

URBAN GOVERNANCE IN THE PROVINCIAL TOWNS OF THE KHARKOV GOVERNORATE IN 1900–1917

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Abstract. The article focuses on the issues of urban governance in district, non-district, medium-size and small-size towns of the Kharkov governorate in 1900–1917. The study is based on materials from Russian and Ukrainian historical archives and newly discovered periodicals. This article utilizes a comparative historical framework to analyse problems of urban governance based on the materials from Great Britain, Germany, the Habsburg monarchy, Poland and multiple large cities of the Russian Empire. In the early 20th century ten towns of the governorate had complete self-government, while six had incomplete self-government. Until 1910 urban power was concentrated in the hands of 58 people: mayors, town headmen, members of town executive boards and support staff. We analysed the main reasons which affected the quality of urban government decisions: absenteeism of voters, quality power dynamics of urban elites, sources of the conflicts among municipal Dumas and finally town executive boards. It is important to note that towns used three strategies to overcome the managerial crises: examples of which included striving for the right to obtain complete urban self-governance, attempts to expand the number of employees in the town bureaucracy, and hiring professionals in various areas of the urban governance. As a result of re-evaluation of property values from which real estate tax was paid, a tax rates revision for trading establishments, introducing some new local taxes received from the state authorities, searching for funds toward commercial banks the cumulative expenses of urban governments increase for 2.4 times and its dynamics exceeded the population growth. After recalculating taxes per capita, the governorate towns spent 2.37–12.67 rubles, while at the same time expenses were 1.5–2 rubles per capita across the empire. The most important components of interactions between urban government and society at large were the statistical and analytical information publications by the city offices themselves, public discussion of urban problems in the pages of St. Petersburg magazine *Gorodskoye delo* [Urban affair], in local permanent newspapers after 1912, participation of society representatives in decision-making on a wide range of urban issues since 1907 and rise of different forms of people's self-organization particularly during the First World War.

Keywords: urban governance, town, executive board, mayor, city-dwellers.

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In modern Ukraine everything connected with the issues of local self-government causes stepped-up attention. Since the set of laws on decentralization was adopted in 2015, a new system of relations between the central authority and the lower link – territorial Communities, including cities – has been created in the country. Naturally, there are many difficulties on the way to the city administration system formation in-situ, as Ukrainian society has encountered a local government restructuring on such a scale for the first time. Therefore, the appeal to the experience of the past, the search for answers to sharp today's questions in domestic and foreign practice is an urgent task.

In historical studies, the activities of municipal bodies in the Russian Empire are considered on the example of St. Petersburg, Moscow and provincial centres. The viewpoint that there was no significant progress in the work of the urban self-government at the turn of the nineteenth – twentieth century is the main one dominated in these works. By historians' accounts, the reason for this was the new Municipal Statute of 1892, which was characterized as an urban counter-reform. All the subsequent actions of the central government aimed at improving the situation were presented as stopgap¹.

The governance issues of small and medium-sized towns, in which more than half of the urban population lived, are out of professional historians' sight. As a rule, local historians [*kraieznavtsi*] pay attention to the problems of such towns in Ukraine. They focus on the socio-economic and everyday citizens' life, idealize the actions of local leaders but do not analyse the processes taken place in urban space². One of the main reasons for this situation is the idea of negative nature of whatever connected with the imperial period that is widespread in national post-Soviet historiography. As a result, urban governance is presented through the prism of confrontation between the „good” citizens and the „bad” central authorities. Another reason is that the history of Ukrainian cities is considered exclusively in the intra-imperial context. The third reason is the fragmentation of the source base.

¹ Michael F. Hamm, “The Breakdown of Urban Modernization: A Prelude to the Revolutions of 1917”, in *The City in Russian History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976): 182–200; Daniel Brower, “Urban Revolution in the Late Russian Empire”, in *The City in Late Imperial Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986): 335; Valeriia Nardova, “Organy gorodskogo samoupravleniia v sisteme samoderzhavnogo apparata vlasti v kontse XIX – nachale XX v.” [The urban self-government in the system of the autocratic apparatus of power in the late 19th – early 20th century], *Reformy ili revoliutsiia? Rossiia 1861–1917* [Reforms or revolution? Russia 1861–1917] (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1992): 55–66; Valeriia Nardova, *Samoderzhavie i gorodskie Dumy v Rossii v kontse XIX – nachale XX v.* [Autocracy and City Councils in Russia at the end of the 19th – early 20th centuries] (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1994), 155–156; *Rossia v nachale XX veka* [Russia at the beginning of the 20th century] (Moscow: Novyi Khronograf, 2002), 130–131; *Istoriia mista Kharkova XX stolittia* [History of the city of Kharkov of the 20th century] (Kharkiv: Folio, 2004), 6–130.

² Ivan Zakharov, *Volchansk i Volchanskiï raïon: Ot veka k veku* [Volchansk and Volchansk district: from century to century] (Kharkov: RIP Original, 1999), 49, 50; Ivan Miroshnichenko, *Starobilshchyna: istoriiko-kraieznavchii narys* [Starobilsk region: historical and local history essay] (Lugansk: VAT LOD, 2002), 21, 70.

The municipal governance study takes one of the central places in the historical and urban research on the cities of Western and Central Europe. The two approaches used in the works of European urban specialists are accepted conceptually important for our study. Firstly, they consider the actions of town and central authorities, public organizations, individuals through the prism of their interconnection and interaction as distinguished from confrontation and counter-strategy³. Secondly, they use a comparative historical approach to the study of governance problems. Such studies conducted on the materials of Great Britain, Austria, Poland, Holland, Germany point to the common development patterns of urban governance systems. At the same time, they help to make a disclosure about the peculiarities of each country. That was especially relevant in the context of increasing state participation in solving local problems, which gained momentum in all countries at the turn of the nineteenth – twentieth centuries⁴.

In view of the above, the objective of this article is to analyse the municipal government activities in small towns of the Kharkov governorate in 1900–1917. The study is based on the materials of the Russian State Historical Archive (St. Petersburg), the regional historical archives of Ukraine (Kharkov, Sumy) and the materials of the periodical press, which have been used for the scientific purposes for the first time ever.

URBAN GOVERNANCE, STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE DISTRICT COUNCIL IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the early of the twentieth century the network of towns in the Kharkov governorate included the principal town, 10 district towns (i.e. official administrative centres, [*uyezd*] towns) and six non-district [*bezuyezd*] towns. From 1897 to 1914 the population of district towns and non-district towns (hereinafter we will use the term “provincial towns” as a synonym) 1.5 times increased from 193 300 to 291 800 people. In 1914, Lebedin, Akhtyrka, Slavyansk, Bolopol’ye and Sumy, with a population of 20 600 to 49 900 people, belonged to the average population towns.

