

Chapter 8

Production of Cultural Policy in Russia: Authority and Intellectual Leadership



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Abstract The chapter discusses different frameworks of knowledge production within the discourses and practices of Russian cultural policy. Russian cultural policy as an administrative sector has been developed in line with two distinctive governmental regimes, more precisely during the period of liberal decentralisation of the 1990s and the conservative centralisation from 2011 up until today. The study focuses on the main changes that have occurred in the framework of policy design and participation in policymaking.

An attempt is made to combine Foucauldian analytical frameworks of power and discourse with a Gramscian hegemonic approach to political studies that was mainly advocated by the Essex scholars—Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and David Howarth. Such a perspective opens up a possibility of considering the institutional rearrangements of intellectual leadership through which the post-2012 establishment has endeavoured to advance its sovereignty and planning capacities in both the symbolic and the normative dimensions of culture. Thus examined, Russian state cultural policy turns out to be intrinsically subordinated to the sovereignty of the presidential apparatus that privileges the conservative stance of the ‘Russian World’ project and neglects human rights and cultural diversity.

The research is based on a wide selection of national strategies and drafts of federal law on culture.

Keywords Russia · Cultural policy discourses · Hegemonic approach · Intellectual leadership · Sovereign power · Laclau and Mouffe · Foucault

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8.1 Introduction

Back in 2004, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine¹ became a kick-off for the first steps made by the Russian establishment towards consolidation of power within the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation (AP) and mobilisation of anti-Western rhetoric through a set of Kremlin-affiliated think-tanks. The antagonistic features of Putin's political project demonstrate its hegemonic character. Various researches have described the corresponding discursive practices of the Kremlin in many ways, e.g. as 'Putin's vertical of power' or 'federalism and electoral authoritarianism' (Ross 2015); 'supranationalism' or 'cultural and economic regionalism' (Kazharski 2019); and the 'Russian World project' (Suslov 2018). Nonetheless, a noticeable political and cultural turn towards conservatism occurred in the Russian Federation after the crisis of Putin's legitimacy in 2011–2013 (Ross 2015; Robinson 2017). Initially, thousands of metropolitan citizens took to the streets to protest against the unfair 2011 State Duma elections, and, later, massive peaceful anti-Putin protests shook the whole country in 2012–2015.

A literature overview (Gel'man 2015; Gudkov 2015; Bogush 2017) shows that the Russian establishment did not expect a chain reaction in the non-systemic opposition and, thus, took urgent measures. Primarily, the ideological shift in the post-2012 Kremlin's thinking sparked numerous changes in Russian legislation, which, in general, might be characterized as a 'state against civil society' confrontation (Ross 2015). Various restrictive federal and local laws led to a narrowing of the political space available for the non-systemic opposition, along with an institutional transformation of state governance as such. Additionally, such a squeeze on constitutional freedoms was accompanied by empowerment of both the repressive apparatus and the Kremlin-affiliated think-tanks (including the Russian Orthodox Church) in the promotion and preservation of traditional values, spiritual bonds, social stability and state sovereignty (Kalinin 2015; Grishaeva 2015; Yatsyk 2019). Within this context, Russian cultural policy became part of the national security strategy protecting 'traditional values and norms, traditions, and customs and patterns of behaviour of the Russian civilisation' (President of the Russian Federation 2014). According to the Presidential Decree № 808 (2004), 'culture' has been defined as 'a set of formal and informal institutions, phenomena and factors influencing the conservation, production, transmission and dissemination of spiritual values'. And ultimately, 'culture' has been turned into 'the guarantor of the preservation of the common cultural space and territorial integrity' of the country (Russian Government 2016).

Nevertheless, the post-2012 Russian state is neither totalitarian nor democratic. It is a 'hybrid regime', which simulates democratic institutions such as the Parliament but relies on 'repressive legislation inspired by the Presidential Administration'

¹See 'Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation' for an interpretation of the Ukrainian case as an 'anti-constitutional coup' supported by the United States and the EU (Russian President 2015).

