

Exploring people's motives for participating in the post 2011-election protest in Arkhangelsk, Russia

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Master thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation – SVF-3901
May 2016



Abstract

The thesis examines the motives of people in Arkhangelsk (Russia) to take part in the 10 December 2011 protest which emerged after the Duma elections. The objective of the research is to find out what motivated people in Arkhangelsk to take part in the protest (i.e. what kind of drivers triggered them to participate). The study draws on theory of spatial analyses of protest under the Russia's hybrid regime, which emphasizes local socioeconomic and political conditions as influential factors in formation of nature of protest.

The results of the qualitative research indicate that protestors in Arkhangelsk were not only concerned with possible falsifications of Duma election results when they engaged into the protest. Due to specific local environments, protesters might also put forward demands based on discontent with socioeconomic and political situation in Arkhangelsk. The findings suggest that protest in Arkhangelsk was not purely political but combined traits of social and economic protest as well.

Key words: Arkhangelsk region, December 2011 protests in Russia, hybrid regime state, protest drivers, spatial analyses of protest

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank Lånakassen for giving me an opportunity to become a part of the “Peace and Conflict transformation” program, University of Tromsø.

My sincere thanks also goes to the all lecturers and employees of Centre for Peace studies, especially to Elisabeth, Christine, Vidar, Randolph, Lodve, Christin, and, of course, Percy Oware. All of you brightened my days in Tromsø and were great source of my inspiration.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Ingrid Kvalvik. Your assistance, flexibility and infinite patience encouraged me very much.

Special thanks to all my informants and ones who helped me with my research during the whole way.

In addition to this, I would like to express huge thanks to my dearest friend Vladimir Starikov for his great help and advice during my fieldwork.

Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my mother Lubov Kolykhaeva, for constant support of me. Without your encouragement and empathy, mom, I would have hardly completed my work.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

After almost ten years of stable development in Russia, which replaced “wild and evil” 1990s¹ – transition period from communism to capitalism - social tension across the country had started to increase again by the end of 2000s (Berdy, 2010). The Great Recession of 2008 is often considered as a starting point which gave impetus to worsening of socio-economic situation in the country, which, in its turn, undermined credit of trust towards current authority among ordinary citizens (Khanin & Fomin, 2013, pp. 12-13). Trends connected with pressure on democratic institutes in the second half of 2000s in Russia accelerated growth of discontent with political environment in the state as well. The protest wave in December 2011 in Russia was one of the most significant demonstrations of the situation in Russian society at that time. One of the protests was held in Arkhangelsk city, 10 December 2011.

1.1 Growth of protest mood in Arkhangelsk, Russia

Arkhangelsk was founded in 1584. It is situated in the European North of Russia on the territory of “Belomorjye” (the White Sea area) with population about 350 thousand inhabitants (The official tourism information portal of the Arkhangelsk Region, 2010). The city is an administrative centre of the same name region and one of the biggest in the Arctic area at all (Russian cities today, 2014).

The Arkhangelsk region is traditionally considered to be a zone with relatively social stability (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 40). However, since 2009 protest activity in the region has been increasing. At this period there was a fall in the rate of industrial growth, increase of unemployment rate, reduction in demand for the products of timber industry complex in the area and so on. According to the research of “Obshestvennoe mnenie” (“Public opinion”) polling organization, 73% of local inhabitants were “dissatisfied with socio-economic conditions in the region” in 2009 (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 40). In the subsequent three years (2009-2011) residents of Arkhangelsk and other small cities in the region experienced a few waves of protests. In particular, the biggest of them were the “protest of doctors” in May and September 2009; the protest against growth of tariffs of housing and communal services in February, March, and April 2010; the “Antigovernor” protest in April and May 2011 and other. None were well organized and did not exceed thousand participators (Chuvashova, 2011, p. 2).

¹ “Wild and evil 1990s” is a journalist cliché characterizing period of post-Soviet Russia in 1990s and associated with: radical market reforms (“shock therapy”), comprehensive privatization of state property, development of democratic institutes, spread of banditry etc.

Main demands of all those protests were generally associated with improvement of socio-economic conditions. As most of these demands were ignored, from 2010 political claims became more and more loud as well. Particularly, protestors urged to fire regional chief leaders, to improve authority monitoring system and so on (ibid., pp. 2-7).

Such state of affairs manifested itself in record reduction of voters for the current ruling party “United Russia” on 4 December 2011 Duma election². Compared to the previous one in 2007, the percentage of people in the Arkhangelsk region who voted for this party was halved: from 56% in 2007 to 30% in 2011. There was no any other area in Russia (except Yaroslavl region) with such a low support of the “United Russia” party.

However, many representatives of local population were not satisfied even with such a result of elections. In addition, the protest researcher N. Chuvashova (2013) notes that citizens had “suspicion of manipulation of votes in 4 December 2011 Duma elections” (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 4). As a result, large-scale protest movement in entire Russia including the Arkhangelsk region emerged: more than two thousand people took part on the 10 December protest in Arkhangelsk. According to the official reports, protestors (most of whom were young people) demanded to declare honest figures of the elections, to liberate electoral legislation, to fire the chief of Central Electoral Commission V. Churov, governor of the region I. Mikhalkhuk and prime-minister V. Putin (Krasnoe TV, 2011; Chuvashova, 2013, p. 44). The movement itself was well-organized by representatives of the local political parties (mainly, by communists and social democrats) and civil society (non-profit-making organizations and unions). Due to a large scale and level of organization, Norwegian journalist R. Andersen called that movement “Snørevolusjonen” (“snow revolution”) (Krasnoe TV, 2011). Noteworthy, that factually none of the protesters’ demands was satisfied except voluntary-compulsory resignation of governor I. Mikhalkhuk in January 2012.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

The main standpoint of the present thesis is that understanding of peoples’ participation in protest is closely connected with examination of their first-hand experience. The study seeks to achieve this by giving priority to first person accounts emphasizing actors which, as the researcher of protests in modern Russia M. Mamonov (2013) notes, “were ignored in most of the studies dedicated to the December 2011 protests in Russia” (Mamonov, 2013, p. 379).

² Duma (or State Duma) is the lower legislative house of the Russian Federation

This study seeks to bring focus on the viewpoints of several protesters in Arkhangelsk on 10 December 2011 protest in which they took part. The research seeks to provide insights on a few protestors' perspectives in order to get deep, not aggregate data. Referring to the protestors' reflections, the study seeks to create fuller and better understanding of the 10 December protest in Arkhangelsk in general, especially taking into account that only several small studies in regards to this protest were done so far.

Based on context, **the main research question** of the present thesis is: what made people in Arkhangelsk take part in the protest. In other words, I would like to find out what motivated them to be involved into the 10 December rally.

In order to achieve my aim, I use theoretical findings of T. Lankina and A. Voznaya who studied nature of protests in contemporary Russia. Having studied reasons of protests across Russia in the period from 2007 to 2012, these two researches came to the conclusion that local political and socioeconomic conditions affect mostly type of demands protestors have towards authorities. In other words, these environments are crucial in forming of nature of protest in particular region³.

I use their findings as a starting point in my thesis trying to apply them to the format of my work. Admitting that the formal cause of all December protests across Russia was similar (people's discontent with falsification of 2011 Duma elections results), I hypothesize that local socioeconomic and political environments might form some specific additional demands among protestors towards authorities in every region where protests occurred.

Figure 1. Spread of December 2011 protests on the territory of Russia⁴



³ Detailed description of A. Voznaya and T. Lankina's work is presented in Theoretical Foundation chapter

⁴ The map is taken from: <http://www.russia-ukraine-travel.com/images/map-russia-roads-rail.gif>; red "protest" spots mark the protests where number was abt. 1000 people and more

It means that, except formal cause connected with falsifications, protestors in different regions of Russia might have other reasons to participate (reasons connected with local environments of the respective region). Such an assumption is associated with the fact that Russia, as the economic geographer N. Zubarevitch (2011) points out, is “too big territorially... extremely multiple and diverse politically, socially, and culturally” (Zubarevitch, 2011). It means that people protesting in European North of Russia might have other reasons to protest compared to people who protested in the central part of the state since local conditions differ much from one region to another.

Thus, in my case, trying to understand what motivated people in Arkhangelsk to take part in the December protest, I assume that for some people there might be other triggers except formal protest cause connected with falsification of Duma elections’ results. Based on my empirical data and theoretical foundation, **I would like to find out** to what degree local socioeconomic and political conditions were influential (if they were at all) as triggers to protest for some protestors in Arkhangelsk in 2011.

1.3 Finding my thesis

My desire to study 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk appeared a while after the event. At that time I was third year student in Northern Arctic Federal University (NArFU) in Arkhangelsk, Russia who studied “International relations and regional studies”. In other words, I was a witness of that protest which was, in fact, the biggest one in the modern history of the city. As a native Arkhangelsk resident, I was extremely amazed with scale of it and how much people in the city (not only protestors) were angry with situation in the area and state in general. I remember that my relatives and acquaintances’ angriness was not only connected with information that electoral results could be falsified but with worsening of socioeconomic situation and anti-democratic changes in political system of Russia which continued in the state at that time. Therefore, when after sometime I started to read reflections from national and foreign mass media and from the researchers about December protests in Russia, I could not agree completely with their conclusions regarding causes of these protests⁵. The authors of most of the works I had read underlined that, generally, the December protests across Russia were very similar, triggered by one factor (falsifications). It meant that people had same claims

⁵ Some of those works devoted to the "December 2011 protests" topic are enclosed here: <http://www.stasisjournal.net/all-issues/24-1-2014-revolutions-and-protest-movements/59-the-russian-protest-movement-of-2011-2012-a-new-middle-class-populism>; https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20140523SakwaFinal.pdf

towards government in every region in Russia. Even at that time I was rather skeptical about such a generalized approach thinking that specific environment of Arkhangelsk made protest so big. If everything was about falsification why didn't people in Arkhangelsk protest, then, in 2007 or 2003 when there were other Duma elections and there were evidences about electoral fraud as well (Centre for the study of public policy, 2015)? Why people in Arkhangelsk were so angry right at that time (December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk, as it was mentioned, was the biggest in history of the city in last several decades and one of the most wide scale protests compared to ones in other parts of the country)?

Having these questions in my mind at that time, I formulated my provisional hypothesis that local situation in every specific region influenced much on protestors' claims and, consequently, on nature of protest. However, since I had already chosen my thesis topic I could not study nature of 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk as the N(A)rFU student.

In 2014 I became a master student of the "Peace studies" program in the University of Tromsø and decided to come back to examination of this topic. I found it relevant to my program since it touches upon such issues as "nature of protest", "protest as a form of political participation", "democracy development" and other issues which are much focused in Peace studies.

In the beginning of my work, I had an assumption that uniqueness of the Arkhangelsk protest was connected with not only internal but external factors as well, for example, with relative closeness of the city to Western Europe and apartness from the centre. I assumed that those factors, in connection with worsening of socioeconomic situation in the city, resulted in such a big protest in Arkhangelsk.

However, after the fieldwork in summer 2015, where I interviewed some Arkhangelsk protestors and wanted to find out what persuaded people to take part in protest, I decided to stress on political and socioeconomic factors only. From the answers of the informants I caught out that internal environment of the region (local political and socioeconomic conditions) was most significant in forming of people's claims towards government on that protest. At the same time, external factors were not so relevant for the interviewees as triggers to protest. Consequently, I needed some concrete theoretical foundation for my new understanding of work which I found in the theory of A. Voznaya and T. Lankina regarding protest trends in Russia's regions. It focuses, as it was said, on examination of local political and socioeconomic environments as most influential factors in forming of nature of protest. I found their approach relevant to my work and decided to use it as a theoretical base.

Thus, by the autumn 2015, based on Voznaya and Lankina's study and my empirical data, I formulated the current main hypothesis of the thesis in a form in which it is now. It sounds as follows: formal main cause of the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk might coincide with the main cause of the December protests in other parts of the state (people's discontent with falsifications of Duma election results). At the same time, due to specific local political and socioeconomic situation, protestors in Arkhangelsk might have other different to other regions' claims towards authorities. Understanding of drivers which could affect people's motivation to participate in the Arkhangelsk protest is something I focus on in the present thesis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The present thesis is divided into six chapters. The following chapter is devoted to more detailed focus on the wave of protest in 2011 from general perspective and background information about situation in Russia right before the studied events. In the chapter 3 the theoretical foundation of the thesis is presented. Chapter 4 discusses and reflects the methodological issues of the study. In the Chapter 5 data presentation and analyses are presented. Last section of the work focuses concluding remarks of the whole paper.

Chapter 2. Protest in contemporary Russia

The second chapter focuses on presenting briefly nature and changes of protest activity in modern Russia, stressing December 2011 wave of protests, its roots and consequences.

2.1 From 1990s to the end of 2000s

Protest as a phenomenon of the contemporary Russian political and social reality emerged in massive and opened forms rather recently.

In the beginning, this new type of political practice played role as a dissident movement under the democratic slogans against economic stagnation and political demagoguery of the Soviet authorities. Emergence of such movement was allowed by the highest elite of the Communist Party in the middle of 1980s within the framework of “Perestroika” (“restructuring policy”) with corresponding slogans: “for democratization!”, “for pluralism, and publicity in state!” and so on. Being inspired with such slogans, Russian intellectuals, mainly, became key members of protests at that time (Pratsko & Sphak, 2013, p. 23).

The protests after the collapse of USSR in 1990s were much larger at their scale, type of participants and content. With enactment of new Constitution in 1993, the right to protest was secured in the main law of the newly formed country. It was fixed in the articles 23, 30, 31, 37, and 45 that person may not just protect his rights by any legal means but express protest in specific forms: meetings, demonstrations, marches, strikes, picketing (ibid., p. 24).

In general, a protest movement in 1990s was a reaction of masses in relation to results of inconsistent and contractionary state policy which resulted in huge fall in living standards among majority of Russian population in comparison to the Soviet period. This is the reason why the protest movement in Russia in 1990s is often called “nostalgic” (Vasilchenko, 2015, p. 40). Such state of affairs provoked citizens to defend their vital interests in form of protest which, consequently, led to the widescale meetings, marches, demonstrations, strikes, railways blocking etc. across the country. An image of the protestor was associated with middle or old-aged person and representatives of most unprotected socio-demographic layers (ibid., p. 40). Initially, all those actions were just a form of citizens’ reaction on the negative consequences of the implemented “market reforms”. Only gradually by the beginning of 21st century, the protest movement in Russia got stable traits and status of almost natural companion of political reality (Pratsko & Shpak, 2013, p. 2).

Vladimir Putin's rise to power in the beginning of 2000s was optimistically perceived by majority of Russian population. His image, as a representative of security forces, was associated with new historical stage in Russia which was in need with, as Russian philosopher E. Sheshtopal (2012) calls it, "strong-arm leader... [who may help] to stabilize consequences of chaos and devastation of 1990s" (Sheshtopal, 2012, p. 97). Background of such positive perception was growth of oil prices which let country to get excess profit and stabilize socioeconomic environment inside the state. All these factors resulted in decrease of number of protests across Russia in the first half of 21st century.

At the same time, in the beginning of 2000s new trends in the Russian reality developed which affected nature of protests in the country further. While the first decade after the collapse of USSR in Russia was associated with development of democratic institutes, in 2000s reverse tendencies started to spread. It was especially much noticeable in the political sphere and manifested in, for example, "verticalization" of power (the alignment of the system of management in which, practically, every official is accountable to the president), growing pressure on the Parliament opposition, gradual merging of ruling "pro-Putin" party "United Russia" and government apparatus etc. (Sergeev, 2013, p. 130). All that resulted in growth of peoples' skepticism and disappointment towards democratic institutes (and especially, electoral ones) as tool to influence on situation in the country.

