

Title page

Encouraged but controlled: Governance networks in Russian regions

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Abstract

The article examines the role of civil society in Russian governance networks, focusing on power relations between state and non-state actors. The analysis is based on empirical evidence from concrete governance networks in two major cities, St. Petersburg and Samara, that handle complex social issues – integration of migrants, drug prevention, and child protection. Civil society formations seen as “loyal” by the authorities are invited in, and benefit from participation in the form of access to resources, personal networks, and an increased possibility for a modicum of influence. The authorities benefit from non-state actors’ special competence and proximity to service users. Both sectors benefit symbolically from association with the other. Power asymmetries are reflected in tight state control of governance networks’ agenda, membership, and opportunity to affect policy. The governance networks are first and foremost advisory bodies with very limited decision-making authority.

Keywords:

Russia; governance; migration; drug policy; child protection

Introduction

This article constitutes a study of Russian governance networks and the power relations within them – to what extent are non-state actors included and given power within these networks? The article compares formal governance networks found in three policy areas, in two different federal subjects.

Part of the rationale for establishing formal networks where non-state and state-based actors can meet to discuss, formulate, and implement policy is that many issues are so complex to manage that traditional hierarchical forms of governance are considered inadequate. They defy precise delineation, they cut across policy and service areas, and they resist solutions offered by a vertical top-down approach. In a context of increasing societal fragmentation, complexity and dynamism, governance networks are held to be particularly apt for tackling such difficult tasks. However, governance through networks takes many different forms. The problems that governance networks are shaped to address, and the institutional and socio-

political contexts in which they operate, have essential impact on their functioning (Røiseland 2011, Torfing 2005).

Since the early 2000s Russian authorities have initiated and established a variety of consultative councils, civic forums, public chambers, grant schemes, multi-actor programmes and public-private partnerships where state and non-state actors interact to discuss and solve pressing and complex social issues (Evans 2008, Laine and Demidov 2012, Stuvøy 2014, Tarasenko 2009, 2010, Tarasenko, Dubrovskii, and Starodubtsev 2011). Much of the policy formation and implementation on social issues in Russia takes place at the regional (federal subject) level (Tarasenko 2015), and we find many network governance structures of the types described above, at this level (Kropp and Schuhmann 2014; see also their article in this volume). Although there are several in-depth studies of networks in Russia (e.g. Ledeneva 2006, 2013, Moshes and Kononenko 2011), these tend to focus on the intricate interplay of formal and informal institutions, and on personalised networks, while studies that examine how formalised governance networks operate in practice are much more rare. This article seeks to address this gap.

Three complex social issues that are high up on the Russian political agenda are integration of migrants, child protection and drug abuse. We analyse the role of formal governance networks in handling these policy issues in two Russian federal subjects where they are particularly challenging: St. Petersburg and Samara. We have studied arenas where state and non-state stakeholders meet for exchange of information, initiation of policy measures, and dividing roles and responsibilities as regards implementation of policy.

In present-day Russia, governance networks are developing in a rather complex and seemingly contradictory institutional context. On the one hand, the idea of civil society participation (NGOs, civil activists, professional experts) has found support at the normative level. The Federal Public Chamber, a consultative body that includes various selected representatives of civil society, was established in 2005, and during the last ten years regional Public Chambers have sprung up all across Russia (Evans 2008, Richter 2009, Laine and Demidov 2012, Stuvøy 2014). Other, more policy area-specific consultative-participatory councils of civil society representatives have been established both at the Federal and regional levels. Federal Law No. 212 “On the foundation of public control in the Russian Federation”, which was signed on 21 July 2014, assigned a significant role to non-state actors in monitoring state policy formulation and implementation. Some important amendments were incorporated the same day into the Federal Law “On Public Associations”. Officially, cross-sectoral collaboration that includes the involvement of non-state actors is recognized and supported as important and necessary components of governance, and especially in the delivery of social services (Bindman 2015). In the Russian media there is a strong tendency to portray the inclusion of non-state actors in policy-deliberation and -implementation as natural and necessary (Myhre & Berg-Nordlie, this issue).

On the other hand, there are other aspects of Russian politics which are much less favourable to network governance. The Federal NGO law of 2006 limited the room of manoeuvre for civil society formations. This has reduced NGO activity and curtailed civil society development. The law “On Foreign Agents” signed on 20 July 2012, has further politically sidelined many critical civil society actors (Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikov 2014, Flikke 2015).

It is under such ambiguous conditions that Russian interaction between state and non-state actors is developing. On the one hand the state stresses and shows interest in collaboration and in certain situations makes use of input from civil society; on the other hand formal and

informal restrictions on civil society formations makes it harder for them to be independent actors in governance networks.

The research question that we seek to answer in this article is the following: What is the role of non-state actors in governance networks within various parts of welfare policy processes? The empirical design of our research allows us to look into aspects such as power asymmetries, the scope for interest representation, sources of control, opportunities for participation and agenda-setting, and motives of the state and the non-state actors to participate. It also allows for comparisons between different policy arenas and regions.

Although there are marked differences between policy areas and regions, we find that the main features of governance networks are similar: Civil society formations seen as “loyal” by the authorities are invited in, and benefit from participation in the form of access to resources, personal networks, and an increased possibility for a modicum of influence. The authorities benefit from non-state actors’ special competence and proximity to service users. Both sectors benefit symbolically from association with the other. Power asymmetries are reflected in tight state control of governance networks’ agenda, membership, and opportunity to affect policy. In sum, the governance networks are first and foremost advisory bodies with only limited decision-making authority.

Theory and methods: Governance networks and the policy system

The ideal type of *government* as a strictly hierarchal top-down process has yielded to a new ideal type - that of *governance*, where keeping a hierarchal chain-of-command is considered less important than getting the desired results, and where non-state actors are acknowledged as a political resource. The network governance approach to studies of politics hence focuses on the inclusion of non-state actors in political deliberation and policy-implementation. One line of network governance research looks particularly into power differences inside governance networks, the possibility that certain actors are denied access to networks, and also how networks’ agendas can be framed to include certain subjects and definitions while others are excluded (Klijn 2008).

