

**Pupysheva T.N.\***

PhD student

Karaganda University of Kazpotrebsoyuz

Karaganda, Kazakhstan

E-mail: ptn7@mail.ru

ORCID 0000-0002-3806-6342

**Fyliuk H.M.**

doctor of economic sciences, professor

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

Kyiv, Ukraine

E-mail: halynafyliuk@knu.ua

ORCID 0000-0001-8671-5709

**Stavbunik E.A.**

PhD, associate professor

Karaganda University of Kazpotrebsoyuz

Karaganda, Kazakhstan

E-mail: sea826@yandex.kz

ORCID 0000-0001-8030-9857

## PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN RURAL DISTRICTS OF KAZAKHSTAN

**Abstract:** *Issues of decentralization of power, and, consequently, the development of local self-government in Kazakhstan are becoming increasingly relevant. Local self-government plays a special role in solving socio-economic and political problems of rural areas. At the moment, certain results have been achieved in this direction in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, there are still many difficulties and problems that need to be solved on the basis of the whole variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. In the article, based on the use of a complex of theoretical and empirical methods, the issues of formation and development of the local self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan are examined. The main approaches to this issue are analyzed, on their basis the need for further study of issues of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan is substantiated. Based on the comparative analysis of the anglo-saxon and continental models of local self-government, the authors characterized the model of local self-government implemented in our country. A PEST-analysis was carried out, which made it possible to identify the main political, economic, social and technological factors influencing the development of the local self-government system. The prospects and directions for modernizing local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan are outlined.*

**Keywords:** *local self-government, public administration, rural district, budget, state, local community, rural population.*

### ■ Introduction

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the system of public administration is being reformed, aimed, among other things, at increasing the socio-economic development of the regions and improving the quality of life of the population. Under these conditions, the issues of developing local self-government institutions focused on increasing the activity of the population and consolidating civil society, as well as enhancing the potential of local communities, are being updated.

In the work «Democracy in America» french politician Alexis de Tocqueville notes that: «Local self-government is a guarantee against excessive individualism: equality puts all people in one line, without creating any relationship between them. Each territory should be allowed to live its own life, so that citizens have an unlimited number of incentives to act together, and daily feel their dependence on each other» [1]. Thus, the dual nature of local self-government is manifested, since it simultaneously acts as a source of power, and at the same time an indicator of its democracy and openness.

Local self-government is focused on solving issues of local importance and is the closest to the population, therefore, its development leads to an effective solution of socio-economic problems. President K.-J. Tokayev, in his message to the people of Kazakhstan 16 of march of 2022, says: «We will continue to transfer real powers from the center to the regions. First of all, it is necessary to effectively delineate the functions of the state and local self-government institutions.

It must be understood that a strong system of local self-government is the basic basis for the direct participation of citizens in improving the quality of life in their native locality» [2].

Despite the unequivocal importance of the development of the local self-government system, unequal attention is paid to its subjects. It mainly focuses on cities, seen as spaces with great development potential. The solution of local self-government issues in the rural districts of Kazakhstan remains without due attention, although their relevance is high. This is due to a significant population living in a vast rural area, as well as many unresolved socio-economic problems of the village.

Based on this, the purpose of this scientific article is a comprehensive analysis of the problems and prospects of local government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The tasks are: justification of the need for the development of local self-government; description of the features of local self-government in rural districts; identification of problems in the development of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan; designation of the prospects for its development.

### ■ Literature review

There is no universal approach to the problem of local self-government in the scientific literature, but four main theories can be distinguished on which these approaches are based: the theory of the free community theory developed by K.F. Gerber, J. G. Touré, G. Ahrens, O. Laband, E. Meyer, A. Tocqueville and others, emphasizing the non-interference of the state in the affairs of the community; socio-economic theory founded by R. Mol, O. Ressler, O. Girke and others, delimiting the interests of the community and the state, at the same time, the competence of the community includes the implementation of economic affairs at the local level, while the state does not interfere in the affairs of the community, but exercises control over the compliance with the legality of the activity of local self-government through a special state authority; state theory founded by R. Gneiss and L. Stein, where local self-government is considered in the structure of the state, and self-government is only one of the forms of public administration, the source of which is state power, but it is exercised directly by the local population, and is controlled by it and the state; the theory of dualism, based on the duality of local self-government, which consists in maintaining the independence of local communities, with the simultaneous primacy of state interests, while local self-government is guaranteed by the state and can, on behalf of the state, implement certain state tasks [3].