One of the consequences of such state of affairs was emergence and rise of non-parliamentary opposition in the middle of 2000s which was dissatisfied with trends in political sphere of Russia. Representatives of this opposition started to organize protests across all regions of Russia to express this discontent. Unlike 1990s, when protestors were mainly triggered by their difficult socioeconomic situation, in the middle of 2000s political issues were put on agenda as well. These movements were very different in their claims: from radical left-winged organizations (such as "Vanguard of the Red youth") to moderate ones ("Solidarity", "United Civil Front" and other). These organizations created coalitions with their aims and demands to authorities and organized protest events across entire state.

In particular, in the period from 2005 to 2010, the biggest coalitions were "Other Russia" and "Strategy 31" which had sophisticated system of management throughout the country and organized rallies in many regions of Russia, protesting against urgent political issues. It should be noted that all marches, strikes and meetings carried out by these coalitions caused severe reaction of the authorities: almost every action was dispersed by police and participants were often detained and were prosecuted for administrative items. However, all of

the protests organized by these coalitions during that period didn't exceed 3000 people, even in the biggest cities of Russia (ibid., p. 131).

Social protests at that time were less widescale, more spontaneous and less organized. In the first decade of 2000s people, as a rule, organized small protests in defence of housing rights, the preservation of social benefits and the environment (ibid., p. 132).

2.2 December 2011 protests across Russia

2.2.1 Preconditions of the protests

By the beginning of 2011 several opinion poll centers had marked growth in protest potential among Russians. It was expressed, in particular, in trust decline to president D. Medvedev, prime-minister V. Putin, and the ruling party "United Russia". The situation became more complicated due to decline in living standards in Russia in last several years. Finally, it was stressed in the opinion poll report that forthcoming Duma election in December would be turning-point if results of election would not fit the expectations of citizens. Such situation, in turn, could result in the recordly large crisis in the Russian society in the last 20 years (ibid., p. 132).

The election environment in the months leading up to the December 2011 Duma vote appeared to indicate increased public discontent with the current political system dominated by V. Putin. According to the July 2011 opinion survey by the Russian "Levada Center" polling organization, 53% of informants considered that the forthcoming Duma election in December would be "an imitation of an election and seats in the State Duma will be distributed as the authorities wish," and 59% of informants agreed with a statement that the election was a "struggle of bureaucratic clans for access to the state budget," rather than a free and fair election (Nichol, 2011, p. 2). Analyst A. Kolesnikov argued that D. Medvedev was the symbol of modernization, and that when V. Putin announced in September 2011 that he would re-assume the presidency, the public became more discontented with the basic authoritarianism of the political system since "decision was made without asking of voters" (ibid., p. 2).

As an election day neared, Russian officials became more concerned that the ruling "United Russia" party, which had held most of the seats in the outgoing Duma, was rapidly losing popularity among population. According to some observers, Russian authorities, in an attempt to prevent losses at the polls, not only used their positions to campaign for the "United Russia" party but also planned ballotbox stuffing and other illicit means to retain a majority of seats for the "United Russia". In addition, president D. Medvedev and prime-minister V. Putin

had increasingly criticized election monitoring carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and insisted on decrease of the number of OSCE observers. Besides, authorities moved against Russian non-governmental monitoring group, Golos, to discourage its coverage of the electoral process. J. Nichol (2011), American specialist in Russian Affairs, points out that “according to the OSCE’s preliminary report on the results of the election, the close linkage between Russian government and the ruling party, the refusal to register political parties, the pro-government prejudgment of the electoral commissions and most Mass media, ballot-box stuffing and other forms of manipulation of the vote marked the 4 December 2011 Duma election as not free and fair” (Nichol, 2011, p. 4). Monitoring group “Golos” reported that it had short-term observers in forty regions of Russia that visited more than four thousand polling stations. Golos, in its report, drew a conclusion that the election was characterized by “considerable violations of many crucial voting procedures” (ibid., p. 4). It argued that some political parties had been prevented from forming and taking part in the electoral run, that electoral commissions had been packed with authorities representatives lacking knowledge of electoral procedures, and that some officials openly campaigned for “United Russia” as part of their duties. Nichol notes that Golos observers reported examples “in which absentee ballots appeared to be abused, groups appearing to be transported from polling place to polling place to vote repeatedly, folded or even tied batches of votes were seen in the ballot boxes, and the counting of votes appeared to violate procedures” (ibid., p. 5).

Therefore, when the results reported by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) were announced they were met with scepticism by Russian public. According to the CEC, “United Russia” lost 77 of the 315 seats it held since 2007, but it still retained over one half of the seats (238 out of 450) in Parliament which meant that the “UR” party, as well as after previous Duma Election in 2007 no longer needed to seek accommodation with the three other Parliament parties (“LDPR” party, “CPRF” party, “Fair Russia” party) that won seats in order to pass favoured laws (ibid., p. 1).

The day after the election, about 5,000 protesters rallied in Moscow against what they viewed as an unfair election. When some of them started an unsanctioned march towards the Central Electoral Commission, police severely dispersed them; hundreds of participants were detained. Protest attempts the next two nights were suppressed (ibid., p. 7).

On 10 December 2011, demonstrations under the slogan “For honest elections!” were held in Moscow, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Arkhangelsk and other cities of Russia.

Table 1. The biggest protests in Russia, December 2011⁶

City	Number of participants	Date	Protesters per. capita
Moscow	85 000 – 15 0000	10 December	0,0074
Novosibirsk	abt. 6000	10 December	0,0038
Ekaterinburg	abt. 5000	10 December	0,0036
Tomsk	abt. 4000	10 December	0,0070
Samara	abt. 4000	24 December	0,0034
Arkhangelsk	abt. 2500	10 December	0,0071
Volgograd	abt. 2000	10 December	0,0020
Izhevsk	abt. 2000	24 December	0,0031

In Moscow, the crowd was estimated by the police at about 25,000 (other estimates were up to 150 000), one of the largest such demonstrations in years. Police presence was massive but there were few if any detentions. At the rally, there was announced a list of demands which included the resignation of the CEC head (V. Churov), release of those detained for protesting and other “political prisoners,” registration of previously banned parties, and new Duma elections. In some other cities, the protests were broken up by police and demonstrators were harshly dispersed (Sergeev, 2013, p. 133).

The Russian protest researcher S. Sergeev (2013) notes that 2011 December protests across Russia had one common character trait. All of them were, in the main, organized not by opposing to the “United Russia” political parties but mainly by civil activists and representatives of non-parliamentary opposition who regardless their political views worked very cohesively together. This is why December protests are usually called “pro-democratic”: participators could have different political views but all of them, according to Sergeev, were united and inspired by idea of Russian democratisation (Sergeev, 2013, p. 133). However at the same time he admits that in order to explain such a large scale of December protests throughout the country it is necessary to study every single protest separately since it helps “to avoid unnecessary general conclusions” (ibid., p. 133). Besides, another character trait of the December 2011 protests was deep engagement of young people, so-called, “creative class” (office employees, students etc.) into organization and participation in protests who are “the most mobilized and desirous part of society to express their civil position” (Vasilchenko, 2015, p. 40). V. Vasilchenko, who studied tendencies of protest mood in contemporary Russia, underlines, that big role of students in December 2011 protests, as most reactive to the situation

⁶ Information is taken from local mass media sources which covered December 2011 protests across all regions of Russia. See in details: <http://lenta.ru/chronicles/protest/>; <http://www.dayudm.ru/news/2011/12/12/51110/>; <http://www.rosbalt.ru/federal/2011/12/12/923316.html>; <http://www.kompravda.eu/daily/25809/2789303>

in the state, evidenced that democratic consciousness of Russians gradually matured and would continue to grow (ibid., p. 41).

2.2.2 Consequences of the December 2011 protests: Kremlin reaction

Despite such great scale throughout the country, December protests didn't result in emergence in all-over population's oppositional mood towards current Russian government. V. Putin was able to mobilize and consolidate his supporters which let him easily win presidential campaign (4 March 2012) (Sergeev, 2013, p. 135).

However, when political positions of the "United Russia" and V. Putin's administration became legislatively secured for the next five years (new Duma elections will be held in September 2016; president elections in 2018) several actions were taken to avoid reiteration of December protests. Particularly, "About meetings" law was adopted in July 2012 which toughened rules for holding rallies (for example, fines for even small violations were highly increased etc.). Additionally, authorities got right to refuse in holding of rallies, if organizer of a protest committed an administrative offense conducting public events previously (ibid., p. 136).

Nevertheless, as the "Levada Center" polling organization points out, such actions did not conceive the expected effect: every third respondent in Moscow continued to support mass protests against political and socioeconomic situation in the country (ibid., p. 137).

In order to legitimize his rule, V. Putin and his administration needed to return support of masses which was lost in December 2011, when most progressive groups of society (young high educated people, "creative" class) refused to support him and "United Russia" party and formed social base of protests. As Sergeev notes, V. Putin managed to achieve this goal by reorienting of policy focus from middle class as main target group to more poor conservative and traditional masses (ibid., p. 138). As a result, instead of policy designed for most educated and young people of Russia ("modernization") like it was under the Medvedev presidency, new policy vector focused on such issues like religious values ("Pussy riot" case), rights of sexual minorities, patriotic values (Crimea annexation) etc. With emphasizing of such issues, Putin's administration managed to calm protest mood in the country, to form reliable conservative majority and split the opposition which had not concrete agenda and common aims except abstract goal to "overthrow Putin's regime" (ibid., p. 139).

Chapter 3. Theoretical foundation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter brings the theoretical framework to the study of protest activity phenomenon in modern Russia. In the beginning it introduces the concept of protest in a hybrid regime state as an attempt to look at the protest when country is under the phase of transformation from authoritarianism to democracy “which is peculiar to cotemporary Russia” (Ekman, 2009, p. 8).

The concept allows to shed light on specific place of the protest for citizens in the hybrid state. In case of my work I would like to apply this concept for the 2011 December protests in Russia when the trigger of the protests across all regions in the country was alleged to be comprehensive falsifications at the State Duma elections held on 4 December 2011 (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 42). Based on the findings of two researchers T. Lankina and A. Voznaya, who studied nature of protests in modern Russia (from 2007 to 2012) in the context of hybrid regime state, I try to find out a connection between possible motives of protestors under hybrid regime state and peculiarities of place where they protest (in my case, in Arkhangelsk). In their research, Lankina and Voznaya examine how local socio-economic and political environments affect the nature of claims towards the authorities and, therefore, how it affects nature of protest on the local level.

3.2 What is a hybrid regime state? Russia as a hybrid state

The notion of hybrid state is one that is not easy to define. However, one point where consensus might be drawn explains hybrid state as consisting of a “political regime which contains elements of both an autocratic system and democratic system” (Wuzumi, 2011). The difficulty of classification is also connected with the fact that each country labeled as “hybrid” may have its own additional set of traits of such hybridity (Bulumac, 2012). Hybrid regime state, as J. Ekman (2009) points out, may originate from collapse of one authoritarian regime, followed by the emergence of a new electoral-authoritarian regime or, vice versa, from the decay of a democratic regime (Ekman, 2009, p. 14).

In their long-term fundamental study of hybrid state, A. Menocal, V. Fritz, and L. Rakner (2008) select out the following common traits which can be observed in every so-called state:

Lack of governmental accountability

Hybrid regimes tend to be characterised by populist politics, “strong-man leadership” and opaque decision-making processes (Menocal et al., 2008, p. 5).

Lack of credibility and/or trust in formal (democratic) institutions

Despite considerable democratic advancements, especially in the area of elections, in such sort of states, many institutions, which are key to make democracy work, suffer from lack of credibility or trust. As Menocal, Fritz and Rakner (2008) note: “frequently... national legislatures and political parties have shown to be institutions least trusted by the population, ranking much below Church, Army and so on” (ibid., p. 6). At the same time, however, electoral process is becoming routinized part of political life, although, citizen often doubt that elections can actually result in the alternations of power (ibid., p. 6).

Lack of forms of political participation

The present traits are, in many respects, run out of previous two. As Menocal, Fritz and Rakner point out “shallow political participation outside elections and weak governmental accountability lead to a sense of collective public frustration about what democracy can deliver” (ibid., p. 6). Therefore, people get frustrated with what they can actually achieve through formal political institutions. As it was mentioned, citizens have feeling of mistrust to chief institutions (political parties, judiciary etc.), since they are not adequately representative. Therefore, political participation often may take place outside formal institutional channels. Additionally, mass media and critical to the government civil society organisations may be harassed or victimised by government sanctions (ibid., p. 7).

High level of corruption and clientelism

As one of the most striking traits, A. Menocal, V. Fritz, and L. Rakner emphasize that hybrid state is driven by personalised interests and public officials often act “to further their own gains without much concern... of public good” (ibid., p. 7). Such a position frequently results in high level of corruption, especially if accountability system (beyond elections) is badly functioning. Moreover, even elections themselves may be the source of corruption since “campaigning is expensive, and politicians often seek to raise funds or win votes in various illicit ways” (ibid., p. 7). Civil services often continue to suffer from a mix of regional or political clientelism “ranging from the creation of additional ministries to accommodate important support groups to the abuse of civil servants to rally support for incumbents during pre-election periods” (ibid., p. 8).

High expectations and weak state capacity

State capacity remains persistently weak, at the same time, however, more actors demand to be included in decision-making processes and expect better services and enhanced

state accountability (ibid., p. 7). This dual dynamic reinforces the prospects for instability in state. Country may be overwhelmed by new demands brought about by democratic pressures, and unable to respond adequately since it lacks necessary institutional and administrative capacity, and even legitimacy and credibility to do that (ibid., pp. 7-8). Consequently, country under hybrid regime condition is more prone to different sort of social unrests.

Elite reversals

Authors continue that usually in hybrid regime states “reversals have been induced by political elites rather than by pressures from below” (for example, presidents may correct chief law of country in order to prolong their ruling legally and so on) (Menocal et al., 2008, p. 8). Such type of reversals may be justified by the facts that more authoritarian measures are needed to strengthen state capacity. What is important to note that such sort of measures are often silently met by the broad sector of population since such elites are “perceived as strong leaders who will be able to provide some order to the lawlessness often associated with (incomplete) democratisation” (Rose, 2001).

In their works, J. Ekman (2009), O. Bulumac (2012), A. Voznaya and T. Lankina (2015) consider Russia as the “hybrid” country, noting similar to mentioned traits of the Russian regime, stressing, however, some peculiarities in addition.

Particularly, O. Bulumac (2012) points out that hybrid regime of modern Russia was absolutely static without movement to autocracy or democracy right before, so-called, “December democratic protests” in 2011 when society demonstrated its discontent with such state of affairs (Bulumac, 2012). Ekman (2009) underlines that, apart from others, main traits of the Russian hybridity are following: low confidence in political parties, low turnout in elections and pressure on election results, and low support of democracy among majority of population. He emphasized much bad quality of electing institute development in present Russia and people’s discontent with that. Such state of affairs forces citizens to find other ways to express their grievances to current politics of government including formation of civil NGOs or organization of protests like it was in Arkhangelsk, Moscow and other cities in December 2011 (Ekman, 2009, p. 17; pp. 26-27).

