Temkina's opinion that it is dependent on the peculiarities of the society gender system and cycles of political transformation. In countries where the government pursues *the policy of equal opportunities for men and women*, men and women get equal access to political resources. Contingently, I attempted to "adjust" the typology by introducing "gender-colored" aspect - percentage of women's representation in regional legislative body at the moment of RHRC establishment. *Intermediate conclusion:* When the variable of women's representation in a legislative body introduced, it is discovered that the most democratic regions fall within the category characterized by the least women's representation in general. Distribution of the other regions where the HRC institution was established is performed in the equal proportion (by 13 in each group) in the categories "Above average of women's representation from 10-to 18%" and "Average indices of women's representation from 5 to 9%". Four women are represented in each group. Seven more regions fall within the outsider group in this aspect, and it should be noted that in 2 of them, the office of the HRC is held by a woman. Therefore, no correlation was observed, and necessary to search for other influence factors.

3.4. Attempts to develop complex model for gender sensitivity analysis were undertaken in a way of matrix creation there in Y-axis the level of regional political regime gender sensitivity placed, and in X-axis the level of RHRC gender sensitivity placed. For "sorting out" regions presented in the Table 1, selected by two variables in each segment: X-axis - % of women in legislative body & existence of gender-sensitive actors in the region (i.e. strong WNGO, gender research center or think-tank, academia community and/or gender research university programmes); Y-axis – existence and content-analysis of gender-based issues sections in Annual reports and preparation of Special report on gender topics. Further modeling could include extra (quantitative) variables and their combinations as indicators for complex index, such as number (and %) of WNGOs registered in the region, % of women in high positions in regional executive power, gender balance in local administrations etc for X-axis. As for Y-axis is possible to appeal for data on number of education/public events RHRC participated and/or organized in the topic, figures from content-analysis of public speeches/articles/publications, gender disaggregated statistics figures, etc.

Table 1: (based on 48 regions with 30 reports for the years 2007-2008)

	Low potential for political regime gender sensitivity	High potential for political regime gender sensitivity
Gender components in activity exist	TYPE ONE Kaluga, Kalmyk, Sverdlovsk, Yakutia	TYPE TWO Kaliningrad, Novgorod, Samara, Tver, Arkhangelsk, Saratov, Perm, Tatarstan, Ulyanovsk, Komi
Gender components in activity absent	TYPE THREE Altay Republic, Altay Territory, Kursk, Rostov-on-Don, Bashkortostan, Lipetsk, Ingushetia, Mordovia, Astrakhan', Bryansk, Khabarovsk, Nizny Novgorod, Oryol, Kabardino-Balkaria, Nenets Autonomous District, Penza, Omsk, Volgograd, Stavropol, Dagestan, Moscow Oblast', Udmurtia, Chechnya, Karachay-Cherkessia, Krasnoyarsk, Krasnodar, Smolensk, Amur Oblast', Primorsky Territory	TYPE FOUR St.Peterburg, Karelia, Irkutsk

Intermediate conclusion: majority of regions where women occupy the RHRC position fall into types one and two, even in situation with low political regime sensitivity they introduce gender aspects in their activity. Nevertheless, the content of this work (as well presented in Annual reports) is not always equivalent to contemporary “western” (democratic) understanding the gender approach theories, sometimes it presented in quite “half-traditional” specific key. Two “curios” cases – Kalmykia and Kaluga – where men are in a position, demonstrates gender component in their work, but with the same “stipulations” as above; St.Petersburg demonstrates the most “deviant” case. Qualitative case-study research had not completed yet.

