

**“YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PEOPLE.”
THE ROLE OF DIASPORA LEADERS IN THE
GOVERNANCE OF IMMIGRANT
INTEGRATION IN RUSSIA**

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Abstract: The Russian authorities are becoming increasingly aware of the need to improve the integration of Russia’s many immigrants into Russian society. This article examines power relations between state and civil society in formal governance networks, the representativeness of “diaspora organizations,” why the state structures want to include these diasporas in the formal governance networks, and why the diasporas are interested in participating. As is common in Russian network governance, state-based actors firmly control the networks through a variety of mechanisms. The diaspora leaders are generally not recent labor immigrants themselves, and do not rely on the latter group’s approval to represent them. This disconnect, and the hierarchal and securitized nature of Russian immigration politics, severely limits the target population’s possibility for input into policy-making or implementation. Non-state network members evaluate participation as leaving no visible imprint on policy, and rarely on implementation, but still giving a heightened potential for influence. Diaspora leaders underscored that membership did facilitate network building that could be of benefit to them and their communities. The state charges diaspora organizations with a special responsibility for keeping law and order among their co-ethnics - assisting, informing, and controlling them. Some were critical of the idea that ethnicity equals responsibility, or of NGOs getting such wide-ranging responsibilities, but most accept the role given to the diasporas by the Russian state.

Russia is one of the world’s major immigrant-receiving countries, second only to the USA. In 2014, immigrants made up 17,281,971

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of Russia's 144,221,341 person population and there were 11,072,355 foreign citizens living in the country, according to official statistics. Precise numbers remain suspect, however, given the prevalence of irregular immigration. Since the early 1990s, Russia has experienced several immigration waves. The main influx came from the former Soviet Union and a substantial amount of this flow includes labor migrants from the states having visa-free relationships with the Russian Federation, particularly the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.¹ Russia faces significant challenges regarding the social conditions of immigrants, inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension (between native and immigrant groups, and among immigrant groups), linguistic and cultural adaptation to Russia, and problems when it comes to designing and enforcing a system that prevents uncontrolled immigration but does allow immigrants to legalize their presence in the country.²

Challenges related to the integration of immigrants confront many countries in Europe today. A key issue in this regard is how to organize dialogue between immigrant communities, state agencies that are tasked with their integration, and civil society organizations that have a special interest in the integration processes. How this communication is organized will impact how much the groups know about each other's needs and expectations, how well prepared they are to jointly meet challenges to social cohesion, and eventually how well the integration effort will work in practice. Ideally, such networks provide the target group with a mechanism for giving input to decision-makers, while also allowing the state to draw on the resources of civil society.

When it comes to analyzing such structures for dialogue and coordination, a useful theoretical concept is *network governance*. This term refers to organized coordination and communication between state and non-state actors to address certain political issues, often issues which are identified as being of high complexity and necessitating sector-transcending political collaboration. The concrete content of the term "network governance" varies somewhat among authors. Some utilize it to describe situations

¹ Federal Migration Service (FMS). 2015. *Offitsial'nye statisticheskie dannye*, At <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/statistics/data/details/9482/>, accessed March 24, 2015; Vladimir Malakhov. 2014. "Rossiia kak immigratsionnaia strana: trud i sotsial'naia vlast'." In Vladimir Malakhov. *Kul'turnye razlichii i politicheskie granitsy v epokhu global'nyh migratsii*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie; Tat'yana Maleva. 2014. *Migratsii i rossiyskiy rynek truda*, At http://www.eabr.org/general/upload/Maleva_Tatyana_Migracii_i_rossiyskiy_rynok_truda.pdf, accessed September 18, 2015. Vladimir I. Mukomel. 2005. *Migratsionnaia politika v Rossii: Postsovetские konteksty*. Moscow: Dipol'-T; Yu. O. Shmatko. 2014. "Izbrannye esse. Analiz i otsenka neregistriruyemoy migratsii v Rosii." *Demoskop Weekly* No 605-606, 1-24 August 2014.

² Aadne Aasland and Mikkel Berg-Nordlie. 2009. "Russisk migrasjonspolitik som balanse-kunst." *Nordisk Østforum* 23 (2): 109-30; Marthe Handå Myhre. 2014. "Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia. State Management of Migration," *NIBR-report*: 2014:5.

where they consider the state and non-state actors to be relatively equal partners whose goals are at some fundamental level in harmony, while others focus on power imbalances and hierarchies within governance networks. Some use the term for informal and formal networking alike, while others focus solely on formal networks.³ Our usage of the term “network governance” makes no assumptions of equality or harmony among actors. We indeed expect to find that resource and power imbalances impact how governance networks operate, and assume that aspects of hierarchical governance by the state will be present within the governance networks. Some noted ways for the state to perform *metagovernance*, the governance of governance networks, are issue framing (predefining the scope of a governance network’s activities), economic framing, participant selection, and direct participation by the authorities in the network.⁴ Depending on the extent to which the state allows genuine representation of non-state interests and admits actual influence to the non-state actors, governance networks can range from being entirely symbolic or manipulative to structures that provide non-state actors with genuine influence.⁵

The task of this article is to present how Russian network governance practices are organized in the sphere of immigrant integration. We will specifically look at the role of “diaspora organizations” in governance networks, because they are the Russian authorities’ go-to type of organization for connecting with immigrant communities. For this purpose we have studied one type of governance network in two major Russian cities – the Federal Migration Service’s Public Consultative Councils (PCCs) in Samara and St. Petersburg. During the period 2013-2015 we performed several rounds of semi-structured interviews with academics, activists, journalists, and politicians with an interest in the policy field – both

³ Walter W. Powell. 1990. “Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization.” In Larry L. Cummings and Barry M. Shaw. Greenwich, eds. *Research in Organizational Behavior*. CT: JAI Press; Jacob Torfing. 2005. “Governance network theory: Towards a second generation.” *European Political Science* 4:305-315; Jacob Torfing and Eva Sørensen. 2014. “The European debate on governance networks: towards a new and viable paradigm?” *Policy and Society* 33 (4): 329-344; B. Guy Peters. 2000. “Governance and Comparative Politics.” In Jon Pierre, ed, *Debating Governance: Authority, Steering and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford; Signy I. Vabo and Asbjørn Røiseland. 2008. “Governance på norsk. Samstyring som empirisk og analytisk fenomen,” *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift* 24 (1/2): 86-101.

⁴ Jonathan S. Davies. 2011. *Challenging Governance Theory. From Network to Hegemony*. Bristol: Policy Press, 62-4; Eva Sørensen and Jacob Torfing. 2009. “Making governance networks effective and democratic through network governance,” *Public Administration* 87(2): 234-58. Asbjørn Røiseland and Signy I. Vabo. 2012. *Styring og samstyring – governance på norsk*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 62-3, 80.

