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Title: Russian Cultural Policy : From European Governance towards Conservative Hegemony

Year: 2019

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Romashko, T. (2019). Russian Cultural Policy : From European Governance towards Conservative Hegemony. In T. Hoffmann, & A. Makarychev (Eds.), Russia and the EU : Spaces of Interaction (pp. 27-51). Routledge. Studies in Contemporary Russia.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203730744>

Russian Cultural Policy: From European Governance towards Conservative Hegemony

Tatiana Romashko

Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, cultural policy in Russia has been subject to a series of changes. Between 1991 and 2011, there was a visible trend of cultural policy decentralization and engagement with agendas and structures developed in the European Union and the United Kingdom (Belova, Et. al, 2002; O'Connor, 2005; Tchouikina, 2010). These attempts to develop network forms of horizontal organisation introduced positive ideas about cultural industries and cultural economy into national and local policies (Butenko, Razlogov, 1999; Gnedovskiy, 2005; Gnedovskiy and Zelentsova, 2006). During this time, the discursive practices of cultural policy absorbed Western principles of pluralism, e.g. cultural equality, cultural feminism, cultural diversity, creativity, inclusion and participation (Butenko and Razlogov, 1999). This enabled the diversification of ideas and concepts about culture and its implications (aesthetic, social and economic) as a result of a nascent framework of 'agonistic' political debates (Mouffe, 2000). The cultural ambivalence that was supported by public demands and foreign investments significantly contributed to the diversification of national cultural policy priorities.

Liberalization and economization are two central policy trends which bolstered inclusive civil participation in the arts, education, philanthropy and cultural economy. In that way, some features of a networked governance coincided with liberal political logic which emerged among non-governmental collaborations with Western and European countries in post-Soviet Russia. According to the results of discourse analysis, discussed below, certain rudiments of 'cultural governance' can be found in the discursive practice of post-Soviet cultural policy and its initial institutionalization within political and fiscal decentralization in the 1990s and 2000s.

Nevertheless, from 2008 to 2011, there was a decline in non-governmental cultural policy activity. It was mainly associated with domestic financial instability and political restrictions on obtaining financial and organizational help from abroad. In 2013 Russian cultural policy was shaped by increased state centralization and censorship, which had been characterized by the discourses of bordering and separation (Smits, 2014), 'single national identity,' 'modernization without westernization,' and 'liberalism as a threat to humanity' (Dugin, 2014), along with a political discourse of 'sovereign state and non-western culture,' 'spiritual bonds,' and 'Russian genetic code' (Chebankova, 2013). This development marked a shift from a previous focus on interaction and co-existence with European cultural norms through mechanisms of cultural governance to a focus on antagonism, separation and cultural hegemony.

This chapter seeks to extend the critical analysis of Russian cultural policy and its priorities stressing the role of different discursive communities in the production of knowledge about the culture and techniques of its steering. An attempt is here made to show how the initial growth of the non-governmental discursive practice of Russian cultural policy, considered to be a form of 'cultural governance', was opposed through the state's restrictive interventions in the field.¹ The main argument of the chapter is that liberal patterns of cultural

1 In 1995 Minister of Culture M. Shvydkoy assigned functional duties of the main governmental structures¹ in cultural policy making (Sukhareva, 2015). This step can be considered as the first move to the implementation of the command style cultural government. Since that time the

policy, which were harmonious with dominant European practices, were suspended by the general recentralization of the governmental system from 1996 to 2006 on the basis of rising ‘national security’ concerns (Kassianova, 2001; Schmidt, 2006; Robertson, 2009) and growing antagonism towards ‘western liberalism’ in political discourse. Evidence from a wide scale of political research (e.g. Ledeneva, 2012; Gel’mann, 2015; March and Cheskin, 2015) supports this hypothesis, stressing that ‘technocratic’ policy-making accompanied by ‘notoriously overwhelming presidential power’ left ‘little room for party politics’ (Gel’mann, 2015). Employing different viewpoints on this topic, I argue that the recentralization of Russian cultural policy occurred through ‘national securitization’ and antagonism to ‘Western liberalisation,’ which reduced the political power of non-governmental agencies and ‘negate[d] civil society’s potential’ (Ljubownikow, Et. al, 2013). Established cultural hegemony eliminated the capacity of cultural difference and its implications for the cultural economy and political freedoms on the cultural terrain, and thereby hindered the laissez-faire principle of cultural policy. As a result, positive cross-fertilization between European and Russian cultural policy models was put on hold in 2013.

According to the literature overview (e.g. Golosov, 2004; Gel’mann, 2006; Samsoshko, 2009; Schleiter, 2013; Fedorova, 2016), Russian state recentralization was introduced during the Putin’s second term and had the following features:

- (1) The curbing and elimination of the political capacity of political parties and, thereby, the elimination of nongovernmental action in the decision-making process about the distribution of public revenue on culture, education and social activities
- (2) New ‘vertical power’ in all spheres of state government, which determined one-way relationships between the state and scientific and educational bodies
- (3) Closed communicative systems of policy design, implementation and control at the federal and regional level
- (4) Command-style (top to bottom) governmental system, which diminished political power of private, public, professional, labour and academic representation in the decision making process and re-established the authority of the bureaucratic apparatus

enactment of numerous Federal Laws, e.g. "On charitable activities and charitable organizations" (1995) and "On non-commercial organizations" (1996) shaped the socio-cultural sphere by the legislation which took the general trend of ‘securitization’ of the policy (Kassianova, 2001). For example, in 1996-2002 the activity of Soros foundation in Russia was suspended according to these laws.

