

# Struggling for Citizenship

## Civic Participation and the State in Russia

SUVI SALMENNIEMI

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the shifting relationships between civic organizations and the state in contemporary Russia. Drawing on a case study of the provincial city of Tver, the paper explores how local activists and authorities interpret citizenship and draw the state-society boundaries at the juncture between the Socialist past and the capitalism of today. The paper argues that the authorities advocate a statist model of citizenship that conceives of civic organizations as an auxiliary of the state, taking over formerly state-provided services and activating citizens to assist the state in governance. Organizations founded during the Soviet era attempt to retain the Soviet citizenship model and the paternalist social contract underpinning it, while organizations founded during the post-Soviet period call for more participatory notions of citizenship.

**Keywords:** citizenship, civic organizations, Russia, state

“I think these notions are somewhat strange to us, that there should be an agreement, public decision, some joint symposia, congresses, compacts, deals. People power. Today, we need strict power—I may be wrong though—but it should be a strict vertical power arrangement, to establish some kind of order in our country.”

This quotation from an official of the regional government in Tver, contemplating whether citizens and their organizations should have more say about local issues, captures the prevailing ethos in state-society relations in contemporary Russia. While during the Yeltsin era the political landscape was characterized by the dispersion of power from the federal to the regional and municipal levels and the mushrooming of independent civic

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organizations, Vladimir Putin's and Dmitry Medvedev's terms in office have been marked by a recentralization of power and a more active and interventionist role of the state in steering social development in the spirit of "sovereign democracy."

In terms of civic activism, this process has been riddled with contradictions. On the one hand, civic organizations and governmental structures have started collaborating with one another more than before, and various mechanisms of cooperation have been established. For example, two federal-level civic forums were organized in Moscow in 2001 and 2008, followed by a number of similar regional forums, and a system of federal and regional public chambers (*obshchestvennye palaty*) has been created that seeks to foster dialogue between the state and society.<sup>1</sup> The authorities have also begun distributing funding to civic organizations, prioritizing in particular youth and social-welfare initiatives.<sup>2</sup> The political elite also actively circulate the concept of civil society in public discourse and emphasize its importance—implying that the concept has certain symbolic value in their own concept of political development.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the state has also placed several new restrictions on activism and increased its bureaucratic control, most importantly via amendments made to the law on civic associations in 2006.<sup>4</sup> This law gives the authorities considerable powers to investigate, and ultimately close down, any organization suspected of threatening "the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, national unity, unique character, cultural heritage, and national interests of the Russian Federation."<sup>5</sup> According to the Russia-based Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, the law has created massive bureaucracy, complicated the registration of organizations, and increasingly marginalized independent civic activism.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, at the same time that organizations enjoying Western funding have been frequently labeled in public as "unpatriotic" and "stooges" of foreign intelligence agencies, and public protests organized by the political opposition have been forcefully suppressed, the Russian public sphere has witnessed a mushrooming of youth organizations, such as *Nashi*, which are closely connected with and enjoy considerable financial support from the government.<sup>7</sup>

The cooperation between civic groups and the state in Russia can be best characterized as "selective corporatism"; the authorities selectively engage in cooperation with and offer funds to organizations that do not question the state's authority and are willing to implement its policies, while contentious and often Western-funded groups have been increasingly marginalized and excluded from cooperation.<sup>8</sup> Selective corporatism is accompanied by selective punishment. The incoherence of formal rules in Russia compels most actors, willingly or unwillingly, to violate them, and because of this pervasiveness of rule-violation, punishments are selectively passed based on "unwritten laws."<sup>9</sup> For example, tax legislation is so complicated that it is practically impossible for civic organizations to abide by it, which has given the authorities an opportunity to selectively punish "undesirable groups" for failing to comply.

This paper taps into this discussion about the shifting relationships between civic organizations and the authorities in Russia. Previous research pertaining to this topic has, as a rule, approached it from the viewpoint of organizations,<sup>10</sup> while the views of the authorities engaged in cooperation with organizations have been largely overlooked. I address this gap in the existing research by studying the views of both the authorities and the activists.<sup>11</sup> Based on a case study conducted in the city of Tver,<sup>12</sup> I examine how these actors articulate their mutual relationships and the conceptions of citizenship that they construct.<sup>13</sup>

How do the activists and the authorities define the division of labor between the state and organizations, and how do they draw state-society boundaries at the juncture of the Socialist past and contemporary global capitalism? How do they understand the influence of civic organizations? By analyzing these questions, this paper highlights the renegotiation of conditions and boundaries of citizenship and civic participation in Russian localities.

Focusing on civic participation and citizenship at the local level is particularly relevant for two reasons. First, civic activism in Russia is distinctively local in nature: Activist groups are usually organized around and seek to solve locally relevant questions.<sup>14</sup> Second, cooperation between governmental structures and civic organizations takes place primarily at the local level. According to our survey of the organizational terrain in Tver, civic groups gravitated toward municipal and regional executive powers, but had only minimal ties with federal-level executive or legislative structures.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, governmental structures were also the most important source of funding for civic groups.<sup>16</sup>

I shall argue, firstly, that while the authorities call for active citizenship and expect citizens and their organizations to take more responsibility for previously state-performed functions, they nevertheless continue to reproduce a statist and paternalist concept of citizenship reminiscent of the Soviet era; they conceive of organizations as an executive auxiliary of the state rather than elements of an autonomous sociopolitical sector.

Secondly, I argue that organizations founded during the Soviet era and after its collapse articulate competing ideas of citizenship. The activists engaged in the “new” organizations seek to renegotiate the conditions of citizenship—they advocated a participatory model of citizenship in which citizens and their organizations have a greater role in shaping and defining policies, instead of merely implementing state-determined policies. The activists of the “old” organizations, by contrast, seek to retain the Soviet-era citizenship idea and the paternalist social contract underpinning it. In this way, they claim recognition for their identities and the work they performed during the Soviet period. This paternalistic concept of citizenship regards organizations as both objects of governmental policies and as the state’s aides in implementing these policies.

I begin this paper by analyzing how the officials discuss the relationships between civic groups and governmental structures, and the way in which they understand civic groups’ ability to exert influence. In the following sections, I will discuss the concepts of citizenship that the activists construct and the types of cooperation they have established with governmental structures. In the final section, I will examine the activists’ assessments of their opportunities to influence society and governmental policies.

### **The State’s “Little Helpers”**

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a transformation of the forms and practices of government in Russia ensued. While in the Soviet system the Communist Party and its bureaucratic machinery held a monopoly on the organization of all human life, the post-Soviet era has witnessed an emergence of a more complex system of governance. Although the state continues to play a key role in Russia, other actors, such as civic organizations and private enterprises, are also involved in addressing societal issues and concerns. The practice of tendering social orders (*sotsialnyi zakaz*) and the establishment of social councils and public chambers in a number of Russian localities—in which the representatives of governmental bodies, business and civic organizations discuss local issues—are examples of new governance mechanisms brought about by the democratization process.