⁵ Sherry Arnstein. 1969. “A ladder of citizen participation,” *JAIP* 35: 216-24. See also discussion on representativeness in governance networks in Mikkel Berg-Nordlie. 2015. “Who Shall Represent the Sámi? Indigenous Governance in Murmansk Region and the Nordic Sámi Parliament Model.” In Mikkel Berg-Nordlie, Jo Saglie and Ann Sullivan. 2015. *Indigenous Politics: Institutions, Representation, Mobilisation*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

network participants and non-participants. Interviewees participated on the condition of anonymity. We also performed non-participating observation of governance network sessions in the case cities, as well as media, document and literature studies. The article forms part of the joint Russian-Norwegian project “Network Governance in Russia,” headed by the NIBR institute at the Oslo and Akershus University College and St. Petersburg’s Center for Independent Social Research.⁶

Migration Management and Integration Policy in Russia

Since 2012, when President Putin signed into law the “Concept of State Migration Policy in the Russian Federation for the period until 2025” (henceforth: “the Concept”), Russia’s immigration policy has partially taken a “turn to integration” at the normative level, and to a certain extent also at the legal and institutional levels. One of the tasks mentioned in the Concept is work with “migrant adaptation and integration, [and the] formation of a constructive relationship between migrants and the receiving community.” It openly states that Russia has a “lack of state programs for adaptation and integration,” which “isolates migrants from the receiving society and leads to increasingly negative attitudes to migrants.” Moreover, the Concept points to the necessity of involving all concerned parties – explicitly, business, NGOs, and migrants – in solving integration issues.⁷

In a rather short time, the Federal-level concept was reproduced at the regional level. These regional documents reflect local specifics – demographic and economic resources, labor shortages, and the level of the annual migrant influx. In 2012, the Government of St. Petersburg adopted a resolution on the program “Migration” for 2012–2015, based on the Concept; and in 2013, the Government of Samara region likewise created a sub-program called “Social adaptation and integration of migrants arriving in the Samara region for 2014–2016.”

Russian immigration policy has not, however, undergone any complete reform towards facilitating integration. Rather, the policy field at present appears colored by contradictory trends, and could be described as liberal in theory but restrictive in many of its practices. It is welcoming in terms of the admitted need for labor, but hostile as regards the lack of welfare services. So-called “patents” have been invented, which make migrants’ access to the labor market easier, and rules of registration have become more transparent and easier to follow. However, new tests on competence in Russian language, history and law have been introduced as a mechanism of civic integration, which is again a restriction on

⁶ Read more about this project at netgovru.nibrinternational.no.

⁷ Kremlin.ru. 2012. *Prezident utverdil Kontseptsiyu gosudarstvennoy migratsionnoy politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii na period do 2020 goda*. At <http://kremmlin.ru/events/president/news/15635>, Accessed November 26 2015.

immigrants' access to the labor market. Obtaining the package of papers that a labor migrant should have in Russia – including patent, competence tests, health tests, and health insurance – remains the migrants' responsibility, and assembling the necessary documents has become quite expensive, increasing migrants' entry costs. The state is still focused on combating “illegals” (undocumented migrants), and now stricter norms mean that minor offences result in deportation or expulsion with a ban on re-entering Russia for a long period. These measures reduced the number of circular migrants in Russian cities, which could be seen as contradicting the welcoming pathos towards labor immigration found in the Concept.⁸

Some of the practices above contribute to reinforcing a negative image of immigrants in Russian society, and the state also does not undertake consistent efforts to improve this image. On the contrary, immigration policy remains mainly colored by the interests of national security. In practice, migrant integration efforts usually mean endeavors towards preserving Russian culture from the “erosion” that migrant influxes might bring, and to protect “native people” or “locals” from any dangers related to migrants' behavior. Less attention is given to the rights of immigrants, or to targeted integration efforts. As one Public Consultative Council member explained:

Integration includes, above all, integration as regards legal rights, so that immigrants and Russian citizens can live on equal terms in various aspects of life (...) economic, social, cultural and so on. However, the authorities understand this term, the idea that migrants should be integrated, in sort of a St. Petersburg-ish, pseudo-cultural, stereotypical way – that one needs to take them and make them cultured. As soon as the immigrant arrives, one needs to wash him and groom him and take him to the Hermitage to show him, I don't know, 18th-century interiors, various palaces, and then he'll become our kind of person. ...or that one needs to bring migrants to order, monitor them. They want to organize special squads [druzhiny] to take care of that... (SPb PCC⁹ member).

⁸ For more on this, see Olga Tkach and Olga Brednikova. 2016. “Labor migration and the contradictory logic of integration in Russia.” In Ilkka Liikanen, James W. Scott, Tiina Sotkasiira, eds, *The EU's Eastern Neighbourhood: Migration, Borders and Regional Stability*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁹ SPb is the standard abbreviation for St. Petersburg. In this article, “SPb PCC” refers to the St. Petersburg and Leningrad Public Consultative Council.

An interviewed expert characterizes the state approach as “counter-integrational.” Additionally, it can be defined as assimilation-oriented, or at least a “fragmented integration”¹⁰ where migrant integration is reduced to some limited areas. The expert interviewee distinguishes two approaches to migrant integration in Russia: one based on the logic of universal human rights, and one on commitment to national (i.e. majority cultural) values. He argues that the state-based actors prefer the latter to the former: migrants have to be culturally similar to natives, and otherwise boundaries should be drawn to protect the locals. Even though this expert sees a coherent “state approach” to the issues of integration, it is actually quite difficult to identify any unified “state vision” on how to integrate migrants which could result in systematic work and institutional reform.

The new task of integration has not led to any deep organizational changes at the Federal level, which has kept more or less the same structure, with the Federal Migration Service (FMS), considered one of Russia’s security structures, still constituting the central actor in monitoring and solving migration issues in Russia. Since 1992, its main administrative task has been the issuing of permits, counting, monitoring and controlling foreigners on the territory of the Russian Federation, and in particular combating irregular immigration.¹¹

However, as early as 2010 – two years before the Concept was signed – a Department for Promotion of Integration was opened at the federal level of the FMS. It was tasked with elaborating and introducing programs for promoting integration, developing tolerance, and improving methods of public relations.¹² It also contributed to the development of migration policy, in particular the Concept and its local replicas. Gradually, similar departments have been opened in all regional FMS divisions. According to one representative of the St. Petersburg FMS, their tasks included networking with the non-state sector even before the Department was created.

Such interaction occurred also before. We had meetings with employers and diasporas, but now this work has been systematized within the Department for Promotion of Integration. (...) This was, in principle, an additional,

¹⁰ Tkach and Brednikova. 2016.