During 1996-2010, the process of establishing of vertical ‘top to down administration’ of the cultural sphere created a new centralised system of power, which subordinated governmental think tanks and excluded the participation of independent actors in cultural policy. The reorganisation of the Russian Government system in 2004 within the framework of administrative reform arranged the executive bodies in three levels 1) political – ministries, 2) controlling – supervising services, and 3) administrative – agencies (Compendium 2011). It prevented the possibility of the introduction of the “arm’s-length principle” in cultural policy making. In other words, it left no room for NGO’s participation in the policy process. In other words, there was an offer from independent cultural policy agencies (Institute of Cultural Policy; School of Cultural Policy, etc.), but no demand for their services from the government bodies (Drozdova, 2014; 148). Also series decrees of the President (2001, 2004, 2008, 2010 and 2011) expanded powers of Ministry of Culture and eliminated the political voice and representation of NGOs in politics of cultural policy.

(5) Limited access of NGOs and professional communities to governmental and policy activity

Thus, since 2004 the command-style recentralization of cultural policy occurred together with the general reorganization of the Russian government (Compendium, 2010) and anti-Western ‘securitization’ of political discourse (Kassianova, 2001).

The range of actors in cultural policy making was limited by the Federal Law on NGO activity (2006) and by the vertical system of subordination in cultural policy design. The broad range of policy-making activities was monopolized by the state bureaucratic apparatus (President's Council on Culture and Russian Ministry of Culture) and delegated to 'intellectuals who work in the bureaucratic machineries of government' (Bennett, 2001), e.g. 'federal and regional services for supervision,' administrative apparatuses (boards and departments) (Compendium, 2010), Russian Institute of Culture, Likhachev's University, Moscow Presidential Academy, and other state-commissioned institutions. The heads of this hierarchical system of government were appointed by the approval or by the order of the President of the Russian Federation. In this way, a new vertical system of power negated the possibility of critical interventions in cultural policy-making from independent think tanks representing multiple interests in the so-called third sector, which included grassroots movements and civic, professional and arts groups. Thus, instead of maintaining the market-oriented environment and support which would increase competitiveness among governmental and non-governmental think tanks, the policy of the state was not conducive to the 'arm-length principle' in cultural policy. In the second half of the decade, such mechanism of top-down cultural government coincided with growing scepticism about the applicability of cultural industry and cultural economy in Russia. This would create a basis for counteraction to the 'unwelcome' activities of non-state, foreign and independent actors (Schmidt, 2006). In this way, Putin's regime established cultural hegemony on the basis of national-conservative premises, securing the new form of 'unitary subject' (Hall, 2002) based as it was on antagonism to western cultural policy.

Examining this context, the chapter addresses some research questions concerning the role of the hegemonic myth in establishing a particular order of power relations and knowledge reproduction in cultural policy. The theoretical part introduces post-structural discourse theory in order to explain 'cultural governance' and 'cultural hegemony' and their implications for cultural policy. The analytical part of the chapter seeks to provide an analysis of the discursive practice of Russian cultural policy stressing the shift in its priorities from 'cultural diversity' towards conservation, securitization and promotion of "traditional" national culture. Interpretations of the concept of culture and its implications (aesthetic, social and economic) are also discussed. Particularly, the analysis extends to the description of the origins of post-Soviet 'cultural governance' which was based on agonistic political debates and *laissez-fair* principles. Then, the focus is made on the further institutionalization of the technocratic model for Russian cultural policy based on the 'party-state' regime (Gel'man, 2015) and on presidential authority. The last part of the paper presents an overview of the conservative project from 2012 to 2016, which opposed and restrained the potential of 'cultural governance' by increasing centralization and censorship. The paper concludes with attempts to explore the logic of equivalence and difference in order to characterize and explain the cultural hegemony of Putin's regime. The research is based on the critical discourse analysis of the following:

- Official web resources, including Russian government websites, the official website of the Russian Ministry of Culture, and Cultural Policy Institute (Moscow); etc.;

- Academic contributions to the cultural policy, e.g. forum and conference discussions, reports, strategies, articles, journals (peer-review Russian journals, such as “The Issues of Cultural Studies”, “Knowledge. Understanding. Skill”, “Journal of Cultural Research”), which are associated with cultural policy;
- Official documents on Russian cultural policy, e.g. legislation, resolutions, laws of Russian Federation.

Post-structuralist discourse theory and Russian cultural policy

This chapter argues that cultural governance in post-Soviet Russia existed only as one of numerous political projects which could not excise political leadership for a long period of time due to its failure to win intellectual and moral leadership and to attain the support of the emerging free market economy. The shift from cultural governance to Putin’s cultural hegemony can be understood through a post-structural theory of political discourse. This approach allows one to more fully understand the process of ‘knowledge production’ and its circumstances concerning different ‘forms of power’ (Foucault, 1982), e.g. hegemonic forms of ‘subordination, domination and oppression’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) between think tanks and institutions of state power. The research seeks to provide a more detailed analysis of Russian essentialism in knowledge production which identifies culture with a set of idealized high-brow and traditional attributes and contrasts it with a multitude of popular and ‘pseudo-cultural’ features. Basically, Russian bureaucratic and academic discourses consider the early period of cultural freedom and liberalisation in the 1990s negatively. Patterns of ‘cultural governance’ are mostly associated with the critique of the insufficient state support and regulation, unpredictable implications of the free market for mass culture production, and the destruction of cultural heritage (Flier, 1999). Political decentralization, free market and liberal individualism of the 1990s, which strived to take a leading role in ‘the circuit of culture’ (Hall, 1997) through the mass consumption and production, received negative connotations in the Kremlin’s discourses. For instance, the official website of the Russian Ministry of Culture depicts this period with the following words:

‘Development of culture has often faced critical situations due to the reduction of state involvement in the support of national culture, and illusive hope that the market will solve problems. Consequently, this led to a decrease in the influence of culture on society and on the spiritual life of the citizens... There was a division of culture into "us" and "them." Mass culture has filled the airtime, book shops, music stalls, and concert halls. The TV flows massively crashed on the person. Flourishing "star factory" and "TV elite" were carrying a pseudo-culture.’ (Ministry of Culture of RF, 2013; translation by the author).

