

# Mediator or boundary organizations in contemporary Russia

**By Alexander Sungurov**

National Research University Higher School of Economics,  
Saint-Petersburg, Russia  
Department of Applied Political Science  
[asungurov@mail.ru](mailto:asungurov@mail.ru)

Paper for 9th ICCEES World Congress,  
Makuhari, Japan, August 3-8, 2015

One of the questions, which are discussed now in political science - is the mechanisms of arising and development social-political innovations. Who are responsible for this process, what structures can support this process and protect this little sprouts from the severe winds of social reality. Other question was – where are the best conditions for creation of innovation itself, new idea resolving of problems of our society and government. Near to fifteen years ago we made proposal, that this innovation can be arise at the boundaries of some sectors of our society or actors of public sphere – science, government agencies, civil society groups etc<sup>1</sup>. One of the reasons for such proposal was the thesis, that any boundary between any mediums has very special spatial and temporal characteristics – the time has more quick speed than in other places of reality, and space is not Euclid, but one of Ryman space<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the structure, which can be support this innovation process must be mediator structures, connecting some different area of social reality.

We proposed that it may be some kinds of such mediator structures or organizations: between peoples & NGOs from one side and government agencies – ombudsman institute or commissioner for human rights<sup>3</sup>; between science and government – advisory board of different

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Sungurov. Organizatsii-posredniki v structure grazhdanskogo obschestva: nekotorye problem politicheskoy modernizatsii v Rossii // Polis, 1999, vol. 6. S. 34-48.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Sungurov . Khronotop kak instrument regionalnogo politicheskogo analiza. // Polis, 2003, vol. 6. S. 62-70.

<sup>3</sup> Emma Gilligan. The Human Rights Ombudsman in Russia: The Evolution of Horizontal Accountability // *Human Rights Quarterly* 32 (2010) 575–600; Finkel, Evgeny. The Authoritarian Advantage of Horizontal Accountability: Ombudsman in Poland and Russia. *Comparative Politics*, 44(3), 2012, pp. 291-310; Vijayashri Sripati. *The Ombudsman, Good Governance, and the International Human Rights System*, 27 *Human Rights Quarterly* 1137-1142 (2005); Alexander Sungurov. Institut ombudsmana: evolutsiatraditsiy I real'naya praktika: opyt sravnitel'nogo analiza. – St.Petersburg: Norma, 2005

kinds and think tanks<sup>4</sup>; between NGOs and government – consultative councils and public chambers<sup>5</sup>. Some of them can be mediator between three or more main actors of public policy, for example, think tanks with mission for support of transition of post-communist countries to democracy and open society received in the beginning of 00<sup>th</sup> name of Public Policy Centers (PPC)<sup>6</sup>. This PPC activities are really mediator activities between academic communities, civil society groups and government. Ombudsman institute during the process of preparation of Annual report about situation with human rights realization can work as mediator between NGOs, expert communities and governmental agencies<sup>7</sup>. Ombudsman institute can work also as mediator between different agencies of administration, by stimulation of start of collaboration of this agencies for resolving of reasons of human rights violations<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Medvetz. Murky Power: “Think Tanks” as Boundary Organizations. // *Rethinking Power in Organizations, Institutions, and Markets Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 2012, Volume 34, 113–133; *The Politics of Scientific Advice: Institutional Design for Quality Assurance.* / Ed. by Justus Lentsch and Peter Weingart. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011; Volker Perthes. Scientific policy advice and foreign policymaking – *Stiftung Wissenschaft und politik (SWP)*, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. // *The Politics of Scientific Advice: Institutional Design for Quality Assurance.* / Ed. by Justus Lentsch and Peter Weingart. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. P. 286-294.

<sup>5</sup> Tarasenko A.V. Activities of public chambers in the regions of Russia: Efficiency vs fictivity. // *Politia*, 2010, No.1 (56), pp. 80-88; Gorny M.B. Nongovernmental advisory bodies under the authorities: experience of St. Petersburg. // *Telescope: journal of sociological and marketing research*, 2011, No.2, pp. 14-24; Alexander Sungurov. Mediator institutions and their role in development of public policy in post-communist countries. Paper, presented on XXII World Congress of International Political Science Association, Madrid, Spain, 8-12 July, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Sungurov. “Think Tanks” and Public Policy Centers in Russia and Other Post-Communist Countries: Development and Function // *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 39 (2012) 22–55.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Sungurov. Human Rights Institutionalization in Russia – Paper, presented on the VIII World congress of International Council for Central and East European Studies. Stockholm, 26-31 July, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Sungurov. «Institute of Commissioner for Human Rights in Russian Regions: Re-active and Pro-active activities» – Paper, presented on the International Conference “Protection of Human Rights: Institutes and practices”, Saint-Petersburg, Pushkin, 13-14 June, 2013.

