Transparency and Its Manifestations in Russian Media Discourse:
A Case Study of HC Traktor

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the manifestations of transparency related to the Russian political management in 2018–2019. A discursive analysis included the media materials covering the decision by Chelyabinsk (the seventh largest city in Russia) regional authorities, without public discussion, to allocate significant funds from the city budget to support HC Traktor. The public discussion of this issue was widely reflected in the media. Civic activists accessed official online documents concerning the participatory financing and initiated an online dialogue with the authorities, disagreeing with their decisions, offering alternatives, and suggesting that internal political management be made more public. The study systematizes various aspects of transparency: openness, availability, clarity, democracy, visibility and accountability. Since new media and social networks play a key role in the interaction between the state authorities and public, the paper considers all the structural elements of modern media communication: addressees, target audience, channels of information, the content and form of publications, their perlocutionary effect. The results of our study proved that communicative success was reached by breaking language standards, polycode information delivery, and storytelling techniques. The perlocutionary effect of this transparent media communication was difficult and deferred. The public dialogue did not satisfy the initial public demand, but it did influence the management practices (further reflected in Russia's federal legislation) and accompanied changes in the composition of regional elites.

Keywords: *Transparency, information society, public authorities, tropes, stylistic devices, storytelling.*

INTRODUCTION

In an information society with a huge potential of information technologies, transparency plays an extremely important role, since it has a significant impact on the speed and quality of decision-making. However, according to the vice-president of the European Science Foundation, Franzi Demshar, people are very reluctant to share information, because it is an expensive good and it provides its owner with many competitive advantages. Hence there is a desire to limit transparency even in cases where it hinders social progress (Demshar, 2016).

Russia tends to fully manifest the above-mentioned trend. Measuring government openness worldwide in 2015, the International non-governmental organization World Justice Project ranked Russia at the 67th place between Honduras and Thailand (among 102 countries). In the category "civic participation" of the same survey, Russia took the 88th place (WJP Open Government Index, 2015). Difficulties with transparency arise in various spheres of Russian political management. In this regard, we can highlight the expert report Openness of the State in Russia–2020. The aim of the project was to assess the degree of openness of federal public authorities on a number of criteria, one of which was answers to journalists' inquiries and the use of social networks to hold dialogue with the public. The results of the

analysis proved that 52% of federal ministries and 57% of departments have a low degree of openness (Openness of the State in Russia–2020, 2020, p. 8). A lack of transparency was revealed both at the federal and regional levels. Our study analyses the peculiarities of media communication in such conditions.

The purpose of this work is to study the patterns that determine the implementation of the principle of transparency in the Russian media space connected with the discussion of internal political management problems. In Russia the activities of the authorities were a closed topic for a long time. When it was covered in most media, the principle of opacity prevailed, contrary to the principle of transparency.

Our research demonstrates that in 2018–2019, a public discussion of regional and municipal management policy in the Russian media space was possible. We aim to reveal how it developed and what results it brought.

The targets of the study are: a) to systematize theoretical and applied aspects of transparency presented in the works of scholars from various scientific schools; b) to describe communication practices connected with regional and municipal authorities in the Russian media space; c) to detect the peculiarities of presenting information with conflict potential in official and non-official sources; d) to define the pragmatic results of media communication interaction. The contribution of our study is closely connected with its subject, namely analysis of a media space in a country whose political regime differs from Western democracies. Our case study of HC Traktor demonstrates how transparency works in hybrid political systems in a digital society with extensive opportunities of modern local and global communication systems, which, as M. Castells rightly notes, create conditions for day-to-day contact between politics and citizens and strengthen citizens' influence on the form and dynamics of power relationships, making this sphere of life more open and accessible to various transformations (Castells, 2013, p. XXIII–XXIV).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining the content of transparency, we should take into account that it can be implemented in various fields of human activities. Modern science distinguishes numerous types of transparency: in public administration (Cuillier & Piotrowski, 2009; Kolosovich, 2019; Ahmadi, Rachmiatie & Nursyawal, 2019), in legislation (Casadesús de Mingo & Cerrillo-i-Martínez, 2018), in the judicial sphere (Zetterberg, Sjöström & Markström, 2014), fiscal transparency (Sedmihradská, 2015), social transparency (Mueller, 2015; Silantyeva, 2019), media transparency (Karlsson & Clerwall, 2018), scientific transparency (Green, 2019), technological transparency (Kos & Kloppenburg, 2019). Having studied these thematically marked definitions, we understand transparency as the timely provision of quality information to all interested communicants, necessary and sufficient for making rational decisions and their subsequent implementation.