In this article we define governance networks as networks that involve both state and non-state actors (politicians, administrators, interest organisations, business, social movements and citizen groups) that deliberate political issues (Torfing 2005). The term then covers anything from loose and *ad hoc* meetings between the authorities and interested parties to formalized boards and councils with a fixed mandate. Governance network theory has tended to stress the horizontal patterns of exchange and relationships within such networks. Ideally, through network interaction, actors should be able to come to solutions that they all can agree upon. Nevertheless, since power asymmetries are pervasive also in governance networks, and power imbalances often favour state-based actors, public authorities can and often will dominate networks.

Theories on governance networks have been developed in a Western context. Applying this theory on Russia may seem counter-intuitive (see Davies et al. in this volume), in light of the shrinking room of manoeuvre for civil society and the strong emphasis on the power vertical, which appear to imply that governance networks will have few prospects for “proper” functioning. Additional constraining factors are constituted by meagre horizontal ties of social solidarity between actors, and weak grass-roots movements. The Russian civil society sector is characterised by a high degree of specialisation and ‘verticality’, typical of the Soviet era, which does not favour cross-sectoral collaboration (Aasland, Grønningsæter, and Meylakhs

2013). Thus, horizontal governance is likely to be complemented by and combined with variations of vertical modes of governance, such as hierarchy, coercion and outright threats and violence (Davies et al. in this volume). However, since our approach to network governance does not at all exclude the possibility of finding hierarchical power practices, we are nevertheless able to utilize the approach on Russia.

We have chosen an open approach to the study of governance networks in Russia, aiming to empirically examine their functioning. We have located networks within the three policy areas, identified the tasks they perform, and investigated the extent to which civil society can be said to be empowered through these networks. Instead of operating with a traditional policy cycle model, which has been criticised for oversimplification of the complex world and for imposing schematic stages of what actually happens (Hill 2014), we look into the governance networks' functions in the policy process: decision-making, monitoring, advice, coordination and implementation. Some of these concepts need a brief explanation.

Decision-making does not need further definition. In the article we assess the extent to which governance networks can be said to possess this in relation to their policy areas. *Monitoring* is here defined as systematically observing policy and giving critical comments to state-based actors and/or to the public regarding whether or not policy is being implemented in compliance with the law (Owen 2014).

By *advice* we have in mind a formal system which purports to deliver recommendations, knowledge and expertise on how policy should be formulated and/or implemented, primarily to government institutions (Howlett and Newman 2010).

When it comes to *coordination*, this implies communication to avoid duplication of programmes and initiatives, and facilitate distribution of tasks.

By *implementation* we understand implementation of programmes or policy that is performed by the network, or by one or more of the network participants. It could also be delegated to other executors of policy programmes or projects under the governance network's auspices.¹

Our aim is to shed light on how the governance networks perform these roles, rather than to assess policy outcomes. For a more thorough discussion of the project's theoretical framework, we refer to Davies et al. in this volume.

Data and methods

The article is based on analysis of governance networks in three policy areas that serve as cases for the study.² The choice of selecting these three cases is motivated by the need to gather in-depth insight and capture complexity, while at the same time producing some level of generalisation of the phenomenon of governance networks (c.f. Ragin 1987). The cases of integration of migrants, drug policy and child protection were selected due to their complex and cross-sectoral nature, their involving a variety of state and non-state actors, the presence of formal networks, as well as their considerable societal importance and attention. At the same time the three cases differ in terms of room of manoeuvre for regional policy-makers, level of securitization, popular perceptions of target groups (migrants, drug addicts, children at risk), and the character of the public discourse.

¹One aspect of the administrative reform launched by the Russian government in 2001 was an outsourcing of some traditionally state functions to civic institutions (see Tarasenko 2015).

² The study is part of a 3-year Norwegian-Russian research project on network governance in Russia funded by the Research Council of Norway under the NORRUSS programme (Project no. 220615).

We have conducted field work in the federal subjects St. Petersburg and Samara. St. Petersburg is a major metropolitan city (Russia's second largest) with a federal subject status of its own. Samara, one of the more populous federal subjects in Russia, includes a larger geographical area with several cities (the largest being Samara City), towns and rural municipalities. The two were selected because two of the policy areas are particularly relevant (high number of migrants, widespread drug abuse). We have identified policy areas where the potential for finding governance networks in operation is high, and then analysed their specific characteristics and modes of operation. Although we started from identifying formal governance networks, we were also interested in how they interact with, and sometimes are complemented by, the informal network structures that are known to be particularly characteristic of Russian policy-making (Ledeneva 2006, 2013, Moshes and Kononenko 2011).

Exploratory field work in the regions was conducted in the spring and summer of 2013. We first made 29 interviews³ with a variety of experts (academics, journalists, activists, and politicians) to identify policy-area relevant governance networks operating in the two federal subjects. Following this we conducted 62 semi-structured interviews, predominantly with participants in network arenas: government officials and policy-makers, representatives of professional groups, and civil society organisations, but also independent stakeholders that do not operate on the networking arenas. Common interview guides were elaborated for the three policy areas, but with ample room for adaptation to specifics of each sphere and local conditions. Project researchers also conducted observations of 19 governance network meetings to which they have gained access. The aim of the observations was to identify participants, and to examine agenda-setting, presence or absence of debate and critical voices, negotiations and decision-making.

Due to ethical concerns, interviewees were promised anonymity. When citing them, we hence only refer to policy area, category of respondent, and place (when not considered necessary to conceal for securing anonymity).

Context: The three policy areas

Drug prevention, child protection and migrant integration all have their particularities that are reflected in governance structures. Similarly, the types and activities of civil society formations, and the types of state-civil society interaction, vary between them. Thus a brief presentation of the policy areas, and their associated civil society scenes and main governance network arenas is deemed necessary.

It is important to be aware of one difference between the policy areas which affects the potential power that local governance networks can have over policy-shaping: the extent to which the policy area is controlled by the Federal level. Both migration and drug policy are dominated by federal agencies; the Federal Migration Service (FSM) and the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN). Their central agencies and governance networks are replicated at the regional level. While regional governance networks in these policy areas operate in a context of streamlining and control from the Federal centre, there is more leeway for regional policy initiatives in the third policy area. The issues that are discussed in the migration and drug sphere are more restricted, and are more about providing support in the implementation of policy rather than attempting to change policy.

