Incremental approach to regional strategising: Theory, methodology, practices

Abstract. The relevance of the study stems from the growing importance of the strategic approach in governance, insufficient involvement of various groups of stakeholders in regional development strategising, and the lack of uniform methodologies to the formulation of a region's strategy for socioeconomic development. The paper researches into the incremental approach to regional strategising. The methodological basis rests on the theoretical concepts of strategic management, regional economics, and political science. The key feature of the incremental approach is the formulation and implementation of a strategy for socioeconomic development of a territory as a gradual, step-by-step, conscious process that ensures continuous improvement of the existing mechanisms and their timely revision, as well as allows adjusting strategic actions and making necessary manoeuvres. The research relies on a comprehensive analysis of the strategies for socioeconomic development of the subjects of the Russian Federation by stages of the strategic management cycle with use of dialectical, causal, and expert evaluation methods. The theoretical significance of the study lies in providing the rationale behind adopting the incremental approach in regional strategising that is due to its ability to increase the likelihood of reaching a consensus between stakeholders, as well as to reduce the risk of making subjective suboptimal managerial and strategic decisions. The practical significance of the paper arises from evaluation of regional strategies and methods of strategising, breaking them down into their basic components (environmental analysis, goals, priorities, mechanisms of implementation and control), and identifying their distinctive features that are typical of the incremental approach.

Keywords: incremental approach; region; strategic planning; governance; socioeconomic development; regional strategising.

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Introduction

By now, economists, political scientists, sociologists, regionalists, and other researchers have come up with many theories, models, and approaches to analyse the formulation of a strategy for socioeconomic development of regions of various hierarchical levels, their individual territories or sectors, etc.

Actor-network theory widely used in strategic planning also helps establish the relationship between the strategic planning and the inclusive, participatory public administration [Bryson J. M., Crosby, Bryson J. K., 2009].
A certain regional planning theory may prevail in a given country depending on its economic level, political landscape, or the priorities of modern development. For example, when analysing the evolution of Iran’s planning system Pajoohan noted that at the first three stages, regional planning was seen as a resource development tool. Later, to the fore came theories of regional welfare and uneven regional development, while at the present stage entrepreneurial regionalism has become prevailing [Pajoohan, 2019].

Heimpold analyses how the priorities of regional strategies changed in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland after their accession to the European Union, and whether current regional strategies give priority to ensuring growth or whether they place emphasis on the equalisation [Heimpold, 2008].

Scientific literature emphasises certain contradictions that exist between the theory and practice of planning. It is noted that theoretical models are not always used in practice. Their successful application depends on whether the research scenarios in urban or regional planning accommodate the interests of various stakeholders and not just rely on expert judgment and analysis [Avin, Goodspeed, 2020]. For the Russian Federation, despite obvious improvements in the processes of strategic planning, their drawbacks remain understudied [Silin, Dvoryadkina, Antipin, 2018; Lenchuk, 2020].

The problems and contradictions in strategic planning did not arise spontaneously. There are still different views on how to interpret both the concept of strategic planning and its scope. For example, strategic planning is understood as the process of working out a strategic plan by formulating governance goals and criteria, analysing the challenges and the environment, identifying strategic ideas and competitive advantages, choosing the scenarios and basic strategies of development, and forecasting the socioeconomic development [Granberg, Lvov, Egorshin, 2005].

The purpose of the study is to research into the incremental approach to regional strategising, i.e. to the formulation (preparation and revision), implementation and monitoring of the region’s socioeconomic development strategy.

In order to achieve the purpose, the author sets the following objectives:

- to explore the theoretical basis of the incremental approach (incrementalism), sum it up and rationalise its applicability to regional strategising.
- to describe the methodology of the incremental approach to regional strategising.
- to summarise the results expert evaluation of the socioeconomic development strategies adopted by the subjects of the Russian Federation together with their strategising methods, and reveal their features that are typical of the incremental approach.

The paper rests on a thorough (comprehensive) review of the socioeconomic development strategies of the subjects of the Russian Federation by each stage of the strategic management conducted using a set of methods (dialectical, causal, expert evaluation, etc.):

- environmental analysis – internal and external environment, methods of strategic analysis, etc.;
- goal setting – mission, general goal, system (“tree”) of objectives, system (“tree”) of problems, causes, etc.;
- building a strategy (defining a strategy structure) – directions, priorities, programs, projects, etc.;
- strategy implementation mechanisms;
- strategy monitoring and management system.