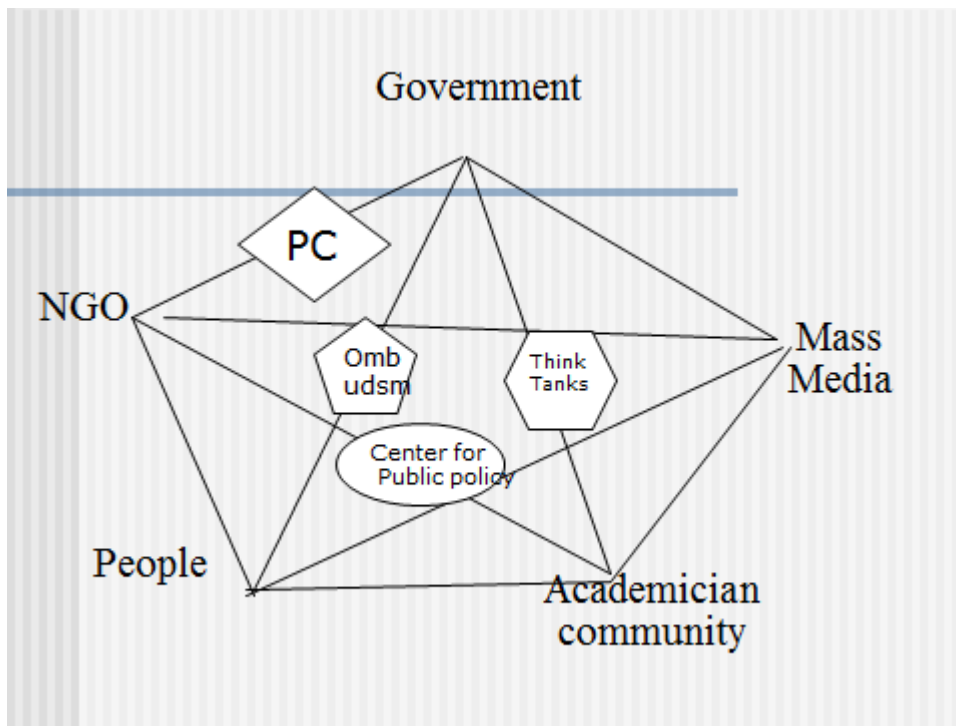


Figure 1 . Mediators – organizations

The comparison of functions of this organizations presented at the table 1

Think tanks and Public Policy Centers	Public Councils	Ombudsman Institute
Analytical	Expertise	Investigation of human rights violations
Educational	Enlightenment	Support of Civic Education
Creative	-	Preparation of Proposals for human rights enforcement
Communicative	Communicative	Communicative
Implementation	Consultative	Proposals in Annual and Special reports
Expert support of public control	Public Control	Function of (parliament) control

Table 1. Functions of mediator structures

Practically simultaneously with our first paper, devoted to organizations with mediator functions, the construct of boundary organization was proposed by sociologists of science. This construct described the intermediary organizations that align the divergent interests of science and politics<sup>9</sup>. Boundary organizations facilitate collaboration between scientists and non-scientists by remaining accountable to both. They “perform tasks that are useful to both sides and involve people from both communities in their work but play a distinctive role that would be difficult or impossible for organizations in either community to play”<sup>10</sup>. Boundary organizations can enable challengers and defenders to substantively collaborate by building a bridge between divergent worlds that allows collaborators to preserve their competing interests. Boundary organizations make collaboration possible by enrolling actors on the basis of their convergent interests.

Initial framework presents three characteristics of boundary organizations: “(1) they help negotiate the boundary between science and decision making, (2) they exist between two distinct social worlds with definite responsibility and accountability to both sides of the boundary, and (3) they provide a space to legitimize the use of boundary objects-items that are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain common identity across boundaries”. In the 90<sup>th</sup> conception of boundary organizations was used for analysis advisory boards and councils in the field of scientific policy. We can mention as example of this structures the National Institute of Health and Office of Technology Transfer<sup>11</sup>, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service<sup>12</sup>, and U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice<sup>13</sup>.

Later the conception of boundary organization started to use for analysis of interaction of more than two actors of public policy. Michel R. M. Rod & Stanley J. Paliwoda used it for analysis of government, industry, and university collaborative venture on example of Institute of

---

<sup>9</sup> Guston, David H. 1999. Stabilizing the boundary between U.S. politics and science: The role of the Office of Technology Transfer as a boundary organization. *Social Studies of Science* 29 (1): 87-112; David H. Guston, *Between Politics and Science: Assuring the Integrity and Productivity of Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Clark Miller. Hybrid Management: Boundary Organizations, Science Policy, and Environmental Governance in the Climate Regime // *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Special Issue: Boundary Organizations in Environmental Policy and Science (Autumn, 2001), pp. 478-500.

<sup>10</sup> David H. Guston. Boundary Organizations in Environmental Policy and Science: An Introduction. // *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 26. No. 4 (2001). P. 403.

<sup>11</sup> Guston, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Cash, D.W. (2001) «In Order to Aid in Diffusing Useful and Practical Information»: Agricultural Extension and Boundary Organizations // *Science, Technology and Human*, 2001, Vol. 26(4). P. 431-453.

<sup>13</sup> Clark Miller, 2001.

Pharmacy-Economics in Canada<sup>14</sup>. This kind of “triple collaboration” of science, industry and government for the purpose of new technology transfer was analyzed later in framework of Triple Helix model<sup>15</sup>. In process of analysis of boundary organizations such phenomena as think tanks start to be understanding as one of variants of them<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, conception of boundary organizations employed now for collaborations of different kinds of stakeholders during processes of public policies, including civil society organizations<sup>17</sup>. Now conception of boundary organizations used for analysis some initiative “grass roots” groups, arising around some projects of social innovations<sup>18</sup>, which are very near to the “Advocacy coalitions” of Paul Sabatier<sup>19</sup>.

We can see, that conception of boundary organizations during last fifteen years suffered some evolution from purely science-government intermediate structures to the pattern of mediators between major actors of public policy, which is very near of our conception of mediator organization, proposed fifteen years ago.

***Russia and Russian regions in Eltsyn time: Think Tanks and other institutes with mediator functions.***

Early we proposed, that three main conditions must take place for development of think tanks and analogy analytical organizations. Firstly, it is existence of demand for alternative policy proposals, which corresponds with level of political pluralism or level of democracy. Secondary, it is existence of proposal, which is correlated with existence of specialists in policy and political research, existence of serious expert community. Thirdly, it is existence of varied

---

<sup>14</sup>Michel R. M. Rod & Stanley J. Paliwoda. Multi-sector collaboration: a stakeholder perspective on a government, industry, and university collaborative venture. //Science and Public Policy, V30, N4, August 2003. P. 273-284.

<sup>15</sup>Hellström, T. & Jacob, M. (2003). Boundary organizations in science: From discourse to construction. *Science and Public Policy*, 30(4), 235–238.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas Medvetz. Murky Power: “Think Tanks” as Boundary Organizations. // Rethinking Power in Organizations, Institutions, and Markets Research in the Sociology of Organizations, 2012, Volume 34, 113–133.

<sup>17</sup>Klerkx, L., & Leeuwis, C. (2008). Matching demand and supply in the agricultural knowledge infrastructure: Experiences with innovation intermediaries. *Food Policy*, 33, 260-276.