(Noble and Schulmann 2018, 50). Following this course of thought, the chapter addresses a pivotal moment in Russian cultural policy development by examining the institutional background behind the conservative turn. A few critical studies show that today's Russian cultural policy tends to have features that differ from what the cultural policy supposedly was before. These are mainly associated with an 'instrumentalisation of culture' in an attempt to (1) legitimise the federal government (Turoma et al. 2018, 651), (2) establish 'cultural borders between Russia and the EU countries' and (3) reduce 'Russian society to a single national identity' (Romashko 2018, 90). In contrast, the mainstream national cultural policy discourse encourages conservative statements about the 'Russian distinctive path', 'Russian World civilisation' and 'Orthodox values' (Ministry of Culture 2015). In this vein, top Russian academics insist on the appropriateness of the new 'model of state cultural policy' (Vostryakov and Turgaev 2018), where the 'political will' comes from the president and his administrative apparatuses (see Gudima 2014; Turgaev et al. 2017).

Taking into account these existing contradictions, the chapter endeavours to explain the paradox of the novel framework of Russian *state* cultural policy and its post-2012 transformation. It is done through an analysis of the current political and legislative context, which is understood as an ensemble of power relations. The main research question is how the institutional conditions of the hegemonic conservative project affected the cultural policy framework in post-2012 Russia. In answering it, I pay special attention to the complexity of the relations between governmental rationalities and administrative techniques, as well as legislative proposals and institutions, which altogether constitute a specific governmental logic of cultural policymaking. In particular, I examine to what extent the sovereign power of the presidential apparatus² has embodied intellectual leadership and replaced network forms of governance in cultural policy.

Drawing on ideas from post-foundational political science and cultural theory (Gramsci 2000; Foucault 1969; Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000), I explore Russian cultural policy frameworks in terms of different governmental logics, ways of production and forms of intellectual leadership. In doing so, I scrutinise the recent legislative amendments on culture and the political discourses around them. The aim is to show the actual power relations and political decisions behind the empowerment of the Presidential Council for Culture and Art, PCCA (1996–2018), and the abrupt dissolution of the Russian Institute for Cultural Research, RICR (1986–2014), which for many years had played a leading role in cultural policy development. Thus, the research focuses on the dynamics of parliamentary lawmaking activity in the cultural sector and the political debates around it over the period from 2007 to 2018. Special attention is devoted to the analysis of

²It consists of the (1) Administration of the President of the Russian Federation (AP) and its profile departments; (2) members of the 'United Russia' party who hold (2.1.) leading positions in Kremlin-affiliated foundations and think-tanks; (2.2) the position of the Chairman of the Committee on Culture of the State Duma (since 2018) and those of other committees in the Parliament; and (3) the highest positions in the Russian Government, which are appointed by the President of the Russian Federation.

routine procedures of the RICR and PCCA and executive-legislative activities of the lower (the State Duma) and higher (the Federal Council) chambers of the Russian Parliament.

The chapter starts with a discussion on the post-Soviet cultural policy framework, addressing its legal system and political struggle for intellectual leadership. After that, I will explain the post-2012 mode of Russian state cultural policy and reveal its institutional background. Before doing so, I outline the methodological background of the study.

8.2 Hegemony, Intellectual Leadership, and Power in Russian Cultural Policy

Originally, Gramsci (2000, 249) defined ‘hegemony’ as an ensemble of ‘domination’ and ‘intellectual and moral leadership’, which is a precondition for the political authority of a supreme social group. Proposing a non-essentialist notion of ‘hegemonic subjects’, which Gramsci saw as the ‘fundamental classes’, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 138) developed a post-Marxist theory of hegemony. They used the term to designate ‘a political type of relations’ that is incompatible with ‘relations of subordination or power’ because ‘a hegemonic articulation’ requires the ‘presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them’ (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 138). Their discourse theory emphasises ‘a logic of equivalence’ that explains how a specific constellation of ‘nodal points’ becomes a privileged signifier through converting ‘elements’ of heterogeneous discursive practices into ‘moments’ of a discursive formation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 114). As a result, Laclau and Mouffe tend to focus more on the symbolic dimension of hegemony and do not take into account the mutual interplay of power and discourse, which is a matter of importance in political studies.