¹¹ Boris Gladarev and Zhanna Tsinman. 2011. “Povysilas’ li “migratsionnaia privilekatel’nost” Rossii? Analiz vzaimodeistviia sotrudnikov militsii i FMS s migrantami posle izmenenii migratsionnogo zakonodatel’sтва”. In Viktor Voronkov, Boris Gladarev and Lilia Sagitova, eds., *Militsiia i etnicheskie migranty: praktiki vzaimodeistviia*, St Petersburg: Aleteiia.

¹² For more details see Fms.gov.ru, *Osnovnie zadachi upravleniya* At <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/structure/management/integr/details/42446/2/>, accessed March 21, 2015. Anatolii V. Dmitriyev and Grigoriy A. Pyadukhov. 2013. “Integratsiya trudovykh migrantov v megapolise: lokal’nye modeli, kontekst identichnost (metodologiya i metody issledovaniya).” In *Demoskop Weekly* № 597 – 598: 5 – 18.

voluntary burden for us. Because someone needed to collect, systematize and analyze this information, and communicate with the diasporas (St. Petersburg FMS officer).

While it can be seen as logical to task the main government body dealing with immigrants to address integration, the task of integration is, mainly, not a repressive one. The modus operandi of the Federal Migration Service and the police may make it very difficult indeed for those institutions to adapt to the task. Both are used to dealing with migrants mainly by monitoring and controlling immigration flows and combating irregular immigration.¹³ The FMS officer quoted above underscores that while they have to take responsibility for the general coordination of integration activities, other agents on the local level should be involved, because the FMS is already overloaded with its main tasks and its human and financial resources are limited. Under such conditions, the formation of Public Consultative Councils (PCCs) is seen as a solution that enables them to delegate some of the workload to other actors.

FMS Public Consultative Councils: Regulations, Membership, Work Format

Regulations

In 2005, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation began its work. This body consists of individuals drawn from civil society to discuss Russian politics and advise the country's political leadership. One of the normative goals of its formation was to increase public oversight of the authorities. Subsequently, in accordance with the Presidential decree on the procedure for the formation of public councils at the federal ministries,¹⁴ such public councils were organized at all ministries, services, and agencies. Ten years on, various forms of such governance networks now exist for a wide array of official bodies at both the federal and regional levels. The Federal Migration Service of Russia (FMS), as one of the major federal structures, followed the same route and decided to organize a public council in 2010. The FMS offices in Samara Region, and in St. Petersburg city and Leningrad Region,¹⁵ established PCCs before the Federal-level

¹³ Tkach and Brednikova. 2016.

¹⁴ Presidential Decree No. 842, August 4, 2006. On the procedure for the formation of public councils at the federal ministries. See Oprf.ru. 2006. *Ukaz prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii o poryadke obrazovaniya obshchestvennykh sovetov pri federal'nykh ministerstvakh*. At <https://www.oprf.ru/about/1391/law/1034/>, accessed November 26, 2015.

¹⁵ Leningrad Region is the federal subject (region) that surrounds St. Petersburg, itself a city of federal significance (giving it region status).

FMS, in 2007. Nevertheless, they operate according to the current regulations for FMS PCCs.

According to “The Order on the Public Council at the Federal Migration Service” (henceforth: the Order),¹⁶ the PCC is an advisory body which

facilitates the interaction of citizens of the Russian Federation with the Federal Migration Service of Russia, in order to attract public, professional and creative associations to work out the main directions of state policy in the field of migration, and implementation of the principle of transparency and openness in the Russian Federal Migration Service.

The Order mentions as possible PCC members representatives of public associations, diasporas, religious organizations and academic institutions specializing in migration and demography. The PCC is expected to perform a number of functions, including preparation of recommendations and advice regarding migration policy at the federal and regional level; discussion of problematic migration issues that attract public attention; consultation to improve the FMS’ work in the realm of migrant adaptation and integration; planning of the FMS’ work, including budget investment in PCC activities; and evaluation of replacements of FMS’ positions.¹⁷

The list of PCC members must be approved by the head of the FMS of Russia, or in the case of regional or local FMS offices’ PCCs, the heads of these. The FMS officers themselves are not technically part of the Council, but serve as organizers or managers. The chairman of the Public Council and his deputy are elected from the Public Council by open vote. At least once every three years from the date of the first meeting of the renewed Public Council, members can be replaced. PCCs are recommended to have one meeting every three months.

Membership

The PCCs consist of individuals selected by the network-managing institution, in our cases the regional offices of the FMS. According to an interviewee in the St. Petersburg FMS office, they are flooded with letters from various applicants asking for PCC membership. This indicates that a large number of people see participation in this governance network as offering a chance for influence, or providing other types of advantages. According to FMS officers and PCC leaders, the FMS tends to be very

¹⁶ Fms.gov.ru, *Poryadok formirovaniya Obshchestvennogo soveta*, At <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/centers/council/condition/>, accessed March 21, 2015

¹⁷ Ibid.

selective, and prefers including people who represent some community or social group, or are experienced in the issues of migrant integration, while they are quite reluctant to invite individuals who are more likely to represent their own narrow interests.

In both of the councils, a key type of participant is leaders in local “diasporas” (*diaspory*). The term “diasporas” is a blanket term that covers various types of ethnically based organizations. The practical function of these organizations can be very different. They tend to describe themselves as organizations aimed at preserving ethnic minorities’ identity, community and culture, but some are closer to semi-commercial providers of paid services to certain ethnic groups, or simply on-paper organizations that exist to provide individuals or informal networks with a formal leg to stand on.¹⁸ In addition to its ambiguity, usage of the term “diasporas” can also be problematized since it does not necessarily have positive connotations. “Diasporas” are accused of being dependent on foreign states, or of being unrepresentative “elite” organizations. As for the foreign dependency accusation, some of them are indeed closely affiliated with their client groups’ ethnic homeland.¹⁹ As for the accusation of being a vehicle for elites, rather than, for example, recent labor immigrants and their progeny, which would be most relevant for integration efforts, it can be noted that you must already be a citizen of Russia to register an organization, something that obviously skews the makeup of their leadership. There is also a tendency for “diaspora” leaders to belong to an entirely different social class than the target group. Often, they are former Soviet citizens who moved to the Russian Federation from other republics decades ago, and received Russian citizenships after the collapse of the USSR.

Despite its vagueness and some negative connotations, the term is applied both popularly and by the Russian authorities, and we hence utilize it in this article. The Federal-level PCC’s charter specifies that “diasporas” are one type of organization it should work with and include representatives from,²⁰ and the regional offices of the FMS follow this up. In the Samara case, particular mention should go to the Azerbaijani diaspora

¹⁸ Marthe Handå Myhre. 2014. “Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia. State Management of Migration”, *NIBR-report*: 2014:5.