This study focuses on the mechanism and conditions of internal political management interaction with the society and media.

Since transparency is a complex category, let us determine its structure. Transparency includes several components: openness – timely and complete disclosure of socially-significant information in official sources; availability – the absence of barriers to obtaining information; clarity – comprehensiveness for the addressee; "glasnost" (publicity) – the legitimate opportunity for public discussion in online and offline formats; visibility – clear procedures for involving actors in solving socially significant problems; and accountability – the right of citizens to evaluate the activities of state, commercial, and non-profit

organizations. Quantitative methods of researching transparency provide valuable information for applied understanding of this phenomenon. For example, J.O. Hare, B.L. Rawlins, and K.D. Plowman present an attempt to develop a tool for measuring transparency at the level of city government (Hawes, Rawlins & Plowman, 2015).

Transparency is essential for the proper functioning of any large organization. In internal political management, transparency provides for the exchange of information among participants and their effective consolidation in socially significant projects; identification of lobbying schemes; prevention of the abuse of power (corruption, fraud, embezzlement, etc.), and assistance in achieving justice; and digital archiving—storing information about the activities of an organization (including after its liquidation or reorganization) for an unlimited period.

The implementation of transparency presupposes its reasonable limitation. Absolute transparence leads to destructive processes in various spheres of public life. We agree with researchers who consider this problem vital for post-industrial societies. This problem arises from the controversies between the claims of the state, the rights and freedoms of the individual and the intensive development of new technologies. In some cases, this conflict becomes extremely acute (Bannister & Connolly, 2011; Ganascia, 2011; Rovinskaya, 2020). Modern research and media discourse indicate a number of factors limiting the manifestation of transparency: national security, territorial unity of the state, maintenance of public order, data protection and privacy.

All of them function as tools for increasing opacity. Their hypertrophy leads to the stagnation of social processes and can cause a systemic crisis. Therefore, balances are needed, and transparency mechanisms can play this role. In digital society, thanks to modern technologies and the high level of information culture, these mechanisms are numerous and diverse. Our research focuses on the mechanisms that make it possible to openly discuss the activities of public administration organizations: official online resources, non-official information platforms, traditional media and social networks. Official websites provide information on the procedures and activities of organizations. These are, first of all, corporate websites and open databases which provide the information published in machine-readable formats for further use by developers of services and applications, journalists, and researchers (de Juana-Espinosa & Luján-Mora, 2020). In 2018–2019 Russian people could use the Open Data Portal of the Russian Federation (RF open data portal, 2021). Such sites function within the legal field and are supported by the government.

Non-official information platforms can reveal confidential materials for public discussion on secret initiatives, decisions, or actions of state services which violate the democratic rights and freedoms of citizens to the public. Such resources include WikiLeaks (Castells, 2013), the Hungarian site MagyarLeaks, the Dutch site PubLeaks, the Italian site IrpiLeaks, and the German site Briefkasten (Porlezza & di Salvo, 2020). In a number of cases, the authorities consider such sites to have questionable legitimacy.

Traditional media and social networks occupy a special pace among transparency mechanisms. Modern mass media is a system of socio-semiotic practices, within the framework of which messages on political, economic, social, cultural and other problems are created, broadcast, perceived, and interpreted. This has an impact on the cognitive, axiological, communicative, and behavioural models of the target audience (Dijk, 2008; Pujihartati, Nurhaeni, Kartono & Demartoto, 2023). By influencing public ideology and rhetoric, the media can serve as a tool to promote the organization of public debates and

improve the quality of discussion and argumentation in politics, advertising, marketing and other areas of social activity (Kjeldsen, 2021; Mateus, 2021; Hassan, Mahbob, Allam, Mustaffa & Ibrahim, 2022). Researchers note that in the modern media space various communication channels may both compete with each other (Dewey, 2021) and complement each other (Karlsson, 2020).

