The Dynamics of Russian State-Society Relations

A Case Study of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations

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Master Thesis

Department of Political Science

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The Dynamics of Russian State-Society Relations

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IV
Abstract

This master thesis offers an additional look at the state of Russia’s civil society sector in the year 2017. The data shows that, while researchers are right to be critical to the current development of the NGO sector, there is also some hope for the future. Often dismissed as non-existing or considerably weakened, the NGO sector keeps on resisting and contesting in their own way. In this qualitative case study, I develop four hypotheses derived from theory on hybrid regimes and consensual contestation, suggesting that the hybrid regime in contemporary Russia has in their interest to include society in some decision making, and that the civil society organizations in turn have certain formal opportunities to influence policy. Using the cases of two environmental non-governmental organizations situated in St. Petersburg, I find that this is to a certain extent true. The organizations face challenges connected to controversial issues, in contact with a government seemingly intent on creating a new brand of nationalism and patriotic ideology. Nevertheless, the government is in some instances dependent on these organizations, and make use of them in a way that is mutually beneficial.
Acknowledgements

Every time I have discussed the subject of my thesis with anyone the last year, the reaction is always why? Followed by the assumption that civil society does not exist in Russia. If someone had told me only a few years ago that I would be finishing my education with a master thesis written about state-society relations in Russia, I would not have believed them. This journey started for me, quite unexpectedly, with a semester of my master in St. Petersburg. These few months sparked my interest in our neighbor in the East, and the development of civil society, which has proved to define my way forward, even after the thesis.

Thank you to Jørn Holm-Hansen, who has been a valuable supervisor in this entire process, for always giving me constructive feedback, and gently steering me in the right direction. Your enthusiasm for the subject has always motivated me. Thank you to all my informants, for always inspiring me to continue and for sharing your valuable knowledge. Without you, this would be a difficult task.

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Any misconceptions and errors in this master thesis, I alone am responsible for.
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<td>Center for Independent Social Research</td>
<td>Центр независимых социологических исследований</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRNO</td>
<td>The NGO Development Center</td>
<td>Центр развития некоммерческих организаций</td>
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<td>ERC Bellona</td>
<td>Environmental Rights Center Bellona</td>
<td>Экологическим правозащитным центром «Беллона»</td>
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<td>FOE Norway</td>
<td>Friends of the Earth Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights</td>
<td>Совет при Президенте Российской Федерации по развитию гражданского общества и правам человека</td>
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<td>NCO</td>
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<td>ROSATOM</td>
<td>State Atomic Energy Corporation</td>
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1 Introduction

The year 2017 was declared by president Putin to be the official Year of Ecology in Russia. According to the president himself, the year is an opportunity to focus upon environmental issues as a priority, and the environmental focus is incorporated into an approved strategy for the development of Russia. In this, the president also stresses the role of civil society and nongovernmental organizations. The president also calls this a very important contribution to the formation of an environmental culture in Russia (Президент России: События, 2016). Alongside this statement from the Russian authorities, reports of human rights infringements are reaching the rest of the world.

As reported by the Freedom House Index’s report on freedom from 2016, further freedoms of assembly and association have been reduced compared to the previous years. The index *Freedom in the World* is an annual report on political rights and civil liberties, ranging from 1 (free) to 7 (not free). Russia's general rank has gone from Partly Free to Not Free. Some of the measures mentioned include the use of force by the police and harsh fines for protests and demonstrations, escalation in the governments campaign against NGOs by including more organizations on the list of “foreign agents”, and limitation of trade union activism. The formation of parties based on ethnicity or religion is not permitted by law (Freedom in the World: Russia, 2016).

In 2017, the report indicates a further increase in breaches, and Russia scores as low as 7 in political rights and 6 in civil liberties. One example of the recent changes in freedoms of assembly and association can be seen through the implementation of the Foreign Agent Law. It came into effect on November 21, 2012. This law requires all NGOs receiving foreign funding or conducting in political activity to register as “foreign agents” at a registry controlled by the Ministry of Justice (NGO Law Monitor: Russia, 2016).
1.1 Research Question

As I am writing this, reports are coming in about new anti-Putin demonstrations in several Russian cities barely one month after the last wave of demonstrations. Other manifestations of civil society activity might also be a sign that the recent changes in freedoms of assembly and association has not limited the civil society sector as much as it might seem. In March 2017, Alexey Navalny organized and encouraged protests in 100 cities across Russia (Mortensen et al. 2017). The protests in Moscow in the wake of the 2011 parliamentary elections where around 50,000 people attended what has been named as the biggest anti-government protest since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989. The protesters claimed that the newly held elections were fraudulent, and demanded a reelection (Sanford 2011). While the recent mobilization and protests might represent something different than NGO activity, the attention is drawn to recent developments in Russia.

The picture emerging of our neighbor in the East is one often painted in black and white, and the aim of this thesis is to dig deeper. This thesis does not aim to diminish the consequences felt by these NGOs in face of recent legislative changes and regulations. It recognizes the challenges the NGOs stand up against, and also tries to highlight what state-society relations remain to the organizations.

The aim of this thesis is in other words to take a closer look at non-governmental organizations role in Russian society today, and in particular; what kind of interplay exists between civil society organizations and the government structures. The workings between society and state is complex in any society, and so is expectedly the case for Russia. Building on the theoretical framework of *consensual contestation* and literature on hybrid regimes, the research question is as follows:

*What kind of interplay exists between civil society organizations and the governmental structures? What formal opportunities exist for civil society organizations’ influence? And in what way are these opportunities limited and/or encouraged by the current regime?*

The thesis aims to assess the existing state-society relations in Russia, through the lens of environmental NGOs. As environmental groups in particular has had unique role in Soviet history as dissidents, the state’s relations with this sphere presents an interesting subject. In addition, the groups in question play a dualistic role, with continuous cooperation with the
state on certain issues, while battling on other issues. With much previous research on state-society relations in the social sphere and the sphere of human rights, this thesis aims to address the need for a study of environmental groups.

1.2 Literature

The literature concerning civil society development in Russia is quite extensive. The sphere was first explored with emphasis placed on the weakness of civil society present in post-communist regimes, among others Howard (2002). The literature focused on the soviet legacy as the explanation for the weakened civil society, and the importance of proper civil society development to enhance democratic development. 26 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union has however, showed that simply describing Russia as a regime in transition to democracy, is at the best naïve. The literature has changed its focus from transitional regimes and post-soviet legacy, to an emphasis on the forms of civil society within hybrid regimes.

This thesis builds on the theories of consensual contestation (Bindman 2015, Cheskin and March 2015, Owen 2015, Tarasenko 2015, Turbine 2015, White 2015), in addition to theory on network governance in Russia (Davies et al. 2016, Aasland et al. 2016, Petrov et al. 2013), theory on hybrid regimes (Levitsky and Way, Carothers 2002, Hale 2011). Within the framework of consensual contestation, the research has been focused on social NGOs (Tarasenko 2015), human rights and women (Turbine 2015, Owen 2015, Bindman 2015).

1.3 Outline

In chapter two, I will illuminate the debate on civil society theory and its implications for the development of democracy. In addition, I will account for the legacy of the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union, which has been discussed at length in former research. It is a common argument that civil society in former Soviet states remains weak because of this legacy. This chapter will form a backdrop for the further discussion of the current state of civil society and the sphere of NGOs in contemporary Russia.

In chapter three, I will explore the theoretical framework that forms the baseline of analysis and discussion later in the thesis. The first part of the chapter will clarify the literature written about hybrid regimes. It further explores the characteristics of hybrid regimes, and show that
Russia fits into this description. Moreover, it will go into the implications this regime type has for the governance and the state-society relations. This will give an account of what we might expect from the state-society relations in Russia. In the second part of chapter three, I will expound on the theoretical framework of consensual contestation. Furthermore, I will show that this framework is useful for studying the state-society relations in Russia because the framework allows for a much more detailed exploration of these relations than some other theories. Lastly, the chapter gives an overview of former research using the framework on different aspects of Russian civil society. Together, the theory outlined in this chapter is used to derive four hypotheses that form the basis of the later discussion.

Chapter four concerns the methodology and data used in this thesis. The chapter explains the choices behind the method and selection of data. The first part of the chapter outlines the research design of the qualitative case study, in addition to the case selection. The cases are two environmental non-governmental organizations present in St. Petersburg, Russia: ERC Bellona and Greenpeace St. Petersburg. To add additional support outside these two cases, several external sources representing different organizations have also been chosen. The second part of the chapter explains the method of collecting data and the method of sampling. The study is based on a triangulation of sources, with interviews and document analysis as source material.

In chapter five, I analyze the material collected in accordance with the theoretical assumptions. The discussion is outlined by the hypotheses which I analyze with each case in turn, and finally summarizing with the additional sources. The discussion will be summarized with some concluding remarks in chapter six. Here, I will return to the research question in context with the hypotheses, and review the results in light of the research question.
In this chapter I will account for the development of the Russian state and civil sphere from the time of the Soviet Union to the transition into what is today recognized as a hybrid regime. I will define a brief timeline for the beginnings of the Russian state as it presents itself today, and account for the literature on the field of post-communist civil society to frame the discussion of the relationship between state and society today. I make the argument that viewing Russia solely in the perspective a post-communist country is unconstructive. While the past should be taken into consideration when studying state-society structures and civil society in particular, it should also be noted that Russia has been a country in rapid development since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Already in 2004, Schleifer and Treisman depicted Russia as a country that underwent and extraordinary transformation, from “communist dictatorship to a multiparty democracy in which officials are chosen in regular elections” (Schleifer and Treisman 2004, 20). The Russia we see today is not only a country in rapid development defined by its past, but more importantly a child of the contemporary world. It finds itself in an unprecedented situation, belonging to the world economy in a novel way, and enjoying a central position in numerous international institutions. Since the dissolution of the USSR, Russia has gained membership in Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Trade Organization, G20 and is additionally a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Moreover, Russia takes a leading role in cooperation to the East, with membership in organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Chapter 2.1.1 outlines of the implications civil society have for state development and democratization, drawing in democracy and democratization theory. Chapter 2.1.2 offers a definition of civil society and non-governmental organizations. In chapter 2.1, I will frame the historical legacy Russia inherited from a totalitarian regime, before I in chapter 2.1.1, will
venture further into what implications this has for the literature on post-communist civil society.