³ Interviews and observations have been performed by Anastasiya Meylakhs, Olga Tkach, Alexander Kondakov, Olga Olisova, Elena Baeva, Polina Bochkova, Jørn Holm-Hansen and the authors.

Drug prevention

Drug use is a serious challenge in Russia, with several million users, many of whom use opiates, predominantly by injection.⁴ Injecting drug users make up the majority of Russia's increasing number of HIV positive people (Pape 2013). St. Petersburg and Samara are among the Russian regions that have the largest percentage of injecting drug-users.⁵ Over the last years general prevention programmes among youth have been a major priority within Russian drug prevention, while many targeted prevention programs and services for active drug users have been closed down (Aasland, Grønningsæter, and Meylakhs 2013). A major concern is the lack of rehabilitation facilities. In 2010 this spurred a comprehensive and cross-sectoral programme on rehabilitation and resocialisation which was recently adopted.⁶

The most important institution in this policy area is the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN), which has a hierarchical set-up of institutions in all federal subjects and also local territorial units. FSKN is a federal executive law-enforcement agency, and is also responsible for drafting state policy, controlling and monitoring virtually all aspects of drug policy. While historically mostly concerned with stopping the supply of illicit drugs, it has more recently also gotten the responsibility for drug use prevention and rehabilitation. However, a large number of other sectoral ministries deal with aspects of drug policy and work closely with FSKN.⁷ Legislation in the sphere is centralized, and the opportunity for the regions to propose major policy initiatives is quite limited. There is, however, some scope for regional variation. For example, when it comes to HIV prevention among drug users, regions have different policies towards measures such as needle exchange programmes, which federal authorities clearly do not support (Aasland, Grønningsæter, and Meylakhs 2013).

A considerable number of NGOs work on drug prevention, though the landscape is different in the two federal subjects studied, with a much greater number and variation of activity in St. Petersburg. Historically almost all the Russian NGOs with drug use prevention activities in their profile began with a primary focus on preventing HIV or promoting a healthy lifestyle. For a long time they were supported mostly by international funds rather than by Russian authorities. The decline in funding from international donors in combination with Russian authorities' prioritizing general rather than targeted prevention has led not only to the collapse of many non-state organizations but also to a change in many NGOs' activity profile. One result is the shift of focus from targeted drug use prevention to more general HIV prevention measures, or other ways of aligning their activities with the state's priorities.

Governance network arenas for drug prevention are quite similar in Samara and St. Petersburg, although with some variation. The most important arenas for coordination of drug policy initiatives are the regional and municipal anti-drug commissions, which are under the FSKN umbrella. The anti-drug commissions have rather fixed memberships, with all sectors involved in drug prevention represented. In Samara there is no cross-sectoral committee for dealing with the HIV issue, while such a committee exists in St. Petersburg and includes non-state members. HIV prevention among drug users is one of the responsibilities of this committee, which is called the Coordination Council for HIV/AIDS Prevention.

⁴ The actual numbers are contested, but the Federal Drug Control Service operated with a number of 8 million drug users in 2013 <http://ria.ru/beznarko/20130628/829653738.html> (accessed 5 December 2015).

⁵ <http://izvestia.ru/news/564615>; <http://www.St.Petersburg.aif.ru/society/136323> (both 5 December 2015).

⁶ <http://www.fskn.gov.ru/pages/main/prevent/13250/> (accessed 5 December 2015).

⁷ The Russian Federal Anti-Drug Strategy until 2020 outlining the structural set-up can be found at <http://www.stratgap.ru/pages/strategy/3662/4434/4437/index.shtml> (accessed 5 December 2015).

Integration of migrants

Russia is one of the countries that receive most immigrants, being second only to the USA. In 2014 the number of immigrants numbered 17,281,971, and 11,072,355 foreign citizens lived in the country.⁸ The main influx comes from the former USSR. Significant challenges, include the social conditions of migrants, inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions, linguistic and cultural adaptation to Russia, and issues of legality (Aasland and Berg-Nordlie 2009; Tkach and Brednikova 2016).

Decision-making in this policy area is strictly centralized to Federal authorities. Regional and local power is limited to implementing policy and to sending signals “upward” in the hierarchy. Migration is a rather securitized issue, and authorities’ focus has tended to lie on limiting immigration and combatting illegal immigration, although there is a simultaneous recognition of the economic need for immigrants. In recent years, the subject of integration has been increasingly put on the political agenda (Berg-Nordlie, Aasland, and Tkach 2010; Tkach and Brednikova 2016).

The policy area’s central institution is the Federal Migration Service (FMS), an executive agency under the federal Government which is considered part of the security structures. The FMS has offices throughout Russia’s regions. For the urban areas covered in this article, the relevant structures are the Samara FMS and the joint FMS office for the regions St. Petersburg and Leningrad.

Both the Samara and St. Petersburg Governments have had programs aimed at migrants, such as Samara’s “Social adaptation and integration of migrants” and St. Petersburg’s “Tolerance” and “Migration”. Another local-level actor of note in this sphere are St. Petersburg’s House of Nationalities and Samara’s House of the Friendship of the Peoples. The “Houses” function as intermediaries between state and ethnic civil society, special competence centers for the authorities, policy implementers and meeting places for network governance type activities.

Many organizations seek to influence policy on immigrant integration. Some of these groupings are fundamentally critical of immigration, and some of them are outright xenophobic (Aasland and Berg-Nordlie 2009). Other organizations and networks take a fundamentally positive stance towards immigration, such as the Forum of Migrant Organizations which unites 50 NGOs. The Russian Red Cross, which is very active in St. Petersburg, is also an important actor in the work for assistance to immigrants and against human trafficking. The human rights’ NGO Memorial, which has a small branch in Samara, has a programme called “Migration and Rights”. While primarily about refugees, the programme also gives legal assistance to labour migrants. The so-called “diaspora organizations”, organizations established by ethnic minority groups to work for the benefit of their co-ethnics, are a very central type of non-state actor in this policy area. Types of ethnic minority organizations include, for example, funds, ordinary NGOs, and the Russia-specific organization type “national cultural autonomy”.⁹

The most relevant network governance arenas are the FMS’ own Consultative Councils. In accordance with the general structure of the FMS there is one central consultative council and several regional councils. Samara has one council while St. Petersburg and the surrounding

⁸ <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/statistics/data/details/9482/> (accessed 5 December 2015).