Social networks serve as a transition to news websites (Anderson & Caumont, 2014), support the key idea of dissent (Sanderson, 2009), break the monopoly on the dissemination of information by traditional media (Pineda, Gómez & Rebollo-Bueno, 2021). However, they do not replace professional journalists who possess an objective method and style of presenting information with a focus on the accuracy of the information and a balanced opinion. The interaction of traditional and new media, their competition and symbiosis affect modern communicative processes and this is confirmed by our observations on the media discourse of Russia.

CASE SELECTION

Modern Russia is the largest state in the world (17,125,191 km2); it is almost twice as large as Canada, China, and the United States. According to the Constitution, Russia is a federal presidential-parliamentary republic consisting of 85 subjects in 2018-2019. Two of them, Moscow and St. Petersburg, are known to the international reader. These are federal centres with a post-industrial economy, a high level of education (42% of residents of Moscow and 37% of St. Petersburg have higher education) and widely available Internet. Moscow and St Petersburg are leaders in Russia, which is why the capital's events and related communication processes attract the attention of both internal and external observers.

However, Russia is not limited to these two subjects; there are many other territories, and without studying communications in non-metropolitan cities, it is impossible to get a complete picture of the laws that determine the manifestations of transparency in modern Russia. We chose Chelyabinsk as it is the administrative centre of a typical region in the Russian Federation. It is a large city with a population of more than 1,100,000 people. The Chelyabinsk economy is dominated by industrial enterprises. Important issues for residents include poor ecology, outdated public transport, low level of landscaping, etc. At the same time, Chelyabinsk has significant political, economic, cultural, and human resources by Russian standards. According to experts, the city can become one of the "points of growth" and transmit the momentum of modernization to the surrounding Russian periphery (Zubarevich, 2016). This applies to various spheres, including management and media communication models.

EMPIRICAL BASIS AND METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of this study is materials related to the discussion of the funds allocated from the city budget to support the Traktor hockey club. The sample included 64 documents:

1) media products published in 2018 and 2019 returned by Google and Yandex search engines for the query "billion for the Traktor hockey club". A browsing depth of 3 pages was set taking into account scientific observation of the behaviour of Internet users: "Out of a hundred people who view the first page of search results, a little less than half go to the second. Only five will go further than third" (Ashmanov & Ivanov, 2011, p. 50);

2) messages about this dispute retrieved through hyperlinks in the publications of the first group; by providing the audience with this option, the authors use the technical capabilities of the modern online format, which allows them to influence the information

picture of the addressee in a non-linear manner, taking into account their likely requests for the details on the media communication event;

3) financial, legal, administrative documents (Chelyabinsk City Duma, 2020; On the Governor of the Chelyabinsk Region, 2004; Charter of the City of Chelyabinsk, 2015, etc.); these sources were studied to understand the socio-economic context media history.

We completed discursive analysis of the aforementioned materials. Discursive analysis is a qualitative scientific method which can be used to identify narratives that are relevant to society and describe significant elements of the structure of modern media communications. Discourse analysis requires close reading, analysis of the audio-visual component, and subsequent interpretation of the issues connected with functional characteristics of messages and their extra linguistic context.

Discourse analysis is a multidimensional interdisciplinary method that includes different approaches to understanding social practices. When the object of study is related to political communications, researchers in some cases turn to the tools of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as it is aimed at the mechanisms of power realization - linguistic, marketing, media, etc. The principal feature of CDA is that its representatives (Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun A. van Dijk, etc.) use the scientific method as a way to critically expose social domination and discrimination encoded in communicative products. We take into account the results of these works, but our study is based on the descriptive rather than critical principle. In our research we applied a heuristic model dating back to the communication pentad of Harold D. Lasswell (1948). It was adapted to the modern communicative processes taking place in integrated digital and analogous media. This is a system of questions setting the directions and search for the meanings in the media discourse and correlating with theoretical aspects of transparency theory:

Which communicative activity took place in a public semiotic space? The answer to this question gives an idea of the topics of those events that can initiate a transparent process and become the subject of open discussion in certain political, economic, and social conditions.

Who (people and organizations) performed it (their social status, values, interests, goals etc)? And who was affected? The need to study senders and addressees is explained by the very essence of transparency as the principle of information interaction between subjects in various spheres of human activity; the characteristics of subjects are a significant determinant on which the implementation of transparency depends.