The changing practices of government have also had important implications for practices of and discourses on citizenship—that is, for inventing and cultivating certain types of citizen identities, relationships and activities. The political and social dimensions of citizenship are intimately intertwined. The collapse of the Soviet Union has widened the arenas and practices of political citizenship and has enabled the politicization of identities and interests. The Soviet concept of citizenship, with its collectivist ethos, its strong emphasis on citizens' obligations toward the state, and its idea of what constitutes a "good citizen," has been reassessed and renegotiated. Civic organizations and new governance mechanisms are important arenas in which this renegotiation of citizenship takes place.

Alongside changes in political citizenship, the parameters of social citizenship have also transformed. Shifts in the ideologies and infrastructure of social protection have curtailed social rights in many respects, and have brought about new vulnerabilities. This process has, on the one hand, given rise to poverty, marginalization and insecurity and created obstacles to sociopolitical participation for many social groups; on the other hand, it has facilitated the founding of several civic organizations to tackle the displacement of the social welfare system. These organizations have provided people with material and emotional support, opened up potential avenues to influence governmental policies, and offered new forms of employment. They have also introduced new conceptual frameworks to make sense of social problems and identities, and have invented new mechanisms to solve these social problems.<sup>17</sup>

How did the officials interviewed in this study contemplate the shifting forms of governance and citizenship? How did they understand the role of civic groups? They articulated a statist conception of citizenship in which the state was the main articulator of social needs and policy priorities. For civic organizations, they assigned three different functions: they were meant to compensate for the state, to complement it, and to represent the interests of the locality by mediating between citizens and the authorities.

In the compensation framework, civic organizations were portrayed as the main agent in producing services and solving problems within the community. Governmental structures were seen as only helping organizations in this task. Cooperation between governmental bodies and civic organizations was portrayed as essential, because of the need to change the forms of government and dismantle the state's monopoly in addressing social needs. The concept of civil society (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*) was invoked here to envision new forms of governance. The development of civil society was interpreted as curtailing the state's scope of activity and increasing individual and organizational responsibility, especially in the delivery of social services.<sup>18</sup> As one official put it: "I think that as civil society develops and establishes itself, the municipality will give social services over to civic organizations."<sup>19</sup> Thus, civic groups were conceived of as the "third sector," taking over responsibilities that the state cannot or does not want to perform.

However, this redefinition of the division of labor in service delivery was presented in the interviews as a future goal, as the overwhelming bulk of all services was still provided by governmental structures. During the post-Soviet period, social obligations have largely devolved from the federal to the regional and municipal levels. This implies that local officials struggling with budgetary constraints have been eager to involve civic groups in governance in order to alleviate the burden of the administration. But the interviewed officials presented civic participation in governance as an obligation: it was the citizens' duty to be engaged and bear more responsibility for governance.

This idea of shifting services to civic organizations points to a certain affinity between the neoliberal rationality and the statist, paternalist rationality remaining from the Soviet era. A key element of the neoliberal agenda has been the transfer of formerly state-funded services to the third sector and the emphasis placed on individual responsibility. However, during the Soviet era, state-affiliated social organizations administered and delivered a whole array of social obligations. For example, the Soviet trade unions took care of a number of social, cultural and everyday life services and benefits (*sotskultbyt*), which they still continue to do, albeit in a much more modest form.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the party-state governed through social organizations, which were simultaneously both objects and subjects of government. In this respect, governing through civic organizations and making them responsible for social functions is not something new or necessarily neoliberal in Russia, although organizations are not subject to the state in the same way as they were in the Soviet era. Furthermore, by invoking increased individual responsibility the interviewed officials did not envision a self-regulating entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism, but rather a subject marked by a commitment to work for the “common good” identified by local officials.

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The redefinition of welfare responsibilities also had a potentially empowering dimension in the compensation framework, as it was suggested that citizens should be able to have more say in issues affecting their lives, and thus practice citizenship more actively. This, however, simultaneously served as a way to legitimize the state’s withdrawal from its previous obligations. Discussing an organization of disabled children and their families, one official commented:

Who would know what their children need better than the parents do, right? Who would choose the wheelchair better—an official or the child’s mother? Naturally, they [mothers] would perform the functions better, much better. And their attitude toward these children is different; they understand them better. They know what needs to be done.

—City’s Committee of Media and PR

The shift of care from the state to citizens and their organizations, relatedly, has important gender implications.<sup>21</sup> The absolute majority of both officials and activists interviewed in this study associated civic activism with femininity and often explicitly with maternal qualities, claiming that women were more suitable for civic activity. Our survey of civic groups in Tver also showed that women participated more actively in civic organizations than men, especially in the fields of social welfare, healthcare and education, which are female-dominated. Thus, this empowerment and the increasing responsibility of organizations for welfare is likely to entail that women are expected to carry out previously state-provided services in the civic sector, frequently without payment, as the majority of organizations rely on volunteer labor.<sup>22</sup> This illustrates how gendered power relations are intertwined with changing forms of government.

We also found that meanings of citizenship often revolved around generation in the compensation framework. The social change of the 1990s was narrated as a transformation in mentalities. According to the authorities, the elder generation had not been able to adapt to new circumstances. The Soviet generation was described as being “children” who had to “grow up” in order to meet the requirements of the market economy. By contrast, young people were considered to have the attitudes and dispositions that the post-Soviet society demanded. As one official formulated:

If one looks at the older generation, they're all used to the idea that someone owes them something. And they won't listen when [they are] told that we're in the market [economy] now, that nobody owes them anything. A new generation with a new mentality is coming in this respect. The mentality is changing, and it's essential and crucial. In our country the older generation is used to the fact that the state takes on all responsibilities and must provide everything for them. Today's younger generation relies only on itself. [Young people] understand that the actions of virtually each one of us make a difference. You either look passively on all those things and you don't care, or you get actively involved and try to make things better. The older generation will find someone to blame. The state, the authorities.

—City's Committee of Media and PR

Although youth was presented as active and endorsing self-reliance and responsibility and the older generation as passive and state-dependent, the officials nevertheless often mentioned that the most active participants in civic organizations were, in fact, pensioners, veterans, and middle-aged women. However, their activism was regarded as the “wrong” kind of activism, because it was seen as being oriented toward the state, reproducing a Soviet-type paternalist order.