The study is based on the incremental approach. The preparation and implementation of a region’s socioeconomic development strategy is understood here as a gradual, step-by-step, conscious process, which is seen as a continuous “extension” of the existing mechanisms and timely revision of the content of the strategy. No viable, competent implementation of the
socioeconomic development strategies is possible without a clear, appropriate, consistent strategising at all stages of strategic planning and management. Forecasting the effectiveness of socioeconomic transformations implemented in the territorial systems and regions of various hierarchical levels is of interest to modern researchers [Shelomentsev, 2008; Vasilyeva, 2014].

Theoretical basis of the incremental approach in the context of regional strategising
Theoretical approaches of incrementalism are based on various theories – elite, group, political systems, institutionalism, humanism, sustainable development, balanced development, self-development, incremental, rational-choice theories, etc. All of them are originally concerned with formulating the socioeconomic development strategy for the regions of various hierarchical levels [Friedmann, 2008; Kölbl, Niegli, Knoflacher, 2008; Vasilevska, Vasić, 2009].

Each of these theories is designed to contribute to a more appropriate understanding of how a region's socioeconomic development strategy is formulated, as long as it is properly applied. According to Lindblom, under the incremental approach, decision-makers are supposed to base their decisions on the current development of the object of strategic planning, along with the programs and policies, i.e. management tools and mechanisms, and focus their efforts on their gradual alteration (increasing or decreasing) [Lindblom, 1980]. Lindblom argued that in pluralistic societies such as the USA or even Nigeria, incrementalism is a typical strategy for socioeconomic development of a region [Beck, 1986].

In his book “The Ruling Class”, an Italian sociologist Mosca argued that there was only one form of government in the human history – the oligarchy. In every society, from those that are meagrely developed and have barely attained the dawning's of civilisation down to the most advanced and powerful ones – two classes of people appear, the one that rules and the one that is ruled. The first class (elite), always quite small in numbers, performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that it brings. Whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first one [Mosca, 1939]. According to the elite theory, the socioeconomic development strategy of a region should be considered as reflecting the values and preferences of the ruling elite. In other words, according to this theory, the elite believes to be the only one to determine the strategy for socioeconomic development of a territory aimed at improving the well-being of the masses and to implement it. Thus, the strategy for socioeconomic development of a territory is formulated “from the elite down to the masses (population).”

In [Batalov, 2014] the elite theory is summarised as follows:
- society is divided into those who have political power and those who do not. Only a small number of persons allocate values for the society; the masses do not decide the socioeconomic development strategy;
- the few who govern are not typical of the masses who are governed. Elites are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society;
- the movement of non-elites to elite positions must be slow and continuous to maintain stability and avoid revolution. Only non-elites who have accepted the basic elite consensus enter governing circles;
- the socioeconomic development strategy does not reflect demands of the masses but rather the prevailing values of the elite. Changes in policy will be incremental rather than revolutionary. Incremental changes permit responses to events that threaten society, a social system;
- active elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from the masses. Elites influence masses more than masses influence elites.

Therefore, according to the elite theory, the strategy is the product of elites, reflecting their values and serving their ends.
Incrementalism assumes that those who determine the socioeconomic development strategy of a region act with uncertainty as to the future consequences of their actions. Therefore, additional solutions usually allow them to reduce the risks of such uncertainty. Moreover, incrementalism assumes that those who formulate the socioeconomic development strategy of a region do not always have enough time or any other resources necessary to thoroughly analyse alternative solutions to the existing problems.

Formulation of a region's socioeconomic development strategy or making any individual strategic decisions is the result of mutual agreement between the numerous parties to the management process. Incrementalism appears to be politically rational as it makes it easier to reach a consensus and prevent subjective and not always optimal managerial and strategic decisions.