For the purposes of political analysis, Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, 5) state that they ‘take discourse or discourses to refer to systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects’. Further, they deduce that ‘moments’ of discourse are the ‘differential positions’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 5) that are visible at the political level due to their incorporation by the hegemonic forces, e.g. moral, intellectual, political and economic forces. Meanwhile, elements are those differences that exist in the complex discursive field, but their ‘articulatory practices’ and ‘subject positions’ lack a political will, and as a result, they do not obtain a higher degree of mediation, reproduction and dissemination within the ‘hegemonic formation’ (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 136). In this respect, the Gramscian notion of *moral and intellectual leadership* might be interpreted as an ensemble of subject positions located within the *dominant* or *politically recognised discursive formation*, which is involved in policy formulation. Since intellectual leadership assumes both *authority* and *expert knowledge*, it articulates meaningful systems, identities and values that in a modern state support legal reasoning and political goals. Yet, neither Gramsci nor Laclau and Mouffe have much to say about

the institutionalisation of a particular intellectual leadership and what kind of power pillars its subject positions. Moving beyond the most abstract comprehension of hegemony, this chapter seeks to extend the scope of the problem to different forms of power that might be mapped into a political logic of difference and a logic of equivalence. This is done in line with Laclau and Mouffe's observation 'that the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity' (2001, 130).

A Foucauldian perspective on power and discourse can help to overcome this methodological challenge. Referring to Foucault's writings (1969, 1975), one may say that power operates not only from outside the discourse, investing a political will in the institutionalisation of a specific alliance of intellectual forces and constituting their discursive formations. But power is also exercised through the articulatory practices or discursive regularities of intellectual leadership. It follows that intellectual leadership might be endowed with authority either (1) by political forms of domination compatible with a democratic regime, which allows for the existence of political differences in collaborative governance; or (2) by the sovereign power of a particular institute or a supreme leader, which is typical for hybrid or authoritarian regimes with a centralised government. Apart from this, institutions of intellectual leadership themselves accumulate political features. This is due to the fact that they enunciate 'rules for the formation of objects, modalities of statements, concepts and theoretical choices' (Foucault 1969, 72). Therefore, those institutional entities that perform leading roles are capable of orchestrating a group of statements, norms of verification, critique and coherence, which a priori excludes certain possibilities, constructing lines of inclusion and exclusion within its sphere of competence. This kind of thinking is particularly relevant when considering the Russian case, because, on the one hand, as an *analytical category*, *intellectual leadership* carries political recognition or authority. On the other hand, as a *political category*, it reveals the struggle for domination among intellectual forces.

In this respect, a set of 'differential positions' (i.e. experts, opinion leaders and top officials of the cultural sector) located within the Presidential Council for Culture and Art³ can be regarded as a coalition of Kremlin-elitist intellectual forces, which in exchange for privileges and economic rent authorise the 'power bloc' to speak out on behalf of the nation. An important fact is that, before 2012, this body was in charge of a limited number of functions, which were mainly related to the management of the national and presidential 'award in the field of literature and art'. Meanwhile, the political will and driving forces of cultural policy development resided dispersed within a network of different institutions of cultural policy, i.e. profile committees in regional governments and the Parliament, cultural and research agencies, independent think-tanks, and professional and academic units.

³Allegedly, this 'consultative body, established to inform the president of the situation in culture and the arts, coordinates his contacts with cultural and artistic organisations and members of culture and arts communities, as well as prepares draft proposals on topical issues concerning state policy in culture and the arts' (Kremlin 2001).

However, on the threshold of the 2014 National Year of Culture, Putin suggested that the honourable members of the Presidential Council for Culture and Art should ‘formulate the central, basic objectives of the state cultural policy’ (Kremlin 2013). Ironically, this initiative resulted in a public scandal. In April 2014, a ministerial document on the ‘principles of state cultural policy’,⁴ which mainly consisted of Putin’s quotations and instructions, caused public discontent. Quite a few academics⁵ and research centres (e.g. the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Science, https://iphras.ru/cult_polit.htm) were against radical statements proposed in the document, such as ‘Russia is not Europe’ (for more, see Gudima 2014, 44; Moroz 2016). This was a pivotal moment since, in order to resolve the situation, President Putin authorised his Council for Culture and Art to take intellectual leadership in cultural policy formulation. Later on in 2014–2016, proceeding in the same way, the president expanded the privileges of his ‘consultative body’ to legislative activity, bypassing parliamentary discussions and political representation. One may say that the redistribution of intellectual leadership has occurred through institutional alterations caused by the reinforcement of the sovereign power coming from the Presidential Administration. Thus, I argue that after 2012 the presidential apparatus has gradually established a monopoly on political and legislative initiatives in cultural policy through rearrangements of institutional apparatuses and consolidation of intellectual and moral leadership⁶ within the Presidential Council for Culture and Art. In particular, it is important to stress that the shift from the logic of differences to the logic of equivalences in cultural policy has occurred in the context of the post-2012 institutional transformation, within which it became part of the hegemonic political project. Hence, to provide evidence for the above claim, the next section will examine several aspects of this institutional transformation of the cultural policy framework. Before that, I will briefly introduce its legislative background, which originates from the early 1990s.