2.1 The Concept of Civil Society

The subject of civil society has been a popular one, especially when it comes to studying post-communist regimes. It has become clear that the emphasis is placed on the weakness of said civil society in most post-communist countries, Russia is no exception here. The claim from many researchers is that civil society in Russia has remained weak since the fall of the Soviet Union. Evidence also suggests that the situation has worsened during the last few years. But what makes civil society such a cherished subject to research? Ivan Krastev attempts to answer in his description of the concept of civil society in Russia:

The idea of civil society has long been a magical construct, one that has somehow succeeded in simultaneously satisfying modernization theorists’ belief in the historical mission of the middle class, the New left’s fascination with spontaneous activism, neoliberals’ affection for antistatism, and Western donors’ fondness for English-speaking NGOs. But today that construct is losing its appeal (Krastev 2010, 114).

2.1.1 Why Does It Matter?

The classical definition of civil society theory draws on the works of Alexis de Tocqueville and Robert Putnam, as well as many other scholars, among others Antonio Cramsci and Ralf Dahrendorf. It argues that social capital and civil society are beneficial to democracy in an array of aspects. Civil society organizations teach the “political skills of democracy”, and it can create social trust and encourage “democratic behavior” such as civic engagement and voting (Newton and van Deth 2010, 220). This argument can be traced far back, and is more recently noted in Robert Putnam’s study of civic traditions in Italy: voluntary organizations “instill in their members, habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness, as well as the practical skills necessary to partake in public life” (Putnam 1993, 89). When citizens do not participate in organizational activities and civil society, they also leave behind the opportunity to learn democratic habits and skills, required for democracy building.
Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) developed a framework describing the different aspects of civil society influence. Although this framework was developed to discover civil society’s role in peacebuilding, the study is founded on theories from democratization and development, and is thus regarded as useful also when studying civil society’s effect on democracy. The study resulted in seven different areas of influence that explain the constructive role of civil society in democracy building and democratic consolidation: protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialization, social cohesion, intermediation and service delivery. The research revealed all the same that civil society is not necessarily solely good for democratic development and peacebuilding: “Many civil society actors show uncivil behavior, preach hatred against other groups, and can incite violence” (Paffenholz and Spurk 2006, 34).

Putnam and Goss (2002, 9) expand on this, giving the example of social capital development in the United States. Many local initiatives have been taken to organize citizen-based groups, and whereas some communities have been successful in creating an increased respect for the government, other communities have groups such as the Ku Klux Klan others like it, which rallies against racial integration. While increased respect for the government is not necessarily the goal of such organization, it provides an example of the influence citizen-based groups might have on society. In Russia, similar examples can be found in the sphere of child protection, where the reforms to strengthen children’s legal rights have formed a ferocious campaign in defense of “traditional Russian family values” (Höjdestrand 2016).

Linz and Stepan (1997, 17) on their side, argue that civil society development is crucial for democratic consolidation. They list this as one of the conditions that must be in place for a democracy to be consolidated: “conditions must exist for development of a free and lively civil society”. They further argue that a well-developed civil society is invaluable, as it has “capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state, can help start transitions, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completion and help consolidate and deepen democracy” (Linz and Stepan 1997, 18).

2.1.2 Civil Society and NGOs Defined

The concept of civil society can be an elusive one, and many different definitions flourish in the literature. Cheskin and March make the claim that “the term civil society can be counterproductive in the Russian case, as it is too fixated on distinguishing between state and
society to fully make visible the relations between the two. State-sponsored and state-sanctioned activities are often excluded in this view” (Cheskin and March 2015, 262). As civil society is a concept originating from democracy and democratization theory, it does not quite grasp the complexity of studying a hybrid regime, such as contemporary Russia. Henderson (2011) points out that several trends in the development of NGOs and civil society has complicated the view that civil society can be completely autonomous from the state.

*While the civil society literature focuses on the ability of organizations to counter state power, the NGO literature is much more pragmatic, focusing on NGOs’ legal autonomy but simultaneously recognizing the significance of their partnership activities with the state. These two views raise some problems for interpreting the development of the nonprofit sector in Russia* (Henderson 2011, 12).

Furthermore, as Cheskin and March illuminate, the concept makes too clear of a distinction between state and society, leaving little room to study the interactions in between. They further expand upon the term, saying that the concept of civil society is insufficient when it comes to “understanding how a regime such as Vladimir Putin’s reacts to, and attempts to interact with, bottom-up social movements” (Cheskin and March 2015, 263).

While this is an argument to keep in mind while studying the case of Russia, some definition of civil society can also be valid in this case. The concept of civil society can be fruitful when employed in a framework of contentious politics as in this study (Cheskin and March 2015, 264). Henderson (2011, 4) for example, employs the definition of civil society as “the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks . . . that fill this space”. Crotty et al. (2014) define civil society as “a space of citizen-directed collective action located between the family and the state, and not directed solely toward private profit”. This definition excludes political parties, business firms or organized crime groups.

In my study of Russian civil society organizations, I will make use of Linz and Stepan’s (1997, 17) definition: “an arena of the polity where self-organizing and relatively autonomous groups, movements and individuals attempt to articulate their values, to create associations and solidarities, and to advance their interests”. This definition includes organized forms of civil participation and engagement, in addition to including non-governmental organizations.
In my analysis of the state of Russian state/society relations, I utilize the more concrete structure of NGOs. The term Non-Governmental Organization is according to Crotty et al. (2014) more commonly used as a description of more formal civil society groups in democratizing contexts. Defined according to the Russian Federal Law on Public Associations, NGOs are “voluntary, self-governing, non-profit formations set up by individuals who have united on the basis of the community interests to realize common goals” (Federal Law On Public Associations, Article 5, 1995). This is the definition I draw on when using NGOs as the platform to study relations between state and society in Russia today.

2.2 Historical Context

In February 1917, an era of tsarism in Russian history was over as Russia culminates in revolution after years of disruption and instability, followed by civil war. The Bolsheviks, eventually emerging as the strongest power, were intent on replacing the autocratic tsarist regime with social ownership, a society of equality and a society without coercion (McAuley 1992, 1). The Leninist political system emerged between 1918 and 1921. Bolsheviks were placed in key positions, in charge of everything from hospitals, to factories to army regiments, a strategy that eventually grew into the system of nomenklatura (McAuley 1992, 29). The Bolsheviks additionally installed an unaccountable leadership, an organization above and beyond state organizations (ibid.).

With Vladimir Lenin’s death in January 1924, an extensive discussion within the core of the party which resulted in the new leader: Joseph Stalin. In the subsequent years, the union underwent a “revolution from above”, were a centrally planned economy and state ownership was established (McAuley 1992, 39). At the hand of the party, the economy, media and all social activity was under control by the mid 1930’s (McAuley 1992, 44). From 1936 to 1938, what is later called the Great Purge gripped the country; a system that not only implies repression but “a system…of arbitrary and indiscriminate violence employed by the rules against large sections of the population” (McAuley 1992, 50).

With Stalin’s death in 1953, followed an extensive attempt to reestablish political power over coercion, and a condemnation of the deceased leader in favor of the memory of Lenin. At the 20th Party Congress, Nikita Khrushchev held a secret speech criticizing and calling into question some of Stalin’s policies (McAuley 1992, 63-64). There was visibly a loosening of
the control that held the regime so tightly together during the Stalin years. This led to some uncertainty, but also meant reduction of control: what had been a solid “mono-organizational system” was fractured (Dallin 1992). Meanwhile, there was a rapid advancement of society as a whole, an increase in educated population and white collar workers, and in living standard (McAuley 1992, 4). With a new leader in Leonid Brezhnev and a new constitution in 1977, the USSR remained highly centralized (McAuley 1992, 6).

The question remains whether the system Mikhail Gorbachev inherited in the 1980s could have endured. The regime was one of repression and isolation, some factors made to have kept Soviet society stable for so many years. The change came with “glasnost” and “perestroika”, Gorbachev’s reforms (Connor 2003).

2.2.1 The Soviet Legacy

It is this legacy of totalitarianism that Russian (civil) society still carries: Some scholars have taken to the particularity of the Soviet legacy as an explanation of the apparent weakness of Russian civil society today. Totalitarian regimes differ from regular authoritarian regimes in their ambition for complete control over the entire society: not only the political arena, but also all forms of autonomous social life (Goncharov and Shirikov 2013, 28-30). Antonio Gramsci made a similar observation about Russia: “In Russia the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed” (From the Prison Notebooks, as quoted in Simon 1982, 28).

One of the characteristics of this regime was the extensive repression of all forms of pluralism. According to Goncharov and Shirikov, nearly all forms of independent group activities and organizational activities that threatened the state were strictly controlled and eliminated. In place of independent organizations, there were state-controlled organizations where participation was often mandatory (Goncharov and Shirikov 2013, 28-30). Howard makes the assumption that the negative experience with this kind of organization has led inhabitants of post-communist countries to mistrust even modern organizations (Howard 2002, 162). Although state domination over society and the lack of social self-organization were distinctive features of Russia already before the Russian revolution in 1917, a longstanding tradition of ties with the West had led to the creation of a vast network of social
organizations (Goncharov and Shirikov 2013, 28-30). This was however effectively removed by the communist government after the revolution, and Soviet society remained atomized and without much of a civil sphere (ibid.).