In post-Marxist terms (Hall, 2002; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Mouffe, 2013), politics is an arena where economic, cultural and social forces and relations produce particular forms of power, e.g. forms of domination and subordination. The creation of lines of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. political frontiers) are significant in understanding the contingency of social order through which relations of domination are naturalized. Naturalization dissolves the political nature of the central ideologies. As Chantal Mouffe (2013) puts it,

‘Any order is always the expression of a particular configuration of power relations. What is at a given moment accepted as the ‘natural’ order, jointly with the common sense that accompanies it, is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices.’

Post-structural discourse theory claims that meanings of the discursive field are formed in the same way as political or social objectivity is constructed. In this respect, the ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser, 1971) working through ‘hegemonic practices’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), operates through elements and moments of social objectivity which constitutes discourses around empty signifiers and legitimate particular ethical-theoretical and ‘metaphysical decisions’ (Derrida, 1973). From this point, ‘the hegemonic process’ (Williams, 1977) as a kind of political practice totalizes social discourses and the ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1971) around or in antagonism to ‘the empty signifier’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). In this context, the empty signifier both has functions of totalization and differentiation. On the one hand, it produces articulation practices where discursive elements become moments of a specific order of discourse through the establishment of semiotic chains of equivalence. In this way, the empty signifier articulates the meaning of the ‘floating signifiers’ into a specific nodal point (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). On the other hand, the empty signifier extends articulation practices through the logic of differentiation. It enables the floating signifier to float; inasmuch as broad symbolic borders enhance its capability to establish symbolic links with other meanings. It is worth noting that ‘articulation’ is not merely about the definition or redefinition, or giving a new sense to the old notions. Rather, articulation is a process of establishing links and semiotic connections between entities, concepts and words. Articulation constitutes relations which derive a particular closure of meaning or a totalized set of meanings.

‘Totality is a discourse formation, a dispersion or ensemble of differential positions which constitutes a configuration that borrows meaning in a particular “context of exteriority”.’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001)

Laclau and Mouffe argue that hegemony is the basis of any social formation because of its contingent character. They suggest two possible hegemonic formations: ‘radical democratic’ and ‘right-wing populism or totalitarianism’ (2001). Following Gramsci, post-Marxists argued that social democratic hegemony requires ‘the differentiation’ of the people’s demands that are supposed to be represented on the political terrain and sustain the stability of the hegemonic order. Thereby, democratic liberalization is seen as an inclusive hegemonic process, where the differentiation of chains of equivalences occurs through the absorption of the whole spectrum of specific representations and demands. As Mouffe (2000) puts it, such pluralistic discursive formation becomes possible only through ‘agonistic’ types of political debate, where all signifiers have incomplete, unfixed, unsecured, open and floating character.

‘Antagonism is struggle between enemies, while *agonism* is struggle between adversaries... ethico-political principles can only exist through many different and conflicting interpretations, such a consensus is bound to be a “conflictual consensus.”’ (Mouffe, 2000; emphasis is added)

At once, agonism enables one to contest the proposition of all parties and provides the basis for a common language. Consequently, a variety of ‘representations’ (Hall, 1997) are present on the political terrain of ideological struggle. This analytical perspective enables us to find a correlation between ‘radical democracy’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) or in Mouffe’s terms ‘agonism’, and the cultural governance model, insofar as culture is maintained as a relatively unfixed empty signifier, which as a ‘site of power’ becomes filled with diverse demands of the heterogeneous society (Laclau and Mouffe 2001).

On the contrary, the populist formation of political debates is seen by many post-Marxists (Hall 1985, 2002; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) as the neo-conservative hegemonic

discourse. They claim that the contingency, ambiguity and heterogeneity of culture might be reduced if the social space is divided into two frontiers through the ‘sutured’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) logic of equivalence, which locks meanings and doesn’t allow any room for their differentiation. In this instance, a contingent nature of discursive elements is re-arranged into a necessary and essential function of hegemonic moments of a particular social order. To put it differently, the meaning of floating signifier is simplified through social antagonism. Its semiotic borders are limited by the exclusive logic of antagonism, which negates the rationality of the opposite position. In such a way, floating signifiers obtain relatively a fixed character through metaphors and equivalences, which ‘arrest the flow of differences’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) and exclude everything beyond an established regime of truth.

The political construction of antagonism constitutes the lines of inclusion and exclusion, which naturalize relations of domination and subordination between different cultural communities or social groups. In this case, culture as a floating signifier can be politically re-articulated through ideologically acceptable chains of equivalences and used as a political tool for social marginalization. From a hegemonic point of view the ‘technocratic model’ of Russian cultural policy establishes closed communicative network of political debates and excludes the alternative way of government which supposes cooperation with ‘undesirable actors’, e.g. ‘foreign agents’ and non-government representatives of marginalised minorities (non-Orthodox religion, gender, ethnic, etc.). In most respects, the general ‘technocratic model’ of Putin’s regime, which constantly has been suppressing the variety of acceptable actors and their political voice on the cultural terrain, can be seen as one possible way of establishing political leadership through cultural hegemony. Thus, my main hypothesis is that the newly built vertical system of Russian state power continuously diminished the role and political activity of non-government actors during 2001-2011 through establishing an antagonism towards the empty signifier “the West” in the political dimension. This part of the argument is that the Russian cultural governance as a political project did not obtain hegemonic leadership due to the weak institutional support in cultural milieu and unstable free market economy.