Some officials also conceived of civic organizations as complementing governmental structures by providing alternative services, offering help and support to certain social groups, and voicing problems. These officials also suggested that civic groups should actively attract external resources to support governmental services. Thus, organizations were seen as primarily conducting fundraising for the state rather than receiving financial support from the authorities. For example, the officials mentioned that youth organizations had begun dealing with youth housing and offering services to young families because the city administration could not provide such services. Organizations were seen as helping the authorities to tackle social needs, but governmental structures were still considered to be primarily responsible for them. As one official commented: “It's bureaucrats who resolve things anyway. If there's no water in your building, not a single civic organization would resolve the problem until the administration got involved.”<sup>23</sup> A similar idea of complementarity was also inherent in the Soviet practice of citizens' mandatory and unpaid societal work (*obshchestvennaya rabota*), which the authorities saw as a way to ease the state's social burden.<sup>24</sup>

### Local Needs and the Limits of Influence

Finally, the officials articulated relationships between the authorities and civic groups in the framework of representation and mediation. Similarly, as in conventional Western conceptualizations of civil society, organizations were understood as representing the public (*obshchestvennost*), advocating social interests and mediating between the governmental structures and citizens. The central mediating institutions in Tver were the Social Council, under the auspices of the mayor, and social units in connection with

the city's administrative branches. They gathered together representatives of civic organizations, members of the city Duma, the administration, and the business community to discuss and solve local problems and concerns. In addition, the city's Committee of Media and PR was established specifically to forge interaction between the city administration and civic organizations.

The authorities suggested that civic groups, by exercising their representative function, could convey the citizens' wishes and thus improve the administration's performance. As one interviewee noted: "To govern the city successfully, one must know what's going on there. It's only from the people that we can get this information."<sup>25</sup> Another official commented in a similar vein: "One can't see from the top the whole problem as it is. So interaction [between the state and civic organizations] is certainly a must. I believe the role of civic organizations is to act as this mediator."<sup>26</sup>

In this framework, a tension emerged between "particularistic group interests" and larger "social interests." The officials considered it problematic that organizations tended to represent and work around "narrow problems of a limited group" instead of tackling "socially significant" issues and problems; projects regarded as socially significant were those that sought to solve local problems and enhance local governance. The authorities did not view civic groups, at least primarily, as loci of citizens' self-organization around interests that were defined as important; rather, organizations were expected to actualize projects that the authorities suggested for the locality. The officials understood local interests to be common to everyone; thus, they did not perceive civic groups as a critical counterforce to the administration, but rather viewed them as its helper. The authorities were portrayed as being responsible for instructing civic groups to pursue those local interests:

We [the Committee of Media and PR] should inform them [citizens], teach them, and they should absorb this information and this teaching, because these are common problems and we can solve them only together, because objectively we're better informed here [in the committee], better trained.

The interviewed officials assessed civic organizations' influence on governmental structures and society, at large, as weak, but they also acknowledged that organizations could make a difference for certain social groups by offering help and support. They identified organizations' passive and unprofessional nature as the main obstacle to their influence. Organizations were portrayed as frustratingly dependent: Clinging too much to the state, expecting everything from it, and lacking an active attitude. These features were also often described as characterizing the Russian population, marking their harmful "Soviet mentality." The officials complained about an "exploitative approach" (*potrebitelskoe otnoshenie*) and "dependant politics" (*izhdivenchekaya politika*) among civic groups and citizens, which emerged as the key elements of this mentality:

These organizations constantly say: 'Nobody helps us, nobody supports us, we're so good, look how wonderful we are.' But they don't do anything themselves. It's sort of an exploitative approach to these things. There are organizations here that come to us and say straight away: 'Oh, help us set up an office, help us get a telephone connection.' In this case I always ask: 'Tell me, please, did anyone force you to found this organization?'

—City's Committee of Media and PR

I've noticed that there's this dependant politics today. It's our problem although let me repeat, I'm ready to say it out loud in the street that I supported Soviet power ... But it's the trouble of Soviet power that we used to tell people all the time: 'Don't think about anything, don't think about your health—medical institutions, the Party and the government will think for you.' A person should first of all take efforts to take care of himself. But what we had was: 'Don't stir, don't move, don't be afraid, we'll do everything for you.'

—Regional department of healthcare

A number of interviewed officials complained that civic groups did not use the opportunities they had for influence. The majority of the administrative structures had tendered competitions for civic organizations for carrying out projects, but only few were said to have proposed a sound project. In their view, civic groups could not carry out government-funded projects because they lacked the necessary professionalism, skills and expertise. In its recent annual report, the Public Chamber of Tver also expressed a similar concern over “the level of competence of the activists (*obshchestvenniki*), who have to fulfill a responsible mission as the main impartial experts.” The report concluded that activists were in need of “additional education” in order to properly perform their task as experts, and that the public chamber should strive for attracting the “best specialists” to its ranks.<sup>27</sup>

This discourse emphasizing professionalism and expertise constructs a particular understanding of activism and citizenship. It conceives of activists as yielders of supposedly objective and non-political information for the needs of governance. Activism is not apprehended as a channel of participation to all citizens, but first and foremost to those who possess certain cultural capital. This understanding is likely to serve as a mechanism of exclusion, discouraging the practice of political citizenship of those social groups that lack the intellectual resources recognized by the authorities.

### Participatory Citizenship

In the interviews with activists, two ideas of citizenship emerged: Participatory and paternalist. These concepts offered different interpretations about how state-society relations should be organized. The participatory conception renegotiates the conditions of citizenship, while the paternalist conception wishes to retain the basic parameters of Soviet citizenship. Participatory citizenship was advocated by those organizations that were founded during the post-Soviet era, while the paternalist one was put forward by the groups that had their roots in the Soviet Union. These organizations were positioned in a different way in Russian society, which explains their different articulations of citizenship. The activists from the old organizations were also older, on average, than the activists of the newly established groups, and thus the different citizenship conceptions can partly stem from generational differences.