In addition, there are many other theories and individual authors offering their views on this issue in modern science. Problems of integrated development of territorial communities based on decentralization are a priority in the works of H. Voznyak, A. Stasyshyn, V. Koval [4], as well as I. Storonyanska, K. Patytska, I. Hrynchyshyn, V. Chemerys [5] and others. When writing this article, the works of Kazakh authors were also used: N.K. Nurlanova, N.Zh. Brimbetova, L.N. Burlakov, I.N. Dauranov, A.A. Kenzhebayeva, A.A. Kireyeva [6], E.A. Sadyrbayev [7], N.V. Yuvitsa [8] and many others. However, despite the variety of approaches to the study of local self-government issues in rural districts of Kazakhstan, many unresolved issues remain. This work is devoted to their study.

### ■ Literature review

The methodological basis of the research is a complex system of scientific methods. There are theoretical and empirical research methods were used in the study: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, classification, comparative analysis, document analysis method. In addition, a tabular method was used to demonstrate the differences in local self-government models. The dynamics of public participation in the rating of open budget of Kazakhstan since 2010 has been analyzed. PEST-analysis was used, taking into account the variety of political, economic, social and technological factors. In general, an integrated approach has been applied in the study of the development of the local self-government system in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The study was conducted on the basis of the following main provisions:

1) In the Republic of Kazakhstan at the moment, the observed model of local self-government based on state theory prevails;

2) local self-government in the rural districts of Kazakhstan has its own specific features;  
 3) in the course of a large-scale reform of the local self-government system in the rural districts of Kazakhstan, certain results have been achieved, but at the same time, many problems remain unresolved.

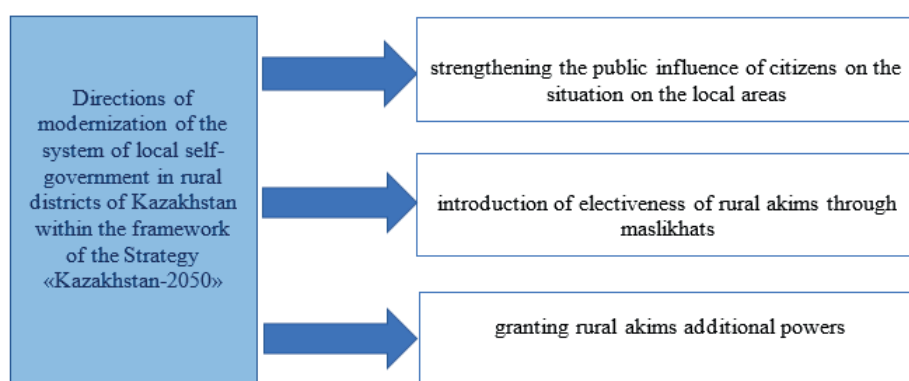
Based on the foregoing, a hypothesis is put forward that the development of the local self-government system in the rural districts of Kazakhstan depends not only on the improvement of the regulatory framework, financial, economic and administrative and organizational measures, but also on the involvement of the rural population in solving local issues, as well as cooperation local authorities with rural communities.

## ■ Results and discussion

During the years of independence, decentralization of power and the gradual formation of local self-government have been carried out in Kazakhstan. This transition is being implemented on the basis of changes in the legal framework of the republic. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan stipulates that: «Local self-government is exercised by the population directly, as well as through maslikhats and other local self-government bodies in local communities covering territories where population groups live compactly» [9]. The Law «On public administration and self-government of the Republic of Kazakhstan» specifies that: «Local self-government is carried out by members of the local community directly, as well as through maslikhats and other local self-government authorities do. Akim of the region, district, city, district in the city, rural district, township and village is not part of the rural district, along with the functions of public administration, performs the functions of local governments. The form of activity of the local community is the gathering of the local community and the meeting of the local community» [10].