<sup>18</sup>O'Mahony S, Bechky BA. 2008. Boundary organizations: enabling collaboration among unexpected allies. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 53: 422-459; Schneider A. L., (2009), “Why do Some Boundary Organizations Result in New Ideas and Practices and Others only Meet Resistance? Examples From Juvenile Justice”, *The American Review of Public Administration*, 39(1): 60-79.

<sup>19</sup>Paul A. Sabatier. The advocacy coalition framework: revisions and relevance for Europe. //Journal of European Public Policy, 1998, 5:1, 98-130.

recourses of financial support of think tanks activity, for examples, some non-governmental foundations. The first and third conditions existed in Russia and their regions during 90<sup>th</sup>, political science was only started in Russia this time, but communities of so name “political technologists”, specialists in electoral processes, was arise very quickly.

We mark out between all think tanks two main groups –organizations with some political or policy mission and more market oriented think tanks, without some special mission (‘technically’ think tanks, as it was proposed by Andrey Makarychev<sup>20</sup>). This marked oriented think tanks can be divided into two groups also – so-name ‘client think tanks’, oriented for some special clients from governmental structures (or created by some governmental agencies) and ‘contract think tanks’, centers oriented for different business or political customers. Think tanks with some political/policy mission can be also divided into two group – organizations with mission to support liberal-democracy political regime and open society and more conservative, tradition-state oriented organizations. The first of them received in the beginning on XXI century name Public Policy Centers<sup>21</sup>.

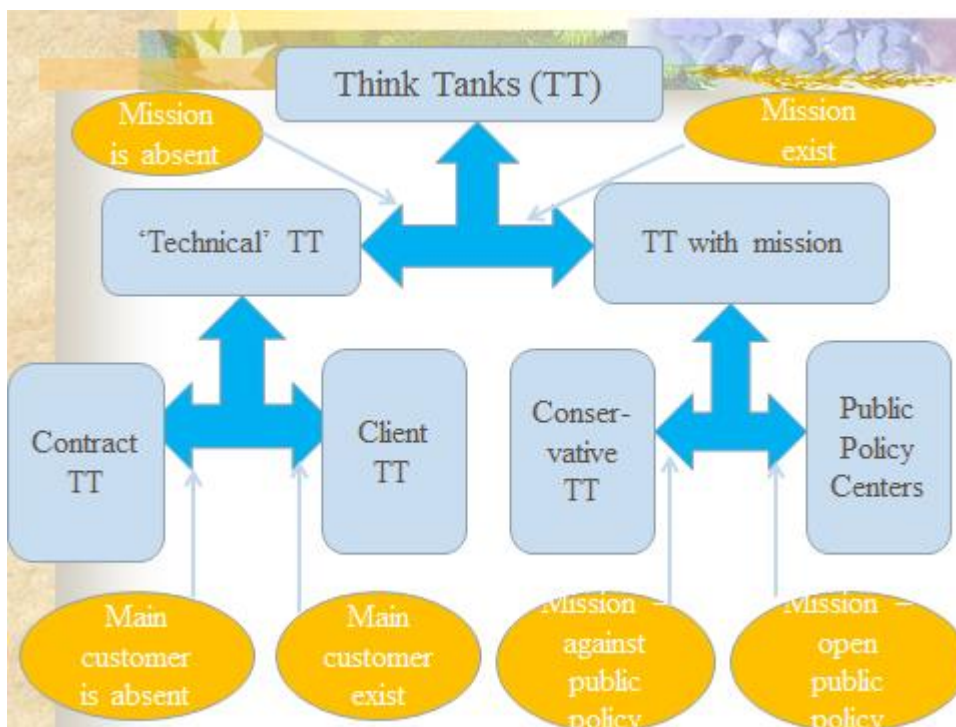


Figure 2. Classification of think tanks

<sup>20</sup>Andrey Makarychev. Russian think tanks under Putin’s presidency: survival, cohabitation or struggle for intellectual autonomy?[http://www.strategy-spb.ru/portal/files/Dr. Andrey Makarychev.rtf](http://www.strategy-spb.ru/portal/files/Dr._Andrey_Makarychev.rtf)

<sup>21</sup>Alexander Sungurov. “Think Tanks” and Public Policy Centers in Russia and Other Post-Communist Countries: Development and Function // The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review 39 (2012) 22–55.

In 1989 in Moscow was created Agency for strategic communications ‘Niccolo M’ (chair – Igor Mintusov), two years later – Center for Political Technology (President – Igor Bunich). This two think tanks, successfully working now, can be ascribed to ‘classical’ contract think tanks. In 1993-1995 to new strong organization arise, who worked during 90<sup>th</sup> as contract think tanks – it is Foundation ‘Politika (president – Vyacheslav Nikonov) and Foundation of effective politics (chair – Gleb Pavlovskiy), but later, in 00<sup>th</sup> they transferred to position of client think tanks.

In 1999 in Moscow was established Center for strategic design, purely client think tanks, affiliated to the Russian Ministry of Economics. Later, in the middle of 00<sup>th</sup> this center transfer to position of contract think tanks and late – start to be real Public policy center.

Starting from the late Perestroyka time to real Public Policy Centers worked actively in Moscow – it was Center for political and legal research ‘Interlegal’ (chair – Nina Belyaeva) and Center for applied political research INDEM (president – Georgiy Satarov). When Georgiy Satarov was worked as advisor of President Boris Eltsyn, Center transformed to client position, but after Satarov’s resignation from presidential administration in 1997, Center INDEM, transformed to Foundation INDEM, returned to position of Public Policy Center. Some Moscow centers forked as conservative think tanks – it was Centers of Segey Kurginyan or organizations of Alexander Dugin.

In St. Petersburg one of the first think tanks organization was International Center for social-economical research ‘Leontyevskiy Center’. It was created by Anatoliy Chubais, who was responsible in this time for economic reform in Leningrad. This purely client (in the beginning) think time later start works as mostly contract TT. Created in the beginning of 00<sup>th</sup> Center for strategic design ‘North-West’ is the good example of purely contract TT in St. Petersburg. Other organization – SPb. Center for political science and humanities STRATEGY was created in 1993 as Public policy center and works in this status more than twenty years. We have in St. Petersburg very conservative think tanks also – it is Group for Constructing of Future of Sergey Pereslegin.