Researchers T. Lankina and A. Voznaya (2015) stress importance of local factor in assessment of Russian hybrid regime state which is characterized by unevenness of democratic development and levels of political maturity across regions in Russia (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 329). This finding of researchers implies that some regions of the country are more authoritarian than others (for example, while Caucasian regions are under the strict authoritarian regime, most European regions of Russia, including Arkhangelsk, have

respectively high level of development of democratic institutions), level of corruption and political competition on regional level can also differ from one region to another and so on (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, pp. 328-329).

There is lack of studies devoted to measurement of democracy rate at local areas of Russia. It is possible to examine it by looking at how much people are satisfied with development of democratic institutions on local and federal level. One of the way to do that is to see what kind of claims are usually prone to the protesters during some definite period of time. The protest researcher N. Chuvashova (2011) notes that from 2007 to the beginning of 2011 most of the Arkhangelsk protesters' claims in all protests were, as a rule, connected with issues like massive layoffs, growth of housing and communal services, pension reduction i.e. with socio-economic issues (Chuvashova, 2011, pp. 114-116). Therefore in Arkhangelsk by the beginning of 2011 claims connected with political maturity and democratic development in the region were secondary for protesters, while socio-economic issues usually came to the forefront.

3.3 Protest in hybrid regime state

Since my study focuses the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk it is necessary to enlighten role of protest in hybrid regime state.

As it was mentioned earlier, several researchers usually points out that people are often frustrated with quality of political, civil and administrative institutions under hybrid regime (Menocal et al., 2008, p. 7; Ekman, 2009, p. 17). Their ineffectiveness accompanied with corruption, clietelism, lack of governmental accountability and trust in formal institutions may result in people's desire to "establish and support contact" with authority through informal institutional channels (Ekman, 2009, p. 26). In other words, people consider that, for example, activism in opposing parties or even participation in electoral process cannot let ordinary citizens control and influence on governmental policy properly in a way it should be in democratic state. At the same time, protesting actions, as an "informal form of political participation", allow people to be heard by authorities and express people's complaints about different aspects of governmental policy and political system in general which is not be done so effectively by any other form of political participation. Therefore, it is not surprise why number and frequency of protests in hybrid regime states are higher than in any other type of state (Wuzumi, 2011). Gathering together, it is connected with following factors:

a) people legislatively get possibility to publicly express their dissent on matters they consider important for them;

b) yet there is no normative and/or institutional base (or it is weak and corruptive) for solving arisen actual issues through respective institutions peacefully.

Therefore, in my study I consider protest as “citizens’ expression of dissent or critique”, that involves “recourse to non-institutional forms of political participation” (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 328). As A. Voznaya and T. Lankina (2015) stress: “the limits of political activism within this type of political regime, thus, give salience to protests as a form of contentious political participation” (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 329).

In other words, under conditions of hybrid state protest becomes one of the best way of authority-citizens “communication” since it reveals opportunity for citizens’ claims to be for sure heard by authorities which, in turn, increases chances of these claims to be solved. Especially important to note, that, as T. Lankina and A. Voznaya point out, such claims could not be only political ones but social, civil, cultural, and economical.

3.4 Spatial analyses of protest under Russia’s hybrid regime: nature of protests across Russia’s regions

In the present section comes a theory of two researchers T. Lankina and A. Voznaya who studied phenomenon of protests in “hybrid regime” Russia in the 2007-2012 period. Two researchers offer some theoretical insights which may help explain the nature of protests in hybrid regimes, underlying that usually researchers focus almost exclusively on national-level protest movements in hybrid regime states. However, as it was mentioned earlier, due to unevenness of democratic development, different levels of political competition and socioeconomic development across regions in Russia, major national trends frequently take different shape at the subnational level (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 329). In other words, Lankina and Voznaya suggest local approach in study of nature of protests in Russia, stressing importance of taking into account local factors. This is what makes their study attractive to me.

In their work, Lankina and Voznaya explained “how the spatial socio-economic and political heterogeneity observed in many hybrid regimes can also result in spatially varied protest configurations” (ibid., p. 340). They stress that local socioeconomic and political environments in every region of Russia shape differently nature and propensity for protest (ibid., p. 330). In other words, researchers suggest an attempt at hypothesising the nature of protests across Russia’s regions focusing on local socio-economic and political contexts and their influence on shaping protests as a challenge to the Russian hybrid regime.

In order to see “the effects of these contexts in shaping the nature and propensity for protest”, Lankina and Voznaya divided Russia into 12 economic regions: Central, Ural,

Northern (where Arkhangelsk city locates), Kaliningrad, North Caucasus, Volga, West Siberian, East Siberian, Volga-Vyatka, North-Western, Central Black Earth, Far Eastern. Regions are grouped into economic divisions on the basis of common economic and social goals, relatively similar economic conditions and potential, similar climatic, ecological, and geological conditions, and similar living conditions of the population (ibid., p. 330). Such a division was made since it could help to “identify some potential drivers of regional variation in the intensity of protests and the issue dimension of protest activism” (ibid., p. 340).

The findings of two researchers are based on data from website *namarsh.ru* which aggregates dispatches from a network of regional correspondents and from press and online reports. The baseline data covers the period from March 2007, when *namarsh.ru* began its online dispatches, until December 2012. During this period, Voznaya and Lankina recorded 4,726 protests with a combined total of 1,859,422 protesters (ibid., p. 331). It should be noted that *namarsh.ru* reports are updated daily by regional correspondents of the website, with each data entry accompanied by a weblink to the original press coverage of a given event. The availability of the original source ensures their ability to verify the validity of every data entry.

Having analyzed all these protests during 2007-2012 period of time, Voznaya and Lankina select out five categories of them, noting that sometimes one protest may combine traits of several categories (ibid., p. 332).

Table 2. Protest categories and description⁷

Category	Description
Political	Politically motivated anti-government and anti-regime protests at municipal, regional, and national levels
Economic	Protests against government economic policies, such as those affecting exchange rates, wages; strikes related to wage and worker-rights issues
Social	Protests by, and specifically furthering the aims of, socially vulnerable groups of people such as pensioners, victims of Chernobyl, students, disabled people, people on state benefits
Legal	Protests targeting unpopular legislation, its implementation (labour, criminal, and administrative codes); protest against illegal acts by state bodies or private companies

⁷ The table is borrowed from: Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 332

	(forced eviction, construction in inappropriate areas)
Ecological	Environmental issues, hazardous work conditions, waste dumping, destruction of forest reserves, and protected woodlands
Cultural	Protests against the destruction of monuments and of historically valuable buildings and sites; against change in city (area) names

As one of the main findings of their work, Voznaya and Lankina revealed that local socioeconomic and political environments of every selected region play crucial role in forming of nature of protest (these environments are different from one region to another but rather similar inside of it). Differences in these environments lead to distinctive demands of people towards authorities in various regions of the country (ibid., p. 330, p. 340).

Table 3. Regional protests by type, % (2007-2012)⁸

	Political	Economic	Social	Civic
Central region	41	9	19	31
Northern region	42	17	19	21
Kaliningrad	25	15	33	27
Far Eastern	33	39	18	10
Central Black Earth	29	26	20	15
North western	36	18	16	30
Volga-Vyatka	42	21	15	22
East Siberian	37	25	13	25
West Siberian	38	19	26	17
Volga	37	13	26	23
North Caucasus	34	10	18	37
Ural	35	23	23	19
National	38	15	20	26

As it could be viewed from the Table 3, the protests in the Northern region (where Arkhangelsk belongs to) in the period from 2007 to 2012 were mainly connected with political (42%) and socio-economic issues (36%).

Voznaya and Lankina's findings may be criticized for being too generic, mainly, directing to classification of protests in hybrid regime Russia during 2007 to 2012 and identifying common trends and traits of protests i.e. they did not focus on concrete cases.

⁸ The table is borrowed from: Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 332

Therefore, it is impossible through their findings to reveal directly what made people in Arkhangelsk protest on the 10 December 2011 rally. They did not reveal specific socioeconomic and political motivators which affect the nature of protest in every single case.

Such state of affairs allows me to contribute to their work under my specific case - 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk. In particular, trying to understand motives of the protest participants, I will apply findings of Voznaya and Lankina and reveal in the “Data presentation and analyses” chapter what concrete socioeconomic and political motivators did affect participants to become part of the protest. In turn, this will help me to suppose what category of protest, according to Voznaya and Lankina’s typology, Arkhangelsk protest was.

3.4.1 Spatial analyses and 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk

December 2011 protest in Moscow is rather deeply studied both by Russian researchers and foreign ones (M. Mamonov; A. Sokolov; J. Nichol and others). Without many disagreements, they converge in opinion that protestors’ demands there were following: a) appointment of new State Duma elections since results of previous ones were absolutely falsified; b) release of "political prisoners"; c) liberalization of legislation regarding elections and registration of new (and previously banned) political parties; d) resignation of chief of Central Electoral Commission V. Churov. (Nichol, 2011, p. 2; Mamonov, 2013, p. 390). Based on different questionnaires, they added that people “protested against political system”, “against Putin”, “against lies, corruption and lawlessness” (Mamonov, 2013, pp. 390-391). Therefore, according to the typology of Voznaya and Lankina, 10 December 2011 protest in Moscow contained elements of “political” and “legal” protest type.

In analysis of December 2011 protests both by Russian and foreign researchers, local protests (including one in Arkhangelsk) are usually viewed as “meetings of solidarity to Moscow protests” and “small copy” of the Moscow one (Shishkina, 2013, p. 379; Nichol, 2011, p. 2). It is connected with the fact that the formal cause of all December protests including one in Arkhangelsk was dissatisfaction with political situation in the state manifested, mainly, in the election fraud (Nichol, 2011, p. 2). Due to small amount of deep studies regarding the December protests across Russia, local protests are simply equalized one to another and studied in the context of 10 December 2011 protest in Moscow.

In case of my work, I want to use findings of Voznaya and Lankina (the idea that specific local socioeconomic and political environments make local protest peculiar and, therefore, protestors have got different claims towards authority or different reasons for similar claims from one region to another) in order to clear up whether or not such an approach to the

study of December 2011 protests across Russian regions can really be applied to the Arkhangelsk rally.

Thus, I select out three motivators through which motivation of protestors in Arkhangelsk is to be examined and analysed in the “Data presentation and analyses” chapter: 1) discontent with political situation in Russia; 2) discontent with local political conditions; 3) discontent with local socioeconomic environment. First motivator is based on the formal cause of all December protests including one in Arkhangelsk, while second and third motivators are based on the theoretical findings of Voznaya and Lankina. Furthermore, I will try to answer the following questions: 1) what concretely did affect people’s motivation to get involved into the protest; 2) was role of local environments crucial for the protestors’ motivation or were they mainly triggered by general discontent with political system of Russia; 3) based on Voznaya and Lankina’s classification, what type of protest might be considered the one in Arkhangelsk?

3.5 Summary

This chapter has sought to outline the theoretical foundation of the thesis.

Firstly, I introduced the concept of the hybrid regime state and examine role of the protest under such regime in order to understand people’s motivation to use it as a form of political participation in there. Russia is considered to be such kind of state where role of protest as form of political participation is extremely high since formal institutional channels of authority-citizens “communication” (such as electoral institute, competitive multiparty system and other) work ineffectively or are not trusted. Based on that, it could be assumed that the protest in Arkhangelsk might not be directly connected with desire to improve political environment but with opportunity to air grievances connected with local social, economic, political environments as well.

Further, I presented the theory of T. Lankina and A. Voznaya who point out that in Russia (from 2007 to 2012) nature of protests across all regions might differ from one area to another even if they were united by one single cause (like, falsification of elections results for December 2011 wave of protests). Two researchers analysed 4,726 protests occurred in Russia during 2007-2012 period and concluded that such a dispersion in different claims in different regions could be explained by various local socio-economic and political environments across the Russian regions.

Voznaya and Lankina in their work did not examine concrete cases and did not select out exact local motivators connected with socioeconomic and political environments which

influenced on nature of specific protest. In my work, through the three protest motivators, I would like to find out what concretely affected people to take part in the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk.

Chapter 4. Methodology

The present chapter of the thesis is focused on the following issues: choice of study area, informants and data collection technique. I reflect upon its strength and weaknesses and finally underline challenges during my fieldwork.

4.1 Emphasizing human perspective

Research regarding the 2011 protests in Russia could be studied from existing written sources: in particular, there are plenty of researches based on the official reports of federal public opinion agencies, viewpoints of key political elites and so on. The main disadvantage of them is that usually in protest studies in Russia, macro level analysis is used as a main approach; besides, the phenomenon of December 2011 protests in Russia is usually viewed through the perspective of Moscow protest and, as a consequence, local protests are viewed as a “small copy of the one in Moscow” (Shishkina, 2013, p. 379). It means that personal attitudes of protesters and peculiarities of place where protest occurred are often left out.

As a consequence, such studies frequently do not take into account scale of Russia and the differences in life conditions among people in the state. As A. Sokolov (2013) notes: “the topic regarding protest activity in regions is poorly covered or even ignored by federal mass media and federal agencies...” (Sokolov, 2013, p. 401)⁹.

Realizing that the December 2011 protests in whole Russia had much in common (for example, a main cause of the protest everywhere was suspicion that the election results were faked up), in the beginning of my work I assume that motives of protestors may vary, to some extent, from one region to another and are dependent on local socioeconomic and political environments which possibly could explain why scale of protests was different in various regions (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 45).

Therefore, in order to understand these motives in my project (Arkhangelsk case), I found it most wise to focus on human dimension when I chose data collection technique. In other words, I wanted to examine in-depth the first hand experience of participators in order to understand their reasons to take part in the protest. Consequently, I chose interviewing as a prior data collection technique in order to see how local inhabitants themselves explain their motives of participation in the protest.

⁹ Translation of the present text is my own

This approach, with emphasis on human and local perspectives, corresponds to the main research question of the thesis: what motivated people to take part in the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk.

4.2 Study area

Arkhangelsk city was chosen to be a study area in the thesis. As the study area Arkhangelsk has several traits which make it attractive for research on people's motives to protest in the December 2011 rally in the city.

First trait is the great scale of the December 2011 protest which occurred in the city. It should be noted that since the collapse of the USSR, the protest after the Duma elections in December 2011 was the biggest in the new history of Arkhangelsk (Chuvashova, 2103, p. 44). Moreover, compared to other cities of Russia, where similar protests happened at the same time, the protest in Arkhangelsk was one of the biggest across the state with officially confirmed more than 2500 participators¹⁰ (ibid.). What is more, the Arkhangelsk region demonstrated one of the lowest support to the present ruling party "United Russia" in those elections (only 30% of people voted for the "United Russia") which probably means that many protestors participated not just spontaneously but as a group which expressed their sceptical position towards the authorities in advance by protest voting.

Second trait is the peripheral and close-to-border location of the city. As it was mentioned above, the protest in 2011 was more widescale only in several cities which have much in common: they are located in the central part of Russia; are economically well-developed and have rather high socio-economic conditions of life. In this context Arkhangelsk stands out from a number of these cities since its location is in periphery of the state and the city has rather bad socio-economic situation (N(A)rFU, 2014). Despite other areas where protests were also large scaled, the relative closeness to other European states is another peculiarity of the city. Arkhangelsk is deeply integrated into the Barents Euro Arctic cooperation with north-European countries since 1990s, which makes it easier for the local population (due to the special "Pomor visa") to travel abroad and host tourists from the Scandinavian states (Pomor tourist centre, 2015). Arkhangelsk, thus, in many respects, is culturally globalized with Northern Europe, which is a significant factor in the daily life of local inhabitants.

¹⁰ See Table 1 in the Chapter 2

Thirdly, the choice of Arkhangelsk facilitates a study from the perspective of a Russian regional reality – a perspective which is rarely applied by academics (Sokolov, 2013, p. 400).