8.2.1 The Post-Soviet Legislative Framework of Cultural Policy

Essentially, cultural policy in the Russian Federation is ruled by laws. These include (1) the fundamental federal law on culture (1992); (2) a set of nationwide sectoral laws; and (3) a number of regional legislations on cultural policy in 59 out of the

⁴The Ministry of Culture outlined the ‘foundations of state cultural policy’ (Izvetia 2014).

⁵See the special issue on cultural policy in the *Iskusstvo* journal (<http://iskusstvo-info.ru/issues/kulturnaya-politika/>)

⁶To address the institutional level of the problem, I understand the assemblage of different institutional entities of the civil society (i.e. research, academic, cultural, analytical and political actors) as an alliance of intellectual forces that struggle for intellectual leadership in policy production.

85 regions of the Russian Federation, which assume a local aspect of cultural development. In addition, ‘many relationships in the sphere of culture are regulated by the Civil, Labour, Budget, Tax, Land and Urban Planning Codes of the Russian Federation’ and other federal laws related to education, informational security and mass communications (Ministry of Culture 2014, 240). To become a law, all legislative initiatives must first pass three stages of parliamentary readings (i.e. be accepted twice by the Duma and by the Federal Council), then, be adopted by the Russian Government and, finally, be approved by the President of the Russian Federation. According to the Russian Constitution (1993, 104), the president of the state, Duma deputies, members of the Government, the Ministries of Culture and the Constitutional and the Supreme Arbitration Court all have equal authority to submit bills to the State Duma.

An initial normative framework of cultural policy was established by the first federal law ‘Fundamentals of Russian Legislation on Culture’, FRLC (Russian Supreme Council 1992). It prescribed the common reciprocal relationships between the state and other actors of the cultural sphere based on the principles of cultural and economic freedom.⁷ These relationships were limited to four main targets that the law intended to tackle. In particular, it aimed (1) to ‘protect the constitutional rights of Russian citizens to cultural activity’; (2) to create legal guarantees for free cultural activity and associations’; and to define (3) ‘legal norms for relations between subjects of cultural activity’; and (4) ‘principles of state cultural policy, legal norms of state support and guarantees of non-interference into creative processes’ (Russian Supreme Council 1992: article 2). According to the FRLC, the key instruments of state cultural policy were four-year federal ‘target’ programmes of cultural development, government subsidies and tax benefits for the third sector and all cultural activities. However, many empirical studies (Kostina and Gudima 2007; Karpova 2009) have highlighted that the Russian Government repeatedly reduced the allocated budget for all ‘target’ programmes by half due to the budget cuts coming from the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, such a policy toolkit provided little opportunities for the diversification of local policies. The target programmes approved by the Russian Government were mainly oriented to support the state-run cultural sector and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the general recentralisation of governance that occurred within the 2004 administrative reform and a range of related centralising laws⁸ practically cancelled the previously announced social

⁷To be precise, Article 11 of the FRLC (1992), states that ‘[e]veryone has the right to a free choice of moral, aesthetic and other values, [...] to the state’s protection of cultural identity’. In addition, Article 46 outlines the economic freedom of ‘cultural organisations’, which have an unrestricted right ‘to obtain gratuitous donations (grants, subsidies) from Russian and foreign legal entities and individuals, and international organisations’.

⁸The Federal Laws № 122 (2004) and № 94 (2005), and numerous amendments to the legislation on non-governmental organisations in 2006–2007, which aimed at increasing control over the public and third sectors as well as combating corruption, in fact, led to the elimination of the economic freedom of state-run cultural organisations (Russian Government 1996, 2004, 2005a).

guarantees and tax exemptions for cultural activity and the third sector (see Gudima 2007; Robertson 2009).

Nevertheless, the 1992 basic law on culture allowed the introduction of unprecedented democratisation and participation in policymaking, which progressed in line with post-Soviet decentralisation. First, the ideological content of culture was not limited to a particular, single idea imposed by the central government or declared in a law of high jurisdiction. In this respect, all regional authorities and republics had a right to develop their own ‘programmes of cultural protection and development’, sourcing intellectual leadership from numerous schools of thinking and professional units. Secondly, Article 28 of the 1992 FRLC proclaims that ‘the state provides an opportunity for organisations that represent creative workers to participate in policy formulation’.