In addition, based on the main provisions of the European Charter of local self-government [11], to which Kazakhstan has joined, local self-government should be created in all areas of compact residence of the population, that is, in all settlements – cities, villages, towns, auls, etc.

The strategy «Kazakhstan-2050» (picture 1), as well as the Program of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2015 «Plan of the Nation – 100 concrete steps» (picture 2) are also focused on modernizing the system of local self-government, primarily by providing the rural population with real opportunities for self-reliance. Addressing issues of local importance, which generally contributes to improving the efficiency of the local self-government system in rural districts.

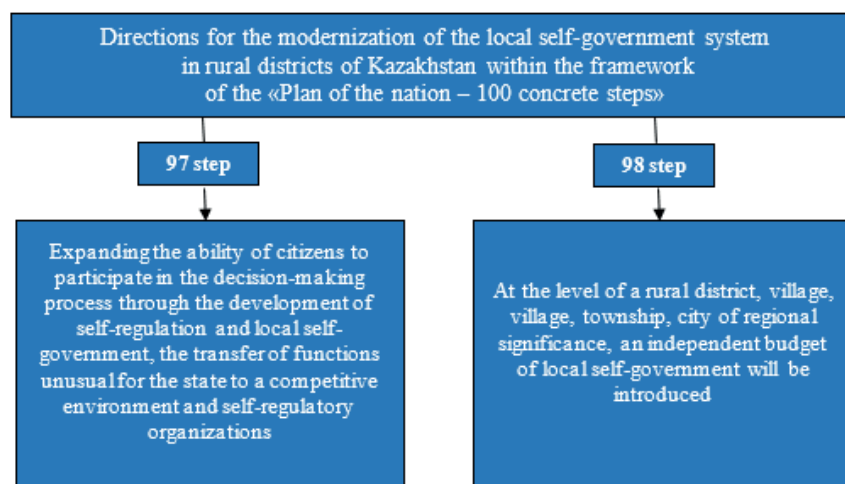


**Picture 1.** Modernization of the local self-government system in rural districts of Kazakhstan within the framework of the Strategy «Kazakhstan-2050»

*Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of the Strategy «Kazakhstan-2050» [12]*

In general, the Strategy «Kazakhstan-2050» assumed the modernization of the local self-government system through the involvement of citizens of Kazakhstan in decision-making processes and their implementation. This modernization had a number of directions, providing the rural population with real opportunities to independently resolve issues of local importance, in particular, empowering rural akims with additional powers, introducing their election, and strengthening the public influence of citizens on the situation on the ground. Within the framework

of the «Plan of the Nation – 100 concrete steps» Program, two main directions are also identified in strengthening the role of rural citizens in the development of local self-government, focused on expanding the ability of citizens to participate in decision-making processes, transferring functions unusual for the state to a competitive environment and self-regulatory organizations, as well as introduction of an independent budget of local self-government at the rural level. These guidelines were developed within the framework of the Concepts for the development of local self-government.



**Picture 2.** Modernization of the system of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan within the framework of the «Plan of the nation – 100 concrete steps»

*Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of «Plan of the nation – 100 concrete steps» [13]*

## ■ Literature review

Despite close attention to building a system of local self-government in the rural districts of Kazakhstan, there are many unresolved problems of theoretical and practical nature. Kazakhstan needs to take into account the historical context, the unitary form of government, the vast rural territory of the country with settlements remote from each other, a significant rural population, socio-cultural traditions, and significant differences in the socio-economic development of regions. In addition, it is necessary to carefully study the experience of foreign countries, which allows you to create your own model of local self-government, taking into account domestic specifics.

Kazakh researcher Nurlanova N.K. notes that: «The process of forming the organizational and institutional foundations of local self-government is lengthy, complex and controversial. The problems associated with this in different countries are solved using various forms and methods, which is due to the influence of diverse, organically interrelated factors. These include: features of the state structure and the form of government used, the level of socio-economic development, historically established national cultural traditions. In this regard, despite the rich historical experience accumulated in the course of the social development of modern civilization, a socially universal model of local self-government has not been developed to date» [6].