Which media channels were involved? This element of the discursive model reveals the mechanisms for implementing transparency, which are chosen by the participants of the event to solve communicative tasks.

Which content was produced (character of the information and peculiarities of its presentation)? When analysing media messages, research attention is focused on how transparency affects the coverage of socially significant problems (accountability of the authorities in our case) and what symbolic means are used in public dialogue (the possibilities of verbal and non-verbal codes).

What happened as a result of this communication (reaction of the addressees, changes in the social context)? What content was produced (the nature of the information and the features of its presentation)? What happened as a result of communication (dynamics in the economic, political, social context)? This is an applied aspect: the processes related to

transparency outside the media field are considered, the study takes into account that transparency functions in antinomic unity with tightness.

The presented discursive model characterizes the components of the media communicative process—the topic of public discussion; addressees of messages and channels of their media communications; target audience; content and form of messages; their perlocutionary effect—and helps us understand how transparency (abstract category) was implemented in the Russian media space in 2018–2019 (concrete chronotope).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Topic of Public Discussion
The public's attention has focused on the governmental/management form of transparency related to initiative (participatory) financing, which refers to the direct participation of citizens in determining and selecting targets of budget spending, as well as subsequent control over the implementation of selected projects (Vagin, 2017, p. 4). This topic does not affect the national security and territorial integrity of the state, unauthorized mass actions, or the private life of citizens, so it does not fall into the zone of above-mentioned transparency restrictions.

Message Senders and Communication Channels
The discussion was initiated by the Chelyabinsk Urbanist, a website which has been run by the blogger Lev Vladov and his team since 2017 (https://chelurban.ru/). They define their goal as follows: "We have united to make Chelyabinsk the best city in Russia". The site's main page lists the problems they are concerned about (pollution, irresponsible urban planning, an unfair distribution of the budget, discrimination against residents, etc.), presents a program to change Chelyabinsk (including ongoing projects), and contains certain background information.

The Chelyabinsk Urbanist was a fact-checking platform: it cooperated with the audience, journalists, and civil activists; it fact checked information from various sources to verify the content; it works with experts, etc. It was not only a media outlet, but also an association of concerned citizens who influenced the government through their joint efforts and their communication channels, website, email, and social networks. Their main communication channels in 2018–2019 were VKontakte, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.

The ex-governor of the Chelyabinsk Region Boris Dubrovskiy, who held this post and was the president of HC Traktor in 2014–2019, and his colleagues were opponents of the Chelyabinsk Urbanist. Official websites of regional government agencies and the official website of the governor were their main communication channels. Publications were also posted on the all-Russian digital platform "Strategy 24" created in 2015. The stated goal of the project was to provide a dialog between civil society, business, and government and to involve people in Russian public administration.

Russian media provided coverage of this dispute and compared the opposing positions, including Delovoy Kvartal magazine, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Komsomolskaya Pravda radio channel etc.

Target Audience
The audience of the information was citizens of the Chelyabinsk region who are concerned about the optimal distribution of the regional public funds. When this event was covered by

the federal media, all the subscribers followed this discussion, thus the audience coverage has increased.

Content and Form of Messages
The scandal related to the financing of the Traktor Hockey Club (HC Traktor) included several stages, and each of them was accompanied by the creation of media products which were used to implement transparency functions such as the exchange of information in a public dialogue between representatives of the regional public and public authorities on a vital region-related issue; public control over political management procedures; detection of violations when the interests of individual officials are lobbied to the detriment of the common good, etc.

The media plot included several "episodes": 10.12.2018 and 11.12.2018, when the news about the budget money for HC Traktor appeared in Lev Vladov's web portals; 11.12.2018 and 12.12.2018, when Boris Dubrovsky's press service provided an official answer on official online sources; 11.12.2018, when the conflict appeared in the media; 13.12.2018, when the opponents held debates on the radio and offline; 14.12.2018, when the conflict escalated as a result of the office of the prosecutor opening an investigation into the financing of HC Traktor; 18.12.2018, the budget approval; and finally, the spring of 2019, when Governor Dubrovsky's resigned, resulting in personnel changes among regional elites. Next, we consider each episode in detail.