It was important to keep up the facade of mass participation and mass support of the government: this served the needs of the Soviet propaganda and encouraged the idea that the state was the instrument of the people’s collective will. But this apparent mass participation was not as refined as it seemed, and according to Remington Soviet citizens joined the government controlled organizations because it took an active effort not to be a member (Remington 2016, 90). The organizations were a way to show support for the regime and a way to gain advantages for private citizens, and not necessarily a sign of voluntary participation. Usually, citizens continued to rely on small, private networks consisting of family, friends, and coworkers for communication, and on lower levels of the government in their dealings with state authorities (Remington 2016, 97).

_Virtually everyone who had a job belonged to a trade union, if only because trade unions administered social insurance funds and subsidized vacations. Youth groups provided recreational opportunities as well as political indoctrination, and nearly all youth belonged to the organization appropriate for their age group. Millions of people were members of voluntary public associations_ (Remington 2016, 92).

The suppression of the regime resulted in the people becoming suspicious of each other, and the level of trust decreased. People could not express themselves openly, and therefore sought to create closed circles of trust with close family and friends. This was also partly due to the shortage economy, which created the need to access essential goods by other means than the official system. Howard found in his interviews that these private networks still existed after the Soviet Union collapsed and we entered a new millennium. These close relations might work as a replacement for organizational activity (Howard 2002, 162-163).

There was a genuine hope for change, for the emergence of democratic institutions and market economy, along with more civil liberties. The feeling of having been cheated out of a better system has, according to Howard, increased the demobilization and retraction from public activities (Howard 2002, 163). Instead of the anticipated move towards democracy however, Russia has ended up in the gray-zone in between democracy and autocracy.
With the legacy of a post-communist society and the recent developments in the civil sphere, this is the state of Russian civil society today. The question however, is whether it still makes sense to view Russian civil society through this lens of post-communism. The legacy remains the same, but society has arguably changed. While the soviet legacy should be kept in mind when studying Russia, the notion of viewing Russia exclusively as “post-communist” is far from constructive. A hundred years after the Russian revolution, 26 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it no longer makes sense to look at Russia simply as a product of the Soviet Union. The soviet legacy has left its mark, both on civil society and the state structures. Nevertheless, the civil sphere present in contemporary Russia is one that is shaped by and exists in a symbiosis with the Russian state.

2.2.2 Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations

According to Crotty et al. (2014), the history of environmental NGOs represents a unique case in Soviet history for a variety of reasons. The movement of the nonconforming environmental organizations was the only one to be to a degree tolerated by the communist regime. Holm-Hansen (2005) outlines the several phases that the issue of environmental protection went through in the Soviet Union. The ideas of environmental protection existed as early as the beginning of the Soviet state, with the Act on Nature Protection from 1915-16 (Holm-Hansen 2005, 103). In 1949, the USSR Council of Ministers introduced the resolution «On Measures in the Struggle Against Pollution of the Atmosphere and on Improving the Sanitary-Hygienic Conditions of Populated Areas», which restricted the free flow of ash and dust from industry (Holm-Hansen 2005, 104). In the late 1960s there was a shift which introduced new legislation focusing on the use of natural resources, rather than the pollution itself (Holm-Hansen 2005, 105).

With these advancements followed the support of voluntary associations. One of the largest environmental organizations, the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature was founded in 1966, and had by 1980 gained over 33 million members. The environmental issues were moreover open for discussion in mass media. (Holm-Hansen 2005, 108). Crotty et al. additionally describes environmental NGOs as the organizations with the “longest heritage and the only movement to have a history of amassing general support from the wider population and contributing to civil society development” (Crotty et al. 2014, 1257).
Van der Heijden outlines the development of the environmental sphere into a vehicle for the struggle for independence in the 1980s. The protests emerging in connection to construction of power stations in namely Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria, later developed into a successful attempt at undermining the regime. The same development could be seen in Lithuania and Armenia after the Chernobyl accident in 1986 (van der Heijden 2014). This history underlines the tradition of dissidence present in the sphere of environmental protection. Environmentalism was additionally a driving force throughout the period of perestroika, where the environmental issues remained useful for reformers because the population was pressuring the state to open up (Holm-Hansen 2005, 123).

The only international ecological organization remaining from the Soviet Union, is the Socio-Ecological Union, founded in Moscow in 1988 (Socio-Ecological Union n.d.). The organization works as an umbrella association, drawing together over 30 different environmental initiatives and organizations, and has played a pivotal role since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Russian Social Ecological Union n.d.)

The year 2017 was declared the Year of Ecology by president Putin, which brings the opportunity for changes in this sector. A series of legislative changes will be carried out during this year concerning forestry, water and national parks (IUCN 2017). The official website outlines the main activities for the year to be improvement of legislation, transition to new technologies, improving waste management, national parks, protection of water resources, wildlife and forest protection in addition to environmental education (Ecoyear 2017).

2.3 Formal Structures

As of 2017, the Freedom House index of Freedom in the World has degraded Russia further down to a score of 7 on political rights and 6 on civil liberties (Freedom in the World: Russia 2017). The developments causing the further degradation in 2017 include the inclusion of the Levada Center on the list of foreign agents and the continued enforcement of the legislation. The civic sector has been struck especially hard by this trend. Freedom House based their score in 2016 partly on the authorities’ intensification of their campaign against NGOs in 2015 where another 111 Russian organizations were included on the Justice Ministry’s list of
“foreign agents” (Freedom in the World: Russia 2016). In April 2017, the number of organizations in the registry has reached 158 (Human Rights Watch 2017).

2.3.1 Legislation

The legislation in question is a law that goes under the name of “Foreign agent law” (officially Federal Law Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Regulation of Activities of Non-commercial Organizations Performing the Function of Foreign Agents) that was introduced by president Putin in 2012 (ICNL 2017). The Ministry of Justice keeps a registry of non-commercial organizations where all NCOs receiving funding from any foreign sources have to register. These NCOs are called "NCOs carrying functions of a foreign agent” When the law went into force in November 2012, it required the NGOs to register themselves in this registry if they received foreign funding or were taking part in political activity (ibid).

When organizations decided not to register voluntarily, an amendment was introduced in 2014 that allowed the Ministry of Justice to include organizations into the registry (Naturvernforbundet 2017). The legislation defines the term political activity vaguely, and an attempt to clarify the term after pressure from the NGO community (ibid.). Political activity is currently defined as participation in or conduction of public meetings, demonstrations, gatherings, participation in public discussions or debates, in addition to activities to influence elections or other aspects of politics (Bellona 2016 b). The law also includes a description of non-political activities:

*Activities in the field of science, culture, art, health care, prevention and health protection, social services, social support and protection of citizens, protection of motherhood and childhood, social support to persons with disabilities, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical culture and sport, protection of flora and fauna, charity* (Naturvernforbundet 2017).

In addition to the legislation on foreign agents, the state Duma approved a second legislation in May 2015. This legislation goes even wider than the former one, and criminalizes so-called undesirable organizations. As of January 2017, seven organizations have been declared undesirable by the Prosecutor General. The legislation allows the Prosecutor General or deputies to declare organizations undesirable if they view the organization as a threat to national security (ICNL 2017)
In June 2016, the State Duma also adopted a bill meant to support socially beneficial NGOs in Russia. The bill states that organizations that build a loyal relationship with the government should receive up to ten percent of social program funds. The new law went into force in January 2017 (RAPSI 2016). With this legislation came a list of social services such beneficial NGOs may provide (BEARR 2017):

at-home social services; employment assistance; rehabilitation and social adaptation of adults and children with disabilities; social assistance for children, the disabled, senior citizens and those in difficult circumstances; prevention of neglect and juvenile delinquency; prevention of child abandonment or parents refusing to educate their children; socialization and creation of familial structures for children without parental care; supplementary education for senior citizens and those with disabilities, including computer literacy; prevention of socially destructive illnesses, smoking, alcoholism and addiction; medical and social support of those struggling with serious illness and people requiring palliative care; medical and social rehabilitation of people with alcoholism, drug addiction and other dependencies; sports and fitness.

The list for further broadened in December 2016 with the following: “establishing international (inter-ethnic) cooperation, social and cultural adaptation and integration of migrants, the preservation and protection of the identity, culture, language and traditions of the Russian people, and the development of eco-tourism”. (BEARR 2016)

2.3.2 Public Councils

In the last fifteen years, much has happened in the sphere of civil society, and cooperation between civil society actors and the government structures. Many formal structures have been established, including “a variety of consultative councils, civic forums, public chambers, grant schemes, multi-actor programs, and public–private partnerships” (Aasland et al. 2016, 148). In contrast with the formerly mentioned legislative changes concerning NGOs, the Russian state is offering an arena, on federal as well as the regional level, for the organizations to raise their concerns. The main focus in this chapter will be the public councils established in relation to a variety of issues and departments. Some public councils have for example been established in or around ministries such as the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Transport Ministry, the Ministry of North Caucasus Affairs, and the Ministry of Sport (BEARR 2017).
To enhance cooperation on nuclear issues, a Public Council is also established by ROSATOM. The council is stated to involve “civic organizations in the policy making process for nuclear power utilization, environmental protection, nuclear and radiation safety” (ROSATOM, 2016). The council consists of representatives from ROSATOM, scientists and representatives from different environmental organizations, for example president of Russian Green Cross, Sergey Baranovsky and chairman of the Bellona Foundation Alexander Nikitin.

Moreover, on the federal level, there have been established so-called Presidential Councils, covering issues such as corruption, economics, culture and art and sports (Presidential Councils, n.d.). In this context, the most important council is the Presidential Council of Civil Society and Human Rights which is stated to have an advisory capacity to the Russian president (President Sovet, n.d.). Similar to the ROSATOM Public Council, the Presidential Council consists of representatives from the Russian state, scientist and members of civil society organizations representing a variety of interests. Executive director of Greenpeace Russia, Sergey Aleksandrovich Tsyplenkov is a member of this council.
3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical framework employed to analyze the relations between state and civil society organizations in Russia today. The theory is separated into two different perspectives; the role of the state and the role of the non-governmental organizations. The analysis of this thesis will be situated around this framework to discover what formal opportunities there are for NGOs to operate in Russian society today. Together, these theories will form the basis for several hypotheses, developed for analysis of the NGOs. In 3.1 I will clarify the assumptions made in the study about the regime type found in contemporary Russia, and further explore in 3.1.2 what implications the regime type might have for the development of the civil sphere. In 3.2 I will account for the theoretical framework of contentious politics and how this will be used as a platform to analyze what role the NGOs occupy in state/society relations. Finally, in 3.3 I will sum up some of the lessons from previous research and theory, and elaborate this into four hypotheses that will be tested in the analysis.