At the moment, despite the variety of models of local self-government in foreign countries, two main ones are conditionally distinguished: anglo-saxon and continental (or observable). The anglo-saxon model, for example, is being implemented in the UK, the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and many other countries, while the continental model is observed in the French-speaking countries of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, etc. The main characteristics and differences between local government models are shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Main models of local self-government

Model of local self-government	
Anglo-saxon model	Continental (observed) model
1. The basis of the model	
Social economic theory	State theory of local self-government
2. Relations between state authorities and local self-government authorities	
State authorities are forbidden to interfere in the activity of local self-government authorities	State authorities have a strong influence on the activity of local self-government authorities
3. Control of the central authorities over the activity of local self-government authorities	
Central authorities exercise control indirectly	Central authorities exercise administrative control
4. Differences between local self-governments and local authorities of public administration	
There are clear differences between these authorities	There are no clear distinctions between these authorities
5. Presence of a special state authority managing the activity of local self-government authorities	
There is no such authority	There is a special authority
6. Relationships between local self-government authorities	
The supremacy of one authority over another is excluded	There is supremacy of one authority over another
7. Election of local self-government authorities	
Representatives to these bodies are often elected by the population	Representatives to these authorities are both appointed by state authorities and elected by the population
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the source [14]	

There is a mixture of models of local self-government with a focus on the transfer of an ever-wider range of rights and powers from central authorities to local communities in world practice today. In general, despite the differences in these models, local self-government in developed countries is focused on meeting the needs of the local population and solves the problems of education, healthcare, maintaining public order, landscaping, housing and communal services, housing construction, local roads, and etc. The solution of these issues is carried out mainly through a large number of local taxes, while transfers and subsidies from the central budget in the total volume of local budgets are insignificant.

The observable model of local self-government based on state theory is currently prevailed in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Thus, the state implements control over the activity of local communities, state authorities combine the functions of public administration with the functions of local self-government, in addition, local self-government is assigned, among other things, to maslikhats as territorial representative authorities of administration. At the same time, the characteristics of the anglo-saxon model of governance are observed: in rural districts, residents themselves can be elected to local self-government authorities and directly participate in resolving issues of local importance, as well as elect akims on the basis of direct suffrage.

In general, due to the above features, it is impossible for Kazakhstan to directly adopt the experience of foreign countries. It is important to develop your own model of local self-government, taking into account the diversity of political, economic, social and technological factors. The method that allows you to do this is PEST-analysis. (table 2).

**Table 2.** Factors affecting the system of local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Nº	Factors
1	Political factors: – form of state structure – degree of development of legislation – level of political stability



№	Factors
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– level of bureaucracy and corruption</li> <li>– degree of freedom of speech</li> <li>– tax policy</li> </ul>
2	Economic factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– growth rates of the country's economy</li> <li>– economic opportunities of the region/individual settlement</li> <li>– level of development of entrepreneurship and business environment</li> <li>– unemployment rate</li> <li>– amount and terms of wages</li> </ul>
3	Social factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– population size</li> <li>– living standards of the population</li> <li>– sex and age structure of the population</li> <li>– rate of population growth</li> <li>– level of migration and migration processes</li> <li>– level of education and healthcare</li> <li>– level of civil and political activity of the population</li> <li>– degree of trust of the population in power</li> </ul>
4	Technological factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– degree of implementation and use of technologies</li> <li>– level of accessibility of the Internet and mobile devices</li> <li>– development of scientific and research environment</li> <li>– degree of remoteness of the territorial community from the center</li> </ul>
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the source [14]	

Thus, when making decisions on the development of local self-government, it is necessary to focus on many factors, the influence of which increases at the level of rural districts, and, consequently, the responsibility for the risks of the decisions taken increases.