Content of the Chelyabinsk Urbanist
On December 10, 2018, Lev Vladov posted a video on the YouTube channel "A billion to hockey players from the pockets of citizens", in which he said that in 2019 more than 2% (1.035 billion rubles) of the city budget (49 billion rubles) was to be allocated for the maintenance of HC Traktor. On December 11, a VKontakte post was published on the same topic under the title "Did you know that Chelyabinsk spends less than all other Russian cities on landscaping?". The author's thesis is that this is improper distribution of funds which damages the residents of Chelyabinsk.

To prove his point of view, the blogger used rational arguments (the city budget spends 10 times more on HC Traktor than on the improvement of the entire city per year — with further details of spending) and psychological arguments (did you ask Chelyabinsk residents if they really enjoy riding on rusty Pazik busses and giving HC Traktor a billion rubles annually in lieu of top-end busses?).

The speaker pays attention not only to the content, but also to the form of his statements. The expressiveness of the verbal component of messages is enhanced by metonymy (The city earns 150 million rubles from outdoor advertising), periphrasis (We can free the entire city from advertising—from all visual rubbish), anaphora and antithesis (Yes, pride, yes, history. But there are sound thoughts!), parcellation (Come, ask questions. Make demands.), syntactic parallelism (Apartments are getting cheaper, wages are falling), rhetorical questions (Did you know that crime among teenagers has grown significantly in Chelyabinsk over the past year?) and exclamations (It happens every day, like in the nineties!), etc.

The non-verbal component is formed by infographics with comparative data on housing and communal service costs in Russian cities, inserts with statistical indicators of the growth of crime, a map of Chelyabinsk districts, photographs of joyful hockey players and dull

city streets, etc. The Chelyabinsk Urbanist's YouTube video on this subject also includes a falling banner as a laconic and emotionally marked sign of the crumbling urban environment. All this underlines the polycodicity of the media products under consideration, a semiotic feature provided by the technical capabilities of the digital environment.

Another characteristic feature that distinguishes the construction of discourse in new media is interactivity. The content created by the Chelyabinsk Urbanist captured the target audience's attention. Analysis of the content of posts shows that users are in solidarity with the author. The most popular comment is "I would never allow my taxes to be spent on some useless sportsmen".

Response of the Governor's Press Service
The authorities responded to the appeal of the Chelyabinsk Urbanist with the publication "Boris Dubrovsky decided to allocate about a billion rubles for the improvement of Chelyabinsk in 2019", posted on the official websites on December 11, and on the digital platform Strategy 24 on December 12, 2018. Almost the same amount is indicated as in Vladov's materials; information about the scope of its application seemed so important to the addressees that they put it in the strongest section of the text—the title. Within the text, a quote is provided as an explanation aiming at improving the image of the head of the region:
"It is very important that people decide which project should be implemented in the first place [...] Our main goal is to improve the quality of life in every settlement of the Chelyabinsk region", Boris Dubrovsky emphasized.
The genre of the media text under consideration is a news article, the characteristic aim of which for an objective presentation of events: the amount of funding is neutrally specified, and the main objects of improvement are listed.
The form corresponds to the content: the addressee as a whole does not go beyond the language standard and shows restraint in using visual instruments (an official photo of the governor at a meeting with the heads of districts is used). It is difficult to determine what impression this material made on the target audience, since users of the Strategy 24 digital platform did not comment on it (there was no such option available on official websites).

Presentation of the Conflict in the Press
The local press perceived the publication of the press service as an attempt to remove the tension caused by the materials of the Chelyabinsk Urbanist. On December 11, 2018, the magazine Delovoy Kvartal published an article "For HC Traktor: almost a billion rubles will be directed to the improvement of Chelyabinsk". The article reproduces the original media sources, expanding upon the original content with a comment from the former press secretary of the hockey club Igor Zhukov, who calls HC Traktor a PR calling card of Chelyabinsk and critically mentions the ineffective work of the club's leaders (personal PR - to show off, million-dollar contracts for relatives, dubious transfers), which indicates a conflict of interests within the sporting organization.