4.3 Informants: size and selection

4.3.1 Criteria of informants' selection

Trying to understand who exactly I needed as informants I followed advice of V. Minichiello (1990) who says that good informants may “illuminate a situation, give insight... or relevant information about a particular event” (Minichiello, 1990, p. 197). In the context of my work, “relevant information about a particular event” implied also first-hand experience in participation on the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk. Therefore, my criteria of selection were as follows: informant resided in Arkhangelsk in 2011 and took part in the 10 December protest.

4.3.2 Sample size

During the preparation period I had no predefined number of interviews that I wanted to conduct in my mind focusing only on desire to get in-depth information from the ones being interviewed. By the end of my fieldwork in the summer 2015, I had conducted seven interviews with people who took part in and/or helped to organize the Arkhangelsk protest in 2011. The group of interviewees consists of two women and five men including: three students (in the period of 2011); a lecturer of the local university; a professional politician who was representative of the opposing party; an entrepreneur; and one worker of the local Paper factory.

In the sampling procedure, I mostly used “snowball sampling”: such an approach involves using a group of informants with whom I had made initial contact and asking them afterwards to “put the researcher in touch with their friends, then asking those people to be informants and in turn asking them to put the researcher in touch with their friends and so on” (Minichiello, 1990, p. 199)¹¹.

Although the number of interviewees is relatively small, I share the opinion of A. Bryman (2012) who stresses that there is no need in great amount of interviews since focus in qualitative research is “to get rich detailed answers... and interest is in the interviewee’s point of view” (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). Besides, what I wanted was, first and foremost, as S. Kvale

¹¹ The gaining access process and challenges I met while I looked for the participants are discussed later in the chapter

(2007) underlines, to “understand the world as experienced by specific group of people” i.e. such an amount of interviewees in qualitative research may also be advantageous (Kvale, 2007, p. 43). In addition to this, talking about the process of conducting my data, I noticed after a while that many reactions and opinions of people began to repeat. Therefore, I started to realize that there is no need to increase my sample. As one of my interviewees said to me in the end of our conversation: “*Maybe... I haven't surprised you with what I've said... I guess, many people shared my views on protest events in Arkhangelsk in many respects*”¹².

4.4 Interviewing

4.4.1 Qualitative research: interview as a method of data-collection

Qualitative research is... any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantifications. It can refer to research about persons' lives, behaviors, experiences, emotions about cultural phenomena, interaction between people, social movements etc.
(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11)

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) note “there are many valid reasons to choose qualitative research” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). In particular, when researcher wants “to understand the meaning or nature of experience of persons”, “to obtain the details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes that are difficult to extract through more conventional research methods”, he has to use qualitative method (ibid., pp. 10-11). Such a method was exactly what I needed since I tried to find out concrete local social and political factors (through individual experiences of protestors) which persuaded people to protest.

I was interested in studying protest participators’ “perspectives on [their]... experiences and interpretations as expressed in their own words” (Minichiello, 1990, p. 93). This is somewhat different from participant observation and other popular methods which often rely on participation in, and observation of, action in the context of which it happens (ibid., p. 95).

For this reason I selected qualitative in-depth interviewing as the main method to achieve my thesis’s aim. Such a method is the perfect one when the researcher has a strong desire, as S. Kvale (2007) notes, “to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view” and wants to “unfold the meanings of people’s experiences” (Kvale, 2007, p. 1). What was also important for me is that qualitative in-depth interviewing, as H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) underline, can help “to reconstruct events in which you did not participate” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3). That was exactly what I needed.

¹² From the interview with Artour; detailed information of the interviewees is presented in the “Data presentation and analyses” chapter

4.4.2 Preparation and conducting interviews

All seven interviews were conducted in Arkhangelsk, Russia during the summer 2015. Each informant was interviewed once in a pre-specified location and, each interview lasted approx. 45 minutes. With every informant's permission, all of the interviewees were tape-recorded¹³.

Having chosen qualitative interview as the main data collection method, I used its semi-structured variant with a pre-prepared interview guide¹⁴. Such a model of interviewing is very convenient for in-depth study of people's experiences and interpretations of events since "type of questioning and discussion allow for greater flexibility than does survey-style interview" (Minichiello, 1990, p. 1992). In other words, I didn't try to restrain my informants during the meetings but encouraged them to reflect in any way they wanted regarding the Arkhangelsk protest of 2011.

Since the events I discussed with my interviewees had happened in the past, I needed, as A. Bryman (2012) notes, to "put emphasis on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events from the past... [to find out] what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding these events" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). Asking pre-prepared questions, I also followed up the reasoning about protests of my interviewee even if some of his/her arguments contradicted with my own assumptions.

Generally, I had a fairly clear focus in my research and wanted to address some specific issues. Therefore, I had a set of questions to discuss necessarily with every interviewee including such topics as: a) phenomenon of December protests in 2011 in Russia; b) peculiarities of the protest in Arkhangelsk; c) background of informants; motives of participation, feelings about everything connected with Arkhangelsk protest which interviewee considered important; d) influence of Arkhangelsk protests on him/her later on; e) discussion of interviewee's activity in forthcoming future. In addition, I collected every protestor's information of a general kind (age, education, occupation etc.) for contextualizing his/her answers.

Such a "soft" model of interviewing also was useful for me: after each conversation, if necessary, I tried to re-think some of the questions and topics I had in order to conduct subsequent interviews more effectively.

¹³ More detailed information about interviewing process is discussed in "challenges and reflections" part of the chapter

¹⁴ See appendix 1. Interview guide

During the process of interviewing, a main principle of mine was to keep a balance between, from one side, my desire to get information about interviewees' motivation in participation and, from the other, asking questions without leading informants too much in order to get the answers they really wanted to give. To do that, for instance, I never told informants my hypothesis or theory beforehand which I had in my work (I could share this info only in post-interview discussion). Besides, I formulated my questions in a neutral way, trying not to enclose in advance known or likely answers to the questions.

Generally, all interviews went well and were conducted in favourable atmosphere. As a result, I got seven comprehensive interviews in which I touched upon every topic I had planned to.

All informants demonstrated interest in my study and tried to contribute me as much as they could. Also it should be noted that I followed the advice of A. Bryman and didn't switch off tape-recorder right after discussion since even during the non-interview off-topic talk, interviewees might touch upon interesting and important points about the December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk (Bryman, 2012, p. 487).

4.5 Challenges and reflections

4.5.1 Access problem

It will be described how I got access to my informants and the challenges in that process.

Establishing contact

Searching for potential informants was the first task I had to handle. My search was complicated by the fact that I had not any acquaintances who took part in the December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk. Additionally, by the time I started to collect my data four years had already passed from the 2011 protest and many participators might have changed their place of life. This really worsened my situation since, as H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) underline: "researcher's own social networks are the easiest way to find and gain access to informants" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 89).

Therefore, I decided to look for potential informants through the electronic social network called "Vk.com" (Russian analogue of Facebook). In several groups devoted to the life in the Arkhangelsk region I announced briefly all general information about the project, leaving my email and telephone number in the end. I made a suggestion in the announcement to participate in the study for the ones who fit the criteria of candidate for interview. I found this way of searching the most successful in my case since: 1) the number of participants in

this group is very big (about 50 thousand people); 2) it allows people to keep their anonymity and increases chances to get a feedback from potentially interested people: in fact, several interviewees in the pre-discussion noted that they agreed to answer positively on my announcement only because it was possible to write or call directly to me without being publically revealed. I counted to find at least 2-3 people with such an approach, realizing that afterwards, my first informants could give me contacts of other people who took part in the protest i.e. “snowball technique” could be applied.

All in all, I got ten email replies from people who showed their interest in participation. Trying not to bore people much I clarified more in detail what’s my project is about and what I needed from the informants. Ultimately, six of ten repliers refused to participate in the interviewing giving various reasons or just stopping get in touch with me. It is disputable whether the reasons of refusal were connected with, for example, fear to talk about such topics as “protest movement”, “corruption in Russia” or fear to be imprisoned for their activity. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that, as H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) stress: “people can often just be busy” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 93). One man who was not able to take part but had a strong will to participate told me: “The time of interviewing is very uncomfortable. Many russians, including me, have their summer vacation in July or August and prefer to spend time outside of the city”.

The rest four people were successfully interviewed. Wishing to get more interviewees, I tried to find other ways to approach potentially relevant informants.

Role of gatekeeper

After a while it was clear for me that I was stuck in the process of searching for informants. Establishing contacts only by myself resulted in not so fertile outcomes I had expected. Additionally, since I had strict time limit I could not wait any longer when somebody would reply on my announcement in the Vk.com network again. That is why I decided to seek assistance from gatekeeper.

A gatekeeper is “a term used in social analysis to refer to persons who are able to arbitrate access to a social role, field setting or structure” (Social research glossary, 2012). As I mentioned above, in my social network there were no people who were anyhow engaged in the protest in Arkhangelsk in 2011. However, luckily for me, I was able to find appropriate gatekeeper – leading journalist of local broadcasting company “Pomorie”. Being one of the most respected and popular journalist in Arkhangelsk, he has huge circle of acquaintances and relations, including political elites of Arkhangelsk. S. Johl and S. Renganathan (2009) note that gatekeeping can affect negatively on research, mainly, because gatekeepers may have “hidden

agendas, ideologies and cultures which may require the researcher to change how the research is talked about to conform to the gatekeepers attitude about what is being researched” (Johl & Renganathan, 2009, p. 42). In my case, due to long good relationships between me and my gatekeeper (in particular, he is a close friend of mine since childhood) I didn’t worry about any potential negative effects of gatekeeping usage.

With the help of gatekeeper I get contact of the politician of opposing party who was not only participator but contributed in organization of the Arkhangelsk protest. In fact, this politician was very interested in contribution and expressed his desire to help me as much as possible. It was probably connected with field of his activity. H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) emphasize that such situation may happen because some informants “participate in interviews to gain favorable publicity for their political or social concerns, occupational or social group, or with whatever they identify” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 91). In any case, this informant gave me contacts of his acquaintances who took part in the protest as well. Thereby, due to assistance of gatekeeper I was able to conduct three more interviews.

In general it should be noted that people whose contacts I got with help of the gatekeeper were more favourable in their conversation with me. H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) point out that such situation is not surprising since quality of interviewing depends on trust in regards to interviewer very much and informants trust much more interviewer if he or she “has been recommended be their [interviewees’] friends or colleagues” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 91).

Thus, since my data collection period started in the summer 2015 (almost four years after December protest in Arkhangelsk) and due to absence of appropriate social connections it was very tough task to find relevant informants for my research. I have solved this problem by using electronic social network “Vk.com” (where I placed basic info regarding my project and leave contacts of mine) and with help of the gatekeeper. All that helped me to conduct four and then three more interviews respectively. In whole, role of the gatekeeper should not be underestimated. His efforts helped me find almost half of my informants. I was lucky to avoid minuses which might be caused by gatekeeping. Moreover, informants I got from him were even more favourable to talk with me since I was recommended by him.

However, my approach of gaining access to informants is not without drawbacks. Particularly, it’s obvious that social network “Vk.com” is not used by every inhabitant of Arkhangelsk, including the ones who protested. Although, at the same time, Russian expert in protest issues N. Chuvashева (2013) points out that “mainly youth and middle-aged people” (who use such electronic social networks most) took part in December 2011 protest in

Arkhangelsk (Chuvashева, 2013, p. 42). It, however, doesn't mean that my approach hasn't got weak spots, but in my case it seemed to be the most relevant anyway.

4.5.2 Developing contacts and informants' security

After the contact with all my informants was established with help of social network "Vk.com" and gatekeeper's assistance I understood that in order to develop contacts I have to think, first and foremost, how to secure my interviewees' from potential threats. These threats were mainly connected with specifics of my work: interviewing of the ones who took part in protest and who were eager to change political and/or socio-economic systems of Russia. In other words, I assumed that my interviewees might be scared for being, for instance, persecuted or anyhow pressured if they took part in a study like mine.

Therefore, following principle of the qualitative research formulated by H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) I wanted to "obtain rich data in ways that do not harm those being studied" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 97). In other words I had to do my best in order to create such conditions which let my interviewees feel as much comfortable as possible and therefore let me get relevant data.

To begin with, during our first talk by e-mail or telephone I informed potential candidates in details and maximally sincerely about this work. It was very important to stress that I was a student, my project was independent and led only by my own research interest. Besides, I underlined that all personal information about informants would be anonymized. Some of the interviewees strongly insisted on the point regarding anonymity and, as a proof, demanded me to send them a copy when thesis would be done.

Secondly, the crucial point regarding securing my informants was choice of the interviewing place. Taking into consideration, that I wanted to discuss such topics as political organisation of Russia, phenomenon of protest, perspectives of Russian political system etc. I understood how important was to find secluded quiet place without unwanted witnesses who could embarrass my informants. Therefore, I could hardly conduct interviews in the places like street parks, cafés etc. When my informants and I agreed upon interview I asked which place would be most appropriate letting them choose most comfortable for them one. It was not surprising for me that ones (namely, three informants) who had possibility to be interviewed in their work offices suggested them to be such place. The rest four were interviewed in the office room of the company "MobileTelephoneSystems" (MTS). My mother, who worked in this company, helped me to get access for the whole empty office room of the organization. I found this variant to be the best one since: a) MTS company is located right in the city centre which

makes it convenient to get from every part of the city; b) nobody could disturb us during interview process.

In order to develop contact with informants better, every interview I started with off-topic discussion about my study in Norway, Norwegian mode of life and so on letting interviewee reflect on it. I could initiate off-topic discussion about issues which were in interest of interviewee because, according to H. Rubin and I. Rubin, it helps to establish conducive for interview atmosphere (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 90). The aim of mine was to be open, fair and honest to build trust between me and interviewee. In general, I felt that I succeeded in that, especially with interviewees who I got from my gatekeeper: since I was recommended to them by mutual acquaintance, as I mentioned earlier, they felt even more benevolent to talk with me. Anyway, all informants almost always were deeply engaged in the process of interviewing without such problems as refusal of tape recording and so on.

Thus, in order to develop contacts with the informants who agreed to be interviewed I had, first of all, to create such conditions which allowed interviewees feel comfortable and safe. Having led by “principle of beneficence” (“risk to harm a subject should be the least possible”) (Kvale, 2007, p. 28), I focused on three main issues regarding that: providing sincere and clear information of my project; choice of appropriate for interviewing place and off-topic talk in the beginning of interview.

4.5.3 Researcher’s identity: being an insider and outsider

Defining an “identity” concept is very challenging task. Usually researchers note that it is one of the most extensively studied constructs in the social sciences and it is possible to provide perspectives from psychology, sociology, ethnic studies when they give definition (Springer, 2011). However, all of the approaches have much in common, stressing generally that identity is examined as “properties based on the uniqueness and individuality which makes a person distinct from others” (Prabhudesai, 2014).

The problem of how insider or outsider role of the researcher affect conducted data is very typical for qualitative research (Greene, 2009, p. 2). Insider and outsider researches have their own pros and cons connected with access issues, problem of objectivity, biases of researcher etc. In the present project, role of my identity as set of my own unique properties, had an impact on the research from two points at the same time: 1) my “Russianness” (i.e. my role as an insider) and; 2) my deep interconnection with Norway at the same time (my role as an outsider).

Being Russian

My nationality had both negative and positive effects on data I got from the interviewees.