According to the incremental approach, to accommodate the interests of the entire population, the socioeconomic development strategy should be formulated in consultation with other groups of stakeholders, not just the elites (authorities). This message remains highly relevant to the modern practices of strategising regional development in the Russian Federation. Researchers cite the ill-conceived composition of the parties involved in strategic planning processes and the ambiguity of their institutional basis as one of contemporary issues [Silin, Dvoryadkina, Antipin, 2018]. Indeed, there are currently no uniform strategising rules in the Russian Federation as well as no uniform requirements as to the composition of parties involved in formulation (preparation and revision) of the socioeconomic development strategies. As a result, this formulation process has several disadvantages which may result in making subjective, sub-optimal managerial and strategic decisions:

- strategy formulation remains an exclusive prerogative of the authorities, for instance, when a strategy is formulated for a city (municipal formation) with regard to the local issues of this municipal formation and the authority of local government. Therefore, this strategy is not a document of a social accord stipulating the evolution of all the processes taking place in a city. Consequently, the feasibility of accomplishing the established strategic goals and implementing the priority scenario of the strategy is questionable1;
- strategy formulation is entirely delegated to third-party developers (scientists, business consultants, etc.);2
- the strategy is formulated intuitively, based on the understanding and qualifications of the parties involved, etc.

There are positive examples of solving the above problem by bringing together representatives of the general public, science and academia, business, media, etc. with the assigned objectives, functionality, and set coordination procedure to formulate a strategy for socioeconomic development of a territory3. This way, the strategy becomes the result of a social accord and becomes more feasible.

However, there are also some critical points of view on incrementalism [Beck, 1986]. It is believed, firstly, to be too conservative and, therefore, able to act as a barrier to innovations which are necessary for the effective implementation of the region's socioeconomic development strategy.

Secondly, incrementalism provides no task-solving algorithms in the event of a crisis.

1 On the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Omsk until 2025: decision no. 938-p of the Omsk Administration of July 09, 2014. Available at: http://docs.cntd.ru/document/430673269. (in Russ.)
2 Strategy for socioeconomic development of Gatchinsky District until 2030: appendix to the decision no. 115 of the council of deputies of Gatchinsky District of December 18, 2015. Available at: http://2016.forumstrategov.ru/rus/242.html. (in Russ.)
3 On the approval of guidelines for revising the Strategic development plan of Ekaterinburg: decision no. 1289 of the Ekaterinburg Administration of June 27, 2016. Available at: http://www.consultant.ru/. (in Russ.)
Thirdly, the incremental approach based on past actions and existing policies may discourage the search for or application of other administrative alternatives.

Fourthly, incrementalism does not eliminate the need to use theoretical approaches in order to prepare a strategy for socioeconomic development of a region. For the changes in strategic (administrative) actions to be rational, it is necessary to clearly understand and know how to apply specific theoretical approaches to maximise the impact of the efforts made.

Weiss and Woodhouse appraise four enduring criticisms of incrementalism: its lack of goal orientation, conservatism, limited range of applicability, and negative stance toward analysis, but the authors do not reject incrementalism as a possible approach [Weiss, Woodhouse, 1992].

Some authors noted that incrementalism lost its relevance by the mid-1990s, as it failed to effectively meet the new global and regional challenges [Bendor, 1995]. Another group of researchers is trying to refute the main criticisms, to conduct certain empirical tests to see if the incremental decision-making under uncertainty is really beneficial, or to estimate how likely the organisations are to adopt incremental decision-making techniques [Lustick, 1980].

More recent research also supported the incremental approach [Pal, 2011]. Howlett, Migone [2011] attempt to complement and elaborate Lindblom’s provisions by looking at the evolution of the incremental approach, discussing its strengths and weaknesses. The incremental approach is emphasised to be especially effective in a rapidly changing environment with a high degree of uncertainty [Salmela, Lederer, Reponen, 2000].

Despite criticism, incrementalism has taken a firm place among the existing approaches to strategising. A generally accepted (compelling) argument for both Russian and foreign practices is that the region’s socioeconomic development is strategised gradually, and includes both formulation of a strategy and its implementation, monitoring, and alteration when necessary and possible.

In many cities and regions, the incremental approach is used in compiling strategic and/or spatial planning documents. An example is the Finnish city of Lahti, where the urban strategy formulation and implementation activities are combined with the master plan based on an iterative process [Mäntysalo et al., 2019].