³ Robert J. Morris, “Governance: two centuries of urban growth”, *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond Since 1750*, Robert J. Morris and Richard H. Trainor (eds.) (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000): 3–5; Mike Goldsmith, John Garrard, “Urban governance: some reflections”, *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond Since 1750*, Morris and Trainor (eds.): 16–17; Julie Light, “‘...mere seekers of fame’?: personalities, power and politics in the small town: Pontypool and Bridgend, c. 1860–95”, *UH* 32, nr. 1 (2005): 98–99; Beata Menesi, “Probleme administrative urbane dezbătute la congresele de la Constanța (1927) și Oradea (1929) ale orașelor din România”, *HU* 24 (2016): 185–193.

⁴ Peter Urbanitsch, “Functions and Tasks of the Municipal Government in the Monarchy”, *Mayors and City Halls. Local Government and the Cultural Space in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, Jacek Purchla (ed.), (Cracow: International Culture Center, 1998): 23; Stefan Couperus, „Research in urban history: recent theses on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century municipal administration”, *UH* 37, no. 2 (2010): 322.

Kupyansk, Zolochiv, Bogodukhov, Valki, Volchansk, Chuguev, Starobelsk and Izyum, were considered small ones, with a population of 11 600–17 900. Nedrigailov, Zmiev and Krasnokutsk were the least populated towns, where no more 9 000 people lived. On the eve of the First World War, the share of provincial towns in the urban population of the governorate was 53.9 per cent.

The towns of the Kharkov governorate had no traditions of self-government on the basis of Magdeburg Law as a significant number of cities of other Ukrainian lands. Self-government began to develop here during the Great Reforms of Alexander II. The imperial power intended to shift the solution of a part of country-wide problems (financing local government agencies, the police and the army) to it and to entrust urban improvements as well⁵. In this respect, the imperial government intentions differed from those pursued by the authorities of other countries. Thus, the central government used the municipal self-government to accelerate the industrial urban development in Germany and it was used to smooth out the negative social consequences of industrial growth in England⁶. At the same time, the Russian self-government gained the rights that did not differ from those that the cities of Western Europe had in the field of socio-economic activity as well as provision of urban amenities. But if in England, Germany, the Austro-Hungary Empire, the number of subjects eligible to participate in urban self-government was legislatively expanded,⁷ then in Russia in 1892 the number of voters was reduced compared to the 1870 Municipal Statute. The Empire legislation provided for the existence of the district councils [*zemstvo*] self-government simultaneously with the municipal government in *uyezd* towns. The district council self-government acted primarily in the interests of the countryside population but had the right to tax city-dwellers. Thus, the latter came under an additional tax press. That status of urban self-government in Russia was significantly different from the status of cities in Europe. For example, in Galicia, the Habsburg monarchy region, which was close to the Kharkov region in terms of development, 140 cities had a separate urban self-government after 1896⁸.

In the early twentieth century in accordance with the Municipal Statute of 1892, the majority of towns of Kharkov governorate had complete [*polnoye*] self-

⁵ Konstantin Pazhitnov, Iosif Gessen, Avgust Kaminka, *Velikie reformy 60-h gg. v ih proshlom i nastoiashchem* [The Great Reforms of the 60s in their past and present] (St. Petersburg: Izdanie M.I. Semenova, 1913), 26.

⁶ Morris, "Governance", 4; Peter Eckersley, *Local Climate Governance in England and Germany: Converging Towards a Hybrid Model?*, Newcastle University Ph.D. thesis, 2016 http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/110691/1/Thesis_final_complete.pdf, 65–66, 70–71.

⁷ Urbanitsch, "Functions and Tasks", 15, 19; Morris, "Governance", 4; Eckersley, *Local Climate Governance*, 76, 70, 73.

⁸ Krzysztof Broński, "Samorząd a rozwój lokalny w dobie autonomii galicyjskiej. Doświadczenia Przemysła, Stanisławowa i Tarnowa" [Local government and local development in the era of Galician autonomy. Experiences of Przemyśl, Stanisławów and Tarnów], *Rozwój przestrzenny miast galicyjskich położonych między Dunajcem a Sanem w okresie autonomii galicyjskiej* [Spatial development of Galician cities located between the Dunajec and San during Galician autonomy], Zbigniew Biersdorf and Andrzej Laskowski (eds.) (Jasło, 2001): 318.

government represented by municipal Dumas (consisting of 23 to 43 councillors named *glasnye*), town executive boards [*uprava*] and mayors. It was incomplete [*nepolnoye*] in Volchansk, Zolochiv, Krasnokutsk, Valki, Zmiev, Nedrigailov, i.e. represented by meetings of 15 authorized persons led by town headmen.

The mayor, the town executive board and the дума were authorized with considerable rights at the stage of preparing decisions. However, Article 11 of the Municipal Statute of 1892 granted the Governor the right to monitor not only the compliance of the decisions made by the дума with the norms of the law, but also the “correctness of the actions” of urban self-governments. The latter formulation was very vague and allowed arbitrary interpretation. On the contrary, in Western Europe they focused on the development of independence and initiative of “urban society”. In the cities influenced by German, the strong-willed and skilled mayor or Magistrat was a full-fledged representative of city-dwellers, and city authorities could solve all the issues, which were not prohibited by law⁹. In England, there was a system of various public organizations participation in the city governance and the city authorities “could only undertake activities that were expressly permitted in legislation”¹⁰.

In fact, until 1910 in provincial towns of the Kharkov governorate, the power had been concentrated in the hands of 58 people: the 16 mayors, town headmen and 26 members of the town executive boards and 16 persons of the support staff: clerks or secretaries of the municipal дума and the executive board [*uprava*]. The staff was assigned to develop costing, prepare concepts and draft decisions authorized by the municipal дума. The meetings of the latter were held not more often than once a month and turned into a mere formality. Specialists outsourcing for the certain work types performance was not common. To prepare draft decisions, the councillors’ commissions were formed in municipal dumas. However, as a rule, they consisted of the same persons and did not always effectively cope with the required issues¹¹.

The nature and quality of decisions made by municipal self-governments were influenced by a number of factors.