⁹ For more on the latter, see Osipov (2013).

Leningrad region share one. As for other network governance arenas there is no shortage. The regional Governmental structures tend to have such councils, often attached to specific Committees. The St. Petersburg Government's programme "Tolerance" had a council, whereas the "Migration" programme utilizes the input of a council under the House, and also the Council on Issues of Implementing State Ethnic Policy under the St. Petersburg Government. In Samara, the region's Ministry of Labour and Employment has a consultative Public Council with immigration issues on its list of responsibilities. Furthermore, the Houses hold semi-regular round-table like meetings.

Child protection

The importance of preventing orphanhood has been recognized at all levels of governance in Russia. In 2014 a total of 630,743 orphans and children without parental care were registered.¹⁰ These numbers are contested, and independent agencies estimate that the number of orphans may be as high as one million.¹¹ Of these 80 percent are so-called "social orphans", i.e. their parents are alive but cannot or will not care for them.

In recent years the policy area has been undergoing comprehensive reforms. Several new laws have been adopted, some of which have caused major controversy,¹² but new legislation has nevertheless instigated a real conceptual transformation of the policy area. In 2012 a "National Strategy for Action for Children 2012-2017" was adopted, which articulated significant changes in approach, including the development of family care for orphans¹³ and restrictions on the number of state orphanages.¹⁴ Despite law reforms, the reorganization of the child protection state bureaucracy which began after the collapse of the USSR is not yet completed. Nineteen different ministries are involved in the management of child protection, which causes problems of cross-sectoral interaction and distribution of responsibilities. In line with this situation, our regional cases St. Petersburg and Samara have different structures that are responsible for child protection. The main bodies in the two federal subjects have different names, different areas of responsibility, and different bureaucracies.

Since the beginning of the 1990s NGOs have played a significant role in child protection, and are also quite well developed in Russian regions. St. Petersburg has about 50 NGOs managing different problems of child welfare. Some of them have been established by foreign actors. About 20 NGOs and charity foundations focusing on children problems are operating in Samara. In St. Petersburg some NGOs have initiated their own platforms, providing professional communication among state and non-state agencies. In addition, the child protection sphere has another powerful agent – the Children's Ombudsmen, operating on federal and regional levels.

¹⁰ <http://irkutsk.rfdeti.ru/upload/ff5c34440fe1feb70ffdf6bf4fa989c4.pdf> (accessed 4 December 2015), p. 127.

¹¹ *Sirotstvo v Rossii: problemy i puti ikh razresheniya*. Issledovanie (2011). Moscow : 49, available at http://sirotinka.ru/download/sirotstvo_v_rossii.pdf (accessed 4 December 2015).

¹² See for ex: Federal Law No. 272 «On measures against persons involved in violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms, rights and freedoms of citizens of Russian Federation», also known as the "Dima Yakovlev Law" 28 December, 2012.

In January 2013 the Party "United Russia" initiated the project "Every child is important for Russia" (*Rossii vazhen kazhdyi rebenok*).

¹³ See http://teoria-practica.ru/rus/files/arhiv_zhurnala/2014/16/sociology/rusakova-odinokova.pdf (accessed 4 December 2015).

¹⁴ The Order of the President of RF No. 761 "On National Strategy of Action for Children 2012 - 2017" 1 June, 2012.

At the federal level, we observe that some NGO leaders are included into public councils working at the federal level.¹⁵ In our regional cases, we observed quite different network structures. The Social Policy Committee in St. Petersburg has no consultative or participatory council attached to it, while the same body in Samara has several such councils, some of which are headed by NGO leaders. On the other hand, the Children's Ombudsman in St. Petersburg plays a rather important role in the policy area, through organising public discussions and managing its own platform for network collaboration. The Children Ombudsman in Samara does not perform such a proactive role, though the institution takes part in all the governance network discussions organised at different arenas.

The Case Networks

The policy areas are characterized by a large number of governance network arenas, but these differ very much in their set-up. Both executive and legislative bodies in the regions have consultative councils that are there to assist the government on policy issues. The framing of these consultative bodies does not necessarily match the three policy areas selected for this study. In some instances there are several separate councils that deal with the same specific policy area, while in other instances one council deals with the policy area as just one of many responsibilities. Drug issues may, for example, in addition to being raised in the regional and municipal anti-drug commissions, also be brought up in the regional Government's commission for a healthy lifestyle, or in the regional Legislature's section for social services. Some issues are discussed on several different governance networks because they are seen as belonging to many different problem complexes (e.g. the spread of new drugs in the regions) while other issues are rarely raised in any context (e.g. harm reduction measures for drug users).

In order to assess the role of Russian governance networks we have selected seven of the most prominent governance network arenas that cover the three policy areas, to describe their main functions according to the different aspects of the policy arenas presented above: decision-making; monitoring; advice; implementation; and coordination.

The Public Chamber in Samara

The Public Chamber is a state institution relevant for all three policy areas covered in this article (Olisova 2015). The chamber formally has an independent status, but the selection process of candidates and the way the chamber operates links it closely to the authorities. Its proclaimed purpose is to ensure public oversight over the executive and legislative branches, and public participation in governance. The chamber is subdivided into a number of commissions which at times also raise public discussion on issues that concern the three policy areas. This heightens the attention to said issues among media and decision-makers, and can end with the chamber giving policy recommendations. The main emphasis of the public chamber is on giving *advice* to authorities, particularly through calling the attention of the authorities to specific problems, as well as on *monitoring*. It has quite weak potential for *coordination* of different sectors and institutions. The members are generally considered loyal to the state and ready for compromise, and the chamber has rather close links to the regional governor. *Implementation* of social policy is not included into the functions of the chamber, and it has no *decision-making* power.

¹⁵ E.g. the Coordinating Council on Implementation of the "National Strategy for Action for Children 2012-2017" 11 September, 2012.