At the moment, in the course of a large-scale reform of the local self-government system in rural districts of Kazakhstan, carried out on the basis of the Concept for the development of local self-government for 2013-2020 [15], certain results have been achieved:

- for increasing the level of transparency and accountability of local authorities to the population, as well as growing the interest of rural residents in making decisions on local problems and strengthening control over their implementation, a basis has been prepared for direct elections of akims of rural districts, villages, townships;

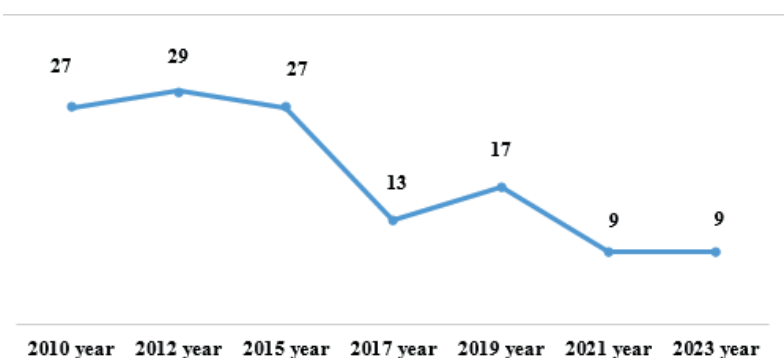
- at all levels of self-government, including at the level of rural districts, annual reporting meetings of akims to the population are carried out, at which the local community is informed about the main results achieved and action plans;

- the fourth level of the budget system was introduced in all rural districts, thereby rural districts got the opportunity to form their own budget and manage their communal property (although the problem of financial self-sufficiency of villages has not yet been resolved).

Nevertheless, a number of problems remain relevant in the system of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan. Firstly, it is the administrative and financial dependence of the akims of the respective administrative-territorial units, which remains due to the unresolved issue of ownership and disposal of local financial resources and property. This is due to the lack of the necessary representative authorities in rural districts, which, in turn, does not make it possible to fully solve urgent local problems. In addition, in rural districts, local budgets do not include documentation for communal property (this is due to its high cost), which ultimately leads to the impossibility of financing these objects (roads, buildings, pipelines, etc.) from the local budget. In general, the approval of the budgets of rural districts is carried out at the level of district maslikhats, which do not take into account the needs of the population in solving local problems.

The next problem is the duplication of powers and responsibilities of local public administration and local self-government authorities. In addition, the requirements for the work of the administration of the akim of the rural district are close to the requirements for the work of central public authorities and their employees, and, therefore, they are overstated. At the same time, the apparatus of the akim of the rural district is formed, reorganized and abolished by the akimat of the district. In view of this, it is necessary to revise both financial, organizational and personnel requirements for the staff of the akim's apparatus, taking into account the increase in the efficiency of their work.

The problem of the participation of the local population in the implementation of local self-government, without which it is impossible to increase its effectiveness, remains relevant. At the moment, there is insufficient political and civil activity of the population at the local level, a low level of involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and control over the implementation of decisions. Also, the rural population is practically excluded from participation in the budget process, while such opportunities should be provided by executive authorities, legislative authorities and regulatory authorities throughout the entire budget process. Thus, in the international ranking of budget openness, which is compiled at intervals of once every two to three years, the Republic of Kazakhstan scores the lowest score in terms of public participation at the end of 2021 – only 9 points out of 100, which is extremely unsatisfactory (from 0 to 40 points – low public participation). At the moment the situation remains the same. In the latest budget openness rating for 2023, Kazakhstan also scores only 9 points. These are the lowest indicators in Kazakhstan since 2010. The dynamics of the indicator of public participation of Kazakhstan since 2010 is presented in figure 3.



**Picture 3.** Dynamics of public participation in the rating of open budget of Kazakhstan, in points

*Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the Open budget survey 2023 [16]*

Despite the fact that, as noted above, a set of economic measures has been adopted, nevertheless, the low filling of the own revenue base of rural self-government remains. Local budgets are significantly dependent on the size of intergovernmental transfers and subsidies. This problem is aggravated by the imbalance of rural budgets, which manifests itself in their significant disproportion depending on the economy of rural districts and population. Thus, for example, the smallest local government budget of a rural district is 2.8 million tenge, and the largest is 2.5 billion tenge, while the average is 107 million tenge.