3.1 A Vigilant State

Outside of Russia, what seems to be an attempt at democracy continues to deteriorate during Vladimir Putin’s third term as president, and the recent legislative election shows that not much has changed in 2016. Between theorists and scholars studying Russian affairs, there is little disagreement about the fact that Russia has not developed into a democracy, as many hoped after the fall of the Soviet Union. The question is what type of regime the Russian state has evolved into, and what implications this might have for the state-society relations.

3.1.1 Russia as a Hybrid Regime

Most social scientists now agree that many of the worlds political regimes, can be qualified as some form of hybrid regime (Hale 2011a). The concept of hybrid regimes is often used for
describing regimes that fall in between forms of democracy and autocracy. These are the regime types that previously were described transitional regimes, undergoing a transition to a democratic regime. This assumption fell through, according to Thomas Carothers (2002), after the third wave of democratization when many of the regimes stayed in transition. This is what he calls the political gray zone, where the countries show signs of democratic political life, some opportunity for opposition in politics and to a certain degree an independent civil society (Carothers 2002, 10). In his article from 2010, Henry Hale goes on to describe Russia as a form of hybrid regime which he dubs an electoral patronal system. The system is known by three measures: 1) regular election to maintain power, 2) some real opposition is allowed to participate in the elections, and 3) power is exercised through patron networks, “political transactions consist less of abstract promises to support broad programmatic ideas than of concrete promises of personal incentives and private benefits made to specific individuals…as well as explicit or implicit threats made to these same individuals” (Hale 2010, 34).

Levitsky and Way (2002) outline a particular type of hybrid regime, called competitive authoritarianism (CA). This came as a response to what many viewed as a misguided definition of transition regimes, as this implied a democratic regime at the end of the yellow brick road. CA regimes must be distinguished from pure authoritarianism; as basic democratic institutions are in place, there is little open violation of the democratic rules. Instead, incumbents are more likely to use bribery and more elusive forms of persecution, such as the use of tax authorities, compliant judiciaries, and other state agencies to legally harass, persecute, or extort cooperative behavior from critics. Unlike a facade democracy, the elections are generally free of massive fraud, and both incumbents and their opposition must take the elections seriously.

The democratic institutions offer an important channel through which the opposition may seek contestation, and are not simply there to legitimize the existing autocratic regime. Following Levitsky and Way, CA regimes, are based on formal democratic institutions that are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. It can however not be viewed as a democracy, as incumbents violate the basic rules of democratic rule so often and to such an extent that is simply does not meet the standards: incumbents will frequently abuse state resources, delimit the opposition’s access to media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, as well as manipulate electoral results.
Evidence of these violations also manifest themselves in Russia: McFaul and Stoner-Weiss (2008) write that during Putin’s presidency, the average living standard has increased the economy thrives all while political freedom is declining. The Kremlin controls all major national television networks, and is attempting control over printed media as well as online. Many surveys among the Russian population also report findings of successful biasing of media coverage (Hale 2011b), and White (2011) reports a suffering opposition with little or no access to media sources. Independent parties remain much more weakened than they were in the 1990s. Some have been disqualified from participating in elections, while others have been barred from registering for elections (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2008). As shown through the chapter 2.3.1, the NGO sector has been weakened. Public assembly has been under attack and NGOs have been determined a threat to the Kremlin’s power. The state of the Russian regime also has decisive implications for the state-society relations.

3.1.2 Implications for Governance

Hybrid regimes like Russia have been a subject of interest for some years now, and much of the literature still focuses on the prospects for democratic development, and comparing the regime to existing democracies. In response to this, Petrov, Lipman and Hale (2013) attempted to address the governance in such regimes. They focus on what they call the three dilemmas of governance (elections, mass media and state), and how the hybrid regimes meet these dilemmas. Among their findings, they argue that the regime of Vladimir Putin after 2012 has governed with a so-called non-intrusion pact with society (Petrov et al. 2013, 2). With methods of censorship and control rather than open repression, Petrov et al. argue that the regime attempts to disengage society. The regime walks a balance between minimizing social unrest, while still maintaining power, and if they fail, the only available alternative for expression is out on the streets (Petrov et al. 2013, 22).

The form and extension of Russian civil society is, it would seem, dependent on the Kremlin’s agenda. Goncharov and Shirikov (2013) introduces this as a last factor that influences the viability of civil society. They go as far as to say that all types of organizations are dependent on staying out of politics in general, and avoid any conflicts with the government in order to survive. Sarah Henderson (2011, 12) contributes with insight on the differences between the development of civil society during the Yeltsin (1991-1999) and
Putin (2000-2008) presidencies. The major difference holding these periods apart is the level of interest the different presidents have shown regarding the development of the civil sphere. Henderson points out that “the issue in most countries is not whether government allows a civic sector to exist, but how it attempts to shape the civic sector using regulations and other tactics that express state authority” (ibid.).

When taking a closer look at the presidential periods of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, we see two extremely different approaches to managing civil society in Russia. Henderson names the difference as “negligent and vigilant state” regarding NGO's. Yeltsin and his administration made few attempts to limit organizational activities, but did not exactly encourage it either. Putin, on the other side, has led a strategy that according to Henderson can be summarized as an “import substitution” model of development for the civic sector, as it provides domestic institutional incentives to replace the role of international donors in shaping Russia’s NGO sector (ibid.).

Further suspicion of Western funding emerged in the wake of a wave of color revolutions in former soviet countries, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The opposition was generally fueled by Western funded NGOs and the Russian state soon turned against what was viewed as interference and a danger to Russia’s sovereignty (Henderson 2011, 20). While the protests in 2011-2012 do not really fit the pattern of the former color revolutions, it might well be a legitimate fear for the regime (Wolchik 2012). Horvath (2011) even argues that Putin has taken such measures to prevent a similar event from happening in Russia, calling it a “preventive counter-revolution”. Western-funded pro-democracy NGOs often led the opposition forces and were widely credited with playing a pivotal role in the push for a more democratic (and pro-Western) electoral outcome. Suspicion of Western donor motivation in Russia was soon transformed to hostility against Western interference in Russia’s informal “sphere of influence” and its “sovereign affairs” (Henderson 2011, 19).

This western suspicion has had many implications for Russian NGOs receiving foreign funding. Crotty, Hall and Lubownikow (2014) studied environmental NGOs from three different regions in Russia in the aftermath of the foreign agent law. In their study, they found that the law affected these organizations in three different aspects of day-to-day activities: 1. Registration requirements are complicated enough to favor larger organizations with sufficient resources, and led to a reduction in official environmental NGOs. 2. The restriction of foreign funds also led to less resources which in turn impedes the organizations from influencing
decision-making processes. The civil society development has been obstructed by the introduction of this law, and so-called marionette organizations have benefited.

Hemment (2012) describes a view of the civil society that emerged in the 1990s as false. The Western influence was motivated by self-interest and turned against Russian values and the development of Russia (Hemment 2012, 234). This rhetoric lays the foundation of the development of a new sphere, more closely connected to the national project. Hemment (2012) contends that the political elites in the later years of Putin’s regime, has constructed their own version of civil society, seizing the concept and adapting it to fit the national agenda. Like Henderson, she describes a regime, adamantly attempting to turn civil society and the NGO sector away from western influence, and toward a common national goal.

Henderson (2011, 36) maintains nonetheless, that the strategy Putin has chosen is more complex than simply repressing civil society development and the NGO sector. The strategy is rather designed to encourage “good behavior for NGOs whose advocacy originates out of performing valuable social services that have the potential to improve the social and economic well-being of the population” (ibid.). Following the theory, the regime does not employ outright repression as a measure to maintain power. The picture is of a regime balancing control on one side, and at the same time opens up for some influence from society. Furthermore, the society finds their way through this net of control. In that way, civil society still finds some way to contest the regime.

3.2 Consensual Contestation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of civil society is often used in the literature as a necessity in democracy-building. However, the traditional definition of civil society does not suffice to grasp the full dynamics between state and society in a hybrid regime such as Russia. In 2015, the journal East European Politics published a special edition, that sought to highlight the emergent Russian politics “from below”, instead of the more broadly discussed state-centric analyses. This theory links the theory on hybrid regimes and their strategies to control political contention, and what forms the contention comes in.
3.2.1 The Framework

The framework of Contentious politics as outlined by for example Tarrow and Tilly (2007), describes more active forms of contention: “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 438). The existing analysis in the field of contention, focuses upon open and active forms of contention, such as the protests in the wake of the 2011 elections. The argument of the theoretical framework of consensual contestation, is that while active forms of contention provides valuable insight in the workings of state-society interactions, it is not enough to completely render the image of Russian civil society today (Cheskin and March 2015, 261).

The concept of “contentious politics” is used to describe the methods used by groups that seek to “make normative demands involving the state in the name of others perceived to be oppressed or excluded” (Owen 2015, 276). By broadening the concept of “contentious politics” to include models of “consentful” as well as “dissentful” contention, the issue of East European Politics makes an attempt at providing a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding state-society relations in today’s Russia. The focus is shifted towards how and why political contention does not occur as we might expect, or how the regime is able to move political contention into the realm of social or officially sanctioned contention (Cheskin and March, 2015).