The difference in citizenship models between old and new organizations should not, however, be viewed as a statistically generalizable characterization of the civic field. It is possible, and even likely, that there are new organizations that embrace paternalist notions of citizenship, while some older organizations may support a more participatory model; further empirical enquiry is needed in order to disentangle how citizenship is conceived across the organizational sector. However, it is worth noting that the organizations established during and after the Perestroika era have often been founded precisely in order to question and critique the ideological and institutional underpinnings of the Soviet social order. Politicization of Soviet notions of citizenship has been, for example, at the core of

a number of self-help groups, feminist organizations and human rights organizations in Russia.<sup>28</sup>

In the participatory conception of citizenship, criticism of the Soviet social order and a wish to dismantle it were central features. The activists of the studied organizations — a center for gender studies, a women's crisis center, a students' human rights organization, a disabled people's group, and a resource center—criticized the overarching role of the state, suppression of initiative, and the paternalist social contract in the Soviet Union. The social transformation of the 1990s appeared as a positive turn to them, and all but the human rights group had been able to negotiate foreign support for their activities.<sup>29</sup>

In this citizenship conception, civic organizations were envisioned as playing a greater role in defining needs and policies instead of merely implementing state-determined functions, as social organizations did in the Soviet Union. Activists called for a partnership between governmental bodies and civic groups. Some activists also portrayed as a “healthy tendency” that instead of turning to the state, people increasingly sought to solve their problems by themselves and through civic groups. The ethos of self-help was portrayed as desirable. These groups positioned as an important goal the “perestroika of a person,” the cultivation of a new type of citizen-subject. They sought to orient people away from state-centered activism and transform them from paternalist objects of state power into responsible, active and independent political subjects who knew their rights and how to use them. Paternalism, however, emerged as an ambivalent issue in these organizations. Although the activists criticized the paternalist social order, they nevertheless tended to rely upon patron-client relationships in their cooperation with the authorities.

Many of these new organizations worked in close cooperation with the authorities, although only the crisis center enjoyed regular funding from them. For example, the disabled people's organization had put up a project of constructing ramps for the disabled together with the city administration and Duma. Ironically, the first ramp was built at the city's social service center, which was supposed to serve the disabled. Before this it had been nearly impossible for the disabled to visit the center. In addition, the leader of the group was involved in the city's committee on architecture, in which he consulted about the construction of houses from the viewpoint of the needs of the disabled people. The resource center also worked in close partnership with the city authorities in developing youth policy and mechanisms of social order, among other things.

The activists at the gender-studies center and the student human rights organization described their cooperation with the authorities as tactical collaboration. At the center for gender studies, this tactical collaboration was called a “strategy of involvement” (*strategiya vovlecheniya*). The leader of the center summarized the rationale of this strategy as follows: “We use the authorities for our goals. We involve them in our projects and then they start to consider these projects already as theirs. And it will be difficult for them to refuse to help when they are themselves participants, involved.” The activists from the human rights organization also argued in a similar vein for “developing a certain tactic” in cooperating with the authorities. In their view, civic organizations should work with the authorities diplomatically, offer their help and “infiltrate” their ideas to the power structures instead of openly criticizing the authorities. The activists explained:

- If you go to the street and yell that the powers-that-be are bad, you simply make enemies for yourself. It's better to make them [the authorities] do something.
- Criticism is not generally the best way. Not everyone can take criticism appropriately.
- One can simply criticize, or one can diplomatically explain that they [the authorities] are wrong. When one has explained things to them, they begin to think that 'maybe we are really wrong, maybe we should do things in another way.' That brings a better result.
- And then, offer them [the authorities] help.

The authorities' indifferent attitude and a tendency to view organizations as a resource to be exploited were interpreted as impeding collaboration. The activists complained that the authorities had not learned what equal partnership and cooperation meant. In their view, the authorities showed interest in organizations only when they needed something from them, "otherwise they couldn't care less," as one activist remarked. An activist of the human rights group argued that the authorities supported them only as long as they did not ask for resources from the authorities or voice opinions that contradicted those of the officials. If they did so, the attitudes of the officials would immediately cool down. The activist summarized: "The authorities want to cooperate with us not as equal partners, but rather so that we'd work for and be accountable to them, so that they would control us."

New organizations were not, as a rule, engaged in contentious action or positioned as pressure groups *vis-à-vis* the authorities. Only the disabled people's organization had occasionally organized public protests. Some activists pointed out that confrontation with the authorities was not helpful and was likely to damage the organization. These groups, rather, oriented their activities to various social groups with which they worked: students, underprivileged citizens, victims of violence, the disabled, and so on. Educational activities played a pivotal role in the repertoire of these organizations.<sup>30</sup> However, these educational activities were not always viewed favorably by the authorities. A resource center activist explained:

Some projects [of our organization] meet with a dead end. Sometimes it's advantageous to keep people as idiots (*derzhat lyudei za bydlo*). And our organization fulfils here the role of an enlightener. It seeks to advance people's education. So that people would understand and find out about things and not just follow blindly those who lead them and tell them what to do.

Although these new groups did not openly challenge the local administration and political structure, they were nonetheless engaged in indirect forms of contestation, as the quote above elucidates. These organizations brought to the public and political agenda new issues and issues that had been previously suppressed, such as sexual violence, gender inequality, and the inhuman treatment of the disabled. As one human rights activist characterized this change: "What used to be discussed one-to-one in the kitchen is now discussed with ten people at the premises of a civic organization." Thus, these groups were engaged in the struggle for full citizenship for certain oppressed categories of citizens. In their activities, they developed alternative interpretations of social problems, offered new types of services, and politicized identities. Their activities challenged many interpretations of needs and interests held by the state machinery as well as by the general public.

The gender-studies center and the disabled people's organization illustrate well this politicization of identities and interests. Through its educational activities, the center challenged the prevailing gender order by questioning gender stereotypes and introducing feminist frameworks to make sense of gender relations. The center can be conceived of as a "subaltern counter-public"<sup>31</sup> that provides spaces for discursive contestation in which the dominant interpretations concerning gender relations and terms of citizenship can be discussed and challenged and new ones invented. The disabled people's organization, for its part, articulated as its *raison d'être* changing the conditions of citizenship for the disabled. It wished to transform disabled people from an object of state policy into citizens who were aware of and demanded their rights, and who were considered as experts regarding their own lives. The leaders of the organization argued that during the Soviet era, the disabled people were seen as recipients of the state's concessions. They sought to change this, and outlined their position as follows:

We don't ask anymore—we demand. We don't ask for doles but demand our rights, the delivery of things to which we have full right. So that the disabled would not be dependants, asking for help from the state.

According to the leaders, challenging the paternalist relationship between the state and the disabled and the educational campaigns of the group had not made the authorities happy: "We tell the disabled about their rights and when they start demanding these rights, it means more work and tricky questions for the authorities. For them it would be far easier if the disabled people sat at home and didn't demand anything."

Although the new organizations tended to avoid confrontation with the authorities, some of them had nevertheless faced conflicts with them. For example, a human rights activist had come into contact with the authorities by participating in an inter-regional project documenting human rights violations. When the report appeared, the local authorities confronted him about it. He remarked: "If I was alone, I'd be perhaps more scared, but there are a number of us [human rights activist] here. But there is a tendency to keep us on a tight leash."