First, 6 471 voters or 2.2 per cent of the residents were eligible to vote to the municipal дума in the provincial towns of the Kharkov governorate. That was even more than in Kharkov, where merely 1.2 per cent of the population was up for the election. The deputy corps of municipal self-governments of the governorate made up at least 422 councillors, while in Kharkov there were 80 people¹². However, as a rule, about one third of the people eligible to vote participated in the elections. The 1909–1911 elections to municipal дума showed that they were delayed due to abstention in the 7 towns such as Sumy, Izyum, Slavyansk, Starobelsk,

⁹ Broński, “Samorząd a rozwój”, 320; Morris, “Governance”, 4; Eckersley, *Local Climate Governance*, 66, 71, 74.

¹⁰ Eckersley, *Local Climate Governance*, 66.

¹¹ *Iuzhnyi Krai* [South Region], 30 Jan. 1914.

¹² *Goroda Rossii v 1910 godu* [Cities of Russia in 1910] (St. Petersburg: Tipo-Litografiia N.L. Nyrkina, 1914), 498.

Chuguev, Akhtyrka and Kupyansk¹³. 201 people came to the polls that equal to 29 per cent of those eligible to vote in Sumy in April 1914¹⁴. Not more than 72 people cast a vote that was about 12 per cent with a minimum of 599 voters in Volchansk in October 1915¹⁵. In fairness, a similar situation took place in the principal town. The only exception occurred in Kupyansk in 1907, there was unprecedented number who came to the polls – 97 people, or almost 61 per cent of those eligible to vote¹⁶.

The main reason for absenteeism of voters was a psychological factor. One of the Kharkov newspapers wrote that the political realities of the Russian Empire taught the population to heel and to obey the government completely¹⁷. Therefore, participation in the elections was considered as a manifestation of disloyalty towards the higher authority by citizens. That was a feature of the voters' behaviour in the provincial cities of the Kharkov governorate. On the contrary, in historians' view, the absenteeism of voters in large cities of the Russian Empire such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odessa, Kharkov had rather a protest character. Thus, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the restrictions on rights of urban self-government after 1892¹⁸. It was also specific that the Galicians manifested a desire to participate in local government. However, according to Polish historians, they did not have time to adapt to the pace and amount of changes¹⁹. Another reason for the low voters' turnout was a con on elections, for example, in Kupyansk, Volchansk. They were organized by those who had already had access to the town authorities and had no intention to share it. As a result, they were eager for preventing unwanted voters from participating in elections²⁰.

¹³ *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA)* [Russian State Historical Archive], Glavnoe upravlenie po delam mestnogo khoziaistva (GUDMKh) [General Directorate for Local Economy] Fund 1288, list 5, 1910, file 121, O lichnom sostave gorodskikh obshchestvennykh upravlenii Khar'kovskoi gubernii [On the personnel of urban public administrations of the Kharkov province], 41–280.

¹⁴ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Sums'koi oblasti (DASO)* [State archive of Sumy region], Sumskaia gorodskaia uprava (SGU) [Sumy town executive board] Fund 1, list 2, file 18 Tsirkuliari Khar'kovskogo gubernatora. Postanovlenie Sumskoi upravy o poriadke sostavleniia spiskov imeiushchikh pravo uchastiia v vyborakh glasnykh. Instruktsiia o poriadke vybora glasnykh. Spiski glasnykh [Instructions of the Kharkov governor. Decision of the Sumy town executive board on the procedure for compiling lists of voters eligible to participate in elections. Instructions on how to select voters. Voter Lists], 45, 111.

¹⁵ *Volchanskiĭ zemskii listok* [Volchsk district council papers], 1 Nov. 1915, No. 36

¹⁶ *Utro* [Morning] (Kharkov), 6 Oct. 1907.

¹⁷ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti* [Kharkiv Provincial Record], 1 Nov. 1907.

¹⁸ Hamm, "The Breakdown of Urban Modernization", 187–188.

¹⁹ Broński, "Samorząd a rozwój", 325.

²⁰ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kharkovskoi oblasti (DAKhO)* [State archive of Kharkiv region], Khar'kovskoe gubernskoe po zemskim i gorodskim delam prisutstvie (KhGZGDP) [Kharkov provincial local government and urban affairs office] Fund 19, list 1, file 231, Dokumenty (zhurnaly zasedaniĭ, ballotirovochnye listy, vedomosti) po osnovnoi deiatel'nosti Volchanskoĭ gorodskoi dумы [Documents (meeting journals, ballot sheets, statements) on the main activities of the Volchansk Town Council], 23–25turn; file 68, O revizii Kupianskoĭ gorodskoi upravy i predanii sudu dolzhnostnykh lits etoi upravy [On the audit of the Kupyansk town executive board and the trial of officials of this board], 1–1turn.

Secondly, since all the towns had predominantly been centres of local trade for a long time, merchants took a dominant lead. The undereducation of representatives of that group, conservative psychology had a significant impact on the decisions made.

The mayors and town headmen, mostly merchants, managed both dumas and town executive boards. They were also burdened with representative capacity, drawing up a great number of papers for reports to the Governor and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thus, the elected leaders were unable to concentrate forces exclusively on municipal governance. In addition, most of them continued to do their businesses, as the salary of the mayor could not ensure a decent existence. Thus, in 1906, the mayor of Akhtyrka, V.P. Boyko, had to resign since his own trade business had decayed²¹. Pursuant to the reasons described above, from 1904 to 1914, four people interchanged in Akhtyrka, Kupyansk, three interchanged in Krasnokutsk, Valki, and two in Bogodukhov, Volchansk, Zmiev, Chuguev, Lebedin, Nedrigailov, Starobelsk, Belopol'ye, and the vacant appointment was in Bogodukhov, Krasnokutsk, Starobelsk during some periods. One and the same person held the position of mayor only in Slavyansk, Sumy, Izyum and Zolochiv within the whole prescribed period.

In the early twentieth century due to industrial growth, entrepreneurs and homeowners tried to compete with merchants regarding urban governance in Slavyansk (the major center of salt production of the Empire, as well as a resort town), Akhtyrka, Bogodukhov, Valki, Volchansk, Izyum, Kupyansk, Lebedin (the centres of agricultural processing, mainly flour manufacture), Sumy (one of the largest sugar industry centre). The development of Chuguev was decisively influenced by the military school and military units located there. The influence of those population groups on decisions made by dumas and town executive boards began to increase gradually. They promoted and supported new local self-government leaders. Those new people belonged to the social groups of the urban population, which were not directly connected with the merchant class. So, retired military men became town heads in Sumy, Akhtyrka; representatives of *meshchane* or hereditary honorary *grazdane*, specific social groups of the urban population of the Russian Empire, approximately corresponding to the concept of *burgess* in English took up posts in Volchansk, Izyum, Krasnokutsk, Slavyansk, Chuguev.