The Public consultative councils under the Federal Migration Service, Samara and St. Petersburg

These councils are regional replications of a similar council at the Federal level. The regional FMS councils were formed in 2007 and consist of individuals selected by the network-managing institution, the FMS. The network manager participates directly in its activities. Typical participants in FMS Councils include members of ethnic civil society organizations (“diasporas”); other NGOs of perceived relevance (sometimes also private business); employers’ interests and unions; academia; religious organizations; and relevant state bodies. The councils do not have *decision-making* capacity. The FMS is in itself an executive – e.g. implementing – organ, and the councils are substructures under those again. The public consultative councils are explicitly framed as having an *advisory* capacity. Particularly important is legislative advice, but the councils also give advice on *implementation* of migration and integration policy. Both councils also take part in *monitoring* of the migration situation in the respective region and prepare informational--analytical materials on different problems of migration.

The Samara city parliament’s Council on problems of fatherhood, motherhood and childhood

This council was established in 2013 as a response to the need for an arena to discuss problems related to child welfare. Council members include officials, heads of children’s homes, the Children’s Ombudsman, and NGO representatives. The council is headed by an NGO leader. Meetings are held 4-5 times a year and typically consist of reports made by specialists on specific problems in the sphere and subsequent discussion, followed by recommendations as to how the issue should be resolved. The *advice* function of the policy system is therefore highlighted. While not *decision-making* as such, the council produces recommendations that legislators and policy-makers are required to consider, though not obliged to follow. *Coordination* is a key task of the council. It coordinates activities and ideas among officials, specialists and NGOs. The council is not involved in the direct *implementation* of social policy; neither does it have a formal *monitoring* function.

The Expert council under St. Petersburg’s Children’s Ombudsman This arena is framed to facilitate discussion of different problems related to child welfare. Participation is rather flexible. There is a set of core members, but external experts are also invited when certain issues are being discussed. Participants include officials, experts, politicians and NGOs. The agenda is formed by the Ombudsman apparatus. The council has *decision-making* authority; the decisions are recorded in protocols and it is obligatory for executive organs to implement them. The *advisory* function is important - the council produces recommendations addressed directly to the executive organs. It also *coordinates* the solution of particular problems raised for discussion. The recommendations’ status is quite high, and the council can thereby have an important influence on how social policy is *implemented*, though indirectly (through recommendations rather than direct involvement in policy implementation). Its *monitoring* role consists in observing the implementation of its decisions and recommendations, and reporting to the mayor and executive organs about the decisions.

Child welfare supervisions, St. Petersburg

Supervision is a regular open event organised by the NGO “Support”¹⁶ in St. Petersburg. The state is involved through the participation of municipal guardianship departments, social workers and other representatives of the municipal services. NGO representatives and international experts also participate in the supervisions. Supervisions are a monthly forum for

¹⁶ Fictive name.

discussing social problems, usually by focusing on individual cases with general applicability. The arena produces *advice* on how to improve skills of practitioners, e.g. in working with orphans, and families and children with specific problems. The advice given does not have to be taken into account, but may influence both the norms of social work practice, as well as practitioners' professional standards. Supervisions play a relatively important role in *coordination* of solutions of the above-mentioned problems. The arena *monitors* and evaluates the usefulness of the recommendations that they produce in the meetings, through repeated participation of the same participants.

The Regional anti-drug commissions, Samara and St. Petersburg

This is a structure under the FSKN (Federal Drug Control Service) umbrella, and the regional commissions are replications of the central state anti-drug committee. The anti-drug commissions have rather fixed memberships. All sectors involved in drug prevention are represented. At the regional level it is headed by the governor and has high-level representatives from a variety of regional ministries. In both Samara and St. Petersburg the commission includes a member of the regional Public Chamber. The commission also invites various state and non-state experts for participation in commission meetings. At the municipal level the membership is less fixed, with some commissions including permanent non-state members, while others only invite them in as experts to present reports about specific issues. The commission participates both in the establishment and the *implementation* of anti-drug policies. It has an *advisory* function in proposing legislation to decision-makers, and also has *decision-making* authority concerning the implementation of its initiatives. The *coordination* function is crucial, both vertically between different levels of government, and horizontally between different sectors involved in anti-drug activities. The commission furthermore performs *monitoring* of drug policy through its analysis of anti-drug activities of the different levels of government.

The Coordination council for HIV prevention, St. Petersburg

The council was established in 1999 with the purpose of solving local strategic and operational issues in line with federal HIV policy. Since most HIV positive people are drug users, the council is relevant also for the sphere of drug policy. The council members are mostly representatives of various state medical and other relevant institutions, but there have also been NGO-based members (Pape 2013:171). Also, NGO representatives and other non-state actors (experts, academics, etc.) participate in meetings as invited speakers. All local policy in the area of HIV is subordinated to the St. Petersburg Health Committee, and the council functions as an *advisory* institution to this committee. As indicated by the name, *coordination* between different institutions involved in HIV prevention is a core task. According to its statutes, it does have *decision-making* authority when it comes to solving operational issues in the sphere, but apart from that it does not formally possess any such powers. The council furthermore has a *monitoring* role through its responsibility for following and informing about the HIV situation in the city, and it has the right to ask for information about HIV policy measures and activities from any state body involved in HIV prevention.

Governance networks and policy processes: A summary table

The above descriptions testify to considerable variation, and shows that governance networks may perform quite different functions. Despite all complexity and variation (many details and relevant contexts are lost in the brief overview above) it is possible to give a synopsis of some major trends (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As can be seen from the table the *advisory* function of governance networks is highlighted in all the explored networks. This is hardly surprising, given that most of them are, explicitly, consultative bodies that the authorities have set up in order to get input from certain state and non-state actors. Another function highlighted across all networks is *monitoring*. This function is often specified as important both in the statutes of each of the networks, and referred to by the authorities as a main purpose. However, the way in which this monitoring- and control function is performed varies a lot. The possibility of less prominent network actors to actually interfere with state-based actors' decisions or policy implementation appears modest at best. There are, though, examples of governance networks performing this role quite seriously, most notably by some of the sections of the regional Public Chambers, e.g. by scrutinising and pointing out irregularities in policy-makers' performance. However, feedback mechanisms tend only to go in one direction. Non-state actors make strong efforts to monitor and comment on legislation, but rarely get feedback from the state agents about their input. Even in cases when their recommendations have been implemented, non-state actors do not know if it was exactly their own suggestion that affected these changes or not.