¹⁹ Sergey Rummyantsev. 2010. “Post Soviet Nation State as a Sponsor of Construction of the Ethno-National Diaspora: Azeri’s case.” *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* (26) 3, pp. 111-131; Sergey Rummyantsev. 2014. “The State and The Diaspora: Bureaucratic and Discursive Practices in the Construction of a Transnational Community.” in Sophie Hohmann, Claire Mouradian, Silvia Serrano and Julien Thorez, eds, *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Migration, Democratization and Inequality in the post-Soviet Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 2, 10, 13, 21, 26-7. The latter also provides an example of “counter-diasporas” that are critical of the regime in the ethnic homeland.

²⁰ FMS. *Obshchestvennyy sovet pri FMS Rossii* (7.2, 9), at <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/centers/council/condition/details/38019/full/>, accessed September 18, 2015.

whose leader is also the head of the PCC, and also participates actively in several networks relevant for immigrant issues. Diaspora leaders are also members of the St. Petersburg PCC, but appear to participate comparatively less actively than the most active diaspora leaders in Samara.

The PCCs also include other NGOs of perceived relevance, employers' interests groups and unions, academia, religious organizations, and private businesses. In the St. Petersburg case, representatives of the Red Cross participate intensively. This organization provides assistance to immigrants and works against human trafficking. In the Samara case, only one non-ethnic NGO participates, through the presence of an activist from the human rights' group Memorial, which has a project called Migration and Rights through which it gives legal assistance to labor migrants. On the whole, the active participation of non-ethnic civil society is more notable in St. Petersburg than in Samara. This difference reflects the more vibrant civil society life in Russia's second largest city.

Furthermore, the networks include other state bodies considered to be relevant by the network-managing institution. One such actor type particularly worth mentioning is the "Houses": St. Petersburg's "House of Nationalities" and Samara's "House of the Friendship between the Peoples." These institutions are *kazennye uchrezhdeniya*, institutions founded and funded by the authorities to perform certain tasks. Such policy-implementing and coordinating institutions have become increasingly common in Russia during the last ten years, and not only in the policy field of immigration.²¹ In Samara, the House is placed directly under the regional government, while in St. Petersburg it was established by the Committee for External Relations, but later transferred to the Committee on Interethnic Relations and the Implementation of Migration Policy. Following the transfer, the latter has begun to deal more with the issues of recent immigrants.²²

The role of the "Houses" is to function as intermediaries between state and ethnic civil society, as special competence centers for the authorities, policy implementers and meeting places for network governance type activities. Like the diasporas, the "Houses" are often oriented towards cultural projects, like arranging community-transcending *Nowruz* or

²¹ Aadne Aasland, Mikkel Berg-Nordlie and Elena Bogdanova. 2016. "Encouraged but controlled: Governance networks in Russian regions": *East European Politics* 32 (2). Mikkel Berg-Nordlie. 2015. "Who Shall Represent the Sámi? Indigenous Governance in Murmansk Region and the Nordic Sámi Parliament Model." In Mikkel Berg-Nordlie, Jo Saglie and Ann Sullivan. 2015. *Indigenous Politics: Institutions, Representation, Mobilisation*. Colchester: ECPR Press. Sabine Kropp and Johannes Schumann. 2016. "Governance networks and vertical power in Russia – Environmental impact assessments and collaboration between state and non-state actors". *East European Politics* 32 (2).

²² Interview, SPb PCC member.

“multiethnic *maslenitsa*”²³ – often in cooperation with the diasporas. The Houses serve as important network nodes in their own right, supplying another connection point between the authorities and ethnic civil society, as well as localities for events organized by the ethnic communities, and occasionally offices for immigrant-oriented services and organizations.

Two aspects of the PCC participants must be noted. Firstly, it can be somewhat ambiguous if the individual members should be primarily considered as fundamentally representing the state- or non-state sector. Individuals listed as belonging to non-state organizations sometimes simultaneously have formal connections to state bodies involved in the policy sector. An example of this is the sole non-ethnic NGO representative in the Samara PCC, who is simultaneously involved in a consultation service to immigrants at the House.²⁴ There are also significant informal connections that cross the sectoral divide. In sum, it can be unclear which of an individual participant’s roles has, in reality, resulted in their PCC membership. Was it their connection to the state, to individual decision-makers, or to civil society? In interviews, some PCC participants did, themselves, express that they did not know why they had initially been invited to join.

Second, it is uncommon for network participants to consider themselves as being representatives of specific organizations or interests. Rather, they tend to see themselves as, in the final analysis, included on an individual basis. This attitude is cultivated by the authorities by choosing individuals as members of the network rather than, for example, offer organizations and institutions the opportunity to choose freely who shall participate in the PCCs. The PCCs are also framed, by the authorities, not as a forum for critical discussion of policy with various interest representatives present, but as a team that works together to implement state policy.

Finally, it should be noted that the PCCs are not isolated governance networks in this sector. There are several such networks whose activities touch upon immigration and integration. For example, the Houses arrange their own meetings and roundtable sessions with relevant organizations; and in both cities there are state programs that deal with immigrant issues, with their own networks of advisors and discussants. These networks have a certain degree of participant overlap, and there is both formal and informal cross-communication between members. The PCCs are hence “only” the most formally prestigious arena (due to their direct connection to a federal institution) in local informal macro-networks of individuals and organizations that deal with immigrant issues.

²³ “Maslenitsa” is a traditional Slavic spring festival.

²⁴ Ufms63.ru. *Sostav obshchestvennogo soveta*, at http://www.ufms63.ru/sovet/topic_7, accessed September 18, 2015.

Format of Work

In the course of the project, the researchers have had an opportunity to talk to many PCC members in the two cities, and to observe several meetings to learn how the councils function in practice. The regional FMS offices try to include active people who have a desire to contribute to the discussions. A St. Petersburg FMS officer showed us a stack of applications for PCC membership, indicating that such membership is indeed seen as attractive by many people. While PCC members are included on an individual basis and do not technically “represent” the organizations they are drawn from, FMS officials explain that they do stick quite strictly to an idea that PCC members should hail from a certain social group or organization, and be considered experts in migration issues. Recruitment is based on existing networks, formal and informal recommendations from other PCC members or outsiders, and the candidate’s reputation. When the candidate has been openly recommended at a meeting the PCC votes on the issue. Hence, the new member is formally elected, although the issue has generally already been solved informally. Usually, recruitment is based on old, long-term relationships, which makes it possible to save time and effort.

Q: Who recommended you, or was it your initiative to apply for membership in PCC? How did it happen?

A: I can tell you how it happened. I run a construction business and the majority of my workers are foreigners from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. I often contact the migration service, both as an NGO representative and as a businessman, because I have to. They took this into account, and invited me. They see me, I see them. We cooperate. When they learnt that I’m a leader of [anonymized diaspora], they invited me, and now we have a special relationship (PCC member).