### Paternalist Citizenship

The interviews with representatives of the old organizations—veterans' organizations and trade union of health care workers—were filled with powerful feelings of anger, disappointment and humiliation on the one hand, and pride for the Soviet past on the other. According to them, the social transformation had radically deteriorated the material and symbolic position of veterans and medical workers. During the Soviet era, veterans enjoyed relatively extensive support from the state and medical doctors, although having a small salary compared to many blue-collar jobs, received their salaries on time, and were able to lead a decent life. Both groups also enjoyed significant symbolic appreciation in Soviet society. The veterans and trade union activists felt that the social transformation had devalued their work and the sacrifices they had made during the socialist years. For them, the collapse of the Soviet Union appeared as a cultural trauma, "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric."<sup>32</sup>

These activists supported extensive state machinery as the main provider of human needs. They did not envision a redefinition of obligations between the state, citizens and civic groups. Their citizenship orientation was state-centered, as they demanded

that the authorities retain the paternalist social contract of the Soviet era. They assigned organizations similar functions that they had in the Soviet Union: organizations were to help the state to implement policies. Thus, instead of remaking the citizen-subject, these old organizations sought to cultivate the citizen virtues of the Soviet era. They cherished Soviet ideals and practices, which functioned as a source of self-worth for them. These groups gravitated toward the authorities, which stemmed from their interpretation that the state was in the key position to improve the lives of their constituencies. These groups had also few alternative sources of support available, as, for example, foreign donor agencies were not interested in supporting trade unions and veterans' movements.

I suggest that by making claims on redistribution and insisting on retaining the paternalist social contract, the veteran and trade union activists sought recognition for their identities. They recalled in the interviews how they had worked for the common good and survived difficult times during the Soviet era. When they were supposed to be rewarded for their work, the Soviet Union disintegrated and they were left unprotected. Thus, the redistributive claims were central to their sense of dignity and perception of social justice, and served as a way to resist the devaluation of their experiences and life-histories.

The old organizations had close ties with the local authorities. The veterans' council received premises and salaries for four employees from the city administration and the veterans' club, similar to several other organizations in Tver, enjoyed benefits-in-kind support. The city authorities had, for example, bought new uniforms and instruments for the veterans' choir and orchestra. Both organizations characterized their relationships with the authorities as "understanding" and "respectful."

The trade union of medical workers also cooperated closely with the local authorities, as do Russian trade unions, in general.<sup>33</sup> These close ties were embodied in the practice of social partnership (*sotsialnoe partnerstvo*), referring to collective tripartite agreements between the state, employers and employees, and aims at social peace with an emphasis on negotiation and collaboration instead of confrontation.<sup>34</sup> The activists portrayed the local authorities as sympathetic partners who understood the plight of the union and were willing to help and support it, unlike the detached federal powers in Moscow:

Interviewee: We have a good relationship [with the authorities]. I think we've always had a good relationship, and still do. A business-type of relationship, of people who share aspirations. They agree with everything. They won't argue with the fact that buildings are falling apart here, that money is needed. So we don't have any collisions, contradictions. [They] listen carefully, put down, promise. They don't always fulfill, though. But there has never been any opposition ...

Interviewer: So it's generally, not like 'what's this trade union for'?

Interviewee: Oh, no. On the contrary, it's stressed at all levels that it's collaborative work. Both the mayor and the governor always speak about collaborative work.

The cooperative orientation was accompanied by contestation and criticism in the veterans' council and the trade union. These groups were engaged in public protests against governmental bodies. The activists were highly disappointed with the current

political power and actions of the state. Unlike during the Soviet era, these organizations had adopted—or had been forced to adopt—a contentious position *vis-à-vis* the authorities. They acted as pressure groups, pushing the authorities to meet the needs of workers and veterans and advocating and defending their rights that had eroded in the social transformation. Thus, similar to the new groups, these organizations also advocated active participation, awareness of rights and defending them, but within the paternalist framework originating from the Soviet era.

Cooperative tactics, however, clearly dominated the repertoire of action within the older organizations. In the trade union, demonstrations tended to be mostly of symbolic value, allowing activists to let off steam rather than putting effective pressure on the government.<sup>35</sup> The cooperative and contentious orientations also often intermingled in the interviews. The activists complained that although the authorities listened to their concerns and claims, they did not deliver what they promised. As a trade union activist argued:

The administration can sometimes pretend that ‘ok, sure, we understand you, we’ll do it.’ And it does really help sometimes, but certainly not every time. I mean, a lot depends on ourselves. While you keep pestering them there’s some effect. Once you quiet down—it’s all over. They’re used to being pestered. Everyone comes and asks for their ‘share’ (*svoi ‘kusok odeyala’*).

This quote elucidates the patron-client relationships that are at work in the cooperation with the authorities. The trade union is portrayed as competitively appealing to the authorities in order to get its “share.” Navigation in the patronage framework requires active agency on the part of the union: it can achieve its goals only if it constantly pressures the authorities.

### **Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Organizations and Influence**

The old and new organizations also outlined their influence in a different way. The new organizations emphasized as primary their ability to influence certain social groups and individuals. This stemmed from their interpretation that influencing the authorities was extremely difficult and from their wish to break away from the state-centered social activism that characterized the Soviet system. By contrast, the old organizations defined influencing the governmental structures as the primary way, although the support of and work among their constituencies was also important.

The organizations’ influence on social groups was articulated in two ways. First, organizations offered people support and services that the governmental structures did not offer, or offered too few of, and in this way improved their well-being. The crisis center, for example, offered help and support to victims of domestic violence and the students’ human rights group provided legal consultation to citizens who could not afford to seek commercial legal services. Several activists also emphasized the importance of sociability (*obshchenie*) and mutual support in civic participation. Organizations partly replaced the terrain of Soviet collectives and provided feelings of belonging in a time of socioeconomic dislocation.

Second, education and enlightenment were regarded as an important way in which organizations could influence people and society. Organizations distributed information and raised awareness about different problems and rights. For example, the crisis center raised awareness about gendered violence by holding educational campaigns at schools and for the militia, and the disabled people’s group distributed information to the disabled about their rights and helped them to claim them.

Almost all interviewed activists both in the new and old organizations assessed civic organizations' opportunities to influence the governmental structures and decisionmaking as meager. Many of them described the authorities as detached from society and public opinion and indifferent toward civic groups. They portrayed the local authorities as reachable, to some extent, but the federal powers were described as utterly out of touch. The trade union activists, for example, complained that their influence was limited to the local level because a number of issues depended on federal-level decisionmaking, to which they felt they did not have access despite the union's nationwide structure. This made the activists see themselves as powerless, and gnawed at the legitimacy and credibility of the union in the eyes of its members.