Incremental approach methodology in regional strategising

There are different points of view in the scientific literature on the stages of strategic planning and strategic management [Gaponenko, 2005; Kopylova, 2019]. The number and titles of these stages are slightly different. However, to sum up the various methodological and procedural approaches to the formulation (preparation and revision) of the socioeconomic development strategy, we shall formulate five main stages of regional strategising which, taken together, bear the hallmarks of the incremental approach (Fig. 1).
Stage 1 – environmental analysis. It is considered to be the initial stage of strategic planning, as it provides the basis for defining the mission and goals of its object and for formulating the behaviour strategy that would help accomplish the set mission and goal. Environmental analysis involves the study of both the external (macro-environment, immediate environment, opportunities, threats, etc.) and internal (strengths and weaknesses, competitive advantages, potential, etc.) environment.

The macro-environmental analysis addresses the effects of the economy, legal regulation and management, political processes, natural environment and resources, social and cultural components of society, its scientific, technical and technological development, infrastructure, etc.

The analysis of the immediate environment usually focuses on the following main components: competitors, labour market, and other actors that the region has various relations with.

The analysis of the internal environment reveals the opportunities and potential that a region can count on to accomplish its goals. It helps understand the goals better, formulate the mission more correctly, i.e. determine the purpose and direction of the activity.

In Russia, the most common strategic planning tools used at this stage include the PEST analysis to study the external environment and the SWOT analysis to research into both the external and internal environment.

Environmental analysis still attracts particular attention in the scientific literature. For example, when identifying the differences between strategic planning and long-term planning, Shvetsov points out that strategic planning starts with building an analytical model for the current state of a region, i.e. with the environmental analysis [Shvetsov, 2007]. Interest in the applied methods of strategic analysis also remains high [Surnina, 2004].

Stage 2 – defining the mission and goals (goal setting). It consists of three steps, each of which requires commitment. The first step is to formulate a mission consolidating the reason for the region’s existence, and its purpose. The second step is to define long-term strategic goals. They should align with the mission. The stage ends with the setting of medium-term and short-term goals that should be in line with the long-term goals and the mission. Mission statement and goal setting help clarify what the region exists for and what it wants to accomplish.

At this stage, the objective tree method is used most commonly. Its main construction technology is decomposition, which arranges objectives hierarchically from the primary (main) one to the lower-tier objectives. All objectives are developed along different directions but have a single (rigid) hierarchy.

The goal-setting stage of drawing up a socioeconomic development strategy also attracts interest of researchers [Antipin, 2018].

Stage 3 – strategy preparation (selection). At this stage, a decision is made about how, by what means, with the assistance of which actors (stakeholders), etc. the region will work towards accomplishing the set goals.

To ensure the designed strategy is more effective, a good practice is to prepare an individual strategy for each region in each specific case. There are certain methods to do this, such as the matrix methods commonly used in strategising: the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix, the McKinsey matrix, the strategic compliance matrix, the lifecycle matrix, etc.

If drawing up an individual strategy is not an option, it is recommended to consider using a combined strategy, i.e. the one that combines the elements of the strategies already designed and implemented (or being implemented). Note that this strategy usually cannot be executed with the maximum effectiveness.
In the worst-case scenario, the existing strategies may be applied. One of the developer’s tasks is to select the right strategies from those already known. This can be done using such a strategic planning method as the Thompson-Strickland Matrix (strategy selection matrix). However, the effectiveness of strategic planning is not guaranteed in this case.

The matters of scenario generation, strategic development “forks”, making the right choice to get the desired results are also discussed in contemporary research papers [Lavrikova et al., 2016].

Stage 4 – strategy execution (implementation). The stage starts with setting the basis for the region to implement the strategy and accomplish its goals. To this end, all the necessary organisational procedures are performed (approval of the implementation schedule, plan, deadlines, organisational structure, responsible persons, etc.), a so-called strategic infrastructure is prepared – strategic changes to make the region ready for strategy implementation. Once this is done, the strategy itself can be implemented.

Stage 5 – evaluation and control of strategy implementation (strategic control). Logically, it is the final process of strategic management which provides a stable feedback between the achieved and set goals of the region’s strategic development.

The main tasks of strategic control are to:
- determine what to check and against which indicators;
- assess the state of the controlled object against the accepted standards, norms, or other reference indicators;
- find the causes of the deviations, if any, uncovered during the assessment;
- make adjustments, if necessary and possible.