The Samara PCC consists of 12 members, while in St. Petersburg there are 22. Regardless, meeting participation is not limited to actual members. Invited participants, confirmed by a head or a deputy of the PCC, can also participate. Sometimes the number of participants of meetings in St. Petersburg can reach 50 people. Invited participants can attend, for example, when the expertise of the PCC is not enough to discuss an issue at hand, for example in the context of discussing migrant children’s issues, the Children’s Ombudsman has been invited.

As mentioned above, in accordance with formal requirements, the FMS officers cannot be members of the PCCs. However, they contribute

decisively to the meeting agenda and participate in meetings. For example, the head of the St. Petersburg FMS is one of the most active participants of the PCC meetings, and comments on all points of the agenda. The FMS officers have an interest in controlling PCC activity to a certain extent – for in the end it is their responsibility to report to the Federal level about the effectiveness of their PCC, and they consider their contribution necessary to keep the councils functioning properly. The FMS officers also takes minutes, although this is not their responsibility.

The meeting agenda is formed by the Council members, or at least by its core, most enthusiastic members. It usually includes the items recommended from the federal level – for example new migration laws and how they should be applied properly, new language testing regimes, dangers that migrants might bring to the region, and what issues PCC members can monitor as a public institute (such as deportation centers), the current migration situation and employment level of the region, and new officers of the FMS to be recruited as well as old ones to be replaced. Usually, a particular speaker is responsible for each point, and then other members ask them questions. Other questions can be also raised during a meeting, but they are generally asked to get a response rather than to open a discussion.

PCC members meet once a quarter year, and each meeting lasts about two hours. Some of the participants are of the opinion that this makes PCC a rigid and slowly working instrument that cannot react rapidly to challenges or emergency cases that should be solved immediately. So, they see the Council as detached from real problems and existing due to regulations only. In order to overcome this, recently, the St. Petersburg PCC has been subdivided into five working groups focusing on particular migration issues. They hope this will make the PCC's work less sporadic. The groups are expected to get together outside of the regular meetings and discuss issues. However, the results of this reform are hard to estimate yet, since such in-between work is a voluntary activity from the members' side.

At the local level, some NGO representatives have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of such civil society-state cooperation. The main reason is that, in their view, the state does not consider this interaction as a real mechanism for solving problems. It might be effective only in the case of narrow, concrete issues, when the state bodies look for experts to solve urgent issues or to make some report rapidly and professionally. In most of the cases, civil society-based participants get only a modest advisory role, which make many of them quite pessimistic, giving them doubts about the effectiveness and usefulness of the PCCs. In the interviews, two explanations for this state of affairs are suggested.

Firstly, the PCCs' work has been framed by a bureaucratic logic that does not presume dialogue, and the work takes place at a political level

that cannot influence general policy. Some PCCs members felt that they waste their time taking part in formal activities with no practical outcomes, and that their expertise was not used adequately. One PCCs participant (Samara) stated outright that they did not trust the FMS officers, because they did not share information with them. Interviewees also noted that PCC members are not actually able to exercise public control over the FMS, but on the contrary just attend meetings and listen passively to speeches on policy. The critical PCC members do not blame the FMS officers for this, but rather see them also as being hostages of the existing laws and hierarchies.

The FMS of St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region, they are part of the state system. In this sense, they operate within the frameworks of existing law. They can't just willfully take any initiative that any NGO might suggest within this council, and implement it (...) Civil society can apply with its ideas and initiatives. These go into some black box, and what happens next depends on a million circumstances that civil society cannot influence at all. So, the system is built like that, this is not the ill-will of concrete people (...) The structures will then make reports saying that they communicate with NGOs and civil society (SPb PCC member).

Secondly, those who perceive the PCCs as ineffective mentioned an ideological reason for this. They formulated this as a “discourse of harmony and calmness,” which is created and maintained by state-based actors. This discourse twists the PCC’s format of work towards a climate where critical discussions are not welcome, since these are seen as a sign of conflicts. The result of this is that meetings do not lead to new decisions. Interviewees also relate this attitude to what they perceive as a broader phenomenon of fears about open debate in the Russian political culture:

The position they choose is “quiet, shh-shh-shh, no, let’s calm down.” The general public should calm down and not worry. [...] 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. [...] This discourse of harmony, calmness and non-conflict interaction is everywhere. It is a fear of conflict. [...] They say they prevent conflicts like this. To me, this is not a prevention of conflict, rather this is an attempt to simply ignore, remove or talk it away (SPb PCC member).

However, even NGO-based members who discuss the low influence of civil society in the council, see governance networks as a rare opportunity for civil society to reach the authorities, and PCC membership as offering at least a hypothetical possibility of influence, which is better than nothing. If they are invited, they do not refuse cooperation on the terms they can get at the moment, hoping that it might work out later.

In the above section, we discussed some general experiences with the PCC's work format as expressed by non-state participants. We will now turn to PCC members hailing from the so-called "diasporas," and their role in it these governance networks.

Why Does the State Collaborate with Diaspora Leaders?

Diasporas tend to have old and established relationships with the state authorities, as many of them were started in the 1990s and have earned the authorities' attention and trust. In line with this, the FMS has collaborated more informally with the diasporas also before the PCCs came into being. Traditionally, diaspora organizations have been expected to perform as representatives and promoters of traditional ethnic minority culture (religious holidays, language, folklore, cuisine), interethnic tolerance, and the ideology of "friendship between the peoples."²⁵ In more recent times, it has become a common perception that diasporas represent not just ethnic minorities already living in the region, but also recent immigrants of their ethnic group. This belief is rooted in essentialist perceptions that ethnic groups are homogeneous, united by common origin, language, mentality and "national spirit," and that all their members feel a responsibility for each other.

The authorities sort of impose the responsibility for migrants on the diasporas. "Tell your people this, explain this to your people, you are responsible for your people," you understand? This can be heard all the time. (...) Moreover, if something happens somewhere in a public place, for example, then the police calls, for they know the telephone numbers of the [diaspora] leaders: "Collect this person of yours, collect this person of yours." Even though they're just civil society activists [obshchestvenniki], but still, even so... (Samara PCC member)

Informally, the state bodies have always relied somewhat upon

²⁵ "Friendship between the Peoples," *druzhba narodov*, is a slogan of interethnic harmony hailing from Soviet times. Cf. the name of "the House" in Samara, *Dom druzhby narodov*, "the House of Friendship between the Peoples."

diasporas when it came to potential or actual ethnic conflicts, and other issues interpreted by the authorities as “ethnic.” However, since the “turn to integration,” official regulations of both the old and the newly registered diasporas should include that they have a responsibility for adaptation and integration of new migrants in the cities. Responsibilities that used to be informal are now officially put into organizations’ statutes. While earlier it was their good-will to help authorities or not, diasporas now cannot avoid these obligations. Accordingly, diasporas, or their leaders, are now among the central participants of PCCs. They are included in the councils because migration policy is understood mainly as ethnic policy – for migrants are “ethnicized,” i.e. first and foremost seen as members of local ethnic communities, even if the individuals in question have not actually been socialized into pre-existing diaspora communities in the locality to which they have arrived.