The aim of developing this framework, is in line with the wave of research trying to change the focus to a bottom-up approach rather than the previously state-centered outlook. It makes three common arguments: “(a) there has long been greater political contention in post-Soviet Russia than many acknowledge; (b) such contention is often more marked at local level than in the cities of Moscow and St Petersburg, but has received insufficient attention and (c) the 2011-2012 protests are therefore less a pivotal point than part of a complex interaction of continuity and change” (Cheskin and March 2015, 262). Additionally, the framework of consensual contestation implies a different form of contestation than the one outlined by Tarrow and Tilly (2007). According to Owen (2015), there are six defining characteristics of this contention: 1) activists have no access to decision-making process, 2) the state is not monolithic, but remains strong, 3) there is no radical activism: the activists use the political status quo to their advantage, and use the existing legislative frames to make their claims, 4)
they are able to find allies both within the state and in the press, 5) the actions are connected to the absence of rights guaranteed by the state and 6) the demands are often made to ensure the integrity of the state rather than undermining it (Owen 2015, 278-279).

The framework of consentful contention can, in other words, be employed to highlight the complexity of political contestation within hybrid regimes, both why political contention occurs, and what form it comes in. It allows for a more nuanced analysis of state/society relations, and the different ways these interactions manifest themselves. It offers a step back from the transition paradigm, and proposes a different theoretical strategy: to view social movements, not as a part of a “wider struggle for democratization”, but rather as “political claim-making within a specific…political regime” (Cheskin and March 2015, 265). This thought is pivotal in the context of Russia, as it not only brings Russia out of the transition paradigm; it also implies a normalization of Russia where civil society is driven by delimited claim-making more than it is a fundamental form of dissidence.

### 3.2.2 Reviewing the Evidence

One of the arguments made by Cheskin and March (2015, 269) is that it is important for the Russian authorities to form a different kind of state ideology. In the absence of the Soviet regime state ideology, it is up to the new regime to differentiate acceptable and unacceptable social claims. This has led to an apparent line drawn between social and political claims, where political claims are faux pas, but social claims remain acceptable. This also goes back to Henderson (2011) and the argument that the regime attempts to shape the civic sector. Furthermore, this has been remarked by Bindman (2015), who highlights the deep divide between the field of human rights on one side and social NGOs on the other. The relationship between social NGOs and the Russian state is described as “complex, nuanced and mutually constitutive, usually varying between consentful contestation (pressing the authorities to honor their constitutional commitments as a “social state”) and consentful compliance (not critiquing the “social state” repertoire but recognizing that co-operation with the state is the most effective way to get things done)” (Bindman 2015). This line of reasoning is also followed by Vikki Turbine (2015). She describes the authorities’ rhetoric, using the concepts western values and traditional Russian culture as a justification for restricted human rights. Included under this rhetoric, we find policy changes such as the law on foreign agents,
restrictions on public gatherings and the law against *homosexual propaganda* (Turbine 2015, 326).

Anna Tarasenko (2015) found a dualism in the relations between state and society, that discourages dissentful contention. The authorities have established a system where the NGOs benefit from cooperation with the government, which makes the authorities successful in maintaining the status quo and avoiding open protest (Tarasenko 2015, 309). The findings of her study of the social NGOs in St. Petersburg also show that there are still some spaces for consensual contestation. The presence of political institutions open as a tool for activists, accounts for the lack of open mobilization and collective action (Tarasenko 2015, 307). Moreover, Owen (2015, 280) argues that it is too simplistic to dismiss the activities of governmental bodies such as the Federal Public Chamber and the Presidential Council of Civil Society and Human Rights. There are many examples of contentious claims made through these bodies are that are reported to have some success.

At the same time, Aasland et al. (2016) highlight a dualism in the development of governance networks: on one side, there is strong government intent on limiting the room available for civil society development. On the other, it seems that civil society participation is accepted at a normative level, and there are established several formal structures on federal and regional level. In their study of governance networks, Aasland et al. (2016) found that such networks play a limited role in the policy system. They find that non-state actors are clearly more interested in maintaining such structures as they have more to gain from it. Moreover, even though decision-making rarely takes place in these governance networks, there is evidence suggesting that decision-makers take into consideration the recommendations made in the networks (Aasland et al. 2016, 166).

This conclusion is closely connected to Davies et al. (2016) in their description of the framework of governance networks. They suggest that the Russian government have an interest in facilitating cooperation with the society, which is reflected in the policy. One example is the Public Chamber, which also fulfils domestic funding that followed the implementation of the law on foreign agents. Introduced in 2005, the law no. 32-FZ “On the Public Chamber” describes the tasks as follows: “to manage societal expertise, societal initiatives and control; to distribute grants to civil society organizations; and to present an annual report on civil society” (Davies et al. 2016, 134). Their argument is that the state’s power and efficacy has its limits, and that consequently remains dependent on cooperation
with non-state actors and NGOs: “We anticipate that authorities need the legitimacy they acquire from co-operating with societal organizations, and that these organizations are often sources of valuable expertise, knowledge and skills, of voluntary man hours and alternative, additional financing” (Davies et al. 2016, 135).

In his study on political opposition in Russia, David White (2015) supports the notion that there should be some degree of cooperation between civil society and the state. Furthermore, he stresses that for the opposition to reach mobilization and open contention such as the protests in 2011, there has to be a certain extent of collaboration between political and civil society (White 2015, 326). He concludes that the political opposition should offer civil society a helping hand when they are limited by the regime, and together mobilize support neither of the parties would have managed on their own.

Based on the theory and evidence reviewed in this chapter, I have created the following hypotheses:

1. **There is a divide between acceptable and unacceptable contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations depend on which issues the organizations are working on.**

2. **There is a divide between patriotic and unpatriotic contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations will depend on the ties to the west.**

3. **The formal structures established by the Russian government are an important arena for the state to fulfill its aims.**

4. **The formal structures established by the Russian government are an important opportunity for the organizations’ consensual contestation.**

In the analysis in chapter five, I will expand upon these hypotheses. I will give a more detailed description of what each hypothesis entails, and further give justify the theoretical foundation of each hypothesis.
4 Methodology and Data

In this chapter I will elaborate on the method of analysis used for this thesis. In 4.1, a summary of the research design will be given, with focus on the method of qualitative case study in 4.1.1. In 4.1.2 a further explanation of the case selection will be given, with the outline of the two organizations Bellona and Greenpeace. In addition, I will give some background to the external sources which are taken in to supplement the data found in the two cases. I will further account for the data collected for the analysis in 4.2. Chapter 4.2.1 elaborates on the snowball method of sampling, whereas 4.2.2 goes into the form of semi-structured interviews. Finally, in 4.3 some attention is given to the possible problems of validity and reliability, and how these challenges are met in this thesis.

4.1 Qualitative Case Study

Case study can be explained as an intensive form of analysis, where the findings cannot necessarily be generalized to different populations such as with large data survey research with probability sampling. Instead, the goal is to examine a single case, or a few cases, to illuminate a theoretical analysis (Bryman 2012, 71). The case study is a useful tool for examining situations or realities in the context of the real world. This requires data to be collected in the “natural settings”, and not just by looking to the data already collected (Yin 2012, 5) This study is a multiple-case study, where two cases will be examined. This is especially valuable when it comes to theoretical testing, as it allows for more robust evidence of where a theory might work or not (Bryman 2012, 74). By being able to compare these cases, the theoretical argument can be tested across different cases, instead of drawing conclusions made from one case.
4.1.1 Case Selection

In my study, I define the cases after Yin’s category of cases: Representative or typical case. This is a type of case that is not chosen for its exceptionality or uniqueness, but rather because it demonstrates a “typical case”. As Bryman (2012, 70) explains it, the case “exemplifies a broader category of which it is member” and can “provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered”. The case is then suitable to illuminate the implications of certain theoretical arguments, and can prove to be invaluable in examination of key processes. In the case of this study, the cases will be used to illuminate the theoretical arguments about state/society relations in Russia and which mechanisms are present here. The cases can, of course, not be viewed as a straight answer of the situation of the entire sector of Russian civil society, as the organizations differ very much from each other. It can however provide some in-depth insight into what kind of formal opportunities exist for these organizations, and what structures they depend on.

The Bellona Foundation is an environmental organization, originally founded in Norway in 1986. Today, the organization officially has three international branches; Brussels, Murmansk and St. Petersburg. Their main activities comprise of nuclear issues, fossil fuels, the arctic, Russian human rights issues, climate change, renewable energy and energy efficiency (Bellona, n.d.). In their own words, Bellona cooperates with everyone and anyone: they list everything from politicians to decision-makers in business, to other NGOs, to media as potential partners. Moreover, the focus lies on cooperation with companies “strategically placed in relation to (Norwegian) industries” (ibid.). In March 2015, Bellona Murmansk was labeled as a foreign agent after allegations of political work (Digges 2015a). In October the same year, the chairman Andrei Zolotkov confirmed that the organization would seize to operate as an NGO (Digges 2015b). In January 2017, while I was writing this thesis, the office in St. Petersburg was also listed as a foreign agent by the Russian department of Justice (Digges 2017).

Greenpeace describes its organization as an “an independent global campaigning organization that acts to change attitudes and behavior, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace” (Greenpeace n.d. a). The organization has been present in Russia since 1989, and opened offices in St. Petersburg in 2001 (ibid.). They divide their issues into working with energy/climate, forest, toxics, lake Baikal, GE foods and world heritage (Greenpeace n.d.
b). Unlike Bellona, Greenpeace maintains a principle of independence, and does not receive any donations from governments or corporations. However, the two organizations have a similar pronounced strategy of cooperating with several different spheres and partners. On their website, they state that they have “no permanent allies or enemies”. The tools to achieve their goals are research, lobbying, and non-violent conflict (Greenpeace n.d. a).

The two cases represent two of the dominating international environmental organizations in Russia. In addition to having representation in St. Petersburg, they are present in other parts of the country. They also represent two different aspects to the organizational life and working strategies. Greenpeace as an international organization, whereas ERC Bellona is the Russian part of an organization founded in Norway.