Thirdly, it should be noted that there was a small number of intellectuals. So, in the late nineteenth century, there were only 3 100 or 1.6 per cent lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers (together with family members) in the provincial towns, who were involved in intellectual activity and could be involved in the process of urban self-government. It was less than the number of people who worked for state administrative structures²². In addition, distrust of intellectuals and even hostility were common. The intellectuals were exclusively credited with

²¹ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 6 July 1906.

²² *Pervaia Vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia rossiiskoi imperii 1897 goda. Vypusk 46, Kharkovskaia guberniia* [The first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897, Issue 46, Kharkov Province] (St. Petersburg, 1904), 210–254.

revolutionary intentions (in the sense of destructive in relation to the interests of the state) by the government and public opinion²³.

The consequence of those factors was a low level of qualitative composition of councillors, conflicts in relations between the collegial bodies of municipal self-governments on the one hand, and executive ones on the other hand. It was especially hard-hitting in the towns such as Belopol'ye, Chuguev, Akhtyrka, Slavyansk, Bogodukhov, Kupyansk. The dumas of those towns did not approve the financial reports of the town executive boards due to over expenditures and waste, abusive practices with the use of municipal funds²⁴. The conflicts were really heated sometimes. There was a necessity in the presence of the Kharkov Governor for providing the executive board [*uprava*] revision in Chuguev²⁵. A part of the councillors asked the supreme authority to carry out a government audit in Bogodukhov²⁶. The Volchansk, Izyum councillors showed their disagreement with the executive board through other means: absence from meetings, leaving the дума session hall prior to discussions, refusal to work in commissions²⁷.

The story of the dismissal of Kupyansk mayor V. Finogenov was accompanied by a loud financial scandal. From time to time publications of the mayor's abusive activity were seen in the Kharkov newspapers²⁸. However, the opinion that the attack on V. Finogenov was a revenge for his position on the issue of equal rights for women, which he had brought to the discussion of the municipal дума during the revolution of 1905–1907, was spread in the publications opposing the government²⁹. The provincial authorities began to investigate the situation in the Kupyansk town council in spring 1908 in connection with the abusive activities (associated with the use of the municipal budget, rigging of municipal дума elections)³⁰. The audit carried out revealed civic peculation of 15 400 rubles, and it was almost a third of the municipal budget! Considering the audit results, the Kupyansk дума came to the conclusion that the specified funds „were apparently in the private turnover of the officials close to this case”³¹. 15 330 rubles were immediately paid into the bank after the audit (it was not possible to clarify from whom the money arrived), the additional дума commission to investigate the situation recommended not to initiate criminal prosecution of the council members, but to confine oneself to civil claims for damages³². S.V. Petrichenko was appointed as a new mayor by the government and, as it turned out, in pushing his own agenda he had no morals as well³³. In process of time scandals arose in the

²³ Pazhitnov, Gessen, Kaminka, *Velikie reformy*, 28, 37.

²⁴ *Utro* (Kharkov), 29 July 1909; 3, 22 Mar. 1911.

²⁵ *Utro* (Kharkov), 28 July 1909.

²⁶ *Utro* (Kharkov), 23 Jan. 1909.

²⁷ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 3 Apr. 1912; *Volchanskii zemskii listok*, 28 June 1915, No. 21.

²⁸ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 22 May, 30 Nov. 1907.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19*, list 1, file 68, 1–1turn.

³¹ *DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19*, list 1, file 68, page 2–2turn, 23–24turn.

³² *DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19*, list 1, file 68, page 27, 29.

³³ *Utro* (Kharkov), 18 Nov. 1909.

town around municipal government figures who had abused access to municipal administration for their own benefit³⁴.

By historical sources, the conflicts in most towns (except Kupyansk) showed that mayors and *uprava* members realized the necessity for changes before the rest ones. Pushing forward the implementation of projects that required significant financial expenses, they entered upon terra incognita. Therefore, part of the councillors and citizens perceived their actions with fear, as a step into the unknown with unpredictable consequences.

To overcome the managerial crisis towns used several strategies. First, Volchansk, Valki and Krasnokutsk had been striving for the right to obtain complete municipal self-governance for several years, i.e. the arrangement of a *duma*. That would increase the number of those participating in elections, the number of councillors, and, consequently, would give the opportunity to attract new cultural forces to the self-governing bodies³⁵. Volchansk had its way in 1906, Valki and Krasnokutsk achieved their goals in 1913, 1916, respectively³⁶. The only city in the governorate that operated straight in the opposite direction was Zolochev. Zolochev authorized persons petitioned for the town exclusion from the list of towns. These strong sentiments on the issue were expressed both by the local elite and the majority of city-dwellers. As a result, on August 1, 1917, a decision to liquidate the town self-government was made³⁷.

Secondly, Akhtyrka, Bogodukhov, Izyum, Volchansk, Zmiyev, Slavyansk increased the number of *uprava* members (i.e. the town bureaucracy) by one or two people in order to improve the executive office functionality.

Thirdly, in 1910–1914 Sumy, Lebedin, Bogodukhov, Volchansk, Zmiev, Kupyansk, Starobelsk started hiring professionals in various areas of the urban governance: accountants, court attorneys, urban technicians, veterinary and medical doctors, urban health officers, architects, and land surveyors. The absolute champion was the Slavyansk *duma*, where had been 22 employees before the First World War³⁸. It should be noted that hiring experts in different areas, the towns began to adopt experience of the *zemstvos*, which had enlisted specialists into their structures significantly earlier. In the early twentieth century *zemstvos*, especially Sumskoye and Volchanskoye, managed everything faster, better and more

³⁴ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 11 Mar. 1916.

³⁵ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 30 June 1914.

³⁶ *RGIA/GUDMKh/Fund 1288*, list 5, 1910, file 37 O vvedenii v g. Valkakh Khar'kovskoi gubernii gorodovogo polozheniia v polnom ob'eme [On the introduction in the town of Valki of the Kharkov province of the complete municipal self-governance], 6–24; *Fund 1288*, list 5, 1914, file 127 O vvedenii v g. Krasnokutske Khar'kovskoi gubernii gorodovogo polozheniia v polnom ob'eme [On the introduction in Krasnokutsk of the Kharkov province of the complete municipal self-governance], 2–4turn, 11–14, 24.