There are several reasons for the authorities to include diasporas into PCCs. One such reason is the PCCs’ substitutive function, i.e. that it substitutes criticism in a closed sphere for potential criticism in the public sphere.²⁶ Granted, the diasporas have no tradition of being public advocates that go into conflict with the state, but PCC membership makes it less likely that they will ever go down that road, as it provides them with a formal channel to discuss matters directly with the authorities rather than initiating public debate. The PCCs’ function of keeping criticism internal is, however, perhaps more relevant as regards activists from non-ethnic NGOs that have more of a tradition for public criticism. The substitution aspect of the PCCs’ is a “functionalistic” explanation, which is seen as relevant by the authors despite not being directly brought up by interviewees.

In accordance with the state-prescribed role of the diasporas, they are expected to perform as assistants to the state in requests related to their co-ethnics. Interviews and observations enable us to discuss certain expectations and demands from state-based actors towards them.

Firstly, diaspora leaders are charged with informing their co-ethnics about migration policy changes, rules of behavior in Russia, and so on. They are seen as capable of doing this because social community is assumed to be inherent in common ethnicity, and because they possess language and cultural competence which makes it easier for them to communicate with newcomers.

Within the framework of the council we have tried to engage diasporas. We want them to inform migrants – preferably already while they are still on the territory of

²⁶ Nikolay Petrov, Maria Lipman and Henry Hale. 2014. “Three dilemmas of hybrid regime governance: Russia from Putin to Putin,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30 (1): 1-26. Tkach and Brednikova. 2016.

the sending countries – about the real state of affairs on the territory of the federal subject. Whether labor force is needed here, and if yes, then if there are conditions for arrival and acceptance of the labor force, are there employers, and so on. (SPb FMS officer).

I believe that they [diaspora members] should be drawn into this work as experts and consultants and, maybe, for holding some events with immigrants [priyezhiye migranty], because they speak the same language. I, for example, don't speak either Uzbek or Tajik, and I will have difficulties talking to immigrants who don't speak Russian (SPb FMS officer).

Secondly, diasporas are expected to provide practical help with migrant issues. They are called upon in emergency cases to solve inter-ethnic conflicts, to help state bodies formally and informally with revealing criminals and illegal immigrants from their ethnic groups, to participate in raids to control working places for illegal immigrants, and to assist organizationally and economically with the deportation of such people from Russia.

It is necessary [for the diasporas] to inform migrants of legal nuances, because they don't know our laws at all (...) Later, when migrants arrive, it's [i.e. we expect diasporas to participate in] prevention of legal offences, and adaptation (SPb FMS officer).

We are now in contact with the director of a center for temporary detention of migrants to be deported, located in [anonymized]. He called and said, "A woman was taken here [...] She is to be deported, but we can't keep her here. Find an apartment for her somewhere to spend four nights. We have a train ticket for her on Sunday." We help with this and that. I found a place. This is how it works (PCC member from diaspora organization)

It is also of value to the state to have diasporas ready to be mobilized for what we may call "peace shows" in the aftermath of inter-ethnic local conflict. Official discourse on such events often paint these as "hooliganism" driven by violent and uneducated elements within the populations involved, for which both parts in the conflict are responsible. A go-to reaction for local authorities is to ask the diaspora organizations to reach

out to their groups, and for the authorities to hold open meetings with representatives of the diaspora groups where the violence of all parties is condemned and it is rhetorically underscored that the peoples in the Russian Federation must live together in peace. The presence of diaspora leaders at such publicly oriented events communicates that the issue is being dealt with by the state and the minority leaders.

Thirdly, diasporas are expected to support labor migrants in their everyday troubles, e.g. if they lose papers, or their rights are violated by employers. Sometimes diaspora representatives perform as interpreters in court, when their co-ethnics need it; or search for people if they disappear; and diaspora leaders can also use networks in immigrants' countries of origin (if they actually have such) to influence immigrants via relatives who stayed behind. Particularly the latter mechanism of informal family control can be utilized only by members of the ethnic community, and is inaccessible to the Russian authorities.

Last but not least, diaspora leaders are expected to demonstrate loyalty towards state bodies, and to the Russian state in general. Interviews and observations show that this goal has been achieved quite successfully.

Diaspora Leaders in PCCs: Why Do They Participate?

In their rhetoric, diaspora leaders often use phrases that fall fully in line with official discourse: "Illegal migrants should be deported," "migrants endanger national security," "we need to unite around our [Russia's] president," "the local budget cannot cover migrants' needs," "diasporas' leaders have the same goal as the FMS has – order." Diaspora activists are also observed to articulate the discourse that their organizations can and must take responsibility for migrants of their ethnicity.

It can be said that NGOs operate as an "airbag" for any state. [...] It is faster to solve problems through certain leaders who work with these issues than through the police, FMS or other state services. This is because when migrants see their co-ethnics they trust them more and behave more openly towards them than people in uniform. Also, any leader knows more what's going on within a diaspora, and can solve issues faster than official bodies (Samara PCC member from diaspora).

I grew up here [Russia], I know the local mentality. I have been living here for 30 years. But I was born there [country of origin], and I understand both contexts. That is why this is our task. We should help (SPb PCC member from diaspora).

The state-based actors' discourse on diasporas' duties appears to have been internalized by, or is at the very least rhetorically utilized by, many diaspora activists. Nevertheless, there are some diaspora members who are less than happy with this responsibility, and who openly expressed discomfort with the state's expectations

I disagree with the prosecutor who says "You're responsible for any crime of your co-ethnics. Moreover, you will be charged for that." It's drivel [bred], you know. [...] And they want us to become informers [seksoty]. They straightforwardly say that our task is to report on possible ethnic crimes, and so on (SPb PCC member from diaspora)

At the last meeting with the Governor they suggested that we meet migrants at the airport. This is going too far (SPb PCC member from diaspora)

Representatives of this attitude express a desire to avoid being "pocket organizations" under the state structures. They would prefer communication on equal terms, and want to be respected as experts not only on their co-ethnics, but on international collaboration with other social and ethnic groups.