Presentation of the Conflict in Audiovisual Media and Offline
The specificity of media materials in the press consists in their analyticity and in such publications the emotions of opponents are indirectly reflected; audiovisual media allows for the full intensity of passions to be conveyed. This is confirmed by the recording of a personal meeting between the opponents—blogger Lev Vladov and Vice-Governor of the Chelyabinsk

Region Vadim Evdokimov—on December 13, 2018, live on Komsomolskaya Pravda radio . A significant portion of the program was comments from experts, as well as calls from residents of Chelyabinsk who expressed their position on the issue under discussion.

The characteristics of the analysed material allow us to consider it as an example of modern radio journalism, in which information is transmitted expressively, with the help of vivid images. In this way an illusion is created. The audience experiences the illusion of personal participation in the program. Journalists used a variety of tools to enhance expressiveness—for example, a language game to create homonymy in the name of the Radiorubka program ("office space where radio transmission equipment is located" and a derivative of the word "*rubit'sia*" "fight, combat") and polysemy in its slogan "It will be hot" (figurative meaning of a "difficult, tense situation"). The presentation of the topic was distinguished by an expressive presentation: The information about a billion rubles literally blew up the social networks—I will highlight this word—a billion rubles, which was posted on social networks by the Chelyabinsk Urbanist Lev Vladov. The increased emotionality of this statement is provided by metaphor, inversion, parenthesis, and intonational emphasis. The subsequent remarks of the opponents corresponded to and strengthened this tone.

The arguments from Vladov and Evdokimov cited during the discussion were generally known to the audience from previous media content and the rhetoric traditional of state authorities. The dialogue was often dominated by the modus component: it was important for the interlocutors to express their negative attitude towards the activities of their opponent (Vladov: I am not satisfied with your work) or his personality (Evdokimov: I don't want to talk about fairness with you, because you are a big boor and a populist). The conversation was conducted in a nervous, aggressive manner, with raised voices, and the interlocutors often interrupted each other. In this case, the addressee was not a direct communication partner, but the audience for which the media product was created.

Experts were involved in discussing the situation. Their task was to present a balanced conclusion, taking into account the specifics and complexity of the phenomenon under consideration which are unknown to the broader audience. Many aspects of the problem were focused on, since it was conceptualized in the context of different professional experiences. Thus, Zhukov, the above-mentioned former head of the PR department of HC Traktor, considered it expedient to focus on corporate management. Alexander Fokin, Associate Professor of the Department of History of Russia and Foreign Countries, also drew attention to the ineffectiveness of the club's management system but focused on the distribution of funds in the context of the economic crisis. The director of HC Traktor in the 1990s, Mark Vinnitsky, turned to the modern market of the Continental Hockey League. Herman Galkin, journalist and public figure, proposed that the dilemma of "Traktor or urban environment" be abandoned and new funding sought out.

During the broadcast, the editorial office received calls from residents of Chelyabinsk. The callers had no differences in opinion on resolving the issue of spending priorities: their point of view was that citizens' well-being should be the top priority (including the availability of children's sports facilities) and professional sports—secondary. That is, in the public discussion, these representatives of the target audience supported Lev Vladov.

The result of this radio battle was a suggestion to discuss the problem in the offline format. The opponents met several hours later in one of the Chelyabinsk area administrations. The meeting aroused great interest among the public: the hall was overcrowded. The meeting was broadcast live. Judging by the comments, the content and form of the face-to-face debate

coincided with the radio program, the parties failed to reach an acceptable agreement: "No constructive solution, no answers to the vital issues so far".

To Be Continued…

The further development of events revealed new characters in the story and an additional storyline. On December 14th, a message appeared on the online publication LentaChel.RU: "Has the director of HC Traktor threatened a person who complained to the Prosecutor General's Office?". The article dealt with the director of the information technology center of the Faculty of Economics of ChelSU, Nikolai Olkhovsky, a wheelchair-bound resident of Chelyabinsk. His appeal to the prosecutor's office with a request to audit the distribution of finances in HC Traktor attracted the attention of the head of the club, former Vice-Governor of the Chelyabinsk region Ivan Senichev, who had previously been noted for the public use of obscene expressions. Noteworthy are the cautious remarks used by the journalist when reporting the remarks: "I get audited four times a year," said a man on the phone with a voice very similar to that of former Vice Governor Senichev. "Got it? Including the main control department and so on. Now, if something really serious is said there, you will apologize publicly. I will take you to court! I've had it with you."