In theory, this mechanism of policy formulation assumed joint work between various experts or groups of interest and local governmental bodies (i.e. committees of the Federal Council, the State and regional Dumas as well as the Ministries of Culture). They were supposed to take into account the demands and needs of social or professional groups and formulate decisions at the municipal level. Then, if successfully argued for on the regional Duma’s floor, such a political statement might become the subject of federal legislative activity and be put forward in the State Duma by political representatives or members of legislative branches.

On the whole, the basic post-Soviet legislation on culture clearly stipulated the introduction of political differences and a kind of network governance in the cultural sector. Nevertheless, the continuous process of legislative activities always implied an antagonism of two forces. On the one hand, the conservative forces of the Russian Government have intended to regulate, operate and maintain those cultural domains that are subordinated to the state apparatuses (i.e. Ministries of Culture) through financial and administrative control. On the other hand, the liberal forces dispersed across miscellaneous actors of the civil society have striven to expand the scope of legislation in terms of equality, social security and labour and economic rights for all actors in the art and cultural sphere irrespective of their affiliation with the state. The next sections describe two discursive formations of Russian cultural policy that were shaped by the liberal and conservative forces during their intellectual leadership.

8.2.2 The Fate of Cultural Governance in Putin’s Russia

An analysis of the recent legislative initiatives (2007–2018) to change the basic law on culture (1992) and the political debates around it makes it possible to detect two ensembles of social relations, within which the conservative and liberal forces have exercised intellectual leadership within a particular regime of power relations. In practice, Russian cultural policy has developed in two major directions. Driven by competing assemblages of intellectual forces, its framework has evolved as (1) a political dimension of democratic debates and bottom-up initiatives and (2) administrative-regulative practices of the central government. The latter has eventually

transformed into a Kremlin-run mechanism of rent distribution among loyal elites and, thereby, has entailed the relocation of the political will from the Parliament to the Presidential Administration.

This section examines the evolving network form of governance in cultural policy that was compatible with the post-Soviet political logic of difference. According to the results of my previous analysis (Romashko 2019), the process of decentralisation and regionalisation of post-Soviet cultural policy was mainly associated with the democratic project of the Russian Institute for Cultural Research. Under the leadership of Kirill Razlogov, this think-tank was a kind of pioneer in building mutual relationships between legislative authorities and non-governmental actors in society (see Razlogov and Butenko 2000).

In close cooperation with the State Duma, the federal and regional⁹ Ministries of Culture and the European Council, the RICR had regularly initiated meetings and collaborative projects with local communities, professionals and scholars in order to make their side of the story heard at the political level. Throughout 1990–2012, this cluster of discursive practices was composed of a broad network of different association, unions, agencies and NGOs. They actively participated in cultural policy formulation by providing (1) relevant background for political argumentation and legal reasoning; (2) reliable evidence of the actual execution of laws and state guarantees; and (3) expertise on legislative initiatives (Fedorova and Kochelyaeva 2013). Typically, a large part of these bottom-up legislative proposals aimed to resist the ongoing limitation of rights, freedoms and social security in the cultural sector through the gradual budget squeeze and security policies of the mid-2000s, which were mentioned above in the previous section. Consequently, through a mechanism of political representation, this discursive formation succeeded in encompassing and orchestrating standard procedures and techniques of cultural policymaking, which ultimately constituted a domain of normativity and participation for various actors of the sector.

In April 2010, during the so-called ‘Medvedev’s modernisation government’ (7 May 2008–7 May 2012), Kirill Razlogov, backed by the Duma’s Committee on Culture, took a political moment to challenge the Parliament (Ivliev 2011). He claimed that cultural activity in Russia desperately needed a legal framework that would strengthen the protection of the constitutional rights and freedoms of all actors in the cultural sphere, including consumers and freelance creative labourers. He stressed three main problem areas (1) controversial issues related to the central government’s attempt to ‘regulate’ and ‘manage’ the culture, ‘beliefs, customs and traditions of people’; (2) a problem with the recognition of cultural diversity in Russia; and (3) difficulties with accepting the synthesis of cultural and human rights (Razlogov 2011: 36). As Razlogov stated, ‘[i]n our country, this problem is particularly acute, since, as you know, there are influential people who believe that the very concept of human rights is not applicable in our culture and our tradition, that