³⁷ Vasilii Sinelnikov, Volodimir Sokolovskiy, Mikola Shapovalov, *Zolochiv. Istoryko-krayeznavchyi narys* [Zolochev. Historical and local history essay] (Kharkiv, Prapor: 1972): 14–15, 16.

³⁸ *Khar'kovskii calendar' na 1913 god* [Kharkov almanac for 1913] (Kharkov, without year): 59–60.

successfully than towns. They used all the legal ways to promptly replenish their budgets, skilfully determined development priorities, concentrated their efforts and funds on the step-by-step solution of several main tasks (primary education and medicine).

In the early twentieth century the focus of town self-governments was on seeking funds for the urban infrastructure development. According to historical sources, positive steps were made not only because of the need to improve public utilities as it was comprehended by urban leaders. The major role in pressing the works forward was played by competition-related matters from *zemstvo* side. *Zemstvos* quickly, ahead of towns, reassessed the value of the taxpayers' property and increased their budgets, including those at the expense of city-dwellers. In order to replenish the budget, a revaluation of property values was also carried out in towns, from which real estate tax was paid. As a result, between 1903 and 1912 charges from real estate increased twice in Kupyansk, almost three times in Valki, Izyum, Chuguev, more than 7 times in Krasnokutsk, 12 times in Volchansk and 27 times in Zmiev³⁹. In the course of conducting their revaluation, municipal self-governments faced resistance from some citizens who did not want to pay higher taxes to a town. In order to overcome the resistance, municipal self-governments prepared a petition to the authorities with the rationale for reducing the value of the *Zemsky* tax. V. Bagmet, who was Volchansk mayor, became one of the active participants of the all-Russian movement for the separation of towns into independent *zemsky* unit [*edinitsa*].

The second source of the town budget replenishment was a tax rates revision for trading establishments. However, there were serious obstacles on the way such as: nepotism and self-government members' (merchants') resistance. In quite a small Zolochev town, there were six out of 12 authorized persons representing relatives or employees of a local bank, with Zavadsky as head. That group provided advantageous places for the stores rental to their people at rates 10 times less than the real price⁴⁰. Market shops were transferred to perpetual lease for small amounts of money in Volchansk in the mid-1870s. Hence, an objectively long pending issue on the rental revision was blocked by some *duma* members, who basically owned those shops. As a result, the town budget systematically lost a significant amount of money⁴¹.

The third source of budget replenishment on the eve of the First World War was the right to introduce some new local taxes received from the government. One of the essential was by the *pood* tax on cargoes being transported through the streets, as well as railways. Those incomings were intended for paving. But the

³⁹ *Iuzhnyi Krai*, 27 Jan. 1903; *Dokhody, raskhody, spetsial'nye kapitally i zadolzhennost' gorodskikh poselenii na 1912 god* [Income, expenses, special capital and debt of urban settlements for 1912] (Petrograd, 1917): 66.

⁴⁰ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 17 Nov. 1906.

⁴¹ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 20 Dec. 1906.

government created major obstacles to the approval of the pood tax rules in towns. So, in Volchansk, the epic story with the taxes approval lasted for two years⁴².

The fourth activity on searching for funds was directed towards commercial banks. Applying to state funds for subsidies to cover budget deficits was typical in the early twentieth century. In 1904 they were issued to meet the urban needs of Volchansk in the amount of 60 000 rubles, Kupyansk – 15 000 rubles, Izyum – 10 000 rubles⁴³. Starting since 1910 urban governments had been actively applying for loans. The actions to this end ceased being formal and the discussions would last for several дума sessions⁴⁴ (it was uncommon practice in previous times). A serious first breakthrough in governorate was made by the Izyum дума. It concluded a mortgage loan for the amount of 315 000 rubles to provide electric lighting, water supply, shopping malls construction, fire truck and slaughterhouse equipment purchasing, premises for local police institutions arrangement, school and pharmacy buildings, paving streets and squares and other needs for the town improvement⁴⁵. The Slavyansk дума developed a plan to apply for a loan in the amount of 800 000 rubles to pay off the town debts and to construct the urban buildings⁴⁶, Sumy applied for a loan in the amount of 1 million rubles⁴⁷. In April 1913 Kupyansk received the permission for three loans to increase the municipal bank capital, to construct an electric power plant and to develop slaughterhouses in credit institutions or individuals for a total amount of 150 000 rubles⁴⁸. Chuguyev received the permission for a loan of 10 000 rubles to construct a hall for public lectures and public readings⁴⁹.

The documents submitted by the towns were carefully studied by the state authorities and were not always approved. So, Volchansk's submission for a loan in private credit institutions on the security of urban property in the amount of 200 000 rubles was not authorized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, since no calculations were made to consider sources of funds to repay the annual interest on the loan⁵⁰. That case showed that the five *uprava* employees, overloaded with current work, did not have time to prepare documents duly⁵¹. Contrariwise from 1911 to 1913 in Slavyansk, Sumy, long discussion on both loan issues and others, slowness in decision-making were connected with the fact that new employees and specialists of town councils carefully studied all the legal and financial nuances of the case.

⁴² DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19, list 1, file 181, O popudnom sbore v gorode Volchanske [About the gathering in the town of Volchansk of the pood tax rules], 2–19.

⁴³ *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 31 July 1904.

⁴⁴ *Utro* (Kharkov), 9 Feb. 1911.

⁴⁵ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 8 Feb. 1912.

⁴⁶ *Utro* (Kharkov), 8 May. 1911.

⁴⁷ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 5 June 1913.

⁴⁸ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 27 Apr. 1913.

⁴⁹ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 11 Oct. 1913.

⁵⁰ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 5 Oct. 1912.

⁵¹ *Khar'kovskii calendar' na 1913 god*, 35.

As a result of the steps taken, 14 towns increased their budgets. So, if in 1904 the cumulative expenses of local governments amounted to 643 500 rubles, then in 1914 – 1 530 000⁵². Thus, the increase was 2.4 times over ten years and its dynamics exceeded the population growth. Only Zolochev and Nedrigailov cut costs. In recalculation per one resident, the governorate towns spent 2.37–12.67 rubles, at the same time expenses were 1.5–2 rubles per capita across the empire⁵³. The main sources of funds in the town budget were town assets (land, buildings, income from city enterprises, including city banks) – 51.7 per cent, taxes on real estate of citizens and trade – 21.1 per cent. In the form of compensation, towns received about 7.4 per cent of funds from the state and 1.2 per cent was from zemstvos, although they spent about 16 per cent of their budgets on meeting state needs⁵⁴.