I could not refuse my “Russianness” that influenced on my research due to several factors: a) first of all, I am Arkhangelsk inhabitant who has been lived whole life in the city; b) I am a native Russian speaker. Thence, consequent limitation of having these traits was my biased attitude in regards to some phenomena. At the same time W. Filstead (1971) considered such situation not to be extremely negative: “it’s naive to assume that biases due to the personality of the interviewer could be avoided... each interviewer is somehow stereotyped” (Filstead, 1971, p. 87). In my case, this biased attitude manifested itself in my witnessing of political and socio-economic situation of Russia and the city of Arkhangelsk before, during and after protest events in December 2011. Besides, personally I sympathized with protestors although I didn’t take part in it. As well as protest participators, I was insulted by information that results of the Duma elections might be falsified; I had a strong will to improve political and socio-economic systems in country. Realizing that on the stage of preparing for my interviews, I followed advice of H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) who point out that researches should “not pretend that [they] have no biases... but to understand how [their] feelings might slant the research... and work to formulate questions to offset the biases” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 82). In particular, in order to reduce damage of my biased attitude I tried myself to be led by principles of objectivity in my research leaving behind my personal feelings as much as possible. Although, it should be admitted, that it’s impossible to avoid that completely.

My “Russianness”, however, had favourable impact on the research as well. In particular, gaining access with informants generally was much easier for me being a Russian, native inhabitant of Arkhangelsk, because I had no problem with living place, unfamiliarity of area and so on – all problems which are faced when researcher had project in foreign for him country. Additionally, I had personal experience of events I studied which was advantageous as well. As H. Rubin and I. Rubin (2005) note: “trust [between interviewer and interviewee] increases if people see that you share a common background with them” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 92).

The language issue is a challenge in many (especially cross-cultural) qualitative researches. Being a “bedrock of qualitative enquiry, language is a fundamental tool through which qualitative researches seek to understand human behavior, social processes and cultural meanings that inscribe human behavior” (Liamputtong, 2008, p. 21). During interviews it was much easier to achieve these aims, since me and my informants are native Russian speakers. In addition to this, my “Russianness” and, specifically, belonging to the Arkhangelsk city

allowed me to understand better non-verbal language which was hardly possible for outsider. For sure, it improved mutual understanding between me and my informants and quality of collected data in general.

Doing research as a student of University of Tromsø, Norway

Having realized my “Russianness”, I understood that some certain impact on my research would be affected by my close interconnection with Norway: I did my work as a master student from the University of Tromsø (UiT), Norway. In order to understand role of this issue it is necessary to overview briefly what kind of attitude among Arkhangelsk inhabitants exists now in regards to Norway.

After the collapse of USSR, foreign policy of Russia towards Norway became duplex: national and regional (since Norway became one of the neighbors of new Russia). One of the greatest expression of relations between two states on regional level was emergence of regional organisation “BarentsEuroArctic Region” in 1993, where northern areas of Norway and Russia (including Arkhangelsk reg.) are part of. For sure, regional cooperation affected significantly on relations between northern regions of Norway and Russia. In particular, after 20 years of such cooperation there were realized numerous initiatives and projects in socio-economic and, especially, in cultural dimensions (such as exchange programs between universities, annual sport competitions, joint music festivals and so on) (Norway. The official website in Russia, 2013). Northern inhabitants from both sides, in whole, have become more familiar with mode of life of each other which, consequently, improve mutual image of both states in their eyes.

In last years, however, due to growing tension in Norway-Russia relations in general (caused by events like NATO exercises in Northern Norway in 2013-2014; Russian annexation of Crimea etc.), image of Norway in the eyes of many northern residents of Russia has gone downhill. This tendency was deepened with emergence of set of articles about Norwegian foreign policy in Russian North, particularly, its attempts to “erode Russian space of European North and norwegianize it” (Semushin, 2013). Besides, in 2012 in Arkhangelsk there was arrested one of the employee of Northern Arctic Federal University (Arkhangelsk) I. Moseev who was accused in “high treason for cooperation with Norway” (Semushin, 2012). It is remarkably important to underline that in these critical articles, University of Tromsø is labelled as an ideological base for policy of “norwegianization” of Russian north (Semushin, 2013).

It was clear for me that many Arkhangelsk inhabitants might be well-known with this information and, therefore, be sceptical about me, as an interviewer, who carried out research as a representative of the UiT. Probably, my belonging to this university was one of the factor

why some potential informants refuse finally to take part in the research: as I mentioned ten people were interested in interviewing at first but after initial discussion about topic, my background and place of study six of them rejected an opportunity. In any case, in order to decline negative influence of my identity as “one who does research on behalf of rival university” (as one of potential informant who refused to take part in research called me) I did my best to follow H. Rubin and I. Rubin advice. They note that, depending on different situation “you can focus on one role [of yours] or another... but the role in which you present yourself should be part of who you actually are” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 86). Therefore in the first talk with informants and again in pre-interview discussion I stressed that my belonging to UiT did not play as big role as interviewees could think. I emphasized other roles of mine like “native Arkhangelsk resident”, “Russian speaker”, “witness of the protest events” and so on in order to demonstrate that these roles of mine were more crucial and influential for me as a researcher. Anyway, sometimes I felt slight skepticism from informants in the beginning (once I was even ironically called “Norwegian spy”). In addition, one informant was concerned that results of my work would be available for foreigners and didn’t want them to have impression or Russia as “*non-democratic state with bad quality of political culture*”¹⁵.

It should be noted that positive effects of my belonging to the foreign university were as well. Particularly, one of the interviewees felt more inspired when I informed him about my interconnection with UiT. He pointed out that this kind of researches “*should get publicity abroad*”¹⁶. In whole, however “belonging to UiT” factor should not be overrated. Although two informants drew their attention to that, the rest (five) were indifferent in regards to this issue: it was unimportant for them at all during interview.

Regarding the identity issue, thus, my “Russianness” (which includes my nationality, background and native language) and deep interconnection with Norway had a strong impact on result of my research. During the process of interviewing and preparation for it the most important thing for me was to get as much benefits as possible from my identified roles and, at the same time, to decrease maximally negative effects of them.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter I have reflected on the methodological issues of my study.

¹⁵ From the interview with Pavel

¹⁶ From the interview with Artour

Data collection was carried out during summer 2015 in Arkhangelsk, Russia – place where one of the biggest regional protest after the Duma elections in December 2011 occurred.

I chose in-depth qualitative interview, as most appropriate for my research method, since it let me stress human dimension of my work: find out personal perspective on the Arkhangelsk protest.

In the beginning of my data collection period, the most challenging task was to establish and develop contacts with most relevant for my research informants. With use of social network “Vk.com” and the gatekeeper I found thirteen people, seven of which were finally interviewed. Since I studied such topic as protestors’ activity I had to pay much attention to the security issues (to find appropriate place of interviewing, guarantee anonymity and so on). Besides, my identity had both positive and negative effects on my work as well, since different people paid attention to different aspects of my identity: what was important in positive and negative sense for ones in regards to my properties was indifferent to others. In any case, my aim was to get as much profit as possible from my identities.

Thus, due to the format of my research method (qualitative in-depth interviewing) alongside with described above attempts of mine to get through challenges during data collection I was able to get necessary data for my study.

Chapter 5. Data presentation and analyses

The present chapter analyses the fieldwork data. It starts with presenting participants' backgrounds, especially focusing such issues as education, occupation and his or her role in the protest (regular participant or contributor to organizing). Further, the chapter attempts to go into the interviewees' individual reflections on what motivated them to take part in the Arkhangelsk protest. Through the motivators presented in chapter 3 and interviewees' narratives, the chapter 5, therefore, seeks to explain people's motivation in participation in the Arkhangelsk protest.

5.1 Informants' presentation

5.1.1 Interviewees' anonymity

Participation in a protest might be considered as a potentially sensitive topic, especially if people commit illegal actions during it or if a rally is organized without authorization of the government. However, the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk was organized and carried out properly in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 44). In this sense, involvement into the protest was just a legal form of political participation granted by the Russian Constitution in the articles 23, 30, 31, 37 (Pratsko & Sphak, 2013, p. 24).

At the same time, being concerned with situation around political prisoners in Russia (resonance cases of S. Udaltsov, P. Lebedev and others who were persecuted for their political activity) I decided not to disregard security aspect in my research (Institute of Modern Russia, 2014). I did not want to put interviewees in any sort of danger. Hence, my informants were guaranteed anonymity in my study. Generally, as it was mentioned in the chapter 4, some of the informants shared my concern and wanted to keep their anonymity. Only one person, Oleg, underlined that he did not worry about being publicly revealed and was "*ready to share my experience openly*"¹⁷.

In order to assure anonymity, first of all, I use pseudonyms instead of the informants' real names. Additionally, I decide not to provide all personal information about informants in details in order to make identification of them even harder. As a result, I try my best, from one side, to minimize any sort of negative consequences to my informants, from the other side, to do deep research about people's motives to be involved into the protest.

¹⁷ From the interview with Oleg

5.1.2 Background of informants

Education and occupation

Seven people were interviewed for the study. Educational and occupational information about the interviewees is presented in the Table 4 and reflects state of affairs by 2011. Four of the interviewees had higher education, two had secondary. One interviewee held a Ph.D. Five of the informants were working while the remaining two were students in the college and the university.

Age, living arrangements, degree of involvement into the protest

All seven interviewees currently live in Arkhangelsk and consider themselves as native Arkhangelsk residents even though Oleg, Julia and Artour moved to the city when they were children.

All of the interviewees were aged between 21 and 37 in 2011; two of the informants are female and five are male. The sample reflects countrywide situation: “Levada Centre” polling organization notes that “young people constituted the majority [of protesters in entire Russia]... they were more likely to be male than female” (Ross, 2015, p. 43). Additionally, the protest researcher N. Chuvashova (2013) points out that most of the protesters in Arkhangelsk were students and young adults (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 44).

Three of the protesters were engaged deeper into the protest than others. Oleg, Denis and Anton were not just participants, but contributed to the organisation of the 10 December 2011 Arkhangelsk protest. One of the task in the analysis is to indicate whether there was a difference between interviewees which were ordinary participants and the ones who contributed as organizers.

Summing up, the informants’ background suggests that all of them are relevant participants for this research. From one hand, the interviewees had various occupational and educational backgrounds, from the other, they represent general trend of a typical protester in those events in Arkhangelsk (being young, well-educated people).

Table 4. Interviewees' educational and occupational backgrounds (in 2011); degree of involvement into the protest¹⁸

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Education	Field of occupation	Contributed organizing of the protest (“✓” if yes)
Julia	F	31	Ph.D	Assistant professor	

¹⁸ Source: fieldwork 2015 (June-August)

Anton	M	24	Higher	Editor in journal, photographer	✓
Artour	M	28	Higher	Owner of the publishing agency	
Pavel	M	37	Special Secondary	Worker in Paper factory	
Oleg	M	36	Higher	Politician	✓
Denis	M	21	Special secondary	Student	✓
Katya	F	22	Higher	Student	

5.2 First motivator: dissatisfaction with political situation across the state

As it was mentioned earlier in the thesis, the main hypothesis of the study is that local environments of the Arkhangelsk region might affect nature of 10 December protest in the city. In other words, people's desire to be involved into the rally might not be formed only by discontent with national political system of Russia but by local conditions of the region as well.

However, since the formal cause of all December protests including one in Arkhangelsk was dissatisfaction with political situation in the state which was manifested, mainly, in the election fraud (Nichol, 2011, p. 2), discontent with general political situation in Russia is examined here as a first variable which affected motivation of Arkhangelsk protestors.

In addition to this, I rely on the findings of the protest researchers A. Voznaya and T. Lankina who define local socioeconomic and political environments as crucial factors to affect protestors' motivation. Hence, influence of these factors is examined later in the chapter as well.

Through the three types of motivators - 1) discontent with political situation in Russia; 2) discontent with local political and 3) discontent with local socioeconomic conditions - motivation of protestors in Arkhangelsk is examined and analysed in this chapter. In this section determinants which are not associated with local conditions of the Arkhangelsk region are presented.

5.2.1 Duma election fraud as a motive to participate

To begin with, it is necessary to look at motives of the Arkhangelsk protestors through election fraud as a determinant which united all protests across Russian. It is connected with the fact that the formal cause of all December protests in Russia was information that results of Duma elections might be falsified (Nichol, 2011, p. 6).

Every interviewee agreed that falsifications of the election results motivated them, to a greater or lesser extent, to become part of the protest. However degree of importance of this factor differs from one person to another. Julia, for example, emphasized it very much, saying

*“I was just angry and really shocked with that election fraud stuff... [feeling] disgusted to be cheated was first thing in my mind when I decided to protest”*¹⁹. Such an important role of this factor for his personal choice to participate was followed by Denis, saying that *“I, as well as most of people there, wanted [by protest actions] to say my “no” in order to force the authority to re-count votes”*²⁰. Oleg and Anton, at the same time, consider this factor to be very important for them however they look at the falsifications as a problem of the Russian political system in general. Oleg says that he *“had, of course, claims to the “clearness of elections”* but priority for him was *“to restore order in [my own] land”*²¹. Anton, in many respects, shares views of Oleg saying that *“I was pissed much that... voice of voter didn’t decide anything... but that was just a consequence of political system of the state”*²².

For the other interviewees, falsification issues as a main motivator was even less important. Katya, for instance, said that the falsification issue was important for her only because those Duma elections were first in her life and she felt insulted since she *“voted for the «Communist party» of Russia, not for «United Russia”*²³. Artour looked at the *“universal violations during the electoral process”*²⁴ as just one of the urgent problems of Russia at that time. Interesting, that Pavel did not participate in the Duma elections at all since *“electoral institute [may not] help people in... overcoming of stagnation of political life [in Russia]”* and looked at the falsifications as *“just a top of the iceberg of problems in the state”*²⁵.

Thus, despite the fact that possible falsifications of the Duma elections was a formal cause of protest wave in entire Russia, my informants had rather various views on this information as their personal motivation to protest. While ones might be seriously triggered by evidences that elections were falsified (Julia, Denis), the others had more neutral relation to that. Pavel, for example, almost ignored that when decided to go on the rally. Other informants might look at it as one of the motivators which affected them more or less to get involved into the protest (Anton, Artour, Oleg, Katya).

Some informants might look at the election fraud as a strong motivator for them but, at the same time, they did not separate this factor with problems of political development of Russia in general.

¹⁹ From the interview with Julia

²⁰ From the interview with Denis

²¹ From the interview with Oleg

²² From the interview with Anton

²³ From the interview with Katya

²⁴ From the interview with Artour

²⁵ From the interview with Pavel

5.2.2 Similar to the Moscow protest? General political claims

“We knew that similar protests are going to be organized in many cities so we wanted to make it louder to the centre. We even tried to cooperate with other regions, although coordinated common actions badly... But we supported each other: we knew that we were not alone in Arkhangelsk”²⁶

As it was mentioned in the «Methodology» chapter, many scholars (V. Shishkina, J. Nichol and other) who studied the December wave of protests noted that local protests were just small reflections of one held in Moscow. According to them, people in the different regions of Russia were motivated by similar to Moscow protesters' triggers. As it was pointed out in «Theoretical foundation» chapter, nature of the Moscow protest was purely political. It focused on the issues connected with development of the democratic institutes in Russia. The demands of protestors in Moscow, in many respects, coincided with weak traits of hybrid regime state. A. Menocal (2008) selects out the following traits of so-called state: lack of governmental accountability; lack of credibility and/or trust in formal (democratic) institutions; lack of forms of political participation; high level of corruption; high expectations and weak state capacity; elite reversals (Menocal et al., 2008, pp. 5-8). In this sense, motivation of Arkhangelsk protestors might be also viewed through the prism of hybrid regime state traits.