Several of the governance networks were established in order to contribute to *coordination* of activities for complex social issues. This also stands out as one of the tasks where most of the governance networks are active. High-level *decision-making*, on the other hand, does not figure among the main tasks performed by governance networks. Most governance networks are just consultative bodies. They make resolutions and recommendations, but have no direct authority over the policy decisions which are made by state authorities. For some of the consultative bodies, however, the state authorities are obliged to process resolutions or recommendations made by a consultative body, although this appears rather to be the exception than the rule. We have not found governance networks that are delegated authority over decision-making of core importance for policy development within the three policy areas. Their decision-making is confined to their own administrative and organisational issues, or to areas that have limited effect on major developments of the policy area. Moreover, decisions of governance networks tend to be non-binding.

When it comes to policy *implementation*, the variation between governance networks is very large. We have found several examples that governance networks can serve as a platform for involving NGOs in service delivery. This can be done through delegation of such functions to NGOs, whether inside or outside the networks themselves. NGOs that have representatives included in networks themselves are more likely to be given such tasks than NGOs that are more detached from authorities. Though grant schemes for NGOs in principle are competitive with impartiality in the allocation of grants being emphasised, several interviewees hinted that some proximity to the funding institution tends not to be a disadvantage for the actual selection of projects. We also found several examples of governance networks directly participating in policy implementation, distributing tasks among network members to be performed between network meetings.

State/Non-state relations within the networks

In this section we build on observations and interviews from the governance networks that we have studied to assess the patterns of participation in the networks, internal power relations, motivation for participation, and priorities when it comes to issues to be brought up in the networks. First, however, we shall assess to which extent the networks represent arenas for interest articulation and negotiations.

Arenas for expression of different views and bargaining of interests?

Governance networks ideally facilitate collective decision-making as well as coordination of action among a variety of stakeholders. In network governance theory it is often stressed that there should be a culture of horizontal decision-making among independent actors (Powell 1990). Our interviews and document analyses indicate that such discourse is rarely observed in the Russian setting (cf. also Myhre & Berg-Nordlie in this volume). The actors are constructed as representing different resources and experiences, rather than different interests, and the consultative bodies portrayed as working from consensus towards practical solutions, rather than arenas for conflict and bargaining. Diverging views and interests tend to be downplayed, and are usually seen as undesirable. When asked whether disagreements are common in governance networks, participants tended to answer in the negative.

Thank God, we have not had any.[...] This didn't occur, because the key feature of the anti-drug commission is that everyone understands, that if a specialist, an expert in a given area, speaks out, that means that the person doesn't just talk without a purpose. Therefore, to interfere, and say that he is not right, that's not good behaviour.
(public administration, drug policy, Samara)

They don't want scandals. The logic is that everything should be quiet, soft, and that everybody should be happy. Nobody should have conflicts with each other or yell at each other. [...] They say they prevent conflicts like in this way To me, this is not a prevention of conflict, rather this is an attempt to simply ignore, remove or talk it away.
(civil society, immigrant integration, St. Petersburg)

The presence of a high level of trust among governance network participants was also stressed by our interviewees. Several of them indicated that trust is reflected in an atmosphere of general professional agreement among network participants. Only a couple of our interviewees expressed the view that disagreements should be seen as something normal or even positive, and very few told us that diverging views are common in governance networks where they participate. When for example policy initiatives are being discussed, input from the different network participants is expected. Network participants rarely speak out, however, on issues for which they do not have a clear responsibility.

Who gets to participate?

Our field research confirmed that there are rather strict boundaries as to who gets to participate in Russian governance networks initiated and run by state bodies. The main rule is that the state institution responsible for forming and operating the network arena also nominates the institutions to be involved. It is then up to the invited bodies to suggest individuals to represent them. In practice, the final decision on who participates in the network ultimately lies with the responsible state institution. This system of selection means that the non-state participants can hardly be called true "representatives" of their organizations in any meaningful usage of the word: their "constituencies" have little or no way to remove them if they fail to represent their interests (Berg-Nordlie 2015). In addition, some network arenas (e.g. regional anti-drug commissions) require explicit high-level representation.

As for the regional Public Chambers, their composition is less directly controlled by the state structures, but even so the members are ultimately dependent on state approval. The selection process may differ slightly from one region to another but the main principles are the same. Typically, one third of the members are selected by the governor, one third by the regional parliament, and the last third by the already selected members. They are selected from a list of

candidates that have been nominated by local NGOs.¹⁷ All members have to be approved by the governor. This means that people that the authorities deem “too critical” have a lesser chance of being included.

In our observed governance networks there is little circulation of participants. Members are rarely removed or replaced without a job change. For some of the arenas there are clear guidelines as to which organizations and institutions must be present in order to secure the right cross-sectoral involvement. Hence, the lack of circulation may also be related to conditions within the organisations that are offered to nominate representatives. As for including new NGOs and other new participants, such matters are often discussed in plenary with all the members of the current governance network. The final decision on the issue tends to lie with the chairperson or the secretariat, which are again quite often employees of the state structure responsible for the network.

A certain level of obedience seems to be a requirement for participation. Very critical NGOs are rarely invited in, but remain outsiders. Certain interviewees did not hide that there are NGOs that are willing to make the compromise of being less outspoken in return for the chance to participate. Other NGOs are not willing to make that deal, and may hence experience that the authority structures ignore them when they put together their consultative-participatory bodies. As for the organizations that have been included, they can be approached by the authorities if they are seen as displaying what is considered unconstructive behavior.

We try to level down and restrain unnecessary initiatives, and stimulate needed innovations. [...] I do not hide it, I say it directly: “You, in turn, get support from us, the FMS, as a state body. You earn a reputation thanks to this, you get many doors opened. This also facilitates the development of your business.
(public administration, immigrant integration)

We got divergent responses when asking interviewees from civil society whether they primarily represent their organisations in such bodies, and are bound by that mandate, or are individual experts with knowledge of the specific policy area. The majority seem to hold the latter position, not seeing themselves as a voice of an interest group, but rather as an informed individual. Only a few claimed to operate with a clear mandate from an organisation. Likewise, the network-managing authorities often see the non-state participants as merited experts that work for the common good, rather than representatives that have a fixed mandate or represent certain non-state interests.