In any case, it is the authorities that ultimately decide to what extent diasporas can be used as helpers, and it is sometimes seen that they put quite strict limits to diaspora representatives going beyond their prescribed role. In our data we have a couple of examples where the FMS and police officers actively resisted certain diasporas' enthusiasm towards involving them closer in searching for and revealing "illegal" migrants, and curbed another diaspora's enthusiasm for lobbying for adaptation centers for migrants where thousands of newcomers were expected to live and go through integration procedures.²⁷

We try to level down and restrain unnecessary initiatives, and stimulate needed innovations. Moreover, when I meet with the representatives and leaders of national-cultural associations, with the leaders [...] 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." To say that they

²⁷ These were suggestions from certain SPb diasporas.

contribute and get nothing in return, that is craftiness
(FMS officer).

In the last part of the quote above, the FMS officer from an anonymized city exposes that diasporas do get both symbolic and more concrete social capital from collaboration with the state through the PCCs. Interviews with different diaspora leaders in St. Petersburg and Samara demonstrate that they do appreciate the different types of resources obtained through PCC membership.

Firstly, at PCC meetings diaspora members get first-hand information about changes in migration laws from the FMS and other bodies, with comments and clarifications. Some concrete issues that migrants face can be clarified and solved right there at the meetings, thanks to the presence of FMS officers.

Secondly, diasporas can gain improved access to relevant officials, a closer relationship to them, and obtain a right to contact them directly at any time.

Today, both the [local] Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor are happy to be in contact with [interviewee's ethnic group]. They say, "We have someone to talk to." [...] Honestly, I can give a call to the assistant of the [local] FMS head at any time. I can get an invitation both during office hours and outside of them, for questions and consultancies, to solve certain issues. [...] Thanks to this Council, we got closer to them, 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? It's very simple, they won't make any appointment with you. How could you get to them? Now I'm not just calling from the street, I'm invited as a leader. In this sense, the Council is very much needed
(SPb PCC member from diaspora).

By getting closer to the state bodies and their officers, diasporas obtain a chance to intervene into formal procedures and solve problems informally. It is also possible to utilize this for assisting co-ethnics in a critical situation:

I tell judges, the police, FMS and everybody, I tell everybody: "Would you please be so kind, if there's an opportunity – if migrants are detained, it would be good

to invite us, our organization. We will help deport them without special [detention] centers. We can buy them tickets, organize everything and send them off from Samara." [...] I can manage to send them off in a week or ten days, so they won't sit in the special center. There are so many of them there. (Samara PCC member from diaspora)

Thirdly, closeness to the FMS and other official bodies gives an ethnic organization increased symbolic status, which is very important in a situation where increasingly many organizations want to represent the same ethnic group. The authorities are concerned with this situation of intra-diaspora competition for leadership, as they prefer to have only one mediator between them and any ethnic community.

Fourthly, PCC membership is a gateway to wider relevant networks in the city that can help in the diasporas' further work. Such networking can also lead to access to the higher levels of authority, or to a wider network of NGOs. Since many diasporas also have a business aspect, such networking, particularly with the state structures, can become a valuable resource facilitating their economic activity.

Fifthly, diaspora organizations can get direct and indirect support from the state. One thing is direct financial subsidies, but there is also a perception that you get a better chance for obtaining support in open competitions for grants and tenders. Interviewees also note other kinds of assistance that the state can offer to diaspora organizations, i.e. helping the organizations when various problems surface.

We're pleased that local authorities support us. Problems appear, and they help. The whole burden of problems has been still put on us, like 11 years ago, but at least now they support us morally. During the last three years, we have felt the help from the authorities. When we approach them with some request or a problem, they don't turn away (Samara PCC member from diaspora)

Finally, it should be noted that the diasporas may also choose to join PCCs not just to maximize positive benefits, but also in order to minimize negative outcomes – an idea evolving from an impression that when the Russian state invites you to participate, saying “no” could have negative consequences. This is of course also highly relevant for non-diaspora PCC members who have been sought out and invited by the authorities.

For the state, the establishment of links with the diasporas and imposition of responsibility on them demonstrates that integration policy

has been implemented and a link to society has been built, as had been demanded by higher levels of the state hierarchy. For diasporas, the system maintains and enhances their status. Regardless of the fact that this system of mutual favors works, and to a certain extent has become efficient, there is also a critical view exposed by non-ethnic NGOs and even certain state actors. According to this view, diaspora organizations are now entirely conformed to state needs that are at odds with their original function. Their original purpose was minority culture preservation, not integration into the majority culture, and doubts are cast on their competence in performing the kind of socially-oriented work needed for the latter:

In principle, according to the law on national-cultural autonomy [one type of ethnic organization in Russia], diasporas have their own functions. They are obliged to fulfill cultural tasks. This means they should sit in the House of Nationalities, and leave it from time to time to participate in different events and show St. Petersburg how many various good, remarkable and interesting cultures there are. And nothing else. In other words, they should not carry out any social or consultative work... (SPb PCC member from non-ethnic organization).

Some local FMS officers also give a critical assessment, portraying the state-diaspora bonding as a compelled collaboration related to an underdeveloped Russian migration policy. They see it as a sign of a transition stage in the policy field's development, and that eventually diasporas will, and should, perhaps not be so empowered:

It is possible to engage them, but even so, the national-cultural associations, upon their founding, had a different task: support and spreading of their culture and language, introducing them to the natives. This lies in the sphere of development of tolerance, that which was earlier called "friendship between the peoples" [druzhba narodov]. "The Day of Uzbekistan," or a "Year of Uzbekistan," and so on. The fact that these national-cultural associations have been engaged in work on adaptation and integration to the extent that they now are – it was probably out of necessity, and not really the right step. They can express their opinion as consultants, but the rest is a governmental task. Perhaps, it makes sense in a transition period of elaboration of mechanisms and approaches, but in the future I see this as a task of another level (FMS officer)

Regardless of the latter, critical, views – this robust system of mutual reliance between the state and the diasporas is not undergoing any transformation, for in the end it seems convenient for both parties.

Conclusion: Diasporas' Role in Network Governance for Immigrant Integration

The governance networks described above could be summed up as highly subject to state metagovernance; only weakly allowing for the representation of the target community's interests and input; and to a moderate extent allowing the state to draw on civil society's resources. If we revisit the metagovernance techniques listed above – issue framing, economic framing, direct participation, and participant selection – we observe that all are practiced extensively. The PCCs are framed strictly as advisory organs, the goals of which are to discuss how to implement state policy. Rather than being framed as interest representation, PCC participation is framed as assistance to the state. The authorities organize, participate in, and guide discussions. Participants are chosen from above rather than elected from below. There is no “culture of horizontal decision-making,” but quite the opposite. While this could be seen as a natural consequence of the policy field being securitized, what is described here is in fact far from unique to Russian immigration politics. Other research on network governance in Russia tends to give the same results. Russian public discourse emphasizes the need for the state to include civil society in deliberation,²⁸ but this effort tends to be implemented as a controlled form of inclusion: the authorities consciously govern the forums for discussion; invite in the actors identified by them as “constructive” while more rarely giving the more fundamentally (and publicly) critical actors the chance to give input; and input is generally advisory only. Within this general ideal type of Russian network governance, there are of course variations, but the immigration sector comes across as being one of the more heavily controlled examples and a case where the potential to receive effective input from user groups is particularly limited.²⁹

²⁸ Marthe Handå Myhre and Mikkel Berg-Nordlie. 2016. “The state cannot help them all.” Russian media discourse on the inclusion of non-state actors in governance”. *East European Politics* 32 (2).