In the summary, hegemony approach, which is mainly advocated by Chantal Mouffe (2000; 2013), acknowledges that political struggle in different democratic regimes can occur through ‘agonistic’ and ‘antagonistic’ types of political debates. The distinction between the two types is seen in the degree of representation of people’s demands in the political terrain. In this context, cultural policy of the modern state may be conceptualized as a ‘mode of objectification which transforms human beings into subjects’ in the context of a particular ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1982). This regime of truth is a result of a political struggle which can take agonistic or antagonistic type of political debates. On the one hand, cultural policy conducts a central system of socio-cultural management, which tends to produce social relations and identities within its discourse. On the other hand, it represents the ideological struggle of political discourse, which in a post-Marxist theory obtains ontological status due to hegemonic values and discursive practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). Thus, the cultural policy as a set of practices of government is reproduced in the same way as the political logic of the hegemonic myths it constituted. To some extent, such an analytical perspective enables one to conceptualize different modes of power relations in Russian cultural policy, where the state, losing its authority, initially gave room to cultural governance and then reinforced institutions of obedience in order to retain the power through cultural hegemony. The next two sections attempt to explain how cultural governance and cultural hegemony are involved in the production of the essence of culture and its regulation.

At the end of this section it should be noted, once again, that I have chosen the hegemony approach to show the concrete social transformations in Russian society that

reveal the relations of political domination in post-2012 social order. That is why I have mainly focused on the scope of state cultural policy discourses and their hegemonic functions. This, of course, does not mean that Russian academic and political milieus do not engender counter discourses. My aim was to show how the mechanism of cultural hegemony dominates over oppositional discourses or excludes the conflictual political dimensions from the official/mainstream narrative legitimised by the Kremlin speakers through building internal divisions and partitions. In doing so, since 2012 the state cultural policy discourses have been totalized and repressive towards ideological pluralism and political alternatives to the ruling regime.

Post-Soviet ‘Cultural Governance’ 1992-2008

‘Cultural Governance’ can be considered a mode of power relations that constitutes a specific order of discourses, regulative practices and institutions due to the context of the hegemonic political imaginary. Under post-Fordist conditions, a plurality of interests and identifications were articulated in neoliberal rhetoric, which now is acknowledged as a ‘political-intellectual-moral leadership,’ or neoliberal hegemonic order (Mouffe, 1979). Valentine argues that ‘cultural governance’ as a political imaginary was formed as a relatively fixed ‘component of hegemonic discourse’ within the neoliberalism that emerged in the 1980s. Neoliberalism is seen primarily as ‘a political project which seeks to extract value from economic processes by acting on political systems and structures in order to transform them to its advantage’ (Valentine, 2017). The argument is that neoliberalism is incapable of producing economic value due to its ‘rentier regime’ specificity which ‘relies on extra-economic political power’ (Valentine, 2017). Thus, neoliberal political logic seeks to extract value from the social contingency and ambivalence of culture that are resources for creative or knowledge economy. Respectively, it can be said that the ‘postmodern culture’ or ‘culture without authority’ (Valentine, 2002), which presents the broad range of differences, is capitalized by the market and mobilized through the ambiguity of the agonistic political terrain of permanent ideological struggle or, ‘war of positions’ in Gramscian sense (1971). Consequently, cultural governance as a political project of neoliberalism is agnostic towards values of culture because it acts ‘on culture in whatever sense’ and concerns ‘political outcomes rather than causes’ (Valentine, 2017). It means that the cultural governance, as a type of bureaucratic practice, does not concern the process of achieving a goal but rather concerns its final result and value. It produces differences via ‘a vast consultocracy’ (Valentine, 2017) then throws them into the market where they create disequilibrium and thus new value. Hence, cultural governance is maintained by a strong institutional basis in the market, cultural diversity and political progressivism which creates the open horizon of political action on cultural terrain without the guaranteed security of a particular ideology (e.g. a set of values).

An extensive body of European literature clarifies some features of ‘governance mode’ in the sphere of cultural policy. First, the notion of ‘cultural governance’ is associated with autonomy and voluntariness of the governed and governing. Governance primarily involves informal means of exercising power or a civil system of conduct and behaviour on the basis of common solidarity or social consensus. For instance, European cultural policy studies stress the ability of liberal cultural policy to develop civil initiatives and inclusive sociocultural institutions in order to harmonise the cultural diversity of ‘glocal’ world (Bennett, 2001). Second, cultural governance tends to provide horizontal interactions and networks, which connect and overlap with each other on the basis of consensus of diverse cultural patterns. Thus, the priority of liberal cultural policy is seen in maintaining a mutual understanding of different representations, meanings and open-ended identities or

‘constructions of the self’ (Giddens, 1990) on the basis of tolerance, trust, inclusiveness and participation in the cultural, social and economic struggles of autonomous subjects and communities (Vestheim, 2012). Moreover, the strong autonomy of each actor endeavours to maintain and promote its ‘own cultural policy’ (Blomgren, 2012). In brief, cultural governance produces cultural differences, working through neo-liberal cultural policy, which is characterized by

- ‘agencification’ or flexible networks, where the participants have their own interests and have relative hierarchy (Bach, 2012);
- mobility of the frameworks that respond to the current challenges (Gray, 2012);
- inclusive participation of different actors (private, public, state, professional etc.) in policy-making (Pyykkönen, 2012; Pyykkönen, Et. al, 2014);
- reflexive nature of the policy towards consumption and production according to the public needs (Gray, 2012).