4.2 Data

The data of this study is primarily based on a combination of document analysis and interview research. I will also use triangulation of sources to establish any convergence in the results. The triangulation of sources consists of a three-way divide between interviews with the selected environmental organizations; interviews with the selected experts in the field of Russian NGOs, and finally; a study of documents connected to the sphere of environmental organizations from the respective organizations and experts. A substantial part of the data has been collected through interviews with key persons from the respective organizations in Russia. Some data has been collected through interviews with two additional environmental organizations based in St. Petersburg. However, due to the legislations outlined in chapter 2.3.1, the organizations do not feel safe to go public with certain information. The organizations have therefore asked to remain anonymous in this study. Both organizations are Russian, not international, and work with issues such as recycling, separate waste collection, renewable energy as well as promoting public participation and environmental rights.

In addition to employees of both the cases and the auxiliary environmental organizations, it has been useful to interview researchers within the field of civil society, and representatives for NGOs working with civil society development in Russia. These interviews have served as further verification of the information given by sources in the different organizations. These additional organizations include:
Friends of the Earth Norway works closely on numerous environmental issues with environmental organizations in Russia (Naturvernforbundet 2017). The organization regularly produces reports on the implications of new legislation and regulations from the Russian state, and consequently hold valuable insight and thorough understanding on the matter.

The NGO Development Center CRNO is a nonprofit NGO located in St. Petersburg, working for the development of the NGO sector in Russia and for cooperation between NGOs and the state. They offer services including legal advice, accounting services, organization of events for NGOs and advice on NGO management. As of May 2015, the center was included by the Ministry of Justice in the registry of Foreign Agents (CRNO 2015).

Center for Independent Social Research operates as a NCO out of St. Petersburg, providing independent academic social research. The majority of the center’s research projects concern civil society and social structure, and cooperates closely with organizations working within the sphere of human rights, gender and environmental issues. Like CRNO, the center is also on the list of Foreign agents (Center for Independent Social Research n.d.)

Norwegian Helsinki Committee works through information, education, surveillance and reporting to increase the implementation of human rights (Helsingforskomiteen n.d. a). The organization has been working with human rights issues in Russia since the beginning, and have now established a considerable network of human rights organizations in Russia (Helsingforskomiteen n.d. b).

The interviews will be supplemented with document analysis. The literature has been collected through web searches, searches in the university library database, Jstor, Google scholar and separate online journals. Some material was also obtained during the interviews, by recommendation from some of the informants. In addition, much of the literature emanates from an extensive curriculum in the subject of Political Development in Contemporary Russia, a subject taken in Russia during the master program. Relevant sources include literature on NGOs in Russia and legal documents.
4.2.1 Sampling

The sample of this study consists of eight informants as representatives for their respective organizations, as well as four informants taken in as experts on the field of civil society development in Russia. The interviews were conducted during a trip to St. Petersburg in February 2017, as well as additional interviews conducted in March and April 2017 in Oslo. In preparation of the interviews, a letter describing the purpose and scope of the research, was prepared for the informants. This letter presents me as a student at the University of Oslo conducting interviews for my master thesis, and further goes on to explain in more detail what the theme of the interview will be situated around. It also defines the time frame of the conversation, and informs of my intention to record the interview if the informant allows it. Additionally, it assures complete anonymity if the informant should so wish, and that no personal details will be revealed in the study. Further details of this letter can be found in the appendix (6.1.1). The recordings as well as the transcription of the interviews have been stored in a password protected folder on my private laptop.

The universe of the Russian civil sphere is quite an extensive one. Considering the resources available and the scope of this study, it is clearly unrealistic to cover all the bases and provide a solid probability sample. But after selecting cases, the population limits itself to the four organizations chosen as subjects of study. The possible informants are then limited to representatives from these organizations, based in St. Petersburg, Russia. As the aim of the research is to discover what opportunities the organizations have for communication and influence on government policy, the most fruitful strategy was to contact so called expert informants from these organizations. That concerns persons with considerable knowledge of their field and the workings of their organization (Leech et al. 2013, 210). Consequently, as the universe is so limited, I opted for snowball sampling as a strategy.

Snowball sampling is a method using initially chosen informants to lead on to new informants, “snowballing” along until the sample is sufficient (Bryman 2012, 424). The initial contact was made through email in January 2017, to reach out to a contact in Bellona’s Norwegian office, achieved by my supervisor. The contact from Bellona then supplied me with contact information for the Russian part of the organization situated in St. Petersburg. They offered contact information for some of the other organizations, which in turn offered
other contacts within their organization. Some informants were also proposed as possible subjects during interviews.

It is beneficial for the researcher to assess the complete sample frame before conducting any interviews. In addition to the group the research is focused upon, it can be useful to draw upon other types of actors such as journalists or well-informed scholars. The informants should then be chosen within this frame, always reporting what informants were successfully obtained, and what informants were excluded, refused or never responded (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013, 90). In this study, none of the informants refused or were in any other way excluded from the study. All informants were positive from first contact, and the interviews were all conducted as planned.

4.2.2 Interviews

Interviews can be very valuable in terms of capturing a part of the picture that official papers cannot. It can highlight informal interactions, and the more precise strategies adopted by the different organizations (Beyers et al. 2014, 176). “In particular, it is extremely difficult to obtain data on coalition building, coalition leadership, the intensity of collaboration and exchanges within coalitions, or on how actors understand a particular policy proposal, as well as the potential conflicts of interest associated with it” (ibid). Interviews should not stand on their own, but can prove a highly relevant component in the collection of data. In addition, the interviews can lead to the discovery of further related documents that can be used to triangulate the data (Beyers et al. 2014, 177).

For this project, the choice of method has fallen to semi-structured interviews with elite informants. With a prospect of comparing the different organizations after conducting the interviews, it is still important to have the flexibility for the organizations to expand as much as possible on their answers. Beth L. Leech and her colleges present semi-structured interviews as a meeting point between a formal survey style interview and informal “anarchy” (Leech et al. 2013, 210).

The semi-structured form of interviewing is not a specific definition, but includes many different choices in the research design. It usually refers nevertheless, to a situation where the interviewer has made an interview protocol with a series of questions. In contrast to the structured interview it gives the interviewer the possibility to vary the order in which the
questions are placed, and the questions are generally less specific than the questions found in structured interviews (Bryman 2012, 212). A less structured interview leaves more room for nuances and new, possibly unforeseen, details of the phenomenon described in the interview (Hellevik 2002, 110).

The semi-structured interview is also viewed as especially suited for interviews with elite informants. The informants in this project are regarded as elites, as they are experts in their respective fields and representatives for their organizations (Leech et al. 2013, 210). Characteristic for elite informants, they are usually on a tight schedule, and the interviewer might have limited time available. The semi-structured form of interviewing is then a useful tool, as it is built upon a guide for which direction the interview should take, but still leaves room for open answers (Gallagher 2013, 193). In connection to their research on lobbying and policy change, Leech et al. (2013, 216) described giving the informants room to speak openly and freely about their subject was invaluable, as this surfaced many details the researchers themselves had not thought about.

4.2.3 Conducting the Interviews

As is usual in semi-structured interviews, an interview protocol was constructed prior to conducting the interviews. I prepared two different versions of the interview protocol, one for representatives of the organizations, and one for the independent experts. The full interview protocols can be found in the appendix (6.1.2 and 6.1.3). Before conducting the interviews, I tried to learn as much as I could about the workings of the different organizations, to be prepared for the information that might come up during the interviews. I also made sure to learn most of the interview protocol by heart, to ease the conversation, and be attentive to any mention of other questions during the conversation.

In every interview, I started the conversation with a so called grand tour question. It is common to use this type of question to open up the conversations, and its purpose is to quickly establish rapport, a sort of bond of trust between the interviewer and the informant (Bryman 2012, 218). It can be a question that creates an opportunity for the informant to go through an issue they are familiar with, and can be seen as experts on. Leech et al. (2013, 216) recognizes this as one of the most useful questions in the interview process. The questions can be categorized by Bryman’s (2012, 253) definition of informant factual questions which is to
say that the informants answer the questions, not as individuals, but on behalf of a bigger entity. The last question of the interviews also remained the same. This came in the form of a clarifying question, asking the informants whether they have any additional information they would like to add. This gives the informant the opportunity to further explain their statements and give additional information if they have any. It also gives the informants a chance to “review” the interview, and to give feedback (explicitly or implicitly) on the questions asked during the interview (Leech et al. 2013, 218). If some immensely important information emerges as a result of this question, the interview protocol should be revised.

The interview protocol was a useful tool in all the interviews, and especially in some. I reviewed all the questions before and after every interview to be certain that the questions were meaningful and fully explored the research question. One of the questions I considered altering was the one concerning the effects of the law on foreign agents. This question was something that almost all the informants mentioned quite early in the interview, understandably as it is currently a factor of great influence for the organizations. It became evident however, that the interviews presented themselves very differently. In some of the interviews, I needed all the questions and possible probes to obtain all the relevant information, whereas in others, the questions could easily have been reduced as the informants themselves would add remarks themselves. I therefore reached the conclusion to keep the questions originally added, and to adjust the questions as necessary during the interviews.

4.3 Validity and Reliability

Robert Yin (2011, 78) describes a valid study as one that “has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied”. One highly relevant concern when studying cases, is the question of external validity. Case studies cannot be expected to generalizable to entire populations, as the research is based on a single phenomenon. A representative case can however, work as an exemplifying case (Bryman 2012, 70). The expressed aim of this case study is to exemplify the findings with the two cases.

It is also important to consider the challenges of reliability and to what extent the study is replicable (Hellevik 2002, 51). In a qualitative case study, this requirement is very
challenging to achieve. It is however ever more important to document thoroughly throughout the study. In the previous chapter, I have consequently documented the method of analysis, sampling strategy, strategy for interviewing and reviewed the interview protocol. These documentations are meant to secure a transparent research project.