²⁹ Aadne Aasland, Mikkel Berg-Nordlie and Elena Bogdanova. 2016. “Encouraged but controlled: Governance networks in Russian regions”. *East European Politics* 32 (2); Berg-Nordlie. 2015. Sabine Kropp and Johannes Schumann. 2016. “Governance networks and vertical power in Russia – Environmental impact assessments and collaboration between state and non-state actors”. *East European Politics* 32 (2).; Anna Tarasenko. 2010. “Deyatel'nost' obshchestvennykh palat v regionakh Rossii: Effektivnost' vs. fiktivnost'”. *Politiya* 56 (1):80-88. Anna Tarasenko, Dmitrii Dubrovskii and Andrei Starodubtsev. 2011. *Navesti most mezhdru obshchestvom i gosudarstvom: obshchestvennye struktury v regionakh Severa-Zapada*; St. Petersburg: Renome. Anna Tarasenko. 2015. *Nekommercheskiy sektor v stranakh ES i Rossii*

As for the input function, it is difficult to say that the PCCs allow for a smooth communication of immigrant communities' feedback upwards in the political hierarchy. For one thing, there is the matter of the types of organization being included as the main representative of the immigrants. If we define a political actor's representativeness as the existence of a system that allows for their constituency's evaluation of their representative's activities and gives the constituency opportunities to replace the representative, we must conclude that the target group of recent labor migrants is not really represented through the diasporas. The leaders of the diasporas are people whose position in the organizations are not dependent on the approval of that target population. The relationship between these leaders and immigrant communities are closer to the patron-client ideal type than the representative-constituency ideal type. This, combined with the fact that most of the diaspora organizations do not really originate as interest-representing organizations but rather as culture-and-community promoting organizations, and as such are not necessarily prepared to fulfil the function of a political representative, results in many of these organizations being poorly suited to channel input from the target population into Russian immigrant policy.

The input potential is further limited by the hierarchal and securitized nature of the immigration policy field, which makes it difficult to deliver effective input from below in any case. While observations have indicated that the general direction of policy is indeed occasionally discussed in the networks, the practical possibility to utilize the PCCs as channels to communicate this criticism "upwards" in the Russian political vertical appears small. Even if it does, it is difficult for participants to know for certain which of their signals have been communicated upwards, and if they had some impact on policy changes, since changes of policy at the central level can come as a surprise even to regional-level offices of the FMS.

Moving away from the purely formal traits of the governance networks, it should be emphasized that the governance networks do of course facilitate closer personal connections between diaspora leaders, other non-state actors, and the state. Whether or not these informal connections are effectively utilized for the improvement of conditions for the target group at the local level, or generally just benefit the elite, is a question our field work has not been able to draw hard conclusions about. In interviews, diaspora activists do claim to use the connections offered by the PCC system for the benefit of their ethnic community.

The system appears somewhat better suited to allow the state to reach immigrant communities through the diaspora leaders, which is also

often cited as a main reason for the state to include the organizations. Here we must allow for the large variation in how different organizations falling under the blanket term “diaspora” operate – many of them appear so elite dominated (or inactive beyond the level of individual activists) that their usefulness in this regard must be considered limited indeed. The state structures have, however, been observed to utilize the services of diaspora representatives’ language and cultural competence, for example when performing raids to apprehend illegal immigrants, and to circulate information in their communities’ mother tongue. This role of the diasporas does not just reflect the desires of the state, but also some diasporas’ own self-representation of having a responsibility to be the representative of the state to “their” community. This prescribed role of the diasporas does, though, also come under criticism from both certain diaspora activists, and other parts of civil society and the state apparatus. It is, however, difficult to say no to participate in governance network when invited in by the Russian state, and some of the actors found on these arenas participate out of a feeling that it would have negative consequences for them to reject the suggestion.

It is an open question if the existence of the PCCs is in fact necessary for the state to utilize the diasporas in this way. State actors can, and indeed often do, make direct contact with non-state actors when they want to discuss issues outside the formal frames of the PCC. It is a somewhat difficult question to answer if the individual networks would be strong enough for this to occur without the PCCs, or if the PCCs have been a catalyst for improving the communication between different actors so that this occurs. The existence of organized networks do, at the very least allow for a formal arena, the proceedings of which are also more open to the public, to perform such sector-transcending coordination. Interviewees have also stated that the PCCs do make it easier to cultivate a good relationship between state and diaspora organizations.

We must also mention two other notable reasons for the regional FMS’ offices to make these arrangements. The first is simply that the regional FMS’ offices follow a bureaucratic logic: they have been tasked by higher levels of the FMS to involve the diasporas in their work and to create PCCs. Doing so is simply a fulfillment of their duties. The second is the substitution aspect of the PCC, which facilitates internal criticism and builds sector-transcending networks between state-based and non-state actors, hence reducing the “risk” of NGOs levelling sharp, public criticism against the authorities.

Finally, at the close of this article, we must point out that while the subject of this article has been PCCs and connections between the state and diaspora organizations, such network governance structures remain just a supplement to what is essentially a vertical decision-making process. In

practice, it is difficult for non-state actors to impact immigration and integration policy in Russia, or even impact how it is implemented, despite the systematic establishment of channels to facilitate efforts by non-state and state-based actors to pool their efforts to ensure the successful integration of immigrants.³⁰

³⁰ On April 5, 2016, President Putin signed into the law the Decree No.156 “On improvement of state management in the control of trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors in the field of migration.” Besides other directions, it eliminated the Federal Migration Service as a separate official body, and transferred its functions and authority to the Interior Ministry (<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51649>, accessed May 3, 2016). The General Administration for Migration Issues of the Interior Ministry of Russia is now in charge of immigrant affairs (<http://en.xn--b1ab2a0a.xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/>, accessed May 3, 2016). An unfortunate consequence of this change is that none of the links to the federal and local web pages of the FMS provided in this article work any longer. The destiny of the PCCs under the FMS is not yet clear. Therefore, this article can be seen a snapshot of a certain time period in Russian migration policy and practice. However, our research gives all reasons to believe that their main trends will not change much with the formation of a new structure.

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