⁹For example, the Ministry of Art and Cultural Policy of the Ulyanovsk Region, Omskaya Oblast’, the Republic of Karelia, etc.

we have other ideas about human rights' (Razlogov 2011, 37). At the end of his speech, he also concluded that the 'key problem' in Russia is 'the problem of recognizing the plurality of cultures, the problem of respect for another culture, the problem of its understanding. . . So, all *these differences*, they are *the very cultural life* that saturates all societies' (Razlogov 2011: 37–38, emphasis added). In November 2011, the first draft of the federal law 'on culture in the Russian Federation' was submitted to the State Duma (Ivliev et al. 2011). In line with the above-mentioned ideas, the law expressed consolidated bottom-up voices from regions and political demands of cultural labourers. It declared a considerably broader understanding of culture, in the sense that all forms of folk culture, art and creativity should be equally recognised as cultural activities that deserve support and protection (Institute of Economics and Social Policy 2011). The intention was to change the existing mechanism of state support¹⁰ for culture through an economic and administrative liberalisation of the cultural sector.

An analysis of the primary considerations, reviews and comments on the draft (2011–2015), carried out and provided by several committees of the State Duma as well as regional Ministries of Culture and expert groups, shows that all actors accepted the concept of the law and its draft positively. Nevertheless, this legislative initiative failed to go through the first readings due to formal comments to the draft and a negative review from Vladislav Surkov, who was in charge of Putin's administration at the time (Russian Government 2011). Several academics who were involved in this legislative process admitted that there was 'no state's will to adopt it', since the Ministry of Culture indicated that 'the proposed legislation could be considered only after the adoption of the "Principles of State Cultural Policy (PSCP)"' (Gudima 2014, 41). Ultimately, in April 2018, the State Duma decided to reject the bill because:

According to the results of the Presidential Council for Culture and Art's meeting held on 21 December 2017, President Vladimir Putin instructed the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, in collaboration with the Presidential Council for Culture and Art, to develop and present the concepts of the draft federal laws 'on culture' and on amendments to certain legislative acts in connection with the adoption of the federal law 'on culture' and, consequently, to ensure the development of these federal laws. Ultimately, *the draft federal law developed in accordance with the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation might happen to differ from the draft law under consideration* [the 2015 draft of the federal law 'on culture'], which, in the opinion of the Committee on Culture [of the State Duma], *is unacceptable*. (State Dumas Committee of Culture 2018; translated from Russian by the author, stress is added).

The extract above clearly demonstrates that in 2018 the authority of the presidential apparatus overrode the constitutional framework of cultural policymaking, or to put

¹⁰The FRLC (1992) was significantly limited by the Federal Law № 122 'concerning the common principles of the organisation of local government in the Russian Federation' (2004), which abolished Article 45, which was related to social security and assignments of cultural labour; Articles 27 and 28 on the status of creative workers and professional units; Article 53 on the interaction between cultural institutions and other enterprises etc. For more, see the latest edition of the FRLC (1992). Consultant. http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_1870/

it differently, the sovereign power of the Presidential Administration took over the role of the Parliament in cultural policy formulation. Thus, in order to understand the actual power relations behind the suspension of this legislative initiative, we should examine the genealogy of Kremlin-driven cultural policy—the nature and origins of its intellectual leadership—and the moment when it became hegemonic.

8.3 Consolidation of Intellectual Forces within the Kremlin's Russian World

During the second period of his presidency (2004–2007), Vladimir Putin appeared increasingly often in academic circles, round tables and forums of the most prominent intellectuals across the country. In these meetings, the Russian president expressed profound concern regarding the mission of culture, which in his own words is ‘to make *“the people out of a mere population”*’ (Putin 2006). Through this, the Kremlin designated culture as a terrain where a constitution of a new political agent—the people of the *Russian civilisation*—out of the *demos* has occurred. Expressing similar sentiments, Vladislav Surkov,¹¹ Vyacheslav Nikonov¹² and other influential figures of the AP, as well as numerous pro-Kremlin think-tanks and foundations,¹³ have extensively succeeded in constituting a set of subject positions within the discursive formation of the ‘Russian World’ project. On the one hand, it has encompassed a number of administrative operations of money and power redistribution among Kremlin-affiliated entities and projects.¹⁴ On the other hand, its symbolic dimension has expanded considerably at the expense of unlimited and unoccupied elements of the discursive field, which have regularly been converted into moments of the antagonistic and therefore hegemonic discourse of the establishment.