Analogy processes took place in 90<sup>th</sup> and in other Russian regions. For example, only in North-Western region of Russian we can mention analytic foundation ‘Regional Strategy’, established by formerly governor of Kaliningradskaya Oblast Yuriy Matochkin and Solomon Ginzburg – deputy of Oblastnaya Duma, Center for social projecting ‘Revival’ in Pskov Oblast (chair – Lev Shlosberg) or Center ‘Dialog’ in Novgorodskaya Oblast (head – Alexander Zhukovskiy). In Nizhniy Novgorod – it was Research Foundation of Nizhniy Novgorod, in Perm – Citizen Chamber of Perm, in Ekaterinburg – Public institute of Regional Politics etc. It

was not a complete set of different kinds of think tanks in the regions outside of Moscow and St.Petersburg, but some kinds of them existed in majority of Russian regions

Along with think tanks, we also identify a certain state institution as mediatory – the Ombudsman (in Russia, Human Rights Commissioner). The commissioner acts as a mediator between the state and citizens and in the majority of former Soviet republics, between governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>22</sup>. It is no accident that in France, this institute is called the Mediator of France. In Russia, the institution of the Ombudsman was established on the federal level in the constitution of 1993, after which it was laid out in federal law in 1997. In accordance with the aforementioned law, such an institute may be established in the subjects of the Russian Federation, acting on the basis of corresponding local law. The first Commissioner for Human Rights in Russia, Professor O.O. Mironov, was appointed in 1998. Earlier, however, in 1996, Chingiz Gazizov was appointed Commissioner in the Republic of Bashkortostan. In 1997-2000 regional Ombudsmen were appointed in Republic Tatarstan, in Astrakhanskaya, Volgogradskaya, Saratovskaya, Smolenskaya and Sverdlovskaya oblasti.

In many post-Soviet states there developed a different type of social-consultative council under government agencies of varying levels, as well as public chambers – all acting on the basis of special laws. These institutes are tasked with the development and facilitation of dialogue between government agencies and NGOs. These institutes and their activity in modern Russia along with other countries have been the subject of criticism because of the imitative character of their work, in addition the fact that A) they are by nature governmental organizations and B) they lack influence on the decision making process in government<sup>23</sup>. That being said, our research shows that in a number of cases, public chambers have been fairly effective institutions<sup>24</sup>.

The appearance, development, and activity of such institutes with mediatory functions can be analyzed on the premise of the conception of ‘border-straddling’ organizations, which has to this day has seen great development in the field of political science. Together with this, for example, the activity of Public Chambers or similar public-consultative structures can be

---

<sup>22</sup> Emma Gilligan. The Human Rights Ombudsman in Russia: The Evolution of Horizontal Accountability // *Human Rights Quarterly* 32 (2010) 575–600; Finkel, Evgeny. The Authoritarian Advantage of Horizontal Accountability: Ombudsman in Poland and Russia. *Comparative Politics*, 44(3), 2012, pp. 291-310.

<sup>23</sup> Yuriy Chernyshov. Obschestvennaya palata: “simulyakr” ili institute grazhdanskogo obschestva v Rossii? // Publichnoe prostranstvo, grazhdanskoye obschestvo i vlast: opyt razvitiya i vzaimodeystviya. – M. RAPN, ROSSPEN, 2008. S. 33-43.

<sup>24</sup> V. Rudenko. Konsultativnye obschestvennyye sovery i osobennosti organizatsii ih deyatelnosti. // *Politeks*, 2006, N3, S. 143-155.; Anna Tarasenko. Deyatelnost’ obschestvennykh palat v regionarh Rossii: evvectivnost’ VS fictivnost’ // *Politiya*, 2010, N1 (56). S. 80-88; Anna Tarasenko. Rol’ soveschatel’nykh organov v politicheskikh sistemakh so slabym parlamentom. // *Politeks*, 2007, N4. S. 87-98.



analyzed in the framework of neo-corporatism developed by Phillip Schmitter<sup>25</sup>, allowing us to derive models for relatively liberal and more state-centric neo-corporatism<sup>26</sup>.

Another theoretical approach to the examination of the development of social-consultative council and other mediatory institutes is monitory democracy, a concept developed by John Keane<sup>27</sup>. In the development process of monitory democracy, which according to John Keane, supplants representative democracy, new forms of cooperation between the public and state appear, exerting influence on government from the people. Among such monitory institutes John Keane examines such forms as public consultative commissions, citizen assemblies, think tanks, brain trusts, and independent public investigations<sup>28</sup>.

During 90<sup>th</sup> in Russia we had no such Public Chamber at federal level, and different variants of such chambers at regional level, and majority of them was open to every regional NGOs, whose leader were ready to work in such chamber.

### **Mediator organizations in contemporary Russia and Russian regions (00<sup>th</sup> and later)**

Situation start to change during 00<sup>th</sup> when political regime starts to be more homocentric and international foundations – the main resources for independent Public policy centers – start to go away from Russia. Therefore the first and third conditions for think tanks development starts to diminished. And, simultaneously with gradual disappearance of think tanks in Russian regions, we see widespread development of institute of Commissioner for human rights and Public chambers.