The activists identified three main obstacles to civic organizations' influence. Firstly, the organizations' lack of mass power was seen as problematic. Russian organizations have not, as a rule, been able to mobilize large masses or create larger coalitions. Scholars have observed that civic groups, especially those founded after the collapse of the Soviet Union, often tend to be small, and are not very actively engaged in recruiting new members or cooperating with each other.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, similar to the interviewed officials, some activists of the new organizations alluded to the "Soviet mentality," manifesting itself in the "psychology of dependency" and "exploitative attitude," as impeding influence. In their view, the Soviet mentality still loomed large in people's minds, making them reluctant to take responsibility and prone to look to the state instead of uniting in civic groups and seeking social change in this way. Thirdly, the indifferent and occasionally hostile attitude of the authorities was regarded as inhibiting influence. Several activists voiced the opinion that organizations could criticize the authorities and suggest alternative actions, but the authorities seldom listened or reacted. As an activist from the gender-studies center put it: "Civic organizations can give advice, but the administration will do as it pleases." Another activist of the center commented: "The authorities simply won't listen. There's no such dependence of the power on grassroots here. One can criticize as much as one feels like. They would say: we have the freedom of speech."

Public criticism toward the powers-that-be was also interpreted as likely to result in negative consequences for organizations. As an activist from the crisis center argued: "Civic organizations can potentially criticize the authorities, but in reality this criticism may have tragic consequences, because it's very easy to crush a civic organization here." Another activist said the authorities can be criticized only secretly, as "no one wants to make the activities of the organization more difficult or risk one's health." She continued:

Well, one may perhaps face some legal restrictions. To the extent that they [the authorities] can deny access to television channels, to newspapers, for example. They can incite a tax inspection [to the organization]. If one received some services earlier, premises and so on, the municipal authorities could deny them. It's a bad thing to fall from the grace of the authorities.

The activists nevertheless outlined three ways in which organizations could potentially influence the authorities. Firstly, organizations could try to exhaust the authorities with their requests and demands. As one activist put it: "It takes all one's efforts to get any kind of support from the city administration. If you go to them every day and claim something, then yes. One must be very patient and have strong nerves." The veterans' council and the trade union

had adopted this strategy. The members of these groups described how they relentlessly wrote petitions and held meetings with the authorities, albeit not always with the desired outcome. Secondly, a number of activists from the new organizations thought that professionalism would make the organizations more influential, just as some of the interviewed officials thought. They believed that if organizations worked professionally and actively, their views would be taken into account.

Thirdly, personal connections with the authorities were put forward as the most efficient way to exert influence, gain access to public resources, and further organizations' goals.<sup>37</sup> The activists made several references to the importance of connections, saying that the Russian social order was based on "the system of personal contacts" (*sistema lichnykh svyazei*):

Civil society doesn't work here, only the system of personal contacts is effective. In fact, I guess, it's the traditional Russian way, because nothing works here without personal contacts. So if there's anything, any channel through which civic organizations can make themselves heard, it's personal contacts precisely—finding acquaintances in power organs.

—Center for gender studies

The mayor or the governor listen not to some political forces, but to specific people who have some influence on them. They are more influenced by informal connections rather than by formal political actions. This informal resource—phone calls, personal meetings, hunting in the woods, saunas—these are the things, I think, influence the political system far more significantly than anything else.

—Center for gender studies

Cooperation between the authorities and civic organizations often relies upon personalized patron-client relationships in Russia.<sup>38</sup> Patronage is a pervasive and durable feature of the Russian political culture. It links institutional hierarchies and personal relationships; personal relations are used for political ends.<sup>39</sup> This blurs the line between the public and private domains. The public is privately appropriated, and political relations become perceived as extensions of private relations.

These patron-client arrangements can be conceived of as informal practices, springing from the failure and inefficiency of formal rules and their enforcement and the widespread distrust of public institutions in Russia.<sup>40</sup> Although many Russian regions have sought to consolidate mechanisms of cooperation between the governmental structures and civic groups, cooperation has largely remained weakly institutionalized, and the existing mechanisms inadequately enforced. Consequently, the personal inclinations of a particular official have tended to play an important role in shaping cooperation practices.<sup>41</sup> For example, among the officials interviewed for this study, no common policy regarding cooperation with civic groups could be identified. Each administrative unit seemed to have their own styles, traditions and ideas about cooperation, and as has been highlighted above, the officials held different conceptions about the division of labor between the administration and civic organizations.

Lack of institutionalization of cooperative practices between civic groups and governmental bodies makes connections an important currency and encourages activists to cultivate personal relationships with the powers-that-be. Although this can often be a useful strategy, it is at the same time problematic, as reliance on personal connections undermines the development of democratic rules of the game. Connections can also undermine organizations' independence and critical potential. As an activist from the gender-studies center commented: "It's through this contact between an official, a decisionmaker, and the

leader of a civic organization that an organization is most often controlled.” Another activist representing the resource center complained that organizations’ financial and mental dependency on the power structures entailed that “everyone tries to show loyalty to the authorities.”

Such personalized patterns of interaction are also fragile in the face of shifting power structures. The gender-studies center and the crisis center illustrate this point well. For both groups, the mayor and his team were the key partners, but when the mayor passed away and the new mayor stepped into office in 2003, these cooperative ties unraveled. The new mayor dismantled many structures of cooperation, such as the Social Council, of which the gender-studies center was a member, the social units in which the crisis center participated, and the Committee of Media and PR that was in charge of developing cooperation practices in the city.<sup>42</sup> The city administration had financed the crisis center under the previous mayor, but the new mayor withdrew this support. Consequently, the crisis center was forced to close down, as foreign funding dried up at the same time.

### Conclusion

This paper has traced the renegotiation of citizenship and the shifting relationships between governmental structures and civic activism in Russia. The authorities and activists put forward competing concepts of citizenship that defined state-society relations and boundaries in different ways. The authorities advocated a statist conception of citizenship, which conceived organizations as subcontractors of the state, taking over services formerly provided by the state, and as “transmission belts” activating the citizenry to help the state to achieve its goals. The authorities also tended to view civic organizations as an auxiliary of the state rather than as an autonomous political force or a critical counterweight. They wished to involve citizens and their organizations in governance more than before, but within their own set limits. They expected citizens and civic groups not to depend on the state, but to be obedient to it. On the one hand, the authorities criticized organizations for being paternalistic and passive; on the other hand, they were not willing to afford organizations any real agency, and effectively endorsed paternalism in a slightly altered form. This illustrates that although the practices and infrastructure of government have been transformed since the Soviet era, the underlying logic of the government has remained distinctively similar.