In the case of monitoring the strategy implementation, these tasks become very specific because strategic control is supposed to find out to what extent the implementation of the strategy ensures the accomplishment of regional development goals. Adjustments based on the findings of strategic control may be made both to the strategy being implemented and to the initially set goals of the regional development.

The described methodological approach to formulating a strategy for socioeconomic development of a region, its implementation, and progress control complies with the principles of incrementalism as it is a gradual, step-by-step, conscious process that ensures continuous improvement of the existing mechanisms, as well as their timely revision and adjustment. No socioeconomic development strategy can be viable without a clear, optimal, consistent organisation of the strategising processes at its every stage and step. It should be noted that it is possible to return from each stage to the previous ones if necessary.

The Russian Federation, and the global community as a whole, lack a unified method to formulate (prepare and revise) a strategy for socioeconomic development of a region. Methodological approaches to formulating the strategies for socioeconomic development of regions of various hierarchical levels are presented in the papers by Russian researchers (see, for instance, [Vlasova, 1999; Granberg, 2004; Turgel, 2014; Kafidov, 2015; Bochko, 2017; Zhikharevich, 2017]).

A number of the subjects of the Russian Federation have their own unique methods and features rightfully considered best practices that bear the hallmarks of incrementalism.

Practices of adopting the incremental approach to regional strategising

In this part of the study, we shall present the results of expert evaluation of the content of the strategies for socioeconomic development of the subjects of the Russian Federation (primarily those of the Ural Federal District) and, therefore, their strategising methods, and reveal their features typical of the incremental approach using the methodology described in the previous section.
The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Kurgan oblast until 20301.  

Environmental analysis is performed for the 2008–2016 based on the values of the socioeconomic development indicators. No methods of strategic analysis were applied.

Definition of mission and goals. The main strategic goal is to become a competitive and sustainable region where the development of human capital, institutions, infrastructure, economy, external integration, and internal space is interconnected to a high standard. The region aims to ensure a stable growth rate of its development and high involvement in the interregional division of labour. The strategy sets priorities for the socioeconomic policy, its goals, objectives, and targets.

Strategy preparation and selection. Four priorities of the socioeconomic policy are identified, namely: “Developing human capital and creating a comfortable living space”; “Competitive economy”; “Balanced spatial development”; “Establishing an efficient institutional environment”, each of which is elaborated in more detail.

Strategy implementation. Three stages of strategy implementation together with its mechanisms are identified, i.e. government programs for Kurgan oblast and projects implemented as part of the strategic development of the Russian Federation. The tools for strategy implementation are also identified (pages 73–74).

Strategic control. A list of the strategy implementation performance indicators for each priority area is prepared.

The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Sverdlovsk oblast for 2016–20302.  

Environmental analysis is virtually not conducted, and is partially represented by the values of some socioeconomic development indicators for 2010–2014. No methods of strategic analysis were applied. The challenges facing Sverdlovsk Oblast at the current stage of its socioeconomic development are not validated.

Definition of mission and goals. The goals of the socioeconomic policy of Sverdlovsk oblast for 2016–2030 are to improve the quality of life to a level that would make Sverdlovsk oblast an attractive territory for human life and development, and to make it more competitive in the global economy” (paragraph 6). Goals are broken down into objectives.

Strategy preparation and selection. Three priorities of the socioeconomic policy are identified, namely: “Creating competitive conditions for accumulation and retention of human potential”, “Creating conditions for increasing the industrial, innovative, and entrepreneurial potential of the Sverdlovsk oblast's economy”, and “Ensuring the balanced development of Sverdlovsk oblast”. Each priority comprises several directions.

Strategy implementation. Three stages of strategy implementation are identified together with its mechanisms, i.e. projects that are part of the state programs of Sverdlovsk oblast.

Strategic control. The expected performance for each direction (priority area) is determined.

The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Tyumen oblast until 20303.  

Environmental analysis. A detailed analysis of the internal and external environment of the socioeconomic development for 2007–2018 is performed. The analysis of the factors of economic and social development is presented in the form of SWOT analysis matrices.