Many media outlets wrote about the next plot twist, including LentaChel.RU, Znak, and Rossiyskaya Gazeta (the official government gazette of the Government of the Russian Federation). The most detailed version was in Delovoy Kvartal. One of the key ideas of the article "Boris Dubrovsky apologized to a disabled man from Chelyabinsk on behalf of the director of HC Traktor, Senichev" was expressed in the statement: public control is necessary, and every citizen has the right to engage in it. In accordance with the standards of journalistic ethics, the text under consideration includes an alternative point of view of Senichev, who turned to irony to express a negative attitude towards opponents:

By the way, there is one more budget item that the "best minds" have not yet thought about or mentioned, but it is quite possible to promote yourself with it [...] I'll give a hint to such "economists": crazy multimillion-ruble spending is directed today towards illuminating the city at night. Just imagine, after 22:00 there are no people on the streets, but the whole city is lit up! Horrible, isn't it?! We need to turn off the lights—we will save a lot of money.

The polemical orientation of the trope used is quite obvious. The speaker's attitude towards confrontation is clear; the potential for conflict in this situation has not been exhausted. This circumstance was reflected in the perlocutionary effect of the case under consideration.

The Perlocutionary Effect

The implementation of the principle of transparency allows conclusions to be drawn about the non-verbal, pragmatic result of communicative interaction.

Local Budget

Defining the purpose of the release of his publication "A billion to hockey players from the pockets of citizens", Lev Vladov appealed to the authorities with a proposal to revise the draft budget of Chelyabinsk, abandoning the irrational (from his point of view) use of finances.

When the Chelyabinsk City Duma approved the document, it turned out that the expenditure item that became the object of the blogger's criticism did not just remain—it was increased. Vladov mentioned 1 billion 35 million rubles, whereas the city budget (On the budget of the city of Chelyabinsk, 2018: 1104) and the performance report allocate more than

1.5 billion rubles. At the same time, the name of the expenditure item has become less specific "subsidy for the development and support of leading sports teams (clubs) in team-based and technical sports, taking part in championships of the Chelyabinsk region". The indication that this subsidy is intended specifically for HC Traktor was removed. Such formulations give state bodies more freedom to redistribute budget funds within the designated area. This circumstance should be taken into account in the course of public control.

Personnel Changes
On April 4, 2019, Komsomolskaya Pravda reported the dismissal of the top managers of HC Traktor, Senichev, and Gubarev. The article noted that experts associate this decision with two factors: 1) team losses due to the presence of highly paid, but ineffective players (Danil Mamaev is the former son-in-law of Ivan Senichev, Danil Gubarev is the son of Yevgeny Gubarev) and 2) the resignation of Boris Dubrovskiy, who appointed Senichev to the post of director of HC Traktor and supported him during the escalating scandals.

The budget dispute initiated by Vladov was only one of the episodes in the complex five-year conflict within the leadership of HC Traktor, and it was not the direct and only reason for the dismissal of key actors in the sport, economy, and politics of the Chelyabinsk region. However, discussion materials in social networks and traditional media covered the dubious actions of influential officials and focused the attention of both Russian society and the federal government on them, thus contributing to the personnel transit of the region. It is unlikely that the discussion reflected in the Russian media caused such significant personnel changes for the region. The reduction in financial flows preceded the start of the information campaign, and this is evidenced, in particular, by the publication presented on the website of the Znak news agency "Budgetary financing of HC Traktor was cut by 353 million rubles". In it, the author highlights the corresponding fragment of the text in bold: the decision to cut funding for HC Traktor is not related to the scandal and was made before the activists were outraged by the amount of funding for the club. We accept the point of view of the journalist, but while not being an initiating factor, the material in social networks and traditional media covered the human resources transit, focusing the public attention on the key figures in sports, economics, and politics of the region.

Open Dialogue
The report Openness of the State in Russia defines open dialogue as the interaction between the state and citizens in online and offline formats (Openness of the State in Russia, 2020, p. 44). Public discussions in the media space have an impact on its organization and development. Vladov, in an interview with the magazine Plan B, noted the positive dynamics in this direction: Today, the mayor's office has begun to invite public figures to its meetings, which means that the policy makers have a desire not to close themselves off from problems, but to solve them. The discussed case is not an isolated phenomenon: the desire of citizens to take part in budgeting has been manifesting since 2001 and is becoming an increasingly widespread public practice. Awareness of the significance of this trend led to it being reflected in the federal law of Russia on initiative budgeting in 2020.