In other words, this group of factors includes discontent with the political system of Russia in general. It should be noted, that this group is also closely connected with the election fraud. However, I separate election fraud concerns in order to see what kind of claims regarding political system of Russia were important for Arkhangelsk residents in addition to the falsification issue.

Two groups of factors linked to discontent with the political system of Russia were identified as ones which affected motivation of protesters in Arkhangelsk to be involved into the rally: 1) irremovability of the leading authority holders; 2) corruption, discontent with quality of governing; poor conditions of electoral law.

Irremovability of the leading authority holders

Among other triggers to protest which are not connected with local conditions of the Arkhangelsk region, my informants called irremovability of the crucial politicians of Russia.

As it is indicated in «Theoretical foundation» chapter, such kind of irremovability evidences about “lack of governmental accountability” in the state, where power is intensely personalised around the several figures for a long period of time (Menocal et al., 2008, p. 33).

²⁶ From the interview with Julia

Katya, trying to explain scope of wave of protest not only in Arkhangelsk but in Russia in whole, noted that “*people began to feel being «choked» of endless irremovability of the authorities*”²⁷. Such an attitude was followed by Anton calling “*weariness from irremovability of those in power*”²⁸ as something which motivated him to be engaged. Although Artour didn’t call this factor as his personal driver to protest he acknowledged that protest mood in the country increased “[since] *people get tired of the similar faces in television...*”²⁹. Noteworthy that here the interviewees talked about federal level politicians, not local ones.

Some of interviewees especially stressed “*Putin-Medvedev presidency reshuffle*”³⁰ in September 2011 as a “*last straw*”³¹ which people could no longer tolerate. In other words, people were disgruntled about some aspects of Russian political system decisively 2 months before the elections. It means that they were ready to take part in the protest a little before the election fraud. The latter for them was just a convenient cause to express discontent.

Although Julia, as it was noted earlier, was triggered mostly by information about falsifications, she noted that she was “*angry that they [Putin and Medvedev] decided to declare this president reshuffle boldly openly*”³². Anton pointed out that “[my] *and people’s around angriness, I believe, much increased in September when Medvedev, de-facto, declared Putin to be the subsequent president without asking citizens!*”³³. Oleg also mentioned this factor to be influential for him and linked it to the occupation he had. As a professional politician and representative of the opposing to the «United Russia» party in Arkhangelsk he expressed his concern with “*decline of competition in last years in Russian system of governance*”³⁴.

S. Sergeev (2013) points out that September reshuffle of Putin and Medvedev was crucial catalyzer of protest mood across Russia (Sergeev, 2013, p. 132). In this sense, irremovability of the crucial politicians was something that might unite protestors in their discontent across entire state.

Expression of general political claims: corruption, bad quality of governing, poor condition of electoral law

²⁷ From the interview with Katya

²⁸ From the interview with Anton

²⁹ From the interview with Artour

³⁰ 24th September 2011 president D. Medvedev said that he was not going to run for a president, since he and prime-minister V. Putin “had already agreed about who is going to be next president” (Sergeev, 2013, p. 133). At the same time, Medvedev declared that he is going to lead United Russia in the following elections in Duma in December 2011. This event is considered to be important in ruining image of Medvedev among citizens and aggravate bad image of UR party.

³¹ From the interview with Julia

³² Ibid.

³³ From the interview with Anton

³⁴ From the interview with Oleg

In their answers, interviewees might underline concern with political situation in Russia as a foundation for their desire to participate in the protest. However, selection of a few concrete factors was often challenging for them. For example, Julia mentioned her dissatisfaction with quality of governance of the federal authorities: *“instead of governing properly... they [federal authorities] started working on themselves”*³⁵.

Denis called himself *“a professional political protester since 2006”* who pursued political aims in the December protest. He abstractly called his activity as *“fight against curtailment of democracy in Russia”*. According to him, protestors in the entire country including Arkhangelsk protested *“in one union for the sake of a common goal of democratization”*³⁶.

Anton stressed that *“by the beginning of 2010s people... started to require modernization, progress and forward movement comprehensively, fight against desolating corruption, development of civil society, transpiration of power structures... but none of that was achieved”*. As well as Denis, Anton was a contributor to the organization of Arkhangelsk protest. He emphasized that he *“wanted personally to make an impact to development of my country... and planned [protest] to be as a general civil meeting... where educated citizens of liberal views would go to the square with posters, express their dissatisfaction with political situation in Russia”*³⁷. Anton said that he, as one of the organizers, was contributing in writing protest resolution and made it, in many respects, similar to the resolution of the Moscow protest. In the resolution, he stressed such demands as 1) demand of reelection; 2) warning about the inadmissibility of falsification in the forthcoming presidential elections; 3) demand of liberalization of the electoral legislation.

Thus, findings of study indicate that view on the local protests as “meetings of solidarity to Moscow protests” and “small copies” of Moscow (Shishkina, 2013, p. 379; Nichol, 2011, p. 2) has some foundation. In many respects, it is connected with the fact that Arkhangelsk protesters like Moscow ones had issues in regards to development of the democratic institutes in Russia. At the same time, as it was mentioned in chapter 3, protestors in different regions might have different reasons to protests for similar claims. Therefore, although interconnection of claims of Arkhangelsk and Moscow protestors is present, reasons to protest might still be different.

³⁵ From the interview with Julia

³⁶ From the interview with Denis

³⁷ From the interview with Anton

In Arkhangelsk, as narratives of informants' evidence, some of the protesters were triggered by dissatisfaction with democracy development in the state. As a result they expressed claims like: liberalisation of electoral and political parties' laws; resignation of leading politicians who, in their opinion, might be involved into election fraud (chief of Electoral Commission V. Churov, prime-minister V. Putin and others).

Not surprisingly, that discontent with political situation in the state as a motivator to be engaged into the protest was especially strong among the ones who contributed in organizing Arkhangelsk protest (Oleg, Denis, Anton). Basically, they were the ones who viewed the rally in Arkhangelsk as a part of the unified wave of December protests across the country. It might explain why the resolution of the Arkhangelsk protest almost coincided with the resolution of the protest in Moscow and did not reflect demands based on local problems.

Besides, it is noteworthy that informants' demands connected with dissatisfaction of political situation in Russia corresponded many traits of hybrid regime state presented in «Theoretical foundation» chapter. Particularly, Julia, as it was noted, mentioned corruption of Russia as a motivating factor for her to protest. She was followed by Anton and others who at that time had expectations regarding development of democratic institutes in the state and were tired of lack of governmental accountability in the state. However, their expectations, in many respects, were broken by tendencies of “growing authoritarianism of Russian political system in last 10 years” (Sergeev, 2013, p. 130). The last straw of such growth was the reshuffle of Putin-Medvedev which was done without opinion of citizens. Additionally, if falsifications of election results as people's triggers to protest, would be viewed through the prism of the traits of hybrid regime like “high level of corruption” and “weak development of democratic institutes” (Menocal et al., 2008, p. 6; p. 8), Arkhangelsk protest might be considered as a reaction of people on weaknesses of such regime.

Table 5 indicates degree of the interviewees' concern with general political environment in Russia as a motivator to be involved into the protest. The degree of concern is based on my own perception after the conversation with the informants.

Table 5. Degree of importance of discontent with general political situation in Russia as a motivator to protest

Pseudonym	Discontent with political situation in Russia in general	Contributed organizing of the protest (“✓” if yes)
Julia	XXX	
Anton	XXX	✓
Artour	X	

Pavel	X	
Oleg	XXX	✓
Denis	XXX	✓
Katya	X	

Degree of concern: XXX – extremely important for the interviewee; XX – less important; X – least important; empty space – not important at all (or informant didn’t mention it)

5.3 Second motivator: discontent with local political conditions of the Arkhangelsk region

The hypothesis that local conditions might affect people’s motivation much in their decision to protest is a crucial in the present study. It was underlined earlier that the hypothesis is based on the findings of Voznaya and Lankina who define local socioeconomic and political conditions as very influential for the nature of protest in the area. The difficulty is that Voznaya and Lankina do not designate concretely what kind of socioeconomic and political factors affect motivation of people to protest, only saying about “multi-issue nature... of many protests” (Voznaya and Lankina, 2015, p. 332). Therefore, in the following paragraphs, through the “local political environment” motivator, I try to select out concrete determinants which affected (if they did) desire of the Arkhangelsk protesters to be engaged into the 10 December rally.

It should be said in advance: study findings suggest that interviewees often did not separate various types of local conditions as motivators from each other. Besides, local conditions as motivators might not be viewed apart from nationwide political situation in Russia since it affects in more or less degree political and socioeconomic situation inside every region. In this sense, separation of local socioeconomic and political factors is done artificially just in order to demonstrate clearly what exact local drivers affected people.

5.3.1 Non-competence of local authorities; corruption; bureaucracy

Informants who reported that bad local political environment was a motivator to participate might be divided into two categories: 1) informants who were strongly triggered by the local political environment; 2) informants who viewed local political conditions as secondary factor for their motivation.

People in first category emphasized directly that they were triggered by bad political environment in Arkhangelsk. Artour, for instance, noted that “[in addition to the election fraud, there were] *other stimulating factors mainly connected with absolute non-competence of the*

*local politicians, especially, ex-governor; total corruption in bureaucratic machine*³⁸. Such a negative attitude, he explained with his experience to build up his own publishing company in the city about one year before the December protest. Trying to achieve his aim, Artour stressed that local authorities “*seemed like... they tried to create barriers*” for him and it was the first time when he, preparing all necessary documents, “*faced famous Russian bureaucracy... with total irresponsibility and bribing*”. He finalized his point that corruption in the local authority apparatus resulted in “*total lawlessness*” in the region. Therefore, by his participation, Artour wanted to “*make these inactive officials care about their own citizens*” and considered that great scale of the protest would attract attention from federal centre. As it was mentioned in the «Background» chapter, one of the consequences of the Arkhangelsk protest was resignation of the governor of the region I. Mikhhalchuk³⁹. Such a result of the protest allowed Artour to call protest as not “*absolutely unsuccessful... like others may say*”⁴⁰.

Oleg might be also related to the first group. Being concerned with issues regarding democracy development in Russia, Oleg, as it was mentioned earlier, prioritized to “*restore order in [his] own land*”⁴¹ as a main common aim to protest. Oleg, as a professional politician and representative of the opposing political party, noted that he was familiar “*from the inside... with situation in the local government*”. He pointed out that in last years before the protest “*local authorities, which are obviously consisted mainly of the “United Russia” party members, discredited themselves with their activity in the region*”. Among other character traits of the local Arkhangelsk authority, Oleg stressed “*pressure on mass media*”, “*pressure on local opposition*”, “*comprehensive corruption*” and “*apartness from regular citizens*”. “*Falsifications of results [in the region] was just another one “merit” of the “United Russia” leaders here*”⁴² he continued.

Second group of informants consists of ones who considered local political factors as secondary for their motivation or as ones which were formed under the countrywide political situation i.e. dependent on political environment in the state in whole. Anton, as it was said above, strictly referred himself to the group of protesters who were involved in solidarity to Moscow protest. At the same time, he admitted that in 2011:

³⁸ From the interview with Artour

³⁹ I. Mikhhalchuk is a Russian politician; governor of the Arkhangelsk region from 2008 to 2012

⁴⁰ From the interview with Artour

⁴¹ From the interview with Oleg

⁴² Ibid.

“people evaluated situation in the state through the prism of local experience. In Arkhangelsk key factor was activity of ex-governor I. Mikhalechuk and mayor V. Pavlenko who were members of the “United Russia”. I guess corruption in their administration and general worsening of life during their time of governance were crucial to people and something that compromised «United Russia» party in the region. All that definitely increased my interest in participation”⁴³

Not recognizing it as a main motivator, he acknowledged that *“possibly, it was local political situation which made me participate and help in organizing it [protest]... but I cannot assess influence of it [corruption in the local government] on myself as a driver adequately”⁴⁴*.

Thus, Oleg, Artour and Anton might be considered as ones who were affected by condition of local political environment in their desire to protest. While Artour and Oleg directly connected their motivation with dissatisfaction of political environment in Arkhangelsk region, Anton noted that bad condition of political situation in the region was the result of bad political environment in general in the state. Anton, therefore, was the one who did not view local political situation and political environment in the entire country separately from each other.

5.3.2 Distrust to the local civil institutes

Voznaya and Lankina note that distrust towards civil institutes “gives salience to protests as a form of contentious political participation” (Voznaya & Lankina, 2015, p. 329). It is connected with the fact that protest, as an “informal form of political participation”, allows people to be heard by authorities and express people’s complaints about different aspects of governmental policy. It might not be done so effectively by any other form of political participation (Wuzumi, 2011). In this sense, protest might serve as a substitute of civil institutes in the area where it is hold. This is the reason why in a hybrid regime state people protest more than under democracy and totalitarian regimes where these institutes either well developed or not developed at all (Ekman, 2009, p. 14).

The findings indicates that Arkhangelsk protestors were triggered only by discontent with work of mass media civil institute. As a main motivator to protest, discontent with work of mass media in region was not called by any informant. At the same time, poor conditions of civil institutes had rather indirect effect on the protestors. For example, answering my question “why you did not appeal to police or sue the organs which extorted a bribe from him”, Artour

⁴³ From the interview with Anton

⁴⁴ Ibid.

replied that *“it had no much sense here [in Arkhangelsk] in any case”*. He continued that he *“had [that experience] in my mind when protested in December”*⁴⁵.

Mostly, if they did at all, informants mentioned dissatisfaction with work of local mass media as something they were concerned when protested. *“Only at that time I really understood that Arkhangelsk newspapers were absolutely pro-state but not pro-people”*⁴⁶ said Katya talking about silence in newspapers and local TV news about the election fraud information. Not any single interviewee called this factor as a motivator apart from some other ones. Katya continued: *“of course we were pissed [that local newspapers kept silent about falsifications information] but I don’t think that anybody was thinking only about corruptive mass media when they went on the square. At the same time, I understood that independent mass media is an important part of democracy, democracy which we strived to achieve that day”*⁴⁷. Similar vision was followed by Oleg who said that that *“freedom of mass media to express their opinion openly is a crucial part of democratic state”*⁴⁸.

Oleg viewed also the problem of corruptive mass media in the city as one which was urgent for him while protested. He added, besides, that he knew that in Arkhangelsk there were many evidences of how local mass media was *“pressured by the local United Russia part lobby”*. For him, *“establishing of fair institute of mass media was in the list of demands”* since, as a representative of opposing party he was concerned, that his party *“got less time and space to familiarize voters with our activity... compared to the «United Russia»”*⁴⁹.

Table 6. Degree of importance of discontent with local political environment in Arkhangelsk as a motivator to protest

Pseudonym	Discontent with local political conditions as motivator	Contributed organizing of the protest (“✓” if yes)
Julia		
Anton	X	✓
Artour	XXX	
Pavel		
Oleg	XXX	✓
Denis		✓
Katya	XX	

Degree of concern: XXX – extremely important for the interviewee; XX – less important; X – least important; empty space – not important at all (or informant didn’t mention it)

⁴⁵ From the interview with Artour

⁴⁶ From the interview with Katya

⁴⁷ From the interview with Katya

⁴⁸ From the interview with Oleg

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The findings of the study suggest that local political environment affected motivation of protestors to be involved into the rally in 10 December 2011 in Arkhangelsk. To make it more demonstrative, Table 6 reflects degree of every interviewee's concern with political environment in the city as a motivator to be engaged in the protest. All in all, based on the interviewees' answers, the following concrete subcategories from this category could be selected out: corruption and bureaucracy of the local authorities; discontent with work of the Arkhangelsk region governor I. Mikchalchuk and mayor V. Pavlenko; poor conditions of civil institutes in the region (mainly, of inadequate and unfair mass media).