The concepts of state-society relations endorsed by the authorities in Tver are concordant with those that have been officially promoted during Vladimir Putin’s and Dmitry Medvedev’s terms in office. As James Richter has argued, the Russian government does not conceive of civil society as “a messy arena” where private interests compete openly for claims upon the state, but rather as an arena where a more or less unified body politic works together to strengthen the state.<sup>43</sup> The system of public chambers aligns well with this—rather as sites of politicization, public chambers are conceived of as “an apolitical realm helping to improve state governance” without real power to decide public policy.<sup>44</sup>

The activists put forward two different conceptions of citizenship. Members of old organizations constructed a paternalist model of citizenship in which the state was regarded as the main provider of human needs. Like the authorities, they pursued a state-centered model of social development. The ideal citizen-subject was portrayed as a socially active person who works in civic organizations to help the state to implement government policies and enjoys social protection by the state. By making redistributive claims on the

authorities, these activists sought recognition for their identities and life histories. Activists of the new organizations, by contrast, questioned this type of state-centered citizenship model and advocated a participatory conception in which organizations did not merely implement government policies but actively participated in shaping them. The ideal citizen-subject envisioned here was active, self-reliant, and responsible, orienting endeavors rather to society than the state.

In both old and new organizations, cooperation with the authorities was largely based upon personal connections. These connections appeared as fundamental “know-how” in a polity characterized by structural distrust and weak institutionalization of cooperation practices. Most of the organizations worked in order to improve conditions of social citizenship, but it was political citizenship—visions of state-society relations and the role of civic participation in governance—that emerged as a major division line between new and old organizations.

The old organizations have managed to survive the changes in political climate better than their new counterparts. Their survival has been facilitated by the infrastructure and resources they inherited from the Soviet era. Their relationships with governmental structures are often far from unproblematic, but they are more likely to be willing to undertake the role of implementing policies suggested by the state than organizations campaigning for more participatory notions of citizenship. The new organizations, by contrast, have turned out to be highly vulnerable. The crisis center, the resource center, and the students’ human rights group have dissolved, and the disabled people’s group, though still formally in existence, now is engaged very few activities. This indicates that these groups did not manage to develop strong enough roots in the local community, which would have supported them amid the volatile political landscape. The center for gender studies, the only new organization still operating, has also been under pressure, mainly due to lack of funding. It is not included in the newly established governmental consultative bodies in Tver, but several old organizations, including a regional umbrella organization of trade unions and the veterans’ councils, are represented in the regional Public Chamber. It is evident that organizations pursuing participatory notions of citizenship sit uneasily with the current parameters of “sovereign democracy” that embrace state-centered social development and prefer obedience to critical voices.

## NOTES

1. For more detail, see James Richter, “Putin and the Public Chamber,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2009): 39–65; James Richter, “The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chambers in the Regions,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 56, no. 6 (November/December 2009): 7–20; and Alfred B. Evans, “The First Steps of Russia’s Public Chamber: Representation or Coordination?,” *Demokratizatsiya* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 345–362.

2. For example, in 2008 the federal public chamber supported civic organizations with 1.5 billion rubles.

3. A detailed account of civil society discourses in Russia can be found in Christer Pursiainen and Heikki Patomäki, “The state and society in Russia,” in *Contemporary Change in Russia*, ed. E. Rindzeviciute (Stockholm: Södertörns University, 2004); see also Suvi Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 167–169.

4. Other pieces of legislation adversely affecting civic activities are the law on combating extremist activities and laws regulating the organization of meetings and demonstrations. Also the law adopted in

2008 obliging governmental structures to conclude rental agreements about their premises exclusively on a competitive basis puts organizations into a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis commercial enterprises. See Yurii Dzhibladze, "Vystuplenie na vstreche chlenov Soveta po sodeistviyu razvitiyu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka s Prezidentom RF Dmitriem Medvedevym," April 15, 2009, available at <http://www.demokratia.ru/news/?content=news&id=17> (accessed June 8, 2010).

5. Richter, "The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chambers in the Regions," 10.

6. "Situation of non-governmental organizations in Russia," document prepared by the Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, September 2007. See also Dzhibladze, "Vystuplenie na vstreche chlenov Soveta po sodeistviyu razvitiyu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka s Prezidentom RF Dmitriem Medvedevym." Debra Javeline and Sarah Lindemann-Komarova, however, suggest based on a research conducted by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law that the law has not intensified difficulties for civic groups. See Javeline and Lindemann-Komarova, "A Balanced Assessment of Russian Civil Society," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2, (Spring/Summer 2010): 171–188.

7. On youth activism, see Julie Hemment, "Soviet-Style Neoliberalism? Nashi, Youth Voluntarism, and the Restructuring of Social Welfare in Russia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 56, no. 6 (November/December 2009): 36–50.

8. Elena Zdravomyslova, "Venäjän kansalaisjärjestöt ja kansalaisaktiivisuus Venäjällä," in *Kansalaisyhteiskunta liikkeessä yli rajojen: Sosiaali-ja terveystien järjestöt lähialueyhteistyössä*, ed. Airi Leppänen (Helsinki: Palmenia-kustannus, 2005): 204–214. See also Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*, and Alfred B. Evans, "Vladimir Putin's Design for Civil Society," in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans, A. B., Jr., L. A. Henry and L. McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006): 147–158.

9. Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 13.

10. See, for example, Sarah Henderson, *Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support to Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Janet Elise Johnson, "Public-private permutations: Domestic violence crisis centers in Barnaul," in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans, A. B., Jr., L. A. Henry and L. McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006): 266–283. The existing body of scholarship on Russian civic organizations has, in general, focused more on examining organizations' interaction with international donors than with the governmental structures.

11. The activists are a somewhat exceptional group, since only 35 percent of the Russian population reports being engaged in civic organizations; see Jan Kubik, "How to study civil society: The state of the art and what to do next," *East European Politics and Societies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 105–120. Even in St. Petersburg, with one of the most active civic sectors in Russia, only ten percent of the townspeople are somehow involved in civic organizations; see Zdravomyslova, "Venäjän kansalaisjärjestöt ja kansalaisaktiivisuus Venäjällä," 207. Based on the data of an All-Russian survey, Vladimir Petukhov argues that belief in and willingness to engage in collective action systematically grows from younger to older generations. See Petukhov, "Political participation and civic self-organization in Russia," *Russian Politics and Law* 43, no. 3 (2005), 6–24.

12. Tver is a provincial city located in Central Russia, located 167 kilometers to the northwest of Moscow, with 454,900 inhabitants. It is the administrative center of the Tver oblast.