There are other factors than opposition towards the authorities that influence access. One example is from the immigrant integration sector where one specific type of organisations is systematically approached for inclusion: the so-called “diasporas”, civil society formations that are oriented towards protecting the culture of immigrant groups and furthering their interests. Their inclusion as representatives of specific immigrant groups, and as organizations that are considered particularly able to reach out to such groups, is often problematized by interviewees. The diaspora organisations tend to be dominated by well-integrated immigrants, many of whom have weak connections to the more recent immigrants that the state is often interested in reaching as part of its integration and anti-illegality policy. Their involvement in governance network arenas does help facilitate understanding between state and recent immigrants on a purely communicative level (language, culture), and in some cases the diaspora’s leaders do manage to reach out to the “newcomers”. Nevertheless, one may ask if the included representatives in this case can be said to meaningfully represent the target

¹⁷ For the selection process in Samara, see <http://news.smbc.ru/others/2014/10/07/66324.html> (in Russian, accessed 5 December 2015).

constituency. In the migration sphere there is a lack of influential pressure groups such as trade unions which, if these were to organize labour migrants to any greater extent, could arguably represent their interests just as well. However, to the extent that trade unions are involved in the governance networks, they tend to rather serve the interests of entrepreneurs and “native” workers, rather than labour migrants.

Our interviews testify that personal relations are crucial for the functioning of governance networks. This is stressed by state and non-state actors alike. The network chair’s degree of dedication and ability to derive resources from higher authorities is highlighted. Personal connections need to be nurtured not only at formal network meetings; interviewees also told about informal contacts between meetings, often in the form of telephone conversations, to solve urgent issues. Reciprocal benefits of such informal relations were stressed, where both sides need to contribute resources, typically in the form of information, support or material benefits. The informal links between network members were activated not only to solve issues directly linked to the network activities, but also external activities of importance to the participants. The informal network-building aspect is an additional motivation for participation in formal governance networks. We observe that in practice, the distinction between governance networks and informal networking is far from clear-cut.

In all three cases, but most notably in the area of child protection, private contacts and previous work experience in many respects define the configuration and efficiency of the network. In all spheres there is overlap between different network roles. Participating NGOs or individuals representing them frequently have partnerships with official organs, partnerships that are often based on previous professional experience of the NGOs activists in question:

I can tell you how it happened [that s/he became a network member]. I run a construction business and the majority of my workers are foreigners from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. I often contact the FMS, both as an NGO representative and as a businessman, because I have to. [...] When they learnt that I’m a leader of [anonymized diaspora], they invited me, and now we have a special relationship.

(non-state, immigrant integration)

I worked in the state agencies, in different organizations before. Regarding the sphere of social welfare, I began working in the October District¹⁸. [...] And now this district is familiar to me. I know that it has solid resources and comprehends positively all the new initiatives. Now I work in an NGO, and this NGO collaborates with several districts, including the one in which I worked before.

(NGO leader, child protection, St. Petersburg)

Some of the NGO-based network participants are simultaneously employed as professionals in the state structures. In line with what has been noted by other researchers (Kulmala 2011, Owen 2015), we found that the boundaries between civil society and public authorities are sometimes blurred and intersect, and the same individuals may perform tasks for both an organisation and the state simultaneously without questions being asked about their primary commitment. Members of NGOs may have experience from work in the state bureaucracy, the educational system, or in the state system of social care. In some cases former state officials choose to leave the state structures to take up a position in an NGO:

The conditions are comfortable, and I see quite a lot of opportunities for using my creativity. We are not so busy. When we develop a project, we know the problem, and

¹⁸ Fictive name

we ourselves can search for a way to realize it. Nobody restricts us. This is interesting. And useful, of course.
(NGO activist, child protection, Samara)

This phenomenon is linked to actors' perception that the public sphere and civil society share the same interests and work for the common good, rather than having opposed interests. Frequent exchange of personnel between the public and non-state sectors may indeed strengthen the bonds at the network arenas, and the competence of state- and NGO-sector alike, but simultaneously this reduces the transparency of network operations and may transfer the loyalty of NGO-based participants to the state or to the network – although, in Russian network governance discourse, such a transfer of loyalty is often constructed as conducive to the network operations.

Who controls agendas?

As expected, our research found state domination in nearly all governance network arenas: the state controls the composition of governance networks, and the leadership and secretariat functions are often staffed by state employees. The latter two positions jointly have great influence over the network meetings, agenda, issues to be discussed and, ultimately, the decisions.

Observations of network meetings in consultative bodies organised by the state showed that power asymmetries are reflected also in the set-up of the arena meetings. In many network meetings the sitting arrangements were formal, with highly-ranked officials taking up the seats near the chairman at one end of the hall or round table, while lower-ranked officials and NGO representatives were seated at the other end. Representatives from the state dominated proceedings. Network meetings are typically of a very formal nature, with pre-prepared statements by participants followed by comments by other attendees. Participants rarely comment on issues which are not directly linked to their area of responsibility or recognized “expertise”. On rare occasions the participants vote, but more often decisions are made unanimously without voting.

Another constraining factor for the room of manoeuvre of governance networks is the high degree of normative acts surrounding public policy. Participants need to have a good grasp of legislation. In the drug sphere, for example, interviewees from local anti-drug commissions said they often struggle with their initiatives not complying with regulations and calling for more legal experts as commission members. The actors that have the best grasp of the legislative framework also have more influence on decisions made - and these are typically the government institutions, which have more legal resources. Resistance to initiatives from the non-state sectors is sometimes based on Russian officials not being accustomed to working outside the framework of prohibitions and restrictive controls (Malakhov 2014: 1067). Also in the migration sector, the consultative councils are steeped in legal frameworks and policy decisions made at the Federal level, causing network activity to be generally oriented towards affecting local implementation rather than changing policy, although the federally decided policy is also discussed in local network arenas.

The great majority of interviewees state that they are free to say what they want in the network meetings. A few admit that there are certain limits:

I think that we have good discussions, and people say what they need to say. It's just that we all understand that we cannot diverge from the main track.
(public administration, drug policy, Samara)

Even if people to some extent speak out, this does not necessarily accomplish much for policy-making. Important decisions on issues covered by most governance networks tend to be made elsewhere, usually at higher levels of governance, and the network meetings in any case have more of an advisory function.

What motivates network formation and participation?