Only three of seven interviewees did not consider the present factor as an influencing one for them at all, while Artour and Oleg pointed out high importance of this factor for their motivation. They both explained that by their personal negative experience of dealing with the local political institutes. It is also interesting to note, that both Artour and Oleg considered results of the Arkhangelsk protest to be unsuccessful. At the same time, Artour at least called resignation of the governor of the region I. Mickhalchuk as positive outcome while Oleg was even more pessimistic regarding results of the rally. Oleg connected such a negative view on the outcome with little accent on the local problems of the Arkhangelsk region during the protest: *"I think if the demands of the participants voiced by organizers of the protests were "local-minded" ... than it [results of the protest] would be more effective"*⁵⁰.

Therefore, "local political environment" as a motivator was very influential only for the interviewees who personally dealt much with local political institutes and experience was negative. Oleg, for example, as a local professional politician underlined that he worked *"in the Arkhangelsk «political kitchen» for ages and know it from the inside"*⁵¹. Artour also had negative experience with local authorities on his way of business establishing. For the rest of informants who had lack of such experience, local political environment factor as a motivator to protest was less influential or not important at all. For them, it might be displayed in discontent of local mass media or negative perception of the main political leaders (governor and mayor) due to their activity lately before the December protest.

⁵⁰ From the interview with Artour

⁵¹ From the interview with Oleg

5.4 Third motivator: discontent with local socioeconomic conditions

In the present paragraph, I am going to discuss how local socioeconomic situation in Arkhangelsk affected motivation of my informants to take part in the 10 December protest. It is noteworthy that definition of socioeconomic environment might be challenging and viewed through the different perspectives (Habitat restoration, n.d.). In my study, I rely on Voznaya and Lankina's view who regard socioeconomic reality in the broad sense including not only social and economic experiences but cultural and historical that help mold one's personality, attitudes, and lifestyle. Voznaya and Lankina emphasize importance of these factors which, according to them, "appear to shape very much... the intensity and the issue dimension of regional protest activism" (Voznaya, 2015, p. 340). In other words, socioeconomic situation plays crucial role in forming of nature of the protest at the local level.

Based on the information from my informants, I may view socio-economic situation in the Arkhangelsk region as something influential for their motivation to protest from two sides: a) influence of history, location and culture of the region on people's desire to protest; b) worsening of living standards as a direct motive to be involved into the rally.

All of the informants, except Anton, stated that they were stimulated by socioeconomic environment in the region one way or another.

5.4.1 Historical, geographical and personality traits of inhabitants in the North

Through the specifics of history, location and culture of Arkhangelsk region, the informants tried to explain why they were motivated to protest. In other words, they tried to explain how local socioeconomic context of the region impacted on their desire to be involved into the rally. Therefore, in this paragraph I stress local socio-economic background in the region as an important part in forming of people's motives to protest.

Several informants connected specific location and history of Arkhangelsk as something that might be influential for their desire to protest in December 2011.

Julia, trying to explain her activity in the protest, said that "*specifics of personal traits of northern people, I believe, influenced on me as well*"⁵². She pointed out that "[being a person] who had lived in the city more than 30 years... [I] positioned myself as a bearer of traditions of Novgorod republic"⁵³. She underlined, that as a local inhabitant, she had some specific

⁵² From the interview with Julia

⁵³ Novgorod republic was a proto-democratic Russian medieval state which stretched from the Baltic Sea to the northern Ural Mountains between the 12th and 15th centuries. The republic was among the most democratic parts of Europe for four centuries and finally was occupied by tsarist Moscow Russia. View detailed information: <http://www.interpretermag.com/when-russia-was-a-democracy-novgorod-before-the-muscovite-occupation/>

northern personal traits: *“I think, we still have in our hearts this skepticism to centralization, independent mind and strong sense of belonging to this place... we still have that feeling of isolation from the centre... in every way”*. Consequently, according to Julia, when basic democratic freedoms are violated *“like it was in 2011, when our freedom to elect was broken... people in the north, as heirs of Novgorod republic, perceived violations of their rights very acutely”*⁵⁴. It, in its turn, might lead to the big scale of the protest in Arkhangelsk.

In many respects, specific “northern mentality” as something that affected people to express their discontent in the protest, was shared by Oleg. Oleg emphasized that factor of northern mentality should not be underestimated when Arkhangelsk protest is discussed. Oleg just like Julia marked *“intolerance of encroachment on people’s freedom”*⁵⁵ as a traditional personal trait. Besides, he added *“sharp sense of justice”* among northern people. *“Our internal traits do make us react so roughly... and call authorities to responsibility like it was on December”*⁵⁶.

Even Denis, who interconnected his personal motivation to be part of the protest with dissatisfaction with political development of Russia in general, admitted at the same time that *“specifics of mentality of people here [in Arkhangelsk] possibly might explain why there were so many protesters in the city, more than in most of the regions in the state, and why they expressed their discontent so abundantly”*⁵⁷. Like Julia, Denis pointed out that *“northwest territories are fatherland of Russian democracy... For us it is very important to have really working democratic institutions here”*. Therefore, by specifics of mentality in Arkhangelsk, Denis explained why people in the North, including him, were so motivated to fight for the democracy development in Russia. *“We kept inside and endured pressure on democracy in the state for a long time and at that day [10 December 2011] we just let everything splash out”*⁵⁸ summarized Denis. Therefore, for Denis protest was a reaction on democratic institutes’ pressure in the country which was expressed mainly by infringement on independence and fairness of electoral institute in 2011.

In whole, all three informants (Julia, Oleg, Denis) considered specific history of northern lands and personal traits of native people as an influential factor for their desire to protest. The findings indicate that even if factors which affected people’s motivation are referred to the «local socio-economic» group, it does not mean that protestors’ motives were

⁵⁴ From the interview with Julia

⁵⁵ From the interview with Oleg

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ From the interview with Denis

⁵⁸ Ibid.

based on socioeconomic needs. The study suggests, that specific socioeconomic situation in the region (based on the local culture, history and so on) formed individual, peculiar to Arkhangelsk residents', vision of aims and desired results of the protest. Through the prism of history of the region, its specific location and personal traits of the local, Julia, Oleg and Denis explained, mainly, political nature of the Arkhangelsk protest. All of them noted that specific mentality of the native Arkhangelsk inhabitants did not allow them to accept so-called pressure on democratic institutes (expressed mainly in violation of electoral process in Russia).

5.4.2 Worsening of standards of living in the region

“You probably now, what is going on around... worsening of life here... This is what made me angry, not falsifications”⁵⁹

The following group of factors is narrower in comparison to the previous one and directly connected with socio-economic environment. Standard of living is the level of wealth, comfort, material goods and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class in a certain geographic area⁶⁰ (Investopedia, n.d.).

All in all, interviewees associated their motivation to participate in the 10 December 2011 protest with worsening of the standards of living in the city in the last years before the studied event. Informants underlined that by 2011 socioeconomic atmosphere in the region had become *“utterly bad”⁶¹*. Particularly, Julia said that *“[at that time] our region still could not overcome the consequences of Great Recession of 2008: whole industrial sector had broken down, worsening of ecology, total job cutting everywhere in the region with growing cost of living – this is not full list of the problems”⁶²*. Similar view was followed by Artour who noted that *“[corruption in the local authority apparatus] was accompanied with manifestation of economic crisis effects [in Arkhangelsk] which pressured all local citizens”⁶³*. One of the consequences of such bad environment in the city was growth of local people's discontent which became a foundation for the protest mood among inhabitants. N. Chuvashova (2013) points out that from 2009 number of small protests started to grow in the Arkhangelsk region, most of which touched upon socioeconomic issues: “protest of doctors” in May 2009, “rally

⁵⁹ From the interview with Pavel

⁶⁰ The standard of living includes factors such as income, availability of employment, poverty rate, quality, inflation rate, number of vacation days per year, quality of education, life expectancy etc.

⁶¹ From the interview with Artour

⁶² From the interview with Julia

⁶³ From the interview with Artour

against monetization of social benefits” in March 2010, “meeting against growth of housing tariffs” in February 2011 and other (Chuvashova, 2013, pp. 41-42). Pavel stressed: “*after stable middle of 2000s people became aware that life in the north could be pretty fine... So, they just could not agree that life again getting worse and worse even though most of us [protestors] experienced poverty in 1990s*”⁶⁴.

Therefore, Pavel summarized, “*Arkhangelogorodzy*”⁶⁵ *logically demonstrated their discontent with such situation by protest voting at the Duma elections in 2011 and [when people discovered elections fraud] then, by street protest*”⁶⁶. In other words, Julia, Artour and Pavel viewed December protest in Arkhangelsk as a part of the protest movement that started in 2009 in Arkhangelsk where worsening of living standards was crucial point to protest upon.

While Artour and Julia considered this factor for them as one of the stimulus to protest, for Pavel worsening of life conditions in Arkhangelsk was surely most important inducement. As a worker in the Pulp and Paper factory in Arkhangelsk, Pavel said that “*we [he and his several workmates] wanted to say about our discontent with labour conditions in the factory, little wages there and so on*”. Possible falsification of election results was secondary for him: “*I was not so much bothered with electoral falsifications... such things happened everytime as I remember*”. Unlike Denis and Anton who considered that people tried to express discontent with political development of Russia, Pavel “*had a perception that many protesters were triggered by issues like I was: up-to-the-minute problems based on the fall of living standards*”⁶⁷.

Katya accentuated this factor as a personal motivator to protest as well. At that time, she and her relatives were affected by, what she called, “*results of socioeconomic stagnation in the city*”⁶⁸. Not long ago before protest her father lost the job in the local sawmill. Besides, as a last year economist student in the university, she was skeptical about perspectives to find job in the city in her field: “*...all that altogether made me ask questions to the government. That protest was a good possibility for that*”⁶⁹ summarized Katya. Just like for Pavel, information that Duma election results might be falsified was something that Katya, as it was mentioned earlier, was worried not so much.

⁶⁴ From the interview with Pavel

⁶⁵ “Arkhangelogorodzy” is a definition of people who reside in Arkhangelsk

⁶⁶ From the interview with Pavel

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ From the interview with Katya

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The study results indicate that ignorance of such problem as worsening of living situation in Arkhangelsk region by central and local authorities affected growth of protest mood among inhabitants in Arkhangelsk. Julia, Pavel, Artour mentioned that in 2011 they had a sense of being “*abandoned by government*”⁷⁰. Julia said, for instance: “*Just compare prices for groceries in the South and North of Russia! Climate and so on... protest mood is more sensitive here due to uncomfortable life conditions. Person feels that state owes him due to difficulty of life in the north, but, somehow, state doesn’t care*”⁷¹.

For them and Pavel, worsening of life conditions in the Arkhangelsk region was very influential for their desire to be involved into the protest. Significant to mention also, that Julia, Katya and Artour mentioned their desire to move from the city to other region of Russia or abroad due to “*impossibility to realize yourself completely here*”⁷². Such sort of desire suggests how dissatisfied people were with socioeconomic situation around.

Table 7. Degree of importance of discontent with local socioeconomic environment as a motivator to protest

Pseudonym	Discontent with local socioeconomic environment as motivator	Contributed organizing of the protest (“—” if yes)
Julia	XX	
Anton		✓
Artour	X	
Pavel	XX	
Oleg	X	✓
Denis	X	✓
Katya	XXX	

Degree of concern: XXX – extremely important for the interviewee; XX – less important; X – least important; empty space – not important at all (or informant didn’t mention it)

The findings demonstrate that discontent with local socioeconomic environment of the Arkhangelsk region affected people’s motivation to be engaged into the 10 December protest. As Table 7 demonstrates, almost all of the interviews, in more or less degree, found these variable to be important for them. Worsening of the standards of living in the region might be identified as an important concrete protest determinant for the informants. What is important to note is that informants stressed large role of specific socioeconomic environment of the region (manifested in specific history and northern mentality) as something which affected

⁷⁰ From the interview with Artour

⁷¹ From the interview with Julia

⁷² From the interview with Katya

their desire to be involved into the December rally. By specific history of the Arkhangelsk region and “northern mentality” of local people, informants might explain their reasons to participate. For example, Denis and Oleg tried to express mostly their concern with political development of the state at the protest i.e. were motivated by drawbacks of political system on local or federal level of Russia. However, both of them admitted that specifics of northern mentality catalysed their desire to express political claims.

Besides, as Table 7 displays, ordinary informants were concerned with local socioeconomic environment more than ones participial to the organizers of the Arkhangelsk protest (Anton, Oleg, Denis). It might explain why, as protest researcher N. Chuvashova points out, the resolution after the Arkhangelsk protest contained only political demands (Chuvashova, 2013, p. 44). Such a “gap” between organizers and regular protesters was also noticed by Artour and Pavel. The latter additionally explained why the Arkhangelsk protest resolution was factually ignored by authorities: *“If ones who were answerable [at the protest] included concrete demands based on improvement of socioeconomic situation here instead of abstract things like «liberalisation of electoral law», I believe... authorities would listen to them and, perhaps, solve some”*⁷³.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and analysed the field narratives. Research results indicate that informants were motivated by all three motivators selected in chapter 3: 1) discontent with general political situation in the country; 2) discontent with local political environment in the Arkhangelsk region and 3) discontent with local socioeconomic environment.

Table 8. Degree of importance of all motivators to protest

Pseudonym	Protest motivators			Contributed organizing of the protest (“✓” if yes)
	Discontent with political situation in Russia in general	Discontent with local political environment	Discontent with local socioeconomic environment	
Julia	XXX		XX	
Anton	XXX	X		✓
Artour	X	XXX	X	
Pavel	X		XX	

⁷³ From the interview with Artour

Oleg	XXX	XXX	X	✓
Denis	XXX		X	✓
Katya	X	XX	XXX	

Degree of concern: XXX – extremely important for the interviewee; XX – less important; X – least important; empty space – not important at all (or informant didn't mention it)

The findings suggest that the following concrete subcategories in these motivators might be identified:

Motivator 1: Discontent with political system of Russia: a) duma election fraud; b) irremovability of leading federal politicians; corruption; bad quality of governing; c) poor conditions of political legislation regarding electoral process.

Motivator 2: Discontent with local political environment in Arkhangelsk region: a) corruption and bureaucracy of the local authorities; b) discontent with work of key politicians in the Arkhangelsk region (mayor, governor); c) distrust to the local civil institutes (discontent with functioning of regional Mass media).

Motivator 3: Discontent with local socioeconomic environment: a) worsening of standards of living in the region; b) specific historical place of Arkhangelsk region; northern mentality.

The first category “discontent with political situation in Russia in general” includes the following concrete determinants which were important for my informants while they protested: information that election results might be falsified; irremovability of leading politicians and corruption in the central authorities, poor conditions of political legislation regarding electoral process (f.e. difficulty to register new parties). The second category “discontent with local political environment in Arkhangelsk region” includes corruption and bureaucracy of the local authorities; discontent with work of key politicians in the Arkhangelsk region; distrust to the local civil institutes. The issues from the third category “discontent with local socioeconomic environment”, which were important for the protestors, are following: specific historical place of Arkhangelsk region; northern mentality; worsening of standards of living in the region.