Definition of mission and goals. The strategic vision and goal of the socioeconomic development are formulated as “… to ensure a steady increase in the standard of living and quality...
of life based on innovative economic development and efficient management of the natural and economic, manufacturing, research and development, and human resource potential, as well as its competitive advantages, and on improvement of the region’s spatial organisation” (Section 3.1), subdivided into a system of goals and objectives.

**Strategy preparation and selection.** Two scenarios of the strategic development (conservative and basic) are prepared. The three identified priorities are as follows: “Human. High standard of living and human capital”, “Economy. Sustainable economic development”, and “Space. Balanced spatial development”, each of which comprises various areas of activity.

The strategy is implemented through management by objective (action plan for the strategy implementation, state programs of Tyumen oblast, area planning scheme of Tyumen oblast) and project management. The strategy involves 3 stages of its implementation.

**Strategic control.** The expected performance is determined by stages of the strategy implementation for each of the priority goals.

The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Chelyabinsk oblast until 2035

**Environmental analysis.** A detailed analysis is performed for the internal and external environment of the socioeconomic development for 2005–2017. The method of expert evaluation, economic and mathematical methods, the SWOT analysis, and the PEST (PESTEL) analysis were successfully applied.

Definition of mission and goals. The main strategic goal in the development of Chelyabinsk oblast is to increase the size, wellbeing, life expectancy and quality of life of its population. The main strategic goal is in line with the strategic priorities formulated around the three components of the human development index (long and healthy life, knowledge, and standard of living) grouped under the main areas of the socioeconomic development.

**Strategy preparation and selection.** Three strategic development scenarios (conservative, baseline, and target) are formulated, each one has its advantages, disadvantages, and risks identified. There are 25 strategic priorities, each consisting of the main directions of the socioeconomic development. The strategy identifies the key economic centres of Chelyabinsk oblast and their functionality, promising areas of efficient economic specialisation of Chelyabinsk oblast, promising areas of specialisation of the key economic centres of Chelyabinsk oblast, etc.

**Strategy implementation.** The mechanisms of the strategy implementation include the state programs of Chelyabinsk oblast, major investment projects (with identified relationships to the federal programs of the Russian Federation or state programs of Chelyabinsk oblast), infrastructure projects (for all municipal formations within Chelyabinsk oblast), and investment programs. The strategy is to be implemented in 4 stages.

**Strategic control.** The expected performance is determined by stages of the strategy implementation for each goal of the strategic priorities.

The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra until 2030

**Environmental analysis** is partially performed for 2011–2015 based on the values of the socioeconomic development indicators. An attempt at the SWOT analysis was made. Its methodology features territorial zoning in a bid to optimise public administration.

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1. On approval of the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Chelyabinsk oblast until 2035: decision no. 1748 of the Legislative Assembly of Chelyabinsk oblast of January 31, 2019. Available at: http://www.mininform74.ru/Upload/files/СТРАТЕГИЯ%20ИТОГ.pdf. (in Russ.)

2. On the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra until 2030: order no. 101-rp of the Government of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra of March 22, 2013 (as amended on August 16, 2019). Available at: http://docs.cntd.ru/document/411709517. (in Russ.)
Definition of mission and goals. The mission is defined as follows: Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra strives to be the best place for people’s permanent residence and a driver of the Russian economic growth, a growth centre for other regions that ensures innovative development of the national economy and the country’s energy security”. The strategic goal of the region’s development is to improve the quality of life in the Autonomous Okrug by building a new, globally competitive model of economy driven by innovation. A system of goals and objectives is defined in line with the strategic goal.

Strategy preparation and selection. Two scenarios of strategic development (reactive and innovative) are prepared. Three blocks of priorities are defined, namely: “Formulating a new model of “smart economy”, “Building the globally competitive human capital”, and “Creating conditions to ensure a favorable environment”.

Strategy implementation. The mechanisms for strategy implementation include the state programs of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, investment strategy, introduction of lean production methods, measures of the national technological initiative, marketing strategy, project management, organisational mechanisms, etc. The strategy is to be implemented in 3 stages.

Strategic control. The expected performance is determined by stages of the strategy implementation for each block of priorities.

The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug until 20301.

Environmental analysis is partially prepared for 2012–2017 based on the values of the socioeconomic development indicators. No methods of strategic analysis were applied.