Initially, Surkov (2006) proposed a political process of ‘nationalisation of the future’ through the use of Russian ‘culture as an organism of meaning formation and ideological influence’. Later, in his 2007 Address to the Federal Assembly, Putin defined the ‘state sovereignty’ of Russia through its ‘cultural and spiritual distinctiveness’ (*samobytnost*) (Putin 2007). Further, followed by a round of applause, the president firmly stated that Russian is ‘a true language of international communication’ and should be ‘popularised to secure a living space for the multimillion

¹¹A former Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration.

¹²A member of the Public Chamber of Russia.

¹³Such as the ‘Unity for Russia Foundation’ (<http://www.fondedin.ru/o-fonde.html>), ‘Russian Social and Political Centre’ foundation (<http://www.rppc.ru/>), non-profit foundation ‘Policy’ (<http://www.polity.ru/>), discussion club ‘Valdai’ (<http://ru.valdaiclub.com/>) and ‘Russian World Foundation’ (<https://www.ruskiymir.ru/>)

¹⁴For instance, the Russian World Foundation was established by Putin in 2007 (Russian President 2007).

“Russian World”, which, of course, is much broader than Russia itself’ (Putin 2007). In fact, a range of Kremlin statements rearticulated Shchedrovitskii’s original conceptual framework of the ‘Russian World’ into a meaningful system of proto-conservative ideas, where ‘sovereign democracy’ (Surkov 2006) was politically linked to national culture, protectionist policies and state intervention in the cultural life of the population (for more, see Suslov 2018).

Finally, the Russian World narrative validated a specific set of Kremlin practices of intervention in the cultural terrain. It both affected the former instruments of cultural policy and generated a parallel toolkit of rent redistribution among subjects of the Russian World who performed the Kremlin’s priorities and initiatives. For instance, the federal target programme ‘Russian language (2006–2010)’ was launched ‘in order to strengthen the statehood, national security and prestige of the Russian Federation’ (Russian Government 2005b). Federal targeted programmes were supplemented by a set of Kremlin initiatives, such as annual celebrations of the national thematic year or presidential grants in the sphere of culture. For example, during the 2007 ‘Year of Russian Language’ (Russian President 2006), numerous international and national ‘events in the field of culture, science and education’ obtained federal financial assistance to deliver the political objectives of the Kremlin. Moreover, many state-affiliated NGOs and think-tanks were set up to implement a protectionist range of tasks to promote the Russian language and Russian national culture in accordance with Putin’s message (Suslov 2018; Yatsyk 2019).

As a result, moments of the Kremlin’s discourse on national identity became institutionalised into a meaningful system of governmental practices of the ‘Russian World’. During the mid-2000s, the Russian World project spread via federal targeted programmes, institutions and policies. On the one hand, this intervention in the cultural domain was sufficient for the Kremlin to consolidate loyal intellectual forces. This way, the AP secured authority to speak on behalf of ‘the people’ after the 2012 crisis of Putin’s legitimacy. On the other hand, after 2014 the ‘Russian World’ was rearticulated within a conservative political idea of ‘sovereign democracy’, which enunciated ‘Russia’s stance vis-à-vis the liberal democracies’ (Suslov 2018, 9).

8.4 Closing Remarks on the Institutionalisation of State Cultural Policy

An institutional transformation of Russian cultural policy began in 2013. That year, the newly appointed Ministry of Culture rejected a national report on culture, which had been prepared by a team of experts in cooperation with several regional ministries and already endorsed by the European Council. In relation to this issue, Kirill Razlogov, one of the editors of this volume, noted that officials wanted him to ‘improve’ the final version of the text in line with Putin’s quotations from the 2012 Valdai Club (Razlogov 2014a). Razlogov refused to comply with these instructions.

In response, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Ministry of Culture and the Russian Government were appointed to prepare and approve the national report on culture (Russian Government 2013). Thereby, the central government consolidated its supervision over the input and output of cultural policy all at once, which completely changed its framework in terms of procedures and methods of scientific research. Instead of providing an unbiased review of the real state of things in the cultural sphere and identifying its problem areas, all ‘state reports on the state of culture in the Russian Federation’¹⁵ celebrate the best practices of the ‘Russian World project’ and Putin’s personal involvement in the formulation of cultural policy priorities. Thus, since 2013, each national report on culture has glorified Putin’s seminal words. For instance, the 2018 Cultural Forum brochure started with Putin’s words: ‘[i]t is extremely important to preserve our identity in the turbulent age of technological change, and here it is impossible to overestimate the role of culture, which is our national civilisational code and reveals creative principles in human beings’ (Ministry of Culture 2018: 4, translated by the author).