In this paper we demonstrate some results of our research, conducted in three oblasts in the Ural Region – in the Perm territory, in the Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk Oblasts, in Povolzh'e – in Nizhniy Novgorod, Samara, and Saratov Oblasts, in the south, in Krasnodar territory, and in the North West, in Saint Petersburg. Over the course of research we utilized information available on the internet and press materials. In addition, in 2012-14, we launched visits to the subject regions, during which took place from 11-16 semi-structured interviews with 4 respondent groups – authorities, social organizations, mass media, and academics. In Krasnodar, Saratov, Sverdlovsk, and Chelyabinsk, we also held focus groups, the members of which

---

<sup>25</sup> Philippe Schmitter. "Neo-corporatism and the consolidation of Neo-democracy", in Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.) *The Challenges of Theories on Democracy*, (Boulder: Social Science Monographs/Columbia University Press, 2000)

<sup>26</sup> Anna Tarasenko, Dmitriy Dubrovskiy, Andrey Starodubtsev. *Navesti mostly mezhdu obshchestvom I gosudarstvom: obshchestvenno-konsultativnye struktury v regionakh Severo-zapada Rossii.* – Sanct-Petersburg: Renome, 2011

<sup>27</sup> Keane John. *The Life and Death of Democracy*, London e.a.: The End Company, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> John Keane. *Monitoring Democracy?* Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series, 'Emergent Publics', The Open University, Milton Keynes, 13th-14th March 2008.

represented the four aforementioned respondent categories. In the analysis of the recorded expert interviews and focus groups, we utilized categorical schemes of content analysis<sup>29</sup>.

## **Saratov Oblast**

### ***Public Chambers and Councils***

The history of the development of public councils on the oblast-level in Saratov takes root in the mid-nineties, as does the development of the concept of Public Chambers under the president of the Russian Federation, the main task of which was the development and signing of the agreement on social consent. This agreement was enacted on a national level in 2004, but was relevant following the fall of 1993, when the country was on the brink of civil war. This form of consolidation of non-governmental organizations and political parties, which then precipitated down to the regional level. As I.I. Bryantzev, then working as deputy in the field of work with NGOS, noted, with the election of D.F. Ayatzkov to governor, there appeared political will for the development of such cooperation. As a result a written agreement on social consent and social partner was signed in Saratov. Thanks to this agreement, Ayatzkov, in the opinion of Bryantzev, succeeded (at the time) at the unification of elites. In actuality, the participants didn't only sign a piece of paper, but signed off on a whole system that exerted a system-wide self-positioning effect. "This is to say, you were pretty much nobody of importance – I mean of some non-government organization of another, but when you signed, you became in-demand, the regime invites you in, you're a force to be reckoned with, and the regime acquires a sort of self-legitimization mechanism."<sup>30</sup>

Later, in 2005, when the law 'On Public Chambers of the Russian Federation' was being developed, in Saratov, an oblast-wide law was passed on its basis, in which a third of the public chamber was appointed by the governor, another third by the Oblast Duma, and the final third by representatives of NGOs. However, by that time, an inner-elite divide was already noticeable between the recently elected governor, P.L. Ipatov – former director of Balakovskii Nuclear Power Plant, and member of the local United Russia branch, in control of the Oblast duma (and supporters of the influential federal politician from Saratov, V.V. Volodin. As a result, the Public Chamber devolved into delegations of each camp, which had a notably negative effect on its work. In effect, the Chamber became a forum for a standoff between the governor's supporters and opponents.

---

<sup>29</sup> V. Patzelt. *Metody politicheskoy nauki. // Metodologicheskie podhody politologicheskogo issledovaniya I metateoreticheskie osnovy politicheskoy teorii.* – V.: ROSSPEN, S. 133-165.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ivan Bryantsev, 06.09.2012.

In the summer of 2012, after the resignation of P.L. Ipatov and the appointment of speaker of the Oblast Duma V.V. Radayev to governor, the position of representative of the Public Chamber fell to Alexander Solomonovich Lando, having left for this position the role of deputy of the Oblast Duma and president of the duma's Rules Committee. The Public Chamber received a modest but separate building in the center of the city, with its own conference hall in the building's basement, and its activity ceased involve arguments between representatives of various political clans – there was hope for constructive work. Together with Lando, a number of loyal supporters have joined the Chamber, guiding it through the past several years, and updating its web page almost daily ([www.op64.pф](http://www.op64.pф)).

A number of different opinions on the Chamber were expressed during the course of a focus group held in September 2012. Below are a number of them:

*“I would like to note, that there's nothing better, because through the Public Chamber we revolve important matters for society, for the noncommercial sector, for the business community – we have the opportunity for direct communication in this forum.”*

*“In my practice, at the present moment, there exists a sort of fixed situation, when the regime, as if because of poor understanding, clearly determined a circle of NGOs, the appearance of leaders, with whom it communicates. And of course, any communication produces its own rules.”*

*“Of course we have a Public Councils of all sorts, under authority structures, of course we have quite enough registered third-sector organizations, and like everywhere, in general, these organs only have the right to make recommendations – its influence on the decision making of local authorities if fairly limited... well, they can't replace the organ of power with themselves, right?”*

*“Speaking of forums that make possible the discussion of various problems in Saratov Oblast, the first thing that comes to mind is the Public Chamber. It is without a doubt the most influential and most well-known civil society institution.”*

In our opinion, the situation is most accurately reflected by the opinion of a local expert, who, answering whether or not the formation of a Public Chamber had been successful, noted: “What been successful is the identification of urgent problems in society, bringing them to the attention of local authorities, and the establishment of constant contact with executive and legislative organs throughout the oblast. What hasn't: the application of non-governmental expertise in legislation and other normative acts, and the following through on recommendations by state organs.”<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Elena Markelova, 07.09.2012.

### *Human Rights Commissioner*

The institution of the Human Rights Commissioner in Saratov Oblast came into being in January of 1999 when A.S. Lando became the fourth ombudsman elected in Russia. Note that the formation of the Human Rights Commission was detailed earlier<sup>32</sup>. A.S. Lando's work during his tenure can be described as both active and highly public, including the formation of two committees: a public committee including representatives from human rights NGO's and other non-governmental organization, and an expert committee consisting of academics and journalists – and others, including the director of the Saratov Solidarity Center for Human Rights. A. Nikitin was a member of both committees. Both committees worked rather effectively, acting in concert with the Commissioner, civil society, and the academic community. In the span of four years as Commissioner, Lando became widely known as a political figure who spent a great deal of time proactively seeking to counteract human rights abuses. His public criticism of the prosecutor's office for its failure to take necessary measures in response to human rights violations by police brought on a strong reaction the oblast administration – resulting in his failure to be nominated for a new term. In his stead, the governor nominated N.F. Lukashova, who during her term sincerely worked to defend and help people. However, in comparison to her predecessor, she was much less of a public figure, and for this reason many local expert feel that the institution of the Human Rights Commissioner is has forfeited the role of a mediator, one it held largely due to Lando's personality.