Definition of mission and goals. The main goal of the strategy is to ensure a sustainable improvement in the standard of living and quality of life by building and developing a competitive economy with regard for the applicable environmental requirements.

Strategy preparation and selection. A single strategic development scenario is defined, a targeted one based primarily on promoting gas extraction. The strategy is to be implemented in 6 priority areas which include “Building up the economic potential of the Autonomous Okrug”, “Developing the infrastructure and social sector”, “Increasing efficiency of management technologies”, “Retention and development of human potential and traditions”, “Rational management of natural resources and environmental security”, and “Making the Autonomous Okrug a strategic outpost for the development of the Arctic”.

As part of priority areas of development, the strategy provides for a set of measures as the basis for devising the state programs for the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The strategy is to be implemented in 2 stages.

Strategic control. The expected performance and target indicators of the socioeconomic development is determined for each stage of the strategy implementation.

To sum it up, it should be noted that the content of the strategies of all 6 subjects of the Ural Federal District is to a certain extent in line with all stages of the strategic management cycle described in the previous section, and also bears the hallmarks of incrementalism (the incremental approach). The Strategy for socioeconomic development of Chelyabinsk oblast until 2035 can certainly be considered an exemplary, reference strategy among those analysed.

It is also important to review the content of socioeconomic development strategies of other subjects of the Russian Federation with distinctive features in their strategising that the experts (e.g. those taking part in the annual all-Russia Strategic Planning Leaders Forum of the Regions and Cities of Russia2) have recognised as ones of the best.

1 Strategy for socioeconomic development of Yamalo–Nenets Autonomous Okrug until 2030 (draft). Available at: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/file/efe421b40a29da09617517182a8d5bd6/strategyamal.pdf. (in Russ.)

2 All-Russia Forum of Strategic Planning Leaders. Available at: https://forumstrategov.ru/. (in Russ.)
We shall have a look at the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Krasnodar krai until 2030. The methodological feature of this strategy consists in a unified methodology used to assess and improve the region's competitiveness, a “live” future management system AV Galaxy (Fig. 2) prepared by Leontief Centre – AV Group Consortium based on the classical theory of interregional and global competition and spatial development as well as many years of practice in the area of strategic planning at the federal, regional, and municipal levels. “Live” future management system AV Galaxy is an integral methodological approach aimed at assessing and improving competitiveness of the region and its industries of specialisation. The system reflects the basic idea – to engage a region in the struggle for positions in the interregional and global competition between the growth poles which ensure the development of competitive economic complexes and clusters and establish the conditions for capital attraction and retention. The system is applied at all stages of Strategy preparation and implementation. The future management system focuses on boosting competitiveness across seven key areas (AV Competitiveness): markets (products and economic complexes); institutions (state, private, and public); human capital; innovations and information; natural resources and sustainable development; space and real capital; investment and financial capital.

The distinctive feature of this strategy’s methodology consists in combining two scopes of the region:
- the external scope that reflects the competitive position of the given region relative to other regions across the seven areas of interregional competition; and

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1 On the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Krasnodar krai until 2030: Krasnodar krai law no. 3930-KZ of December 21, 2018. Available at: https://economy.krasnodar.ru/strategic-planning/files/Strategiia_2030.pdf. (in Russ.)

2 Source: AV Galaxy live. Available at: av-group.ru.
• the internal scope that describes the structure of the basic economic complexes (with clusters and flagship projects identified in relation to the economic complexes) across the economic zones that take into account the formation of urban areas.

The future management system reflects seven areas of competitiveness, i.e. markets, institutions, human capital, innovations and information, natural resources and sustainable development, space and real capital, investment and financial capital.

The key mechanism used to implement the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Krasnodar krai is represented by the seven flagship projects that form economic clusters.

Another example that is worth mentioning is the method adopted in the Strategy for socioeconomic development of the Republic of Tatarstan until 2030\(^1\). The distinctive feature of this strategy’s methodology is that it uses a dedicated model “Tatarstan 7+6+3” (Fig. 3), where 7 is the number of areas of competition, 6 is the number of basic economic complexes, and 3 is the number of economic zones around three urban areas (Kazan, the Kama, Almetyevsk).