The state structures have two basic motivations for involving non-state actors in governance networks. The first follows a bureaucratic, rule-fulfilling logic: they are required by higher authorities to set up networking arenas. The second is more strategic: they want to make use of resources that the non-state actors possess, such as access to target groups, which in all three policy areas (but most notably drug users and immigrants) can be hard to reach. Non-state actors also have experiences, knowledge and information that the state authorities need for policy-making. By making use of such actors the state may be able to make implementation of policy run more smoothly. An example of the latter is found in the migration area, where the state has involved diaspora organizations in “raids” to identify and apprehend illegal immigrants. The networks can also be used to perform distribution of grants. Some state actors that we have talked to in our field work spoke appreciatively about this input, but opinions and experiences were mixed. Quite a few officials did look upon the involvement of civil society and other non-state actors with scepticism. Some state bodies already have close links with NGOs and prefer to use these directly rather than involving a myriad of less familiar civil society formations.

As for non-state actors’ reasons to participate in governance networks, we have already mentioned the informal network-enhancing function of participating on a formalized network governance arena. Some NGO representatives bluntly acknowledged that their main motivation for participating in consultative bodies is access to authorities for solving organisational issues, funding, or information – while they are less convinced that their network has actual influence on policy. The symbolic legitimation that an NGO receives from participating in a governance network, and the recognition from the authorities, is also considered important for the societal standing of the NGO. Also, some NGOs appear to participate just because it is expected from them, without any clear idea about what they are going to achieve or deep understanding of their role. Several of our interviewees were, for example, unsure whether they were formal network participants or just invited guests. It should also be considered that under the current conditions in Russia, in which it is highly unfortunate for a civil society organization to be considered disloyal or otherwise suspect by the authorities, it can probably be difficult to say no when a representative of the Russian state asks you to participate in a governance network. A refusal could ostensibly reflect badly on your organization.

Finally, several of the NGOs do see themselves as performing a task of public control by participating, and many express that their participation does give them some possibility to influence politics for the better – which they would completely lack if they were to reject the possibility of being in a governance network.

Thanks to this council, we got closer to them [the authorities], we’ve made decisions to work together, to realize certain projects. [...] If there wasn’t such a council, where should I find them, should I just try to seek them out on the street? [...] Now I’m not just calling from the street, I’m invited as a leader.
(non-state, immigrant integration, St. Petersburg)

Nevertheless, a large number of non-state actors simultaneously express that their influence is very limited. This reflects a philosophy of pragmatism, in which one believes that the influence held by being on the inside is small, but the influence one has by not participating is virtually zero.

While this article is not aimed at mapping the impact of networks and civil society actors on policy, we have through the course of our studies found some rare examples of non-state actors having a recognizable impact. Opportunities for making such impacts tend to depend on constellations of individuals and windows of opportunity. An example from Samara is when a problem regarding kindergartens which had been identified by a governance network, was addressed in accordance with their advice when the city received a new Mayor. In all policy areas there seems to be some limited room for small policy adjustments locally. Such adjustments do not entail any deviations from the policy principles formulated at the federal level, however, and the input is more about strengthening rather than counteracting government priorities.

Conclusions

Empirical data from three policy areas in two Russian regions have shown that governance networks in Russian regions take many different forms. Nevertheless, some common traits have been identified. Russian governance networks that are formed to solve complex societal issues tend to operate in a tight and formalised rather than a loose and informal manner, though the importance of informal networks for recruitment and network functioning has been clearly demonstrated.

The article used concrete governance networks to develop a matrix in order to assess the different functions governance networks play in the policy process. We found that the main functions that formal governance networks perform are to give advice, recommendations and feedback to the authorities on policy initiatives and on how to implement already formulated policies. Though there are exceptions, decision-making only rarely takes place within the governance networks. On the other hand, we find that decision-makers often participate in the networks, and there are examples that decision-makers need to take into consideration recommendations of governance networks when they adopt or implement policies. In the three policy areas we have studied, governance networks also often play a role in implementation of policies, for example in the sense that tasks are allocated to civil society organisations participating in the networks. The monitoring function performed by the networks tends to be vague and of a declarative rather than practical nature, since few of the less powerful network participants have access to the arenas where the most important decisions are being made.

Based on our sample of governance networks we were also able to identify some important differences between St. Petersburg and Samara. The St. Petersburg civil society landscape is much richer and more varied and with more distance to the regional authorities than what is the case in Samara. The fact that St. Petersburg is a donor to the federal budget rather than a recipient of federal subsidies such as Samara could also be a reason why it operates more independently from the central authorities. Our impression is that in St. Petersburg the different actors have a clearer understanding of their role and function in the governance networks. On the other hand, the closer proximity and more widespread personal relations between state and non-state actors in Samara tends to encourage more informal involvement and influence of non-state actors there.

Although there is considerable variation between governance networks, non-state actors display stronger motivation for network participation than state institutions. To the latter, this is just one of many ways of influencing policy, and not even among the most important. Non-state actors are clearly, in general, interested in network participation. It gives them direct and legitimate access to the authorities. It also involves certain important benefits: possible impact on policy development, access to subsidies, access to information, access to professional networks, heightened symbolic status, and so on. They also highly value the effects of joint efforts in the networks. It is evident, however, that also the authorities have a certain interest. In some cases the resources and input provided by non-state network participants are really valuable to authorities for solving complex social issues. Some challenges have to be discussed by professionals, some events have to be organized, and the authorities may have a lack of resources to implement all the policy measures that they are responsible for. Governance networks also give legitimacy to state decisions and an impression of popular involvement in policy development. Our study confirms that governance networks play a certain role in the policy system, but also that this role is quite limited and indirect, and always subject to the goodwill of the state.

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Table 1 The role of governance networks in the policy system.

	Decision-making	Advice	Coordination	Implementation	Monitoring
Public Chamber in Samara		x			x
Council on problems of fatherhood, motherhood and childhood at Samara City Duma	(x)	x			(x)
Expert Council of Children's Ombudsman, St. Petersburg	x	x	x	(x)	x
Supervision, St. Petersburg		x	x		x
Consultative councils under Federal migration service (Samara + St. Petersburg)		x	x	(x)	x
Regional Anti-drug Commissions (Samara + St. Petersburg)	(x)	x	x	x	(x)
HIV coordination council (St. Petersburg)	(x)	x	x	x	x
x: A core function of the governance network					
(x): A secondary/indirect function of the governance network					