As a result of those efforts, there had been some progress in the improvement of living conditions of settlements. In 1904, only Sumy used electric lighting, 12 cities used kerosene. In 1910 the five towns (Akhtyrka, Volchansk, Sumy, Belopol'ye, Slavyansk) had electric lighting in the streets, as a rule, in parallel with kerosene. Only kerosene lanterns were used for the rest towns, but Zolochev did not have this amenity at all. In 1904 water supply was provided mostly with wells in eight towns, using river water in eight towns. By 1910 municipal governments had developed a network of wells in those towns where only river water was used. In 1904 none of towns in the governorate, including Kharkov, had a municipal sewerage system. Refuse disposal was home-based: the waste was simply buried by the inhabitants themselves in urban areas. By 1910, all cities had begun to centralize the garbage and sewage disposal using urban or hiring private sanitary brigades. The fourteen towns (excluding Valki and Nedrigailov) organized municipal slaughterhouses or used private ones and thus could provide sanitary control over the cattle brought to the towns⁵⁵.

We believe that the insignificant scope of positive changes cannot be entirely attributed to the work shortcomings of the town self-governments of the Kharkov governorate. Assessing the activities of the latter, one should take into account the fact that the cities of England, Germany, and the Hapsburg Empire had made some progress in solving some of the problems in education, street paving, sewage, and

⁵² *Goroda Rossii v 1904 godu* [Cities of Russia in 1904] (St. Petersburg: Tipo-Litografiia N.L. Nyrkina, 1906): 387; *Calendar'-spravochnik gorodskogo deiatelia na 1917 god* [Almanac-reference of urban doer for 1917] (Petrograd: Izdanie zurnalov 'Zemskoe Delo' i 'Gorodskoe delo', without year): 233–239; *DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19*, list 1, file 173 Smety raskhodov i dokhodov goroda Valok Khar'kovskoi gubernii na 1914 god [Estimates of expenses and income of the town of Valky of the Kharkov province for 1914], 25.

⁵³ *Gorodskoe delo* [Urban affair], no. 2, (1912): 136.

⁵⁴ *Dokhody, raskhody, spetsial'nye kapitaly*, 240–247; *Otchet Kupianskoi gorodskoi upravly ob ispolnenii smety dokhodov i raskhodov po gorodu Kupiansku za 1914 god* [Kupyansk town council report on the execution of the estimates of income and expenses in the town of Kupyansk for 1914], (Kupiansk, without year), 63.

⁵⁵ *Goroda Rossii v 1904 godu*, 198; *Goroda Rossii v 1910 godu*, 382–383; *Dokhody, raskhody, spetsial'nye kapitaly*, 243, 245.

water supply gradually throughout the nineteenth century⁵⁶. In the early twentieth century small and medium-sized towns of the Kharkov governorate found themselves in the situation where they were forced to simultaneously solve all the problems of urban amenities. So, naturally there were a lot of difficulties in making decisions about the scope and pace of transformations.

MUNICIPAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AND URBAN SOCIETY

As European experience has demonstrated, efficient communication between urban self-government and citizens is of great importance for decision-making in the field of urban governance. One of the most important components is the statistical and analytical information publications by the city offices themselves⁵⁷. In the early twentieth century a part of the urban elite of the provincial towns of the governorate came to understanding of the need to interact with a wide range of urban residents. Sumy, Kupyansk and Zmiev regularly published reports on their work. Kupyansk elite made a significant step towards cooperation with citizens. First in 1911 the self-government started publishing not only the financial report of the town council but also analytical materials that should help understand the intricacies of managing all those interested in urban affairs⁵⁸. Bogodukhov, Volchansk, Izyum did not publish any materials about their activities⁵⁹.

In European cities and large cities of the Russian Empire, public discussion of urban problems in the newspapers' pages played an important role in the development of self-government⁶⁰. However, as the authoritative St. Petersburg magazine "*Gorodskoye delo*" [Urban affair] emphasized, the central and local press of the Russian Empire wrote a little about the activities of urban self-governments in the heart of the country. Published notes had the character of a short chronicle of events or reported top-line information⁶¹. That estimate was fully applicable to

⁵⁶ Jan Palmowski, *Liberalism and the city: The case of Frankfurt am Main, 1866–1914*, Lincoln College Ph.D. thesis, 1995 https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:1e1b5618-6038-42d2-98b7-ec90ea7805/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=602337345.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis, 209–69, 270–313; Broński, "Samorząd a rozwój", 317–319; Jonas Hallström, "Technology, social space and environmental justice in Swedish cities: water distribution to suburban Norrköping and Linköping, 1860–90", *UH* 32, no. 3 (2005): 419–432.

⁵⁷ Morris, "Governance", 6–7.

⁵⁸ *Otchet Kupianskoï gorodskoï upravy ob ispolnenii smety dohodov i raskhodov po gorodu Kupiansku za 1911 god* [Kupyansk town council report on the execution of the estimates of income and expenses in the town of Kupyansk for 1911] (Kupiansk, without year): 3.

⁵⁹ *Calendar'- spravochnik gorodskogo deiatelia na 1914 god* [Almanac-reference of urban doer for 1914] (St. Petersburg: Izdanie zurnalov 'Zemskoe Delo' i 'Gorodskoe delo', without year): 162–164.

⁶⁰ Palmowski, "*Liberalism and the city*", 335; Morris, "Governance", 5; Broński, "Samorząd a rozwój", 317; *Istoriya mista Kharkova*, 64–65.

⁶¹ *Gorodskoe delo*, no. 7 (1916), 320.

regional newspapers, which were published in Kharkov. In addition, the notes published on the life of provincial towns were anonymous. Their authors were afraid of persecution from both the government administration and town officials. That situation did not contribute to an open and comprehensive discussion of issues. In the provincial towns of the Kharkov governorate local permanent newspapers appeared only in 1912 (Sumy, Volchansk). The first time attempts to discuss the problems of urban management were made on their pages. But after the outbreak of the First World War, material and intellectual resources for the development of local newspapers narrowed significantly. That put brakes on citizens' consciousness raising.