4.3.1 Sampling Bias

When the sampling strategy is not based on probability, there is always a chance that human judgement will affect which members of the population that are selected (Bryman 2012, 188) The snowball technique might lead to further bias caused by interviews trapped in a net of like-minded informants. The initial contact might refer the researcher to a different contact with similar views on the matter (Martin 2013, 115). To mitigate these problems, researchers should be aware of the vulnerability of this technique, and make sure the initial informants are selected from a variety of backgrounds. As the snowball sampling goes on, the different views on the subject will more likely be covered (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013, 87). Bleich and Pekkanen also give a warning of nonresponse bias. They argue that surveys are regarded as more valid when the nonresponse rate is high. The nonresponse rate is generally not reported in interview research, but remains a factor that can skew the results (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013, 86). For this reason, it is essential to note as I did in chapter 4.2.1: that all interviews were conducted as planned.

4.3.2 Concerns with Interviews

When using interviews of expert informants as a source of data, there are several concerns to keep in mind throughout the research. The informants’ reliability depends on different mechanisms; they can be knowingly withholding information for their own interest, or to protect something or someone. They can also suffer from recollection bias, where the informants create unbalanced memories and rationalize the story. This is especially prevalent when some time has passed, and the informant is asked to recollect a certain event (Andersen 2006, 292). Complexity and intensity are other factors that might be at play, even though the informant is asked about an event that is happening right now (Andersen 2006, 293). According to Andersen, this might even permeate an entire organization (Andersen 2006, 294). This concern is highly relevant when it comes to this study. The informants are asked about events that are still taking place, but started five to ten years ago. The cases are also
organizations, that might show to have issues regarding recollection bias in the entire organization. One way to limit the reliability concerns, is to use triangulation of sources. Triangulation can be described as a method of reviewing the consistency of the findings, with the use of different sources (Yin 2012, 13). In this thesis, different organizations and experts are employed as additional sources of information, meant to corroborate the data from the two cases. Additionally, interviews took part in both Norway and Russia, in order to have some experts who are slightly more removed from the situation.

In the following chapter, I will combine the method and data outlined in this chapter, and the theoretical framework outlined in chapter three to analyze the hypotheses. I will summarize the findings and present an analysis of both cases, in addition to the external sources.

4.3.3 External Validity

The concern of external validity is highly central in any case study. This thesis has employed two cases, showing two different organizations to represent exemplifying cases to the study. The organizations have been used to highlight different strategies and how these strategies play out in the encounter with the governmental structures. There are several sides to these two cases that make them unsuitable as basis of generalization. They are both different types of international organizations, not founded in Russia. Both are based in St. Petersburg, one of Russia’s larger cities and far more liberal than Russia in general. In addition to this, they are quite large organizations.

However, the intention of using these two cases was not to generalize the findings to fit the entire sphere of environmental NGOs. What makes them equally suitable cases for generalizing, is that both organizations represent two different methods of working. They are two international organizations, international in different ways, and can therefore provide more insight on the sector than one organization alone. Furthermore, this thesis aims to provide an improved understanding of the theoretical framework of consensual contestation, using environmental organizations. What this thesis does, is to show the workings of the Russian state regarding some organizations, providing examples from other organizations in different situations. The thesis also recognizes that the situation might be very different for NGOs situated in other parts of Russia.
5 Findings and Analysis

This chapter will present and analyze the main findings of the data collected through interviews and documents. The former chapters in this thesis, are written with the intention of equipping the reader with an understanding of the historical background of the development of civil society in Russia, in addition to which methodological principles are applied to conduct this study. In this chapter I will expand upon the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework of consensual contestation and hybrid regimes in chapter three. I will give a more detailed description of what each hypothesis entails, and further give justify the theoretical foundation of each hypothesis. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. There is a divide between acceptable and unacceptable contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations depend on which issues the organizations are working on.

2. There is a divide between patriotic and unpatriotic contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations will depend on the ties to the west.

3. The formal structures established by the Russian government are an important arena for the state to fulfill its aims.

4. The formal structures established by the Russian government constitute an important opportunity to influence policy for the organizations’ consensual contestation.

In 5.1, I will expand upon the first hypothesis concerning the issues on which the organizations are working on, analyzing the two cases concerning Bellona and Greenpeace, and then move on to exploring the other sources. The additional sources include informants from two anonymous environmental NGOs, as well as informants from Centre for
Independent Social Research, the NGO Development Center CRNO, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Friends of the Earth Norway. In 5.2 I will analyze the second hypothesis concerning the legislation and foreign funding, whereas chapter 5.3 will concern the hypothesis about what forms of contention these organizations employ. Finally, chapter 5.4 will analyze what role these organizations fulfill for the Russian authorities.

## 5.1 Acceptable and Unacceptable Contention

*Hypothesis: There is a divide between acceptable and unacceptable contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations depend on which issues the organizations are working on.*

This part of the consensual contestation theory is especially explored by Eleanor Bindman (2015) in the same issue of the journal where the citation above is derived from. She makes a clear distinction between “economic and social rights on the one hand and civic and political rights on the other. Just as in Soviet times, the Russian authorities prioritize social and economic rights and are willing to sponsor NGOs that are deemed to be working towards these goals” (Cheskin and March 2015, 268).

*With the lack of a clearly defined state ideology today, it is important for the Russian authorities to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable contentious claims. As the papers of this volume attest, this has generally resulted in a situation whereby social claims are acceptable but political ones are not, despite their equal constitutional status* (Cheskin and March 2015, 269).

This implies that the authorities have a certain vision of what can be characterized as legitimate and illegitimate activity, and which corresponds with this definition of political and social claims. Bindman (2015, 355), who has studied social NGOs, shows that “Overall, the relationship between the Russian state and SO NGOs appears to be more complex, nuanced and mutually constitutive”. This is in stark contrast to human rights NGOs, which according to her findings have been “shut out of the policy-making process during Putin’s tenure” (Bindman 2015, 353). Crotty et al. (2014) support this finding in pointing to the areas of human rights and democracy as the areas most likely to be targeted.
These findings were also made by Henderson in her analysis of the Putin administrations strategy towards NGOs compared to the former strategy of the Yeltsin-era. Henderson (2011, 24) shows that the Putin administration has “designed a complex of policies with which to select and encourage NGOs that are likely to support, not so much the Kremlin, but national projects the Kremlin deems compelling and important”. She goes on to explain how these policies can reward good behavior “that can improve the social and economic well-being of the population”. In addition, it also gives the government “the capability to punish (if it so chooses), or at least deter, NGOs that pursue issues about which it is less than enthusiastic—issues, many argue, pertaining to political rights and liberties” (ibid.). These measures include the recently introduced legislation that was previously discussed in chapter 2.3.1.

The recent developments in the legislation surrounding the NGOs is also a clear indication of the established divide between political and socially beneficial activities. With the introduction of a new legislation in 2017 concerning socially beneficial NGOs and the services they may provide, it establishes what type of organizations are wanted in Russia. The requirements for social NGOs are closely connected to child welfare, health and education, but does not include the more controversial issues such as HIV prevention, refugees, human rights protection and the like (BEARR 2017). This fact is also repeated through the amendments of the law on foreign agents, adopted in June 2016. Even with the amendments to the law that were added in June, the definition of certain non-political activities still stands:

*Activities in the field of science, culture, art, health care, prevention and health protection, social services, social support and protection of citizens, protection of motherhood and childhood, social support to persons with disabilities, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical culture and sport, protection of flora and fauna, charity* (Album et al. 2017).

Following the theoretical framework of censal contestation, my hypothesis is that the relationship between the state and the environmental NGOs, will depend on which issues the NGOs are working on. In accordance with this theory, issues that touch vital political or economic interests will be supported to a lesser degree by the government. On the other side, issues that are beneficial to the state will gain more support and cooperation. As of 2015, Russia is the world’s third largest oil producer, in both crude oil and refined oil, and second largest producer of natural gas (Global Energy Statistical Yearbook 2016). Leading the export is currently crude petroleum and refined petroleum, together representing 46,5 % of the total export (OEC: Exports 2015). ROSATOM, represents the largest part of energy production.
and generation in Russia. In 2016, the company produced 196.37 billion kWh, which is 18.3% of the country total. In addition to this, the company owns the world’s only nuclear icebreaker fleet, and delivers 17.7% of nuclear fuel globally (ROSATOM n.d.).

Therefore, I expect the most difficult areas in the sphere of environmental NGOs, will be nuclear energy, oil, and gas which are vital political and economic interests for the Russian state.

5.1.1 Bellona

In Russia, Bellona originally had two offices working with different issues: Bellona Murmansk focuses on nuclear safety, industrial pollution and renewable energy, whereas Bellona St. Petersburg has established an environment rights center, in addition to working with Russian nuclear issues, clean renewable energy and industrial pollution (Bellona n.d.). Bellona therefore has many years of experience working in what the hypothesis frames as unacceptable issues. Surprisingly enough, Bellona had a completely different opinion regarding which issues were the most difficult to work with. In their experience, their work with nuclear issues have been the easiest in terms of cooperating with Russian authorities.

*When it comes to cooperation with the government? No, no it’s the complete opposite.*

*Because when you have the backing from ROSATOM, then it’s no problem. We have a Public Council that we can work with, ROSATOM public council. So, when we have ROSATOM behind us, then all the local governments are willing to cooperate and talk. If you come right from the street, then it’s hard (Interview 1.3).*

The informants report that the nuclear issues are indeed the easiest issues to work with, most importantly because of their close cooperation with ROSATOM. On other issues, such as legal disputes in local areas over parks, it is more challenging because they have to operate through the legal system.