13. This paper draws on three sets of data. Firstly, it draws on interviews with eight officials from the municipal and regional executive branch representing the departments of social welfare, youth affairs, education, health care, and media and PR. All these officials reported collaborating with civic organizations. Obviously their views do not represent the totality of views in the administrative organs, but I suggest they can convey important insights into the perceptions and orientations of those officials engaged in interaction with civic groups. Secondly, this paper draws on interviews with 37 activists representing organizations established both during the Soviet Union and after its collapse. The "old" organizations include the Tver city branch of the nationwide Veterans' council, a local veterans' club engaged in cultural activities, and the Tver branch of the trade union of health care workers. The "new" organizations include a feminist center for gender studies engaged in edu-

cation and research, a crisis center offering support to victims of domestic and sexual violence, a students' human rights organization providing free legal consultation to underprivileged citizens, a disabled people's group, and a resource center that offers support to local civic groups and carries out development projects with the city authorities. The interviews with the officials and the activists were conducted during 2001–2002, with a few follow-up interviews in 2004. Thirdly, on a couple of occasion this paper also draws on a representative survey of civic groups (n=105) conducted in the city of Tver during 2004–2005, in cooperation with the Department of Sociology and Political Science at Tver state university. For more detail about the data and methodology, see Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*, 17–26.

14. See Oleg Yanitsky, "Russian Greens in a Risk Society" (Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2000), 6; and Richter, "The Ministry of Civil Society?," 13.

15. Regional and city administrations were the most important partners of civic organizations in Tver: 83 percent of the surveyed organizations reported collaborating with the city administration and 81 percent with the regional administration. Organizations had notably less cooperation with legislative power than executive power, which reflects the dominance of the latter in the Russian state system. For more detail, see Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*, 46–47. A number of other studies also note the local nature of cooperation between civic groups and the authorities; see, for example, V.I. Yakimets, "Mekhanizmy mezhsektornogo vzaimodeistviya: Tipy, regionalnye primery, problemy razvitiya." Presentation in a seminar "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Rossii," St. Petersburg, February 21–23, 2002; Sarah Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support to Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Anna Sevortyan and Natalia Barchukova, *Nekommercheskii sektor i vlast v regionakh Rossii. Puti sotrudnichestva* (Moscow: CAF Russia, 2002).

16. 42 percent of the surveyed organizations received funding from some governmental organ. For more detail, see Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*, 45–46.

17. Cf. Zdravomyslova, "Venäjän kansalaisjärjestöt ja kansalaisaktiivisuus Venäjällä," 212.

18. A large number of civic groups in Russia are engaged in social welfare issues; see Yakimets, "Mekhanizmy mezhsektornogo vzaimodeistviya: Tipy, regionalnye primery, problemy razvitiya."

19. Interview at the city's Committee of Media and PR.

20. Sarah Ashwin and Simon Clarke, *Russian Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Transition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

21. For a detailed account of the gender dimensions of sociopolitical activity, see Suvi Salmenniemi, "Civic activity—feminine activity? Gender, civil society and citizenship in post-Soviet Russia," *Sociology* 39, no. 4 (2005): 735–753; and Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*.

22. Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*, 36.

23. Interview at the regional department of social protection.

24. Anne White, *Democratization in Russia Under Gorbachev 1985–91: The Birth of a Voluntary Sector* (Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 1999), 44.

25. Interview at the city's Committee of Media and PR.

26. Interview at the city's Committee of Education.

27. "O sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Tverskoi oblasti," *Ezhegodnyi doklad*, Tver, 2010, available at the <http://www.optver.ru> (accessed September 23, 2010).

28. See, for example, Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition*; Anne White, "The memorial society in the Russian provinces," *Europe–Asia Studies* 47, no. 8 (1995): 13–43; and Anne White, "Charity, self-help and politics in Russia, 1985–91," *Europe–Asia Studies* 45, no 5 (1993): 787–810.

29. Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*.

30. Education was overwhelmingly the most popular form of activity in civic groups in Tver: 60 percent of the organizations we surveyed were involved in educational activities.

31. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997): 81.

32. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African–American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–2. In his article on the community restructuring

in Russian north, John Round has documented similar narratives. His interviewees were proud of their history as “patriots of the north” and as pioneers for the Communist project, but felt now increasingly embittered as according to them, the government had abandoned them and tended to view their work as ideologically redundant. See John Round, “Rescaling Russia’s Geography: the Challenges of Depopulating the Northern Periphery,” *Europe–Asia Studies* 57, no. 5: 705–727. In his recent book Serguei Alex. Oushakine also discusses how the language of trauma and loss emerged as the main symbolic framework for making sense of the social transformation of the 1990s and its consequences in Russia. According to him, the bonds of social attachment are produced by repeated articulations of a culturally shared traumatic experience. As he argues, “for several generations, the Soviet past and personal biographies had become indistinguishable, and the disappearance of the Soviet country often implied the obliteration of individual and collective achievements, shared norms of interaction, established bonds of belonging, or familiar daily routines.” See Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 1–2, 51.

33. There are also independent trade unions in Russia, chiefly in the private sector, which have taken a more contentious position than the traditional trade unions. However, the overwhelming majority of unionized workers are still represented by the traditional unions. See Paul Kubicek, “Civil Society, Trade Unions, and Post–Soviet Democratisation: Evidence from Russia and Ukraine,” *Europe–Asia Studies* 54, no. 4 (2002): 603–624.

34. Ashwin and Clarke, *Russian Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Transition*.

35. Ashwin and Clarke, *Russian Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Transition*, 71.

36. See Salmenniemi, *Democratization and Gender in Contemporary Russia*; P.V. Romanov “Negosudarstvennyye organizatsii Samarskoi oblasti,” in *Grazhdane i Vlast: Problemy i podkhody*, eds. Mikhaleva, G. M. and S. I. Ryzhenkov (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Studia politica, 2002): 70–87; and Laura A. Henry, “Russian Environmentalists and Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans, A. B., Jr., L. A. Henry and L. McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006): 211–228 .

37. An all-Russia survey reveals that Russians perceive personal connections as the second most effective way to influence the authorities. However, it is noteworthy that most respondents,—46 percent—think that there simply are no effective means to influence. See Petukhov, “Political Participation and Civic Self-Organization in Russia,” 10.

38. See Yanitsky, *Russian Greens in a Risk Society*; Sevortyan and Barchukova, *Nekommercheskii sektor i vlast v regionakh Rossii: Puti sotrudnichestva*; and Lisa M. Sundstrom, “Soldiers’ Rights Groups in Russia: Civil Society through Russian and Western Eyes,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans, A. B., Jr., L. A. Henry and L. McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006): 178–196.

39. Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 53–56.

40. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works*, 22.

41. In recent years a certain institutionalization of cooperation between the state and civic organizations has taken place with the creation of public chambers. Unlike earlier consultative mechanisms, the regional public chambers have been created by an act of the regional legislature. See Richter, “The Ministry of Civil Society?.”

42. During the second half of the 2000s, a whole array of cooperative councils and bodies were again established in Tver in connection with the municipal and regional executive and legislative organs. The regional public chamber was also founded in 2009 in order to stimulate dialogue between the state and the public. See “O sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Tverskoi oblasti.”

43. Richter, “Putin and the Public Chamber,” 42.

44. Richter, “The Ministry of Civil Society?.”