Using such analytical perspective, the further part of this chapter discusses the discursive practices of Russian cultural policy in order to show some features of nascent ‘cultural governance’ and the decisiveness of ‘hegemonic functions’ of post-Soviet political decentralization. It gives a description of an early transitive period in post-Soviet perestroika that conditioned ‘cultural, fiscal and political decentralisation’ (Kawashima, 2009). Affecting the governmental regime (e.g. a system and method of former centralised government), it enabled neo-liberal patterns to appear in Russian cultural policy. To that extent, it can be assumed that low legislative and administrative activity of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation in 1991-1995² and the absence of ‘controlling and supervisory’ state’s structures, opened some room for non-governmental initiatives to create a ‘political moment’ (Mouffe, 1979) compatible with the cultural agenda on the national and local level. This assumption is concerned with the transformation of the discursive order under hegemonic functions of general post-Soviet liberalization. The analysis of the cultural policy discourses divides them into specific communities according to their periodic, thematic and political type.

In 1991 the Ministry of Culture declared the transition to the targeted program management. Initially, this frame aimed to provide inclusive access and participation of different actors in the design, coordination and implementation of cultural policy on federal and regional levels. Every regional Ministry of Culture was supposed to elaborate its own programs for cultural development according to the needs of a local community. In this way, the Russian state made an attempt to adjust the cultural sector to the free market, which was supposed to combine economic and social priorities of cultural development. It seemed like a practical way to solve challenges of rapidly growing liberalization and democratization, which ‘traditional government’ could not cope with (Golyshev, 1999).

There is some evidence from National Reports on Russian Cultural Policy (Razlogov, 1992, 1996) to suggest that at the regional level, practitioners, labourers and workers of the art and cultural sphere endeavoured to find a common language with the state and private sectors and propose possible frames of the cultural economy and inclusive cultural policy.

2 During this period, the Ministry of Culture prepared only Federal Law on ‘Fundamentals of Legislation on Culture’ 1992 and the Federal Programme for the Development and Preservation of Culture and the Arts, 1993-1995. However, due to ongoing political and economic crisis these documents gained mainly declarative character.

This was supported by the growth of non-governmental activity in social, civic and cultural spheres from 1991-1996 (Liborakina and Yakimets, 1997; Henderson, 2002). Russian investors and business magnates, foreign and domestic philanthropists were willing to invest funds in support of nascent civic institutions, ‘organic’ (Gramsci, 1971) cultural initiatives and small businesses that belonged to popular culture and the entertainment economy. The analysis of online resources³ of the main actors⁴ and international programmes⁵ as well as other research (for instance, see: Khodorova, 2006; Tchouikina, 2010) shows the increase of the spectrum of cultural, educational and scientific issues that obtained support from domestic and foreign foundations, commercial companies and EU programmes. Open Society Institute, OSI (Soros Foundation in Russia), as well as other foreign foundations provided financial help and organizational support to local research centres and public associations in arranging network projects, internships, and seminars with foundations, charities, NGOs and governmental structures of Eastern and Western Europe, Central Asia and US (Chaparina, 2004; Crotty, 2003; Henderson, 2003). Social networks were transformed into common grounds for further structural and institutional policy change. Subsequently, knowledge and skills from abroad, and interactions with foreign consultancies, gave a boost to the first wave of Russia non-governmental activity.

In 1996, the Russian Ministry of Culture supported initiatives of the Council of Europe in the field of rights and freedoms, cultural diversity and sustainable development. In the early 2000s, few independent agencies and research centres interacted with European actors. During 2000-2007, numerous autonomous domestic cultural policy players emerged at the regional and local level. Cultural agencies attempted to form a politically active community, to bring together different kinds of representatives of cultural business, local self-government, private and professional sectors. Moscow-based NGOs such as ‘Institute of Cultural Policy’⁶ (ICP, operated from 2002 till 2012) and ‘Creative Industries’ agency⁷ (operating from 2005) were among them. Their aim was to bridge private sector’s interests with local community’s demands and the national agenda. Official discourses assumed that these initiatives would increase responsibility and provide inclusive access to the cultural policy making, which would operate on the basis of a grant system. For instance, top managers of ICP, Elena Zelentsova and Mikhail Gnedovsky took the leadership in this area of activity (Gnedovsky, 2005; Zelentsova and Gladkikh, 2009), providing the whole range of different kind of services⁸ in cultural policy all around the country. Likewise, Justin

3 For example, several non-government resources, such as Agency of Social Information

(<https://www.asi.org.ru/>), Russian office of the Charities Aid Foundation (<http://www.cafrussia.ru/>), Centre for the development of NGOs (<http://crno.ru/>) provide overall annual reports and surveys on philanthropic and fundraising activity in different regions of Russia.

4 Cultural Policy Institute, Moscow(<http://eng.cpolicy.ru/>), Open Society Foundation

(<http://soros.novgorod.ru/index.php?chap=project>), M. Prokhorov’s Foundation, V. Potanin’s Foundation, Moscow School of Cultural Policy, UNESCO, EU Council of Culture, etc.

5 Numerous international grants and programs were launched at the end of the 1990s by Open Society Foundation (US), Fulbright program in Russia (US), Ford Foundation (US), Eurasia Foundation, Chevening Scholarships in Russia (UK), DAAD (German), UNESCO, etc.

⁶ <http://eng.cpolicy.ru/>

⁷ www.creativeindustries.ru

8 Such as: translation of foreign professional literature (P. Kotler, J. Smiers, C. Landry, R. Florida, etc.); consultancy of regional government bodies (Siberia, Karelia Republic, Kyrgyz Republic);

O'Conner describes similar attempts to introduce innovative ideas regarding cultural industries in St. Petersburg within EU's TACIS Cross Border Co-operation Programme (see: Belova, Et. al, 2002).