In general, these are the main problems currently observed in the system of local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, although their list can be continued. Further reform of the priority areas of this system is continued within the framework of the Concept for the development of local self-government of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 [17]. Prospects for a comprehensive reform of the local self-government system in rural districts of Kazakhstan, based on this concept, are aimed at:

- further improvement of the legal framework in order to delineate the functions and powers of local government and local self-government bodies;

- expanding the powers of rural akims in matters of local decision-making, as well as in the economic sphere in order to more efficiently use land and property;
- strengthening the responsibility of akims to the population due to the election and accountability of rural akims;
- creation of a special representative authority in the countryside – Kenes, elected directly by the population and solving problems of local importance, as well as its chairman;
- increasing the interest of residents of rural districts in resolving issues of local importance through outreach aimed at teaching the population the basics of local self-government, including using the opportunities of the non-governmental sector;
- involvement of representatives of rural communities in the budget process by teaching the population the techniques and methods of budget advocacy, which, in turn, helps to achieve a more effective solution of local problems, as well as increase the responsibility of the government in relation to budget issues;
- creation of special centers of collaboration of the rural population, where people can gather, discuss local problems, receive electronic government services, or other household services;
- based on the capabilities of Internet resources, the creation of a single platform of state authorities, where plans for the development of rural districts, decisions of the representative authority, information on budgets, their expenditures and receipts are published without fail, to strengthen the interaction of local self-government authorities with the local population;
- expanding the powers of local community gatherings in matters of designating priority goals and objectives of the local community, determining the timing of their implementation, coordinating development plans, changing the administrative-territorial structure, exercising control over the akim of the rural district;
- creation of a special body – the administration of the rural akim to increase efficiency in current activity with the provision of the opportunity to independently carry out activities for the improvement of territories, landscaping of settlements, sanitary work, etc.;
- further increase in the budgetary self-sufficiency of rural districts through fiscal decentralization through the expansion of the revenue base of local self-government, implemented through the transfer of part of taxes and payments to the local fourth level.

The implementation of these promising directions for the development of the local self-government system in the rural districts of Kazakhstan makes it possible to more effectively solve local problems, which, in turn, contributes to the economic equalization of living standards in remote rural settlements, stabilizes the socio-economic and political situation, relieves social tension and also solves many other problems.

## ■ Conclusion

Thus, the development of local self-government in the rural districts of Kazakhstan occurs due to the transfer of powers from higher authorities to local government and self-government bodies, which helps to optimize the resource potential of settlements, improve the living standards of the rural population and develop rural areas, and, therefore, leads to social and economic development of the whole country. At the same time, the population itself, being a direct participant in these processes, is still badly involved in them and has a vague idea on this issue, often not understanding their role in this process and placing the main responsibility on the state and state bodies. Since the development of local self-government directly depends not only on funding, but also on the desire and interest of the population itself, additional efforts are needed on the part of higher state bodies, including in matters of explanatory work among the population about the importance of local self-government and the opportunities for citizens to participate, which, in turn, contributes to the growth of the responsibility of the population.

In general, building a system of local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a complex and lengthy process. In the course of its implementation, further improvement of the regulatory and legal framework, financial economic and administrative and



organizational measures is required. The effectiveness of its implementation largely depends on the involvement of the rural population in solving local issues, as well as the cooperation of local authorities with rural communities.

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## ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ АУЫЛДЫҚ ОКРУГТЕРІНДЕГІ ЖЕРГІЛІКТІ ӨЗІН-ӨЗІ БАСҚАРУДЫ ДАМУ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ МЕН ПЕРСПЕКТИВАЛАРЫ

**Пупышева Т.Н.\***

PhD докторанты

Қазтұтынуодағы Қарағанды университеті

Қарағанды, Қазақстан

E-mail: [ptn7@mail.ru](mailto:ptn7@mail.ru)

ORCID 0000-0002-3806-6342

**Филлюк Г.М.**

э.ф.д., профессор

Тарас Шевченко атындағы Киев ұлттық

университеті

Киев, Украина

E-mail: [halynafyliuk@knu.ua](mailto:halynafyliuk@knu.ua)

ORCID 0000-0001-8671-5709

**Стабунник Е.А.**

PhD, доцент

Қазтұтынуодағы Қарағанды университеті

Қарағанды, Қазақстан

E-mail: [sea826@yandex.kz](mailto:sea826@yandex.kz)