Below is an example of such an opinion on Lukashova from a focus group:

*“I agree with the previous participant that she (Lukashova) can get things done – she's a capable person. Still, will should come first, pure human will. If you want to hold such a post, you have to make some compromises. I know her well – we're practically acquaintances. She's missing something. She's too kind. Kindness is a good quality, but not for something like this. What's more, she shies away from publicity. And publicity is very important for such a position.”*

The multifaceted activities of the Commissioner can be divided into two categories: reactive and proactive. Reactive activities pertain to reactions to a violation of human rights, and all actions taken to restore said rights. Proactive activities are geared towards decreasing the likelihood of future violations, in other words various activities in the field of public policy. Proactive work was typical for the work of the first Commissioner, whereas it remains lower in the case of the second.

---

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Sungurov. Alexandr Lando i ego kpmenda. Nezakonchennay istoriya Saratovskogo Upolnomochennogo po pravam cheloveka. // Pravozaschitnik, 2000, N2. S. 10-20.

### ***Think tanks and other expert organizations***

Majority of respondents emphasized clubs of regional organization of political party “United Russia” as a real analytical communicative places in the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup>. In Saratov in 2010 worked all three “United Russia” clubs – social-conservative, state-patriotic and liberal-conservative. This clubs in 2009-2011 were the main and widely reflected in Muss-Media regional public communicative places, where main social and political problems of regional were discussed. During this time Expert council of deputy faction of “United Russia” in Saratov regional Assembly active worked also. Meetings of this Expert council took place every month, with mandatory invitation of independent experts from academic community<sup>33</sup>.

Such high activity of Saratov’ “United Russia” in the field of public communications and such level of collaboration with expert community can be explain by situation when regional leaders of this party were un 2009-2011 in sharp opposition to governor Pavel Ipatov. Such concurrent conditions force them active work in the public policy field and to involve expert community to process of decision preparation. After Pavel Ipatov’s resignation in the Spring 2012 such kinds of activity disappeared very fast.

Our questions about expert structures, where analytic product is generated received answer were mainly university analytical centers are figured – Center of information-analytic and sociological software of administration service of Volga Academy of State Service, Center of regional sociological research and Center for cooperation with NIS and Baltic countries of Saratov State University etc. Nobody mentioned some independent centers near to think tanks.

## **Sverdlovsk Oblast**

### ***Public Chamber***

In Sverdlovsk Oblast there existed (relative to other regions of Russia) a relatively high level of press freedom, including for TV stations. Largely as a result, there did not exist a particular demand for the creation of special structures aimed at facilitating the cooperation of society and the state. Nonetheless, for a brief period in the mid-nineties a Public Chamber was active. “In 1995 we founded the Public Chamber of Sverdlovsk Oblast, in which anybody could participate. We would gather once a month, discuss something, and then finish.”<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Zabbarov A.G. Vozможnosti i ogranicheniya “partiynoy analitiki” na primere deyatel’nosti Saratovskogo regional’nogo otdeleniya partii “Edinaya Rossiya” // Analiticheskiye soobshchestva v publichnoy politike: globalnyy fenomen i rossiyskiye praktiki. – M: RAPN, ROSSPEN, 2012. S. 165-171.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with A, administration of Ekaterinburg, April, 2013.

The Public Chamber of Sverdlovsk Oblast was formed in accordance with local law no.4-O3, passed February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, “On the Public Chamber of Sverdlovsk Oblast.” Its makeup is standard for regional chambers founded after 2006: in thirds, members are elected by governors and legislative assemblies, and local NGOs.

It must be noted that the Public Chamber of Sverdlovsk Oblast was founded four and a half years earlier, than in the majority of other Russian regions. This took place upon a change in governors: the departure from the post of political heavyweight E.E. Rossel, who failed to fulfill numerous recommendations of the Chamber, under the impression that it, having been formed within a federal framework, was a redundant organization. After two assemblies, S.S. Naboichenko, director of the Dean’s Council of the Universities of Sverdlovsk Oblast and the Ural Federal District and president of the B.N. Yeltsin State Technical University, became president of the Chamber. Somewhat self-evidently, could only dedicate a fraction of his time to the Chamber. As a whole, judging by publications in the mass media, the activity of the Chamber was generally uneventful. A number of experts went further, saying the Chamber’s work was unnoticeable; however, this did not prevent a number of its members from solving resolving issues facing NGOs close to them. Overall, according to a majority of experts and focus group participants, the Public Councils Sverdlovsk and Samara Oblasts failed to exert any influence on public affairs.

Below is an excerpt from an interview with the Human Rights Commissioner of Sverdlovsk, T.G. Merzlyakovya, who in our opinion, most level-headedly and accurately characterized the Chamber’s work:

*“The mediators of the Chamber fulfill some sort of function – the work of the Commission of the Rule of Law has gone well, which is related to [what we do]. It has attempted to be a middle man between law enforcement and society at large – not one person, but public opinion and public conscious to a certain extent. But as a whole, I don’t see the Public Chamber as a true mediator, because [its members] often raise questions – and whose opinion the answers reflect, what subset of society... I think a number of self-sufficient people who don’t need a career, salary, not even a boost in their public standing, are working in the Chamber. The people want to change something in the Oblast. Only 10% of people are like this. What about the other 90%? They’re just volunteers, and nothing else. They work traditionally with our Department of Internal Affairs and as soon as an issue comes up: “we support any action the regime takes!” Third, let’s say, is the group of people that seek to expand somebody’s influence. Lastly are people who are trying to make some sort of career for themselves.”<sup>35</sup>*

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Tatyana Merzlyakova, November, 2012.