Later in 2014, the Russian Institute for Cultural Research was dissolved as part of the implementation of the ‘optimisation policy’ of Putin’s 2012 May Decrees (see Razlogov 2014b). It was replaced by the Presidential Council for Culture and Art appointed by Putin to take a leading role in cultural policy formulation. Consequently, in 2014–2016 the PCCA was commissioned to elaborate two nationwide legislative acts, namely, the ‘Principles of State Cultural Policy’ (Russian President 2014) and the ‘Strategy of State Cultural Policy’ (Russian Government 2016). Approved by the head of the country, without having been considered in the Duma, both papers were statutory and consistent with the conservative priorities of the Kremlin (see Romashko 2018). Both these so-called ‘national strategic documents’ attained a status of supreme power, revoking the previous federal and sectoral laws.

Imposing a totalising logic of equivalence on the further legislative as well as administrative process in the cultural sector, these official papers articulate ‘culture’ through the nodal points of the ‘Russian World’. Consequently, the chains of equivalences include both the spiritual dimension of culture, in other words, spiritual bonds = Orthodox religion = Russian traditional values and non-Western morality, and its normative aspect, i.e. single cultural space = civilisational code = patriotism and historical identity = state sovereignty. In this manner, the meaning of culture is partially fixed, through an antagonism, to an empty signifier ‘the West’, which bears ‘threats to national security in the field of culture, including the erosion of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values and the weakening of the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation’ and makes ‘never-ending attempts at falsification of the Russian history, at its revision’ (Russian Government 2016: 6–7; 9).

¹⁵For example, see a number of Cultural Ministry reports from the period of 2014–2018 (<https://www.mkrf.ru/activities/reports/>)

In fact, the novel ‘management of state cultural policy’ (Russian Government 2015) produced a whole range of bureaucratic operations. Some of the most visible governmental practices were intended to bring about a general ‘improvement in the management system of state cultural policy’, mainly by focusing on two issues (Russian Government 2015). The first was the task of ‘bringing *the legislation of the Russian Federation* in line with the goals and objectives of *state cultural policy*’, which involved the process of elaborating a set of documents consistent with the president’s annual list of instructions and the 2012 Presidential May Decrees (Russian Government 2015, 2016; Putin 2015).

The second task was to organise a structural basis for the operative work and actual management of Russian *state* cultural policy. In this respect, various state commissions, councils, committees and Kremlin-affiliated expert and working groups were commissioned to ensure the implementation of the ‘principles of state cultural policy’. Subsequently, this created a need to ‘improve the federal and regional legislation on culture’ and to ‘create structures at the federal and regional levels to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the goals and objectives of Strategy 2030 and the principles of state cultural policy’ (Council of Federation 2017). For instance, between 2012 and 2018, the Russian Government adopted 51 federal laws in relation to culture and its regulation (Ministry of Culture 2018, 57). This is almost nine times more compared to the number of legislative acts accepted via the democratic mode of cultural policy during the equally long period of 2004–2011.

In general, this scope of rulemaking procedures served to justify the further morphologic growth of state-run organisations responsible for the implementation and control of targets, ideas and measures set out by the Presidential Decree № 808 on the PSCP (2014) and related acts. Moreover, it provided an institutional basis for the (1) monopolisation of power over cultural policy formulation within the presidential apparatus and (2) reduction of the political capacities of policymaking at the regional and local levels. To a certain extent, such a sovereign mechanism of decision-making is justified because the presidential instructions are authorised by the PCCA at its annual meeting. Hence, these decisions are not supposed to be questioned or challenged in the Parliament.

In sum, it can be said that state cultural policy became part of the hegemonic conservative project within the ideological limits of the Kremlin’s ‘Russian World’. It was carried out through the gradual empowering of the Presidential Council for Culture and Art and weakening of the democratic forms of governance as well as the representative capacity of the Parliament. The acceleration of these processes led to a moment in 2018 when the authority of the Presidential Administration completely substituted the former mechanism of governance and its logic of difference that conveyed various voices of the cultural sector.

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