ORCID 0000-0001-8030-9857

**Аңдатпа:** Билікті орталықсыздандыру, демек, Қазақстанда жергілікті өзін-өзі басқаруды дамыту мәселелері өзекті бола түсуде. Ауылдық елді мекендердің әлеуметтік-экономикалық және саяси мәселелерін шешуде жергілікті өзін-өзі басқарудың алатын орны ерекше. Қазіргі уақытта Қазақстан Республикасында бұл бағытта белгілі нәтижелерге қол жеткізілді. Дегенмен, теориялық және әдістемелік тәсілдердің алуан түрлілігі негізінде шешуді қажет ететін көптеген қиындықтар мен мәселелер бар. Теориялық және эмпирикалық әдістер кешенін пайдалануға негізделген мақалада Қазақстан Республикасының ауылдық округтеріндегі жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару жүйесінің қалыптасуы мен даму мәселелері қарастырылған. Бұл мәселенің негізгі тәсілдері талданады, олардың негізінде Қазақстанның ауылдық округтеріндегі жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару мәселелерін одан әрі зерттеу қажеттілігі негізделеді. Жергілікті өзін-өзі басқарудың англосаксондық және континенттік үлгілерін салыстырмалы талдау негізінде авторлар біздің елімізде жүзеге асырылып жатқан жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару моделін сипаттады. Жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару жүйесінің дамуына әсер ететін негізгі саяси, экономикалық, әлеуметтік және технологиялық факторларды анықтауға мүмкіндік беретін PEST талдауы жүргізілді. Қазақстан Республикасының ауылдық округтерінде жергілікті өзін-өзі басқаруды жаңғыртудың келешегі мен бағыттары көрсетілген.

**Түйін сөздер:** жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару, мемлекеттік басқару, ауылдық округ, бюджет, мемлекет, жергілікті қоғамдастық, ауыл тұрғындары.

## ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕСТНОГО САМОУПРАВЛЕНИЯ В СЕЛЬСКИХ ОКРУГАХ КАЗАХСТАНА

**Пупышева Т.Н.\***

PhD докторант  
Карагандинский Университет  
Казпотребсоюза  
Караганда, Казахстан  
E-mail: ptn7@mail.ru  
ORCID 0000-0002-3806-6342

**Филюк Г.М.**

доктор экономических наук, профессор  
Киевский национальный университет  
имени Тараса Шевченко  
Киев, Украина  
E-mail: halynafyliuk@knu.ua  
ORCID 0000-0001-8671-5709

**Ставбунник Е.А.**

PhD, доцент  
Карагандинский Университет  
Казпотребсоюза  
Караганда, Казахстан  
E-mail: sea826@yandex.kz  
ORCID 0000-0001-8030-9857

**Аннотация:** Вопросы децентрализации власти, а, следовательно, и развития местного самоуправления в Казахстане приобретают все большую актуальность. Особую значимость местное самоуправление играет в решении социально-экономических и политических проблем сельской местности. На данный момент в Республике Казахстан в этом направлении достигнуты определенные результаты. Тем не менее, до сих пор существует множество сложностей и проблем, решать которые необходимо на базе всего многообразия теоретическо-методологических подходов. В статье на основе применения комплекса теоретических и эмпирических методов рассмотрены вопросы формирования и развития системы местного самоуправления в сельских округах Республики Казахстан. Проанализированы основные подходы к данной проблематике, на их основе обоснована необходимость дальнейшего изучения вопросов местного самоуправления в сельских округах Казахстана. На базе проведенного сравнительного анализа англосаксонской и континентальной моделей местного самоуправления, авторами охарактеризована модель местного самоуправления, реализуемая в нашей стране. Проведен PEST-анализ, позволивший выявить основные политические, экономические, социальные и технологические факторы, влияющие на развитие системы местного самоуправления. Обозначены перспективы и направления модернизации местного самоуправления в сельских округах Республики Казахстан.

**Ключевые слова:** местное самоуправление, государственное управление, сельский округ, бюджет, государство, местное сообщество, сельское население.