In the Table 8, I have collected and classified the answers of the informants altogether in one place. This table clearly demonstrates that discontent with political situation in Russia in general was an important driver which made people go on the rally in Arkhangelsk. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the assumption that the local problems of the city were most significant in formation of protestors' motivation was crucial in the thesis. The findings, however, may not prove such a categorical assumption. At the same time, it is patently noticeable from the Table 8 that local conditions affected people's motivation to get involved

into the rally as well. As A. Voznaya and T. Lankina (2015) note, this uniqueness of the local environments “results in varied protest configurations... across the country” (Voznaya, 2015, p. 340) i.e. makes protest specific in comparison to other ones in other regions. Therefore, the view on the December protest in Arkhangelsk as a “small copy” (Shishkina, 2013, p. 379) of the Moscow one, where people were motivated by same to Moscow protesters issues is not completely right. Moreover, for some of the interviewees, claims associated with local environment of Arkhangelsk were even more important. To be acknowledged, I did not expect that the protestors in Arkhangelsk were so concerned with general political problems of the state while protested.

It should be added also that ordinary protesters viewed the December rally in Arkhangelsk as an arena to express various types of claims: one person could be concerned with local socioeconomic issues and problems of political development of Russia at the same time. Important to note, that specific northern mentality and history of the Arkhangelsk region might influence desire to express discontent on the protest although it should not be viewed as a motivator literally. Views of the informants who helped with organisation of the Arkhangelsk protest were less various and focused mainly on political demands (both local and general).

Such a big set of issues, which motivated the informants, may indicate that the December protest in the city should be viewed in complex. It might possibly explain why the Arkhangelsk protest was the biggest in the history of the city in last decades: “*in December 2011 there was a good combination, from one side, of bad socio-economic situation, from the other, authority in all levels compromised itself hard. So all that led to such scale of the movement...*”⁷⁴.

In relation to the Voznaya and Lankina’s theory, results of the research indicate that 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk had traits of political, legal and socio-economic types of the protest (Voznaya & Lankina, 2015, p. 332). It is difficult to argue how far I can apply obtained data based on sample of 7 people and generalize results of the study in regards to the whole Arkhangelsk protest. What should be noted, however, is that sample represents typical protester of that time: young, well-educated people which might give some foundation to make at least provisional conclusion on that score. Finally, it is important to mention, that strong discontent of the Arkhangelsk protesters regarding development of civil and political institutes on federal and local level suggests about strong presence of traits of hybrid regime state in Russia.

⁷⁴ From the interview with Artour

Chapter 6. Summary and concluding remarks

6.1 Introduction

The thesis has sought to answer the question what motivated people to take part in the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk. It was an attempt to provide individual perspectives of people involved into the December protest in the city. The research has been based on seven qualitative semi-structured interviews. To explain people's motives to participate in the protest, theory of spatial analyses of protest under the hybrid regime has been chosen. This theory emphasizes local socioeconomic and political conditions as influential factors in formation of nature of protest i.e. in formation of people's demands towards authorities. Thus, local socioeconomic and local political environment were chosen as protest motivators through which I tried to find out what concretely motivated Arkhangelsk protestors. Since the formal cause of all December protests across Russia was dissatisfaction with current political system of the state (manifested, first of all, in Duma election fraud), discontent with general political state of Russia was chosen as a motivator as well.

A note on limitations

The number of the earlier studies regarding 10 December protest in Arkhangelsk is extremely small. Additionally, that rally was never studied from the perspectives of protesters earlier at all while in this study protestors' reflection was a cornerstone of the work. As it was mentioned, it is rather challenging to reason how far the results of the research based on narratives of seven informants can be applied. It is absolutely clear that I cannot generalize mostly results I have received upon all protestors of the Arkhangelsk rally and make overall conclusion regarding the protest. At the same time, my first priority task was to give presentation of concrete motivators which affected small group of people to protest. Making my conclusions, I tried not to go beyond limitations of my sample.

6.2 Findings

Modern Russia might be considered as a hybrid regime state (intermediate state between authoritarian and democratic state) (Wuzumi, 2011). In such state role of protest as form of political participation is extremely high since formal institutional channels of authority-citizens "communication" (such as electoral institute, competitive multiparty system and other) work ineffectively or/and are not trusted. Based on that, it could be assumed that the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk might not be directly connected with desire to express

discontent with nationwide political system but with an opportunity to air grievances connected with local social, economic, political environments as well.

The analyses of the field narratives has demonstrated that all three motivators affected Arkhangelsk protesters' motivation to go on the 10 December rally. Together with concrete influencing on motivation subcategories which are selected out from these motivators, they are gathered in the Table 9.

Table 9. Arkhangelsk protest variables and determinants

Protest motivator	Subcategory
Discontent with political system of Russia	1) Duma election fraud 2) Irremovability of leading federal politicians; corruption; bad quality of governing 3) Poor conditions of political legislation regarding electoral process (f.e. difficulty to register new parties)
Discontent with local political environment in Arkhangelsk region	1) Corruption and bureaucracy of the local authorities 2) Discontent with work of key politicians in the Arkhangelsk region (mayor, governor) 3) Poor conditions of civil institutes (discontent with functioning of regional Mass media)
Discontent with local socioeconomic environment	1) Worsening of standards of living in the region 2) Specific historical place of Arkhangelsk region; northern mentality

Every informant marked discontent with general political system in Russia as an important motivator to be involved into the protest. Possible information that election results might be falsified was, as a rule, first thing which touched protestors. However, the empirical findings evidence that protestors had other, no less important motivators based on discontent with Russian political system in addition. Informants expressed their dissatisfaction with irremovability of top political leaders (V. Putin and his surrounding), corruption among federal politicians, overwhelming bureaucracy; rigorousness and inadequacy of the legislation regarding electoral process. All in all it means that they were really concerned with democracy development in Russia, its state and perspectives.

Informants who contributed in organisation of the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk were triggered by this motivator more than ordinary participants. It is connected

generally with their common vision of the protest as an expression of liberal democratic claims of middle class towards authorities. Not surprisingly, that the resolution written by organizers after the Arkhangelsk protest contained only general political claims like it was in Moscow and included: resignation of the involved into the fraud politicians, liberalization of electoral law, new elections in Duma and so on. In whole, Arkhangelsk protesters' claims based on discontent with general political system of Russia are, in many ways, similar to the claims of protestors from the December 2011 protest in Moscow which are shown in the "Theoretical foundation" chapter. Based on experiences of my informants, thus, some of the Arkhangelsk protestors were really motivated by similar issues as protestors in Moscow.

Besides, it is rather easy to notice that demands based on the first motivator reflects, in many respects, drawbacks of so-called hybrid regime state. In particular, subcategories of the first motivator correspond to the following traits of hybrid regime state presented in Table 10:

Table 10. Hybrid regime state traits and motives to protest⁷⁵

Theory: traits of hybrid regime	Findings: informants' motives to protest
Lack of governmental accountability/strong-man leadership / clientism	Irremovability of leading federal politicians
Lack of trust in formal democratic institutions	Distrust to the Duma election results
High level of corruption	Corruption; bad quality of governing
Lack of forms of political participation	Poor conditions of political legislation regarding electoral process

It is difficult to argue how far I can generalize such results of the research. However, curious linkage between my informants' motives and traits of the hybrid regime is clear in this study. It may give some foundation to summarize that the Arkhangelsk protest was partly a reaction of people on weaknesses of such regime which is peculiar to modern Russia.

Through the lens of "Local political environment in Arkhangelsk region" motivator I have found out three subcategories which affected my informants' motivation to participate. As it is noted in the Table 9, they are as follows: corruption and bureaucracy of the local authorities; discontent with work of crucial politicians in the Arkhangelsk region (mayor and governor); distrust to the local civil institutes. Five of seven informants stressed influence of these factors on their desire to be involved in the December rally in Arkhangelsk. Especially

⁷⁵ Traits of hybrid regime state are taken from "What is hybrid regime state?" paragraph in the "Theoretical foundation" chapter

big concern was demonstrated by the informants who had large personal negative experience of dealing with local political institutes (f.e. due to work in the local government or due to large contacts with representative of local authorities on the way of business establishing). If the informants had lack of such sort of experience, their concern was less manifested.

Furthermore, it is rather easy to notice from the Table 9 that subcategories form the first and second motivators, to some extent, coincide with each other. It could be said that subcategories from the “discontent with local political environment” category are similar to the claims regarding general political situation of Russia but wrapped into the local context. In the table 11 I try to draw parallels between protestors’ discontent with general political situation in the state and discontent with local political environment.

Table 11. Intersection of political discontent at local and federal levels⁷⁶

Discontent with general political environment	Discontent with local political environment
Discontent with work of federal crucial leaders: a) president D. Medvedev, b) prime-minister V. Putin, c) chief of Electoral commission V. Churov	Discontent with work of the local crucial politicians: a) governor I. Mikhalchuk, b) mayor V. Pavlenko
Discontent with corruption in federal authorities	Discontent with corruption in local authorities
Discontent with some federal laws (particularly, with legislation regarding electoral process)	Discontent with some local laws (f.e. regarding development of business in Arkhangelsk)
Discontent with work of federal civil institutions: mass media, Central Electoral Commission	Discontent with work of local mass media

Such a crossing of political claims expressed in the protest might suggest that “hybridity” was peculiar not only to Russia as the state in whole, but to the concrete region in particular. It is difficult to show how federal political environment may affect political environment at regional level (and vice versa). It is clear, however, that if political system of the state in general has some problems it is rather difficult to avoid similar problems on the local level. It might explain why similarity of some political determinants on both levels which motivated people to protest is so noticeable.

Six of seven informants marked that discontent with local socioeconomic environment affected their motivation to protest. The main subcategory under this category is a “worsening

⁷⁶ Based on the narratives of the interviewees

of standards of living in the region”. For informants, this subcategory included: dissatisfaction with job perspectives in the region, worsening of ecology, growing cost of living, poor infrastructure etc. Due to this, several informants felt themselves vulnerable and abandoned by authorities of both local and federal levels. By expressing discontent with socioeconomic situation in the region, informants, therefore, wanted to attract attention of authorities to the problem of existence in the north. Furthermore, the findings of the research suggest that this motivator was more influential to the ordinary informants in comparison to the ones contributing to organisation. This, perhaps, might explain why, as it was mentioned earlier, the resolution after the Arkhangelsk protest did not include any demands based on local socioeconomic condition of the region.

“Specific historical place of Arkhangelsk region and northern mentality” as a subcategory of third motivator should be stressed especially. Informants noted, that singularities of the regional history, of personal traits of native people, formed individual peculiar to Arkhangelsk residents’ vision of the December protest in general. In particular, through this subcategory, some interviewees explained why the protest in the city was so big. This subcategory should be viewed not as a separate motivator but as something what affected desire to protest on the whole. Mainly by specifics of history and personality in the north informants explained political nature of the Arkhangelsk protest. For example, protestors might feel especially violated because of the possible falsifications of the Duma election results.

Finally, informants most often noted that they were motivated by several motivators at once (see Table 8). These motivators might smoothly flow out from each other and be even similar-type ones. Since protestors sometimes might not separate them one from another I had to do it by myself just to make influencing motivators clear and visible for the research. However, in their answers, the ordinary protestors were different a little compared to the ones who help with protest organization. The latter were more concerned with political issues (local and federal), while influence of socioeconomic environment was more significant for ordinary protestors. Study suggests that age and education difference can be hardly connected with difference of motives which informants were concerned upon.

The findings of the thesis suggest that combination of different sort of protest subcategories affected protestors’ motivation to participate which, in turn, might mean that nature of Arkhangelsk protest was complex. Therefore, such sort of cliché as “small copy of Moscow protest” (Shishkina, 2013, p. 379) regarding protest in Arkhangelsk is unacceptable even though, as study demonstrates, protestors in Arkhangelsk partly shared concerns of the Moscow protesters.

Summing up, Arkhangelsk protestors expressed nationwide similar to other regions' discontent with general political development of Russia. However even vision of general political problems of Russia might be very specific among Arkhangelsk protestors due to influence of local environments. As it was noted in the "Theoretical foundation" chapter, Northern European regions of Russia (including the Arkhangelsk region) have usually more developed democratic institutions in their area in comparison to the rest of the country. Empirical findings proves this point in many respects: protestors often mentioned specific historically formed mentality and personality traits of Arkhangelsk people which made them perceive violations regarding democracy in the state especially much. Being dissatisfied with trends of returning to authoritarian regime in general and the election fraud in particular, Arkhangelsk protestors might protest, perhaps, due to mismatch of their desires and vision of democracy in Russia and real situation in the state. All that accompanied with concrete set of local political and socioeconomic problems might explain why that protest was one of the biggest in city's history.

6.3 Analytical contributions and suggestions for further research

The present thesis was one of the first works where findings of Voznay and Lankina were applied to the concrete case: December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk. Voznaya and Lankina tried to find out common trends of the protests in Russia from 2007 to 2012. I used one of their findings in regards to the Arkhangelsk rally. In particular, their hypothesis that local political and socioeconomic environments might be influential in forming of people's protest demands. Voznaya and Lankina did not find out concrete determinants which affected people's motivation to protest. In the present research, identification of these determinants was most crucial part of the work.

Analytically, this study has sought to contribute to understanding of possible nature of the 10 December protest in Arkhangelsk. All in all, using information from the informants' narratives and protest typology of T. Voznaya and A. Lankina, Arkhangelsk protest contained traits of political, legal and socio-economic types of the protest (Lankina & Voznaya, 2015, p. 332).

In the future, research can be continued in different directions. For example, it is possible to find out the motives of protesters in December 2011 from other regions through the same motivators and make a comparison with Arkhangelsk protestors' motives. The history of modern Russia manifests that wave of protest emerged after every Duma election in the state (in more or less degree). Therefore, after the Duma election 2016, if the country again

undergoes the protest wave, it will be possible to conduct analogical to the present study and reveal determinants which may affect people's motivation to express their discontent.

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Appendix 1. Interview guide

The aim: to find out why informants decided to get involved into the 10 December 2011 protest in Arkhangelsk, Russia.

Block I. General information regarding interviewee:

- age;
- gender;
- level of education and occupation;
- role in the protest (ordinary participant, organizer, contributor to organizing etc.)

Block II. Precondition of the protest:

a) 2011 Duma elections were the first one after the “United Russia” took the office in 2001 when number of supporters, according to results, decreased much in many regions of Russia compared to the previous elections. Besides, despite this, wave of protest occurred across entire Russia. In your opinion, what is the reason for that?

b) Why such a big scale of protest across Russia emerged right at that time: not earlier or later?

Block III. Peculiarities of Northh European Russia. Arkhangelsk region

a) In Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and Karelia regions number of supporters of the “Untied Russia” and federal leaders in general decreased even more in comparison to other regions of the state. Why did such situation occur in these regions?

b) One of the biggest protest (excluding Moscow and St. Petersburg) against results also happened in the European North of Russia. Why here? What’s the peculiarity of the northwest region of Russia?

Block IV. Interviewee’s vision of nature of the 10 December protest in Arkhangelsk

a) Could you describe mood and atmosphere in society in Arkhangelsk right before the December events?

b) What were your own motives to take part in? Did they coincide with official aims of the protest declared in the organization group in VK.com?

c) Did you contribute to organization of the protest? If you did, could you say more about that experience

d) Did you go with company or alone? What sort of people were in the protest?

e) Were you satisfied with results? Or your expectations were not met?

Block V. Summary: influence and consequences

a) Could that meeting be called as a part of democratization process in Russia or not?

If not, how would you call that protest in two words?

b) Was the protest influential on you in any way? How?

c) In near future, is it possible that some sort of similar protest occur In Arkhangelsk like it was in 2011? For example, after next elections in 2016. If yes, are you going to take part in it?