There were two types of discourses and practices produced by Europe-connected NGOs.⁹ The first group represents emerging networks between local NGOs, creative class and business structures, which mainly took place in Moscow, Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod and St. Petersburg. The discussions within these networks were aimed at adapting post-Soviet 'cultural administration' to the free market. The general subject of this community was cultural and art management, or what is known in Russian as 'project work'. The development of Russian 'alternative economy' was discussed in the context of positive EU-Russian co-operative rhetoric with the emphasis put on such concepts as 'marketing,' 'cultural diversity,' and 'collaboration'.

The other group of discursive practices illustrates intensive relationships in cultural policy between:

- (1) Federal and regional government's structures (Russian Ministry of Culture and regional Ministries of Culture, Committees of Culture and local authorities);
- (2) Russian and European governmental structures (Russian Ministry of Culture and UNESCO, EU Council, EU Commission on Culture, etc.);
- (3) Foreign Foundations and EU structures¹⁰, local public authorities, autonomous cultural agencies, domestic academic communities and individual scholars.

Examination of the dynamic of both discursive communities unveils important aspects of cultural governance during this period. First, in contrast to the Soviet times, official discourses adapted the utilitarian approach to culture and its government (Fitzpatrick, 1974). Instead of the so-called 'socio-cultural engineering' (Dondurey, 1986; Glazychev, 1987; Henisaretsky and Shchedrovitsky, 1967) the concepts of 'cultural diversity', 'creativity' and 'participation' (Butenko and Razlogov, 2000; Henisaretsky, 2003; Belyaeva, 2012) were introduced on the federal level. Such a change demonstrates the expansion of issues of cultural democratization, human rights, political and ideological freedoms in the official discourses. During 1996-2004 new chains of equivalence appeared in ministerial discourses, such as 'cultural democratization – cultural liberalization – cultural marketization' and 'international cooperation – cultural diversity – cultural industries'. As a result, ideas of cultural industries and cultural economy were adjusted to specific Russian conditions (Gnedovsky, 2003; Zelentsova and Gladkikh, 2009) and introduced as central concepts of cultural development in the 'Strategy 2020' (Ausan and Arkhangelsky, 2012), as well as of Dmitry Medvedev's political agenda of modernization during 2007-2011.

Secondly, the liberal hegemonic practices transformed the *dispositif* of power relation, which during this period encompassed horizontal, heterogeneous and relatively inclusive discursive practices of independent cultural policy-makers. In the 1990s and early 2000s

conducting research and design of programmes ('Sociocultural Design', 'Creative City', 'Models of Cultural Policy', etc.); establishing partnership between foreign and domestic foundations, local community and public authorities; planning, organising and holding meetings, discussions, seminars, conferences, forums, roundtables with different actors of regional cultural policy.

⁹ The period of chosen data is limited to 1992-2012.

¹⁰ EU and UK think-tanks, universities, EU Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, etc.

organisational assistance from the West expanded a variety of cultural policies and gave a chance to relate them to public demands and the global economy. Financial support from foreign and domestic NGOs created a convenient environment for fair and straightforward discussions about political issues concerning the accessibility of public funding, priorities of cultural policy, organisational frameworks of governmental and non-governmental agencies, etc. Such discussions clearly attested to the democratic features emerging in the Russian political system (see Evert van der Zweerde's chapter in this volume). Open systems of communication, transparency, inclusion and participation were the main features of these discussions. Moreover, established connections between different kinds of actors created common symbolic grounds for negotiations. Finally, these discussions defined priorities and dynamics of further domestic and international co-operation not only in culture and arts, but also in education and economics. Furthermore, national independent cultural agencies tried to make these discourses compatible with the governmental logic of the Russian state apparatus (O'Connor, 2005). For example, Compendium's report shows that 'cultural policy priority shifted from state administration of cultural institutions and funding, mainly for heritage preservation, to more diverse principles of managing cultural affairs' (Council of Europe, 2013). In this context, this period of cultural policy development might be considered a prototype for the nascent cultural governance.

Nevertheless, these trends were halted. Multiple attempts to 'transfer power from government to the non-governmental sector, i.e. the market, industry, voluntary sector and private individuals' (Kawashima, 2009) were limited by the growing interventions of the central government in the local process of policy-making. Innovative approaches were also constrained by corruption of the local public authorities (see: O'Connel, 2005; Erofeeva, 2010; Tchouikina, 2010; Lipmann and Petrov, 2012). After 2008 EU-Russia activity and interactions with western countries became much less accentuated in the official internet resources; this tendency reached its peak in 2012-2013. The decrease of this particular discursive dynamic coincided with the growing general recentralization of the governmental system (O'Connor, 2004; Gel'man, 2006; Gel'man and Lankina, 2008), paralleled by securitization and geopoliticization of Russia's foreign policy agenda.

'Cultural Hegemony', Conservatism and Securitisation

After the wave of mass protests against the unfair presidential and parliamentary elections in 2011-2012, the trajectory in Russian political development decisively shifted towards authoritarianism, conservatism and securitization (Gel'man, 2015). The arguments this section puts forward are aimed at understanding the new basis of the hegemonic nature of the conservative turn in Russian cultural policy. It describes the origins of the Russian conservative project and explains how its different elements are fixed in the totalized cultural policy discourse that functions as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1971). In a typical Gramscian sense, cultural hegemony contains features of a class alliance which exercise political, moral and intellectual leadership, and are supported by economic forces. The economy sets 'the limits for defining the terrain of operations' (Hall, 1986), political freedoms and individualistic actions. Such a type of leadership, in Althusser's (1971) sense, can be considered an authority of the 'ideological state apparatuses' over individuals. In other words, cultural hegemony produces 'a historical form of popular thinking' in order to secure social acceptance of the leading class' supremacy through the subject' agency (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1982).