4) Practices: Analyzes of gender sensitivity on the basis of Annual and Special reports (2007-2009) undertaken in frameworks of the Joint European Union – Council of Europe Programme “Setting up an active network of independent non judicial human rights structures” (Peer-to-Peer project). All together reviewed 49 regional institutions, for content-analysis were selected materials of 37 regions, where were produced reports on 2007 and 2008 years. Tool was developed by M.Jaeger, Head of Co-operation with the National Human Rights Structures, Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs (Capacity Building Division) at Council of Europe. Tool included 25 positions for analysis, reflected/corresponded with fundamental human rights in according to international mechanisms (the Universal Declaration, the European Convention, etc) and structure of German Ombuds Annual report model. *Intermediate conclusion:* content screening demonstrated that such spheres as “**protection of privacy**” not presented at all, as well as by once presented “right to organize” (Kursk region) and “anti-terrorist measures” (Chechnya). By two times each mentioned “access to public data (Lipetsk & Bryansk regions) & “freedom of assembly and association” (Samara & Sverdlovsk regions where women are in position). Issues of “freedom of expression and freedom of the media” (Samara, Sverdlovsk regions & Karachay-Cherkessia) and “right to political participation” mentioned only in four regions (Samara, Sverdlovsk regions where women are in a position, Altay Territory and Smolensk region) as well as issues of “respect of human dignity by public bodies and employees” (Kaliningrad & Novgorod regions where women are in a position, Smolensk region & Primorsky Territory). “Freedom of religion” issue observation presented only in six regions (again Samara, Saratov & Sverdlovsk regions where women are in a position, Nizny Novgorod, Udmurtia and Karachay-Cherkessia).

On another side, issues of “rights of the child”, “detention conditions”, “Rights of migrants and refugees” and “rights of disabled people” are absolute leaders in annual reports (each reviewed in 28-27 regions). Close to them are “rights of the elderly” and “right for fair trial” (reflected by 23 regions). All other rights and freedoms lies in continuum between.

Tool considered gender-based discrimination not as a separate type, but mixed with others in wording “discrimination: racial, ethnic, gender, religious, sexual”, but anyway only five regional reports among observed included such section in its structure (Lipetsk & Kaliningrad regions, Chechnya & Udmurtia, Perm Territory) and only in one (Kaliningrad) mentioned sex-based discrimination complaints. Summing up in general, Annual reports in regions where women are in a position in 2007-2008 years covered wider spectrum of violated rights in comparing with male-ruling offices: among 25 points, Samara refer to 18 (and it is absolute leader in quality of the report), 14 points in Sverdlovsk (& Bashkortostan with man as Ombuds), 13 in Saratov & 12 in Kaliningrad (& four male-ruling Offices). Little differences in thematic directions are also existed. For example, only four women-ruling offices among all RHRC community paying attention to issues of civil freedoms and political rights (just two men’s reports covers electoral/political rights violations). Women also more often considered access to public education issues. At the same time, men are paying more attention on “right to property”, “police behavior” and “right to a healthy environment”.

Analyzes of gender sensitivity on the basis of Annual reports (2012) was undertaken on the basis of 11 regions, where by July 2013 “anti-gay propaganda laws” were in charge. Similar Federal law was signed and introduces to the legal framework at July 2013, so this period just

began and takes more time to complete analysis of all regional reports. Annual Reports and public discourse shows that only 2 (St.Petersburg and Samara) among 76 regional offices during the year 2013 were openly officially dealing with situation and complains on discrimination on sexual orientation basis, and few (Perm, Arkhangelsk and Federal) made public statements against regional legislations drafts and blaming them potentially discriminative.

So, conclusion is: the HRHC is the institution which in case of gender rights violation not ready to speak on behalf of (potential) victims rather than following state rhetorical trends. During the whole period after its' establishing it stays gender-blind in majority of issues covered even by general (traditional) Women's rights corps (CEDAW, UNIFEM, ILO), and can't almost deal with any new international human rights instruments connected with sexual orientation issues. This couldn't be explained only by the fact that in such regions woman is holding the post, rather by closer involvement of the Commissioner in networking, including international communications, and active interaction with actors-bearer of "innovation gender discourses and knowledge" like women's movement and LGBT NGOs. Institution practices after ten years of education/cooperation attempts from gender-sensitive and gender-competent agents still not enough sensitive to gender issues, and on the other hand, due to WNGOs and international donors there processes slowly were leading to its improving before the state announced the "backlash (ultra)conservative ideological policy. Nevertheless, current backlash on political level is the major factor of influence, so we may reflect it.