Under such conditions, the materials of "*Gorodskoye delo*" magazine (since 1909) and the annual Calendar of the Urban Leader (1911–1917) both published in St. Petersburg were of didactic key importance for municipal leaders. Firstly, metropolitan journalists and experts in the field of municipal self-governance discussed a wide range of special issues of urban management. Secondly, they analysed different models of urban self-government development. The authors of the magazine preferred the English model and criticized mildly the German model, which was preferred by government circles of the Russian Empire⁶². The appearance of such publications pushed urban leaders for quick decisions on professional approach to issues of municipal nature. As a result, in 1915 in the course of preparation for the next elections to Akhtyrka Duma technical, organizational and legal mistakes, which had been made during the power plant development in 1908, were being discussed quite skilfully⁶³. But generally, the lack of qualitative information regarding the theory and practice of municipal life had affected urban governments till the end of 1917⁶⁴.

In the early twentieth century there were practically no public organizations that could cooperate in conjunction with dumas over municipal problems solution in the provincial towns of the governorate. The most extensive network of public organizations was in Sumy and Volchansk. It included a guardianship of folk sobriety, prisons, poor pupils of educational institutions, shelters, a branch of the Kharkov Literacy Society or Committees of the Red Cross Society⁶⁵. Municipal governments cooperated closely with estate organizations – merchant and petty bourgeois societies in Krasnokutsk and Valki.

Since 1907 the participation of society representatives in decision-making on a wide range of urban issues increased. In accordance with the law on the

⁶² *Gorodskoe delo*, no. 2, (1912), 141; no. 7, (1912), 422–423; no. 4 (1915), 169; no. 8 (1915), 374.

⁶³ *Gorodskoe delo*, no. 5, (1915), 275–276.

⁶⁴ *DAKhO/KhGZGDP/Fund 19*, list 1, file 363 Dokumenty (zhurnaly zasedaniĭ, doklady, smety) po osnovnoi deiatel'nosti Bogodukhovskoi gorodskoi dумы [Documents (meeting journals, reports, estimates) on the main activities of the Bogodukhov Town Council], 529–530.

⁶⁵ *Khar'kovskii calendar' na 1914 god* [Kharkov almanac for 1914] (Kharkov, without year), 112–130; *Vovchans'k: Zb. arkhivnykh dokumentiv i materialiv* [Vovchansk: a collection of archival documents and materials] (Kharkiv: Folio, 1994): 112.

regulation of the working day in establishments, discussion commissions consisting of merchants, shop-assistants and municipal dumas representatives were created on a parity basis in towns. The meetings of the commissions took place in premises of self-governments in a tense atmosphere. Decision-making was often delayed due to obstruction by merchants. However, that was the first experience of collective discussion and search for compromise solutions for the provincial towns of the Kharkov governorate⁶⁶. In those years, public organizations began to appear in towns – committees – to develop various urban projects. So, there was the committee of the townspeople in Valki, which initiated the opening of a real school and there was the fire-insurance company in Izyum⁶⁷. But really, in comparison with England, Germany, and Galicia, large cities of the Russian Empire, municipal or political parties, mayor parties, which could influence the processes of preparation and decision-making and electoral practice, were not organized in provincial towns of the governorate⁶⁸. As a result, some groups of citizens took part in the town management.

During the First World War, the Empire government was forced to allow a wider participation of society in solving economic and humanitarian problems. Various committees intended to help the wounded, the families of those called for the service, front, mass catering organization, etc were set up in governorate towns. They often took the initiative and relegated the town dumas and executive boards to the side-lines.

Another important change was the de facto right to organize associations of urban self-governments across the governorate. For the first time, town leaders were able to coordinate their activities at the regional and general imperial level within the All-Russian Union of Towns (ARUT)⁶⁹. By the beginning of 1916 there had been nine committees in the Kharkov governorate: in Kharkov, Akhtyrka, Valki, Volchansk, Izyum, Slavyansk, Sumy, Chuguev and Krasnokutsk⁷⁰.

⁶⁶ DAKhO/KhGZGDP/ Fund 19, list 1, file 61 Delo o vvedenii obiazatel'nogo 2-kh chasovogo obedennogo pereryva dlīa sluzhashchikh torgovo-promyshlennykh predpriatiī v gorode Valki Khar'kovskoi gubernii [The case of the introduction of a mandatory 2-hour lunch break for employees of commercial and industrial enterprises in the town of Valki, Kharkov province], 3–4, 7–7turn; file 63 Dokumenty (proekty postanovleniī, raporta, perepiska) ob izdaniī obiazatel'nykh postanovleniī Belopol'skoī gorodskoī dумы [Documents (draft resolutions, reports, correspondence) on the publication of binding decrees of the Belopolsk Town Council], 5, 11, 17; file 64 Delo o vvedenii obiazatel'nogo 2-kh chasovogo obedennogo pereryva dlīa sluzhashchikh torgovo-promyshlennykh predpriatiī v gorode Volchanske Khar'kovskoi gubernii [The case of the introduction of a mandatory 2-hour lunch break for employees of commercial and industrial enterprises in the town of Volchansk, Kharkov province], 1, 14, 25.

⁶⁷ *Utro* (Kharkov), 26 Aug. 1909; *Iuzhnyi Krai*, 23 Dec. 1912.

⁶⁸ Michael F. Hamm, “Khar'kov's Progressive Duma, 1910–1914: A Study in Russian Municipal Reform”, *Slavic Review* 40, 1 (1981), 22–26; Palmowski, *Liberalism and the city*, 46–74, 343–346; Urbanitsch, „Functions and Tasks”, 17.

⁶⁹ See more; Viktor Shevyrin, *Vlast' i obshchestvennye organizatsii v Rossii: Analiticheskiī obzor* [Authority and public organizations in Russia: an analytical review] (Moscow, 2003): 40–47, 63–68, 97–103.

⁷⁰ *Vserossiyskii souz gorodov. Lichnyi sostav uchrezhdeniī Vserossiiskogo souza gorodov na 1 marta 1916 g. Vyp. 2: Oblastnye i gorodskie komitety* [All-Russian Union of Towns. Members of the All-Russian Union of Towns on March 1, 1916. Issue 2: Regional and city committees] (Moscow, 1916): 87–89; *Iuzhnyi Krai*, 28 Oct. 1914.

Although those committees were few in structure, including from 6 to 13 (Valki, Chuguyev, Akhtyrka) to 21 (Izyum) members (there were 73 in Kharkov), they carried out a certain amount of real work mainstreaming new layers of the population into urban life. So, more than half of the members – only 13 – were women in the Izyum Committee including Deputy [*Tovarishch*] Chairman of the City Committee M.A. Hadjopulo⁷¹. This phenomenon for the country with patriarchal traditions and laws, including a ban on women to cast a vote to municipal dumas, was a real breakthrough⁷².

