The elections of the president of the Russian Federation of March 4, 2012, amazingly made electoral territorial analysis meaningful again. The two previous cycles (2004 and 2008) were more likely to be transitional from the more competitive elections of the 1990s, when the political preferences of voters played a decisive role, to the epoch, when the decisive word came to belong to the administrative resources of regional elites and the federal center. Therefore, the election results of the 2000s demonstrated strange regional jumps that were rather quickly revealed to be mainly explained by situational agreements between Moscow and local authorities, as well as staff changes in the composition of the latter.

The process of consolidation of administrative resources in the center and regions came to a logical finish by the electoral cycle of 2011–2012, and geographical regularities acquired a sort of meaning again: now the results of V. Putin reflect the degree of loyalty of the regional establishment multiplied by the capability of authorities to control the voting process and count of votes in their regions.

Five federal subjects, where Putin gathered the maximal percentage of votes (from 99.8 to 90.0%), are the Chechen Republic, Republic of Dagestan, Republic of Ingushetia, Karachay–Cherkess Republic, and the Republic of Tyva. The regions, where his official result was the smallest (from 47 to 53.5%) are Moscow, Kaliningrad, Kostroma, Orel, and Vladimir oblasts. Since Kostroma and Orel oblasts showed an analogous result (52.8%), we can add the sixth lowest region—Yaroslavl oblast—where Putin got the support of 54.5%.

In essence, St. Petersburg must also be related to this group, where, despite Putin’s official result of 58.8%, independent observers fixed mass falsifications that gave him an additional percentage of not less than 8—10% [4, 5].

The wave of dismissals of governors after December 4, 2011 (the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation), became a practical confirmation of the reliance on administrative resources as a major source of electoral results. During five months, 11 people have already left, among which dominate leaders who showed weak results either at the elections to the State Duma in December or at the presidential elections in March (the voting for the United Russia party and Putin, respectively): Perm and Primorsky krais and Kostroma, Moscow, Murmansk, Omsk, Smolensk, Tomsk, and Yaroslavl oblasts. Only the dismissal of the governor of Stavropol krai, where the electoral record was higher than the medium one but there took place resonance hunger-strike of protests against the falsification of local elections in the city of Lermontov, can be regarded as an exception.

The map of the official support for Putin (Fig. 1) that mainly recalls an earlier built cartogram for the “index of electoral governance” (Fig. 2) reflecting the dependence of the electoral process on the administrative control at the local level can be regarded as an analytical confirmation [2].

The area of electoral support for Putin in 2012 was finally shifted to the sociocultural periphery of Russia, where public life, mass media, and political activity.
were suppressed by the authoritative style of governance. The twenty most loyal regions (in addition to the five previously mentioned regions, in descending order) looks eloquent: the Republic of Mordovia (87.1%), Yamalo–Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Republic of Tatarstan, Kabardino–Balkarian Republic, Kemerovo oblast, Republic of Bashkortostan, Tyumen oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Tambov oblast, Saratov oblast, Republic of North Ossetia–Alania, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Astrakhan oblast, and Tula oblast (67.8%).

Signs of this drift appeared as early as 2000, when the regional elites of the so-called “Red Belt” (mainly, the Black-Soil Belt to the south of Moscow) were persuaded in practice that state capitalism had much more advantages than the soviet model of governance. Correspondingly, the “Red Belt” immediately turned into “Putin’s belt,” although indicators of electoral freedoms and democracy did not improve there [2].

Subsequently, Putin’s process of mobilization of the regional establishment from the areas of “specific electoral regime” continued successfully, which was reflected in the formation of the so-called “Putin’s consensus of elites” (expression of political scientist G. Pavlovskii) and a successful operation ensured by Putin to transfer power to a successor at the presidential elections of 2008, when D. Medvedev received a record 70.3% with the consolidated support of the center and regions.

Since that period, the structure of electoral support for the tandem between Putin and Medvedev constantly worsened: the share of votes gathered in the areas of “specific electoral regime” (mainly, republics and autonomous okrugs) was growing, and the indicators of support in urbanized and, therefore, more freely voting territories were decreasing.

As a result, by 2012, Putin’s electoral geography turned into an antipode of B. Eltsin’s electoral geography in 1996. Then, in the first round of elections on June 16, 1996, the current president of the Russian Federation was mainly given the highest level of support in large cities (primarily capital cities). At a total result of 35.3% (his major competitor—G. Zyuganov—had 32.0%), B. Eltsin gathered 42.9% in the 100 largest cities of the country. G. Zyuganov got support of only 22.9% there. In the ten largest million-plus cities, B. Eltsin had 52.4%, while G. Zyuganov had only 18.1% [1]. By the way, this is the most visual answer to those, who try to discredit the idea of electoral democracy in Russia at present, stating that hon-

Fig. 1. Putin’s share of the vote during the presidential elections in the Russian Federation on March 4, 2012.