DISCUSSION

Discourse analysis of our case study revealed a socially significant issue which triggered transparent processes in the Russian region in 2018-2019—participatory financing. Having a legitimate access to official documents on the activities of regional authorities, Chelyabinsk residents organized the public discussion of a regional budget project and criticized the budget allocation to HC Traktor. As a result, the authorities engaged in open dialogue, trying to account for their decision. The opponents of the discussion used different channels in their media communications to influence the target audience: social networks, websites, the Russian digital platform, and traditional media, that is, those mechanisms for implementing transparency that function within the legal framework of the Russian Federation.

Our study of the content and form of messages on the HC Traktor financing scandal proved that in modern mass communications, the addressee's attention is attracted by the aesthetics of language standards (expressive tropes and stylistic figures), polycode in the presentation of information, and storytelling techniques. Materials on the financing of HC Traktor were published in the media before the events detailed above, but did not arouse such interest among the target audience, because the issue was not raised in a narrative involving all residents of the city prior to the piece by the Chelyabinsk Urbanist.

The initiator of the discussion, blogger Lev Vladov, created an expressive image of the long-suffering Chelyabinsk region: gray, and dirty, environmentally disadvantaged. In contrast to this backdrop, information about the billion rubles allocated from the city budget for the maintenance of the "fashionable toy of the top officials of the region" was presented as personally and emotionally as possible. The stated contradiction caused the conflict—the source of a fascinating media story. Its development is connected with the interaction of the main characters, among which are the images of a fighter and a defender (L. Vladov, civil activist), an antagonist (V. Evdokimov, vice-governor), a villain (I. Senichev, director of HC Tractor), victims (disabled Chelyabinsk resident N. Olkhovskiy) and even deus ex machina (the resignation of Governor B. Dubrovskiy).

An awareness of the involvement in the problems existing in the region, sympathy or antipathy for the actors, and the possession of modern communication technologies revealed that people had a need to publicly express their own opinions and defend their rights; thanks to new media, their experience has become interactive ("Q&A with: Pam Rutledge, Media Psychologist", 2021).

In the course of our study, we paid special attention to the perlocutionary effect of transparency in the media environment, which is complex and deferred. Summing up the discussion on the financing of HC Traktor, Lev Vladov remarked that the regional authorities started to involve social activists in the discussion of social issues. This speaks to the influence of public dialog on regional managerial practice, the dynamics of which are reflected in the legislation of the Russian Federation.

Such evidence, in our opinion, speaks of the impact of public dialogue on regional management practices, the dynamics of which are reflected in the legislation of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the debate on the more rational (from the point of view of the public) distribution of financial resources did not achieve the stated goal: the conflicting budget item remained, the allocated budget was increased, and the vagueness of the wording made the issue of beneficiaries unclear.

However, this does not mean that in Russia such scandals occur without significant consequences: their wide media coverage accompanies changes in the composition of the regional elites.

CONCLUSION

A reasonable balance between transparency and opacity is necessary for the modern information society. This is a flexible and dynamic phenomenon that depends on various factors, including the political situation in the country, the development of public institutions, the peculiarities of the media system, etc.

In Russia, the activities of public authorities have traditionally been hidden from public discussion and control, which can explain the lack of transparency in the political management sphere. Our research demonstrated how this problem was solved in 2018–2019 in media communication of a typical Russian region.

It was found that during this period media tools of transparency functioned, but had limited influence, as management practices included blind spots with information inaccessible to the mass audience. Our study of the Chelyabinsk case allows us to conclude that in 2018–2019 this process depended on many factors. It is difficult to compile an exhaustive list of these factors, to determine the "weight" of each determinant, or to identify the details of their implementation and interaction based on media materials. This is especially true for the mechanisms of budget allocation and personnel transit which is the opaquest area of Russian domestic political management. The causes and effects of this state of affairs are many and varied, and we believe that they can be the subject of further interdisciplinary research.

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