Fig. 3. “Tatarstan 7+6+3” methodological approach
Рис. 3. Методический подход «Татарстан 7+6+3»

The following strategies are of particular interest as to the adopted strategic analysis methods:
• the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Samara oblast until 2030\(^2\) prepared using the economic and mathematical methods of analysis, forecasting methods, the SWOT analysis, scenario forecasting method, method of expert evaluation, and modern information technologies;

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\(^1\) On approval of the Strategy for socioeconomic development of the Republic of Tatarstan until 2030: the Republic of Tatarstan law no. 40-ZRT of June 17, 2015. Available at: http://docs2.cntd.ru/document/428570021. (in Russ.)

\(^2\) On the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Samara oblast until 2030: decision no. 441 of the Government of Samara oblast of July 12, 2017. Available at: http://docs.cntd.ru/document/450278243. (in Russ.)
the Strategy for socioeconomic development of Belgorod oblast until 2025\(^1\) details methodological approaches used in its preparation, i.e. quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, multivariate analysis, cluster analysis, and others.

Analysis of the content of the strategies for socioeconomic development of the subjects of the Russian Federation and of the various strategising methods suggests that no document is perfect, some are better and others are less elaborate. However, there are positive aspects or “good practices” in many documents and various methods which should be taken into consideration and used in formulation (preparation and implementation) of the socioeconomic development strategy.

**Conclusion**

This study reports the following scientific and practical findings.

Firstly, the theoretical basis of the incremental approach was studied in the context of regional strategising. The main groups of theories underlying incrementalism were reviewed, and its advantages and disadvantages were defined.

Formulation of a strategy for socioeconomic development of a region, its industries, or making any individual strategic decisions is the result of mutual agreement between the numerous parties to the management process. Incrementalism appears to be politically rational as it makes it easier to reach a consensus and prevent subjective and not always optimal managerial and strategic decisions.

Secondly, the methodology of the incremental approach in regional strategising is revealed. It represents a combination of five interrelated stages of the formulation (preparation and revision), implementation, and monitoring of a strategy.

Thirdly, the findings of the author’s expert evaluation of the socioeconomic development strategies adopted by the subjects of the Russian Federation and the methods of their formulation (preparation and implementation) in the context of the incremental approach were presented, i.e. the practical application of the incremental approach to the regional strategising were analysed. The features typical of the incremental approach were identified. In particular, the structure of each region’s strategy has its own distinctive features, but its basic characteristics, such as goals, objectives, scenarios, analysis of socioeconomic development, etc. remain the same. In addition, the application of the incremental approach during the formulation (preparation and implementation) of the socioeconomic development strategy of a region was proved to be reasonable since strategising is considered as a continuous process that enables timely adjustments to strategic actions and the necessary strategic manoeuvres.

For the public authorities and local governments, strategic planning has become an ultimate organisational tool, a guide to decision-making, a guarantee of successful accomplishment of the set goals.

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**Information about the authors**

Ivan A. Antipin, Cand. Sc. (Econ.), Associate Prof., Associate Prof. of Regional, Municipal Economics and Governance Dept., Ural State University of Economics, 62/45 8 Marta/Narodnoy Voli St., Ekaterinburg, 620144, Russia
Phone: +7 (343) 283-10-76, e-mail: aia87@mail.ru

Natalya Yu. Vlasova, Dr. Sc. (Econ.), Prof., Prof. of State and Municipal Governance Dept., Ural State University of Economics, 62/45 8 Marta/Narodnoy Voli St., Ekaterinburg, 620144, Russia
Phone: +7 (343) 283-10-36, e-mail: vnj@usue.ru

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Информация об авторах

Антиров Иван Александрович, кандидат экономических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры региональной, муниципальной экономики и управления Уральского государственного экономического университета, 620144, РФ, г. Екатеринбург, ул. 8 Марта/Народной Воли, 62/45
Контактный телефон: +7 (343) 283-10-76, e-mail: aia87@mail.ru

Власова Наталья Юрьевна, доктор экономических наук, профессор, профессор кафедры государственного и муниципального управления Уральского государственного экономического университета, 620144, РФ, г. Екатеринбург, ул. 8 Марта/Народной Воли, 62/45
Контактный телефон: +7 (343) 283-10-36, e-mail: vnj@usue.ru

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