## *Human Rights Commissioner*

It is worth mentioning that Sverdlovsk Oblast was the second region in Russia (after the Republic of Bashkortostan) to appoint a Human Rights Commissioner acting on the basis of special law – earlier than such an institution existed on the federal level. The first Commissioner, V.V. Mashkov died in 2001 of serious illness, after which the second and still-serving Commissioner, T.G. Merzlyakova, former journalist and deputy of the Oblast Assembly, was appointed. She was well known outside of the oblast, and made progress in the organization of dialogue between the state and society. In 2001 she organized a meeting between the governor of the oblast and human rights activists – a meeting that ran past its allotted time of forty minutes to three hours. Her apparatus became a central institution, with whose help has taken place meaningful cooperation between citizen, society, and state.

Her active work relating to both the defense of citizens' rights and proactive work led to her being named among Medialogy's "Fifty Most Influential Women in Russia 2011," after which she was elected to a third term in office<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, she was supported by the directors of widely known human rights NGOs, including the Moscow Helsinki Group and Memorial Society. She furthermore succeeded in establishing partnerships between human rights defenders in other Oblasts, along with the academic community. She actively coordinates with foreign ombudsmen, already having been a member of the European Ombudsmen Institute for several years.

Two comments from focus group participants characterize her reactive and proactive work:

*"On the topic of Tatyana Georgievna, what I really like about her administration is that they don't try to find who's right, who's guilty – figure out what led to the situation from an expert point of view – but how to resolve it, even though there might not be a legal basis. And sometimes, putting it mildly, picking and choosing when it comes to laws."*

*"It seems to me that the top expert community is the apparatus of the Commissioner for Human Rights and all of the specialists there – we appeal to both Tatyana Georgievna, and to specific specialists of the apparatus, in regard to specific issues."*

T.G. Merzlyakova actively participate in the composition of the Public Chamber, successfully adding to the governor's list candidates from the most successful human rights NGOs. "Here are the deputies – I tried to get into the deputy quota, but that didn't work at all. I can tell you my feelings about the quota. It's... well, let's call it opaque, hard to explain, and you

---

<sup>36</sup> Valentina Matvienko stala samoy vliyatelnoy zhensvhinoy goda, Informatsionnoye agentstvo «Fontanka.ru» <http://www.fontanka.ru/2011/12/28/108/>

get people surfacing, about whom it would be a stretch to say were visible in the public sphere before.”<sup>37</sup>

### ***Think Tanks and expert organizations***

One of the reasons of disappearance of think tanks in Sverdlovsk regions in 10<sup>th</sup> can be two resignation of governors and subsequent removals of all old political figures from regional political scene. We can quote of our respondent from city administration: “Situation in region is very serious politically from the frequent change of governors, and we have no independent analytical centers as result. Some analytical sociological centers exists with main Moscow partner or some commercial organizations. I had such structure – some PR agency, but with serious analytics. I closed it in 2005 from financial reasons”<sup>38</sup>. One of the results of our research was that some non-government analytical organizations exists in this region, their heads works in Universities or in academic institutes, activity of this organizations in field of regional development and they work outside of Sverdlovsk region mostly - in Yamal region, for example<sup>39</sup>.

Many experts marked high level of expert activity of academicians from Institutes of Russian Academy of Science, and concretely Konstantin Kiselev, deputy director of Institute of philosophy and law. He said us during our interview, that he proposed to the acting governor to create think tanks: «When governor Kuyvashev was appointed, I proposed him to create think tank. He supported this idea, but then our contacts interrupted, but I collected some projects. We can say that some needs in intellectual support exists. All this resulted in creation of expert council, and I was member of working group for this creation. But without any financial support nothing was created.<sup>40</sup>»

We must mention also, that many participants of focus-group named office of Commissioner for human rights Tatyana Merzlyakova as real think tank, with activity in format of Public policy center. Analyze of system mistakes if regional administration results in concrete proposal for elimination of this mistakes. This process took place with serious participation of regional experts and academicians. Result of this analysis and proposals are published in Annual and Special Reports, and concrete decisions of regional government took place finally.

### **Permskiy Kray**

---

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Tatyana Merzlyakova, November 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with B., city administration, April, 2013

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Olga Frants, November 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Konstantin Kiselev, April, 2013



## ***Public Chamber***

The law on the Public Chamber of Perm Territory was passed in 2009, however, the Chamber itself was only formed a year later. In two years, like in the case of Sverdlovsk Oblast, two classes have served. In addition, in the formation of the second class, not only the president (in place of the former chief physician, seventy five year old B.I. Svetlakov, having served three times as head of the Legislative Assembly on Social Policy and Human Rights, was appointed fifty two year old I.K. Kiryanov, dean of the History-Politics Department of Perm University) was replaced, but everybody but one member of the Chamber. It is interesting to note that one of the members of the Chamber is former governor of the oblast, G.V. Igumnov.

The late (in comparison with other cases examined in this work) foundation of the Public Council is tied to the presence in the Territory of an ambitious alliance of strong NGOs – the Perm Citizens’ Chamber, on the basis of which was formed the wider association of NGOs, the open partnership called Perm Assembly, following the Moscow Citizens’ Forum of 2001. However, the necessity to form a Public Chamber (passed down from the federal government) based along the lines of the federal one, a formation in which initiatives belong to the authorities, led to the eventual formation of the Public Chamber of Perm Territory. However, the ‘Permians’ followed their own path: the principles of the formation of the Chamber differed significantly from the majority of other regions of the Russia, in that two thirds of deputies are chosen at a conference of NGOs, to which the governor and legislative assembly add six deputies each.

*“The second assembly two years later formed under circumstances when Chirkunov already had itchy feet. For this this reason, there wasn’t much by way of serious work on candidate selection and the formation of organs. And as a result, the present Chamber is more capable. It was a positive step. They began to behave more independently, examine more relevant themes, and make appropriate decisions”<sup>41</sup>*

It must also be noted that during the period of activity of the second class of the Chamber, there has been noteworthy cooperation between the Public Chamber, Citizen’s Chamber, the representatives of which led classes on NGOs during seminars of the Public Chamber, and act as experts.