Since 2012, the Russian government has resumed using familiar from the Soviet times forms of intervention in cultural sphere such as censorship and political prosecution in order

to limit or eliminate independent thinking in education, humanities and sciences, arts and performance, etc. (Romanov, Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2015). The mainstream Russian political discourse has been establishing itself against narratives of Westernization, modernization, and globalization which it regards as threats to authority and control. Hence, it mobilized a new, conservative cultural project as part of the political regime. The conservative positions were articulated at the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture in Moscow on 15 April 2013. In the opening speech, the newly appointed Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky declared that “originally, culture is a system of prohibitions. This is a system of restrictions. The higher the culture of a particular civilization is, the more restricted the system is” (Medinsky, 2013). According to the new conception, cultural policy should include patriotism and articulations of national identity. For this sake, the state increased its subsidies to numerous programmes and events such as the 2014 Year of Culture, the 2015 Year of Literature, the 2016 Year of Russian Cinema (Khestanov, 2014; Kalynin, 2015; Kurennoy and Khestanov, 2018). In this context, culture was rearticulated as based on conservative discourses on values, patriotism and Orthodox morality. The concepts of official ideology (Chebankova, 2015), such as ‘single national identity,’ ‘sovereign state,’ ‘non-Western culture,’ Russia’s ‘distinct path of development’, were introduced as a dominant rhetoric by which the state legitimated its policy decisions through the conservative politics of ‘national security.’

Furthermore, during 2012-2015, the floating signifier ‘national security’ was articulated in different forms of antagonism (sex, gender, national, cultural, religious, moral and ethical), and promoted through chains of equivalence ‘national security – cultural conservation – top-down cultural government – state censorship’ and ‘state culture – national culture – high-brow culture – cultural heritage’ in official statements and the media. For example, the conservative project rearticulated LGTB issues not as a freedom of gender, sex and individuality, but as a threat to Russian norms (Makarychev and Medvedev, 2015). In this way, questions of national identity, norms and traditions are linked together and create the empty signifier ‘national security.’ This totalized complex of national security discourses establishes an antagonism towards the empty signifier ‘the West’ through a form of cultural hegemony that negates meanings beyond a particular regime of truth. Cultural hegemony enables the rearticulation of the semantic field of a particular regime of normality through establishing sutured chains of equivalences and eliminating the logic of differentiation.

Essentially, ministerial and Kremlin’s discourses articulate ‘culture’ in its narrow sense (Gnedovsky, 2003), associating it mainly with classical or traditional culture and arts, cognitive or spiritual improvement (Zukova, 2009), which excludes cultural diversity beyond the borders of a particular civilization. Such ‘civilizational’ understanding as a vestige of Lenin’s “likbez” campaign¹¹ still defines the political priorities in education and culture (Kurennoy, 2013; Herstanov, 2014). Since Soviet times, ‘cultural work’ has been associated with the state’s responsibility for the enlightenment of the population and preservation of the national heritage (Kagarlitsky, 2013). The Federal Law on ‘Fundamentals of Legislation on Culture’ 1992 (RF Law, 1998) aimed to protect national cultural heritage from destruction, to ensure people’s rights for cultural participation, to guarantee the freedom of cultural activity of national and ethnic communities, and to secure non-interference of the state in creative processes on ideological grounds. In actual practice, the ‘state protection’ was provided mainly towards classical arts (Erofeeva, 2010). Also, the ‘Federal Program of Support and

11 The elimination of illiteracy campaign in the 1920-1930s, from the Russian abbreviation: ‘likvidatsia bezgramotnosti’.

Development of Culture (1993-1995)' mainly was introduced as a protection measure for maintaining 'the network of institutions of culture and art' (Ministry of Culture, 2013).

In the spirit of 'securitization' (Kassianova, 2001), official declarations announced that the Russian state is concerned with the moral, ethical and economic implications of the global market and cosmopolitan imaginary for national culture. This approach is deeply rooted in the post-Soviet academics' discourses of the 'state cultural policy'¹² (Flier, 1994; Vostryakov, 2011; Astafiyeva, 2008, 2014), where the state is considered the main political regulator of the policy, and discourses of 'sociocultural regulation' (Markov and Birjiniuk, 1997; Flier, 2000; Lusan, 2014; Flier, 2014), where the individual is a subject of state regulation. Basically, since the fall of the Soviet Union, the academic community tried to formulate a 'new cultural policy' in order to 'preserve the high culture and national heritage from total destruction' (Razlogov, 2014). A concept of a sustainable system of cultural policy was defined as a 'direction of state's policy associated with planning, design, implementation and support of the cultural life of the state and society' (Flier, 2000). Such an approach supposes that cultural policy is an area of state government where cultural regulation, the creation of national identity and civilizing restrictions all take place.

It is worth pointing out at least two implications which follow from this. First, the current cultural hegemony of the conservative regime is deeply rooted in the Soviet imaginary, where the state had strong paternalistic functions and society was seen as a clock mechanism. Second, the vast state-affiliated network of academic and scientific structures, whose institutional patterns remained practically unchanged, inherited this imaginary and continuously reproduced it. In doing so, the system of knowledge production is nourishing an immutable bureaucratic apparatus around a ruling party by means of moral and intellectual leadership. Conversely, it gets financial and political support through the durable state order.

The analysis of academic and ministerial discourses¹³ shows that the current cultural dynamic is formulated through the following chains of equivalence:

- (1) 'Official or high-brow culture – cultural heritage – national culture';
- (2) 'Cultural destruction – cultural democratisation – liberal influence of the Western culture';
- (3) 'Preservation of national culture and heritage – state interventions – centralized government of culture'.