An important form of people's self-organization became joining in consumer co-operatives and credit societies. From 1914 to 1917 the number of co-operatives in the governorate increased six-fold⁷³. Although 75 per cent of these associations operated in rural areas, the towns got a shot in the arm. The county union of credit and loan-saving partnerships that had been founded in Starobelsk was considered as a financial centre of the *uyezd* by the organizers and a new step in the town development. Being an independent structure, it influenced the formation of public opinion⁷⁴. On the contrary, the cooperatives, which had been established only by city-dwellers to solve food supply issues, faced obstacles in their activity. Individual entrepreneurs, dumas and executive boards considered them only as a competitor in the food trade market. Resistance from the merchants in the Kupyansk дума⁷⁵ and the management of the Kharitonenko Company in Sumy was especially strong⁷⁶. For the first time, the conflicts that arose in these towns transferred a discussion on the problems of interaction between town government, public organizations and citizens to a wide public space. Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks' coming to power at the end of 1917 put an end not only to all discussions, but also to the existence of town self-governments.

CONCLUSIONS

In the early twentieth century the growth of the urban population and the industry development changed living conditions of the provincial towns of the Kharkov governorate. That had a significant impact on the activities of town self-governments.

Mayors and town headmen played the main role in the urban governance. They organized the work of the executive body – *uprava*, as well as they were

⁷¹ *Vserossiyskii souz gorodov*, 33. To put that in context: there were nine in Kharkov and no one in Poltava governorate.

⁷² *Khar'kovskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 1 Jan., 8 Jan., 27 Oct. 1915; *Volchanskii zemskii listok*, 7 May 1915, no. 16.

⁷³ Volodymyr Polovets, *Kooperatyvnyi rukh v Livoberezhnii Ukraïni (1861–1917 rr.)* [Cooperative Movement in Left Bank Ukraine (1861–1917)] (Chernigiv: Desnianska pravda, 1996): 62.

⁷⁴ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 29 May 1916.

⁷⁵ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 11 Mar. 1916.

⁷⁶ *Iuzhnyi Kraï*, 12 Mar., 4 May, 26 May 1916.

responsible for preparing reports, developing and implementing plans for the municipal sector development. Presenting mainly one social group of the urban population – the merchants, they did not have special knowledge in the field of urban management and were overloaded with clerical work. Those circumstances significantly limited their capabilities and contributed to a constant labour turnover of mayors and town headmen. They could not become participants of equal cooperation with representatives of state authorities in solving municipal problems.

Nevertheless, the beginning of the twentieth century in the provincial towns of the governorate was marked by a search for a balanced model of work of all town institutions: the *duma*, *uprava*, and mayor. People from social groups of the urban population who were not associated with the merchants came to the leadership posts in seven towns. Volchansk, Krasnokutsk, Valki achieved the right to organize *dumas*, which increased the number of participants in self-government and the scope of its rights. The number of town executive boards' members was increased in most towns and professional specialists started working there. As a result, on the eve of the First World War, the city executive board included people who had broader and more pragmatic views on the urban economy development. For all that, their activities aimed at developing urban infrastructure, increasing budget expenditures and receiving loans were not always supported by collegial bodies and the public. The main reasons for such dualistic behaviour were psychological features of the population in provincial towns, cases of misuse of urban funds (Kupyansk).

The example of the towns of the Kharkov governorate demonstrated that their self-government did not use all the opportunities provided by the law. Ample evidence was an absenteeism, even those elite segments of the city-dwellers who were eligible to vote or to be elected to municipal *dumas*; municipal governments meetings non-attendance by councillors; the desire of a narrow circle of persons, close to municipal self-government, to seize the moment to their personal advantage in spite of actions in the interests of the entire urban society.

From 1910, decision-making procedures began to change in town executive boards. New employees and specialists studied carefully the legal and financial nuances of drafting the funds. During the meetings, *dumas* informally discussed urban infrastructure development projects (Izyum, Volchansk, Slavyansk and Sumy). As a result, self-governments delayed in dealing with decision-making. In contradiction from the previous stage, when delays had been caused by the unwillingness to changes, but later the long preparation of documents was due to the need to make quality decisions. At the same time, the absolute majority of *dumas* and *upravas* of provincial towns of the governorate intended to manage towns without cooperating directly with citizens. Only three town self-governments regularly published reports on their activities for public use. Permanent newspapers appeared in two cities in 1912. It was the period when local discussions on the urban management issues were only emerging.

The authorities of the Russian Empire were committed to increase its influence on the solution of urban problems. In general, it corresponded to the trends that were gaining strength in Europe. The decisions of St. Petersburg, such as the permission for towns to raise new taxes and apply for loans from commercial banks, had a positive impact on the town self-government in the region. The cooperation of representatives of the imperial power and town self-governments of the Kharkov governorate was within the limits of the powers established by law. The governors followed the correct preparation of documents (for example, loan applications), participated as arbitrators in disputes between collegial and executive bodies, citizens and local governments. Along with that, the government considered formal town requests for a very long time (Volchansk, Krasnokutsk, Valki), made unsuccessful personnel decisions (Kupyansk).

The *zemstvos*' activities served simultaneously an irritant and an example for town self-governments. First, it pushed the towns to revise taxation, and second, it showed an example of how to implement successful projects in the field of education and medicine. At the same time, there was a polarization of sentiments towards *zemstvos* in the towns. Some dumas entered into a confrontation with *zemstvos*, began to support the movement for the allocation of an independent *zemstvo* unit.

In the early twentieth century urban society began to form in the governorate towns. The first significant steps were commissions (formed by the state decision) served to reduce the working day. They included merchants, employees and representatives of town self-governments. In addition, various committees and commissions began arising to resolve some issues in towns at the initiative of citizens. After the outbreak of World War I, the state was forced to loosen control over the activities of dumas. De facto, numerous public organizations were established in the towns to assist the army, refugees and to provide food supply. The organization of the provincial and eight town committees of the ARUT became especially important. Thanks to their activities, self-governments got the opportunity to coordinate their activities, voluntarily undertake national-level tasks for the first time. At the same time, town self-governments themselves often showed conservatism, set back the clock of urban cooperatives.

Nevertheless, despite the problems, in the early twentieth century, town self-governments of the Kharkov governorate started solving a number of urgent tasks on urban improvement, sharpened their work, adopted experience and learned to cooperate with *zemstvos*, government bodies and public organizations in the interests of the city-dwellers.