It is helpful to add the expert opinion of Human Rights Commissioner of Perm Territory, T.I. Margolinaya: *First, I would note that during discussion of matters there is a good amount of publicity and the positions of the Chamber, depending on the question on hand and analysis that was done. But this is the position of the Chamber. Even if there’s a certain opinion of the Chamber, the opportunity for the presentation of unique opinions of its members, in my view, is*

---

<sup>41</sup> Interview with B, academician, June, 2013.

*impossible. Second, I would like to say that there has appeared a certain Innovative-Applied character of the work of the Chamber, which I'm not hiding, appeared upon the direct participation of the Ombudsman. This was an attempt to enact a system of public control over the coordinating role of the Chamber. This attempt isn't specific, it's already laid out in the law, seeing as "On Public Control in Perm Territory," at the recommendation of the Commissioner, conferred this coordinating role on the Chamber in specific. Today, this institution is becoming responsible for these processes becoming more intensive and organized. One can criticize the fact that this is happening. But the main thing is that it is happening."*<sup>42</sup>

### ***Human Rights Commissioner***

The institution of the Human Rights Commissioner came into being in 2001 in then Perm Oblast, when thirty two year old lawyer Sergei Matveyev, who had worked only three years before resigning in order to follow former governor of the oblast Y.I. Trutnev to Moscow. Soon after T.I. Margolina was elected to the post, having previously worked for five years as the vice-governor of the oblast, managing matters of social policy, education, culture, youth politics, and the defense of children's rights. Her successfully used her record of responsible work on the oblast level to organize systematic work of her apparatus, striking a healthy balance between reactive and proactive activities. As Commissioner, she continued the partnership she had developed prior with human rights organizations and other NGOs, and in the territory, taking part in various initiatives and drawing upon the creative and organizational potential of Perm's NGOs, such as the Perm Regional Human Rights Center, Perm Citizens' Chamber, Memorial Society, and others. An example of such systematic work can be seen in the 'Development of Political Culture and Civic Education of the Population of Perm Territory for 2007-2011' policy objective. Preparations for this program and the monitoring of its implementation were directed by the Public Council for Civic Education under the Education Department of Perm Territory, founded in 2003 by initiative of the NGO the center for Civil Education and Human Rights and Civic Education Center of Perm State University<sup>43</sup>. Margolina, like her colleague from Samara, I.A. Skupova, was elected twice as co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Committee of Russian Human Rights Commissioners.

This consistency was visible in the successful involvement of the Public Chamber of Kaliningrad Oblast and other organizations, each of which addresses problems concerning civil

---

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Tatyana Margolina, June 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Alexandr Sungurov. Grazhdanskoye Obrazovanie: v poiskakh optimal'noy modeli regional'nykh razvitiya. // Sotsial'noye partnerstvo i razvitiye institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva v regionakh i munitsipalitetakh: praktika mezhshektornogo vzaimodeystviya – 2008. – M.: Agenstvo sotcialnoy informatcii, 2008. S. 275-294.

society development and rule of law. As was mentioned earlier in the fragment from the interview with T.I. Margolinaya, the law on the Social Chamber of Perm Territory confers the role of coordination specifically on the Public Chamber, giving it the opportunity to more or less exert a degree of control over state organs.

### ***Think Tanks and expert organizations***

Unlike to two previously analyzed regions, majority of our respondents as example of acting think tanks ore Public policy centers named Perm Citizen Chamber<sup>44</sup> and Center of citizen analysis and independent research “Grani”. Perm Citizen Chamber (Head – Igor Averkiev, lecture of Perm State University). This Center proposed draft of laws, including law “About Commissioner for Human Rights in Perm region, and successfully realized many projects in social policy.

Perm Citizen Chamber was one of establishers in 2007 of Center “Grani”. This center was created for expert, consultative and informational support of activities of citizen and NGOs for realization of public interests, including their collaboration with officials<sup>45</sup>. One of center’s establisher was professor Alexander Auzan, very prominent member of Council for civil society development and human rights at President of Russia (now he is dean of economical faculty of Moscow University) . Center “Grani” very effective realized technology of outsourcing, and received financial support not from international foundations only, but from Russian Ministry of Economic also. We must comment, that Commissioner for human rights Tatyana Margolina is member of consultative body of this center also. «Center “Grani” – is alternative and very powerful center of influence, more powerful, that Public Chamber, sometimes for influence than legislative Assembly. Igor Averkiev is a big brain, with possibility to clearly formulate his proposal. He work as such expert, that a persons of the governor level only can to discuss with him»<sup>46</sup>.

In Perm region, unlike to Saratov and Ekaterinburg, exists regional community of political scientists with the center at department of political science of Perm state university (head – professor Lyubov Fadeeva). This department collaborate actively with scientists from institute of Russian Academy of Science and support research activity of students. Some lectures from this department works in Center “Grani” part time.

---

<sup>44</sup><http://www.pgpalata.ru/>

<sup>45</sup><http://grany-center.org/>

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Igor Lobanov, journalist, Perm, April 2013.

\*\*\*

The presentation above of the result of our analysis allows us to derive a number of models of interactions cooperation between analyzed mediator organizations in three Russian regions: Public chambers, Human Rights Commissioners and think tanks. To begin with is the model of ‘polite ignoring’, wherein both structures act autonomously, throwing together cooperation with ritual phrases, and not experience any mutual aspirations to work together. The situation in Saratov Oblast reflects this model. In this case we have no regional think tanks – it was some expert communicative places only. The second model can be termed ‘one-sided interest,’ typical of Sverdlovsk Oblast. This region is a example, where functions of public policy center are realized by the office of regional ombudsman.

The most interesting model, in our opinion, we call ‘constructive interaction,’ which is visible in Perm Region. The Human Rights Commissioner initiated the inclusion of a number of positions in the law on the Public Chamber. These partner relations are enforced by existing in this regions of strong public policy centers, which are real actors of regional public policy.

The presented results confirm the conclusion to which we came earlier– that the most effective results of institutes with mediatory functions are achieved in cases of consistent and constructive interaction with one another.