The effect of these elements in cultural policy discourses paves the way for antagonism between 'liberal-cosmopolitan-popular culture' and 'patriotic-national-official culture', and

12 Russian cultural studies

¹³ Particularly, articles from pre-review Russian Journals, which are associated with issues of cultural policy (e.g. "The Questions of Culturology", "Journal of Cultural Research", "Knowledge. Understanding. Skill"), certain articles of the most cited (Cultural studies: Top 100 most cited Russian scientists according to the RISC. Available from: <http://dissertation-info.ru/index.php/-100-/167--100-.html>) Russian academics (e.g. Kondakov I., Zukova O., Khrenov N., Zapesozky A., Mosolova L., Astafiyeva O., Flier A. and others), conference proceedings and transcripts (e.g. International Cultural Forum in St. Petersburg in 2013, 2014 (Almanac: World of Culture and Culturogy. Conference proceedings, 2013, 2014); Round Table "Culture and Industry: Towards Brand New Industrialisation?" in 2013 (Questions of Culturology, 2013; 2-3); First and second reduction of Federal Law "Origins of State Cultural Policy" (2014); period of analysis is 2010-2015).

therefore creates the terrain of exclusion. For instance, it normalizes such statements in academic discourses as ‘the contemporary Western human, more – “liberal”, doesn’t know any values in principle; he doesn’t have to know; he is assumed to know and to follow only his own selfish interests without any valuable moral chimers such as “idea of justice.”’ (Kafyrin, 2012). This particular ‘regime of truth’ excludes the capacity of negotiating cultural challenges in a different way. Human rights, freedom of self-expression, and tolerance for cultural diversity are negated for the sake of preservation of the national culture, conservation of the cultural heritage, and moral issues. Thus, the potential differentiation of the political as well as academic discourses is articulated through two chains of equivalences: ‘Russian culture – conservative culture – true cultural values’ and ‘Western culture – liberal culture – degenerate cultural values’. Escalation of this kind of antagonism after 2014 has generated the following moments of totalization within the conservative discourse:

- (1) The concept of ‘economic equality’ acquires the negative connotation of consumerism;
- (2) The concept of ‘national identity’ rejects the idea of ‘cultural diversity’;
- (3) The concept of ‘inclusiveness’ is considered as synonymous to the omnivorous character of culture or its undue commodification;
- (4) ‘Creativeness’ is equated with the collapse of high culture and traditional values;
- (5) The freedom of sex, gender, class, ethnic, national, cultural expression is associated with ‘dissoluteness and immorality.’

These chains of equivalences eliminated the logic of differentiation inherent in the floating signifier ‘culture.’ Such a semiotic totalization of ‘culture’ on the political terrain created the popular consent around the exclusion of cultural diversity and human rights associated with gender, religious and cultural freedoms from the current regime of truth. In this way, Putin’s conservative project sees cultural policy as a field of exclusive state regulations on culture, or ‘practical operations that are merely administrated and policed by governmental officials’ (McGuigan, 1996). Thus, considering cultural policy as an authoritative ‘mode of subjectification’ of meanings and values and not as the ‘political mode’ of ‘the whole way of life,’ such administrative practices exclude discourses and imageries that fail to legitimize their belonging to the “national” or “patriotic” culture defined from the top.

Conclusion

The increasing tendency towards securitization and the decreasing care for individual freedoms of expression legitimated two dominant functions in Russian cultural policy: national security and conservation. ‘Justice’ as one more essential aim of the state was articulated in the government’s documents mainly as ‘cultural participation’ solely in traditional, nation-patriotic, ‘state-approved folklore’ (Razlogov, 2013) and classical culture. The current conservative political project leaves little room for cultural governance as understood in this chapter, and thereby for cooperation with European actors of cultural governance. It maintains the patterns of command cultural regulation characterized by:

- the reduction of the logic of differentiation in articulations of cultural policy discourses;
- little chance for grass-roots participation;
- legitimized violence over oppositional political and ambiguous cultural representations.

Moreover, the totalized discourses of Russian state cultural policy exclude the possibility of conceptually opening up a wide range of terms and notions (e.g. creative culture, informational economy, cultural industry, etc.), maintaining an antagonism and enmity towards inclusiveness, contingency and diversity of a ‘common culture’ (Williams, 1986). In conclusion, it might be suggested that post-Soviet cultural governance existed as one of the numerous political projects. Having lack in political capacity and economic support in the market, it failed to become hegemonic in Russia. As follows, cultural governance as a mode of cultural policy is limited in the case of the authoritarian governmental system and undeveloped grounds for neo-liberalism.

Increasing censorship in the media, social networks and arts, which took place during 2012-2017, led to the ‘frontal war’ (Gramsci, 1935) between the repressive state apparatus and cultural coalitions of Russian creative class, e.g. artists, performers, film makers and producers. Konstantin Raikin’s¹⁴ speech on censorship, 24 October 2016 at the seventh Congress of the Union of theatrical figures of Russia and lately at the Public Chamber of Russian Federation or Vitaly Mansky’s¹⁵ speech at the Nika Ceremony (the Russian Oscar), 29 March 2017, other public statements and open confrontation¹⁶ with censorship might be seen as glimpses of rising counter-hegemony and a demonstration of the weakness of Putin’s hegemonic project. However, this is a topic of further research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jeremy Valentine for critical comments and suggestions. Also, I am very grateful to Andrey Makarychev for his editorial help and Hadel Jarada for her assistance with style correction.

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¹⁴ Konstantin Raikin is a director of the Moscow theatre “Satyricon”.

¹⁵ Vitaly Mansky is a Russian film and documentary maker.

¹⁶ For example, in 2012-2017 Peter Pavlenko performed the brightest performances of political actionism in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

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