*We can refer to lifting up the problem. We can go a bit to the side, and to other ministries and say ’look, this is not good’. Then it might be possible. So, we had some good cases where we had good results, where it was possible to have the park a different place without construction work. So, it its possible. But hard (Interview 1.3).*
If we consider only this evidence, the hypothesis can be rejected in the case of Bellona. This result should however not be as surprising when taking into consideration the close relationship that Bellona has developed with ROSATOM. This relationship will further be discussed in chapter 5.3 and 5.4. In the case of Bellona, what should also be taken into consideration is the fact that the office in Murmansk was one of the first environmental organizations labeled a foreign agent by the ministry of justice (Digges 2015a). The justification for this label was political activity, and the Murmansk office additionally played an important part in the work of efforts to clean up nuclear waste. After it became clear that Bellona Murmansk was listed as a foreign agent, Bellona’s executive director Nils Bøhmer, expressed his concerns about the work: *Bellona Murmansk has been critical in nuclear cleanup efforts in Northwest Russia on an international scale – now we fear international cleanup efforts will deteriorate dramatically as a result of this* (ibid.).

5.1.2 Greenpeace

Greenpeace tells a different story about which issues are easiest to work with. One representative points to one organization that has recently been declared a foreign agent after working with nuclear issues:

*And also, the Green Cross it's an also organization working in St. Petersburg and they deal with the Leningrad nuclear power plant and all this other stuff. And they were accepted as a foreign agent, I mean, yeah it's very bad. Because, this is indicator of the situation because regarding or in relation to that organization, the government starts to use these tools. To just eliminate them from the arena, and to close these nuclear problems or nuclear projects. But in toxic waste, it's better, but for example we start raising the issue of the hazardous waste water discharges of different companies. It's still something that they do not want to hear. And could like a bit you know, make a pressure on us somehow* (Interview 2.1).

They paint a picture of a situation where energy issues are sensitive topics for the government; especially connected to work regarding the Arctic, oil companies, gas business, and nuclear issues are increasingly difficult to work with. On the other side, we find topics such as toxic waste, separate waste collection, and forest work as acceptable arenas. One informant also points to the media as an important factor to see what issues are more government-friendly:
Ok, again it depends on the topics. And media is writing less about something where they see conflict with the authorities. Like criticism of ROSATOM, they don’t like so much. But at the same time, they would be willing to write about recycling, because recycling is everyone simply sees. Because many people from Moscow and St. Petersburg they do travel and they see that everywhere in the world you have recycling and separate waste collection and you don’t have it in Moscow or St. Petersburg in Russia in general (Interview 2.2).

This is an example of an issue that becomes important to the administration because of popular pressure. When more people notice this difference from other countries they have visited, it also becomes more of a hot topic for the government to meet this demand. The same seems to be the case with environmental issues concerning more states than the Russian state. One informant brings to light the example of a recent success with a campaign on chemical leaks into the Baltic sea. The organization managed to enlighten the governments of Germany, Finland, and Estonia about this risk, which in turn made the Russian government contact the organization to ask for advice. Putting indirect pressure on the administration from outside the country by making it an international problem rather than solely a Russian problem, seems to be effective, at least with issues such as chemical leaks. However, the organization still has hesitations about pressuring direct Russian economic interests. One informant describes a consumer pressure campaign they carried out, where consumers were encouraged to send letters to different companies. The conclusion was that while this worked with foreign brands, it might not work as well with Russian companies because of the economic interests.

Depends on the issue. Because of the issue and depends on the way we are working. And it’s for example if we compare with this international consumer pressure campaign that we also supported in Russia, so we mobilized people asking them to send a petition I don’t know to different fashion brand or even, yeah something like this... But probably if we start pushing Russian companies even in textile industry or electronics industry it could be another situation. But if we push like foreign companies, I don’t know, probably they decided they didn’t care (Interview 2.1).

This also means that there are issues that the organization is slightly more careful to pursue. The informants describe an organization trying to find a balance between latching on to the important issues, to mobilize people and solve problems, and on the other side, to still have an organization, to be alive, and to be
present in the country. It is a constant reevaluation of the current climate, how to communicate, which issue to chase and which angle to choose. One informant also hints at the fact that a former member of the public council in Leningrad oblast was dismissed from the council after publicly criticizing nuclear projects. This statement seems to be in accordance with Hendersons (2011) claim that the government is able to punish or deter organizations that touch critical issues.

For example I remember ... was a journalist, her participation was not prolonged by the governor. I was not supposed to see, but I saw why it was. It was because she publicly criticized nuclear projects, so, you know if I had this document I could make a scandal out of this and like publicly withdraw from this council, but I don't have (Interview 2.2).

5.1.3 Other Sources

The general consensus among the other sources is the same as what Greenpeace has experienced: The issues they are working on does matter. One environmental organization based in St. Petersburg reports that they are working closely with the local government on some issues, but finding it hard on other issues:

Yes, NGOs or people from the committees or from the local government. Sometimes it could be. Not with the issues which are kind of hard issues, like nuclear energy or oil extraction, so you will never find the allies in local governments in these issues. Other issues if not the oil, gas and everything like nuclear. So, energy issues are hard, but other issues would be ok (Interview 3.2).

This is also confirmed by a different informant about a different sector. The informant explains that in the sphere of child protection, official public councils are very active and they may be successful. However, the informant also points out, how this is a specificity of this sphere. In for example the sphere of migrants, or of HIV protection, the work of NGOs is almost completely futile (Interview 4.1). This also goes for the sector of human rights organizations versus social organization, in accordance with the observations made by Bindman (2015):
For human rights organizations it's different than social organizations...Because it's also in
the position, for social NGOs it's not possible not to cooperate. But there are human rights
NGOs who are in opposition because they think they, it's their position that they are not
supposed to cooperate with the state in the meaning of this very close cooperation, they with
for example for with executive bodies. They do it differently than social NGOs (Interview 4.1).

The informant from FOE Norway also agrees with this distinction between these issues. The
most noticeable resistance is in the nuclear issues, and the informant explains that they have
received several anonymous threats during the time that they have been working with nuclear
policy. Compared to working with hiking trails and teaching inhabitants not to litter in nature,
nuclear issues are clearly more complicated. The informant also mentions commercial
interests as a possible challenge. As an example, the informant explains how one partner in
Sosnovy Bor is working directly against one company in charge of recycling radioactive
metal, and who reported episodes of violence.

But it has certainly been the nuclear issues, they’re more it is considered a bit more like
politics. Whereas the more classic nature conservation is protected by the thought that it's
just nature conservation and not politics. And that’s also what we see, that it is those
organizations that work with nuclear power that was first labeled as foreign agents then. It is
perceived as a major threat, more political (Interview FOE Norway).
This is a specific sector which is opposite by nature. So, environmental NGOs make efforts to
protect nature from the state usually. So, I think that is why they were one of the first NGOs to
be pressed (Interview 4.1).

As the informant points out, this challenge with certain issues also manifests itself through
which organizations were targeted through the foreign agent legislation after the amendment
went into effect in 2014. The targeted organizations include Bellona Murmansk,
Educational Center for Environment and Security in Samara, and Siberian Environmental
Center (Human Rights Watch 2017).

The material gives a somewhat clear picture of how the organizations perceive the difference
between legitimate and illegitimate contention. What stands out, is Bellona and their work
with nuclear issues. What is important here it seems, is not only what issues the organizations
are working on, but also in what way. The more difficult issues might require a different approach towards the government, as noted by Bellona and some of the other organizations. The reason governmental structures are still seeking cooperation, seems to be that these organizations have made their ground as reliable, and by not pursuing the most controversial cases in the most controversial way. It pays off to be constructive in face of the Russian government. What the data seems to show on this hypothesis, is that issues do matter. But what matters more, are the connections between the government and these organizations. The government uses the tools available for them to limit influence coming from organizations working on controversial issues. But it also takes use of certain organizations when it needs to. The hard issues, such as nuclear issues, oil and gas, seem to make connections and establishing a solid relationship vital for the survival of these organizations.

5.2 Patriotic and Unpatriotic Contention

Hypothesis: There is a divide between patriotic and unpatriotic contestation, where the relations between the state and the non-governmental organizations will depend on the organizations ties to the west.

This theoretical hypothesis is closely connected to the first one. In addition to shaping civil society organizations after legitimate and illegitimate contentious claims, the hypothesis assumes that the Putin administration establishes a sharp divide between what they view as patriotic and unpatriotic contention. With this follows the assumption that western influence on the NGOs is perceived as unpatriotic and non-Russian. As Cheskin and March (2015, 269) point out, the Putin administration has had an increase in “hostile rhetoric and actions against “western” forms of intervention in Russian society”. Issues or organizations that are found to have links with “western or liberal forms of political organization” are now more likely to be “targeted as anti-regime”.

Cheskin and March describes the absence of “an overarching state ideology” as an important factor when it comes to the establishment of a clear division between “legitimate” (patriotic) and “non-legitimate” (western, unpatriotic) claims” (ibid.). This change was also noted by Henderson (2011, 33), who emphasizes the involvement of western funding in the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. “Suspicion of Western donor motivation in
Russia soon turned to hostility against Western interference in Russia’s informal “sphere of influence” as well as Russia’s “sovereign affairs.” (ibid.).

Thus, organizations receiving foreign funds to support their works, in addition to what the government views as political work, are more likely to have difficulties in their cooperation with the government. Included in this hypothesis is also an expectation of a noticeable change in the formal opportunities for environmental NGOs during Putin’s presidency, and especially after 2014 with the amendments to the foreign agent legislation. This suspicion of Western influence is also underlined by Wolchik (2012) and Horvath (2011) in their studies of the color revolutions in former Soviet states.

Furthermore, this suspicion is what Hemment (2012) refers to when she describes the civil society that emerged in the 1990s as false. She points to this as the footing for the Putin administrations constraints on civil society; most notably with the introduction of the law on NGOs later revised to the law on foreign agents. Crotty et al. (2014, 1253) echoes this argument in their study of the impact of this particular law, by stating that “the Kremlin perceived both foreign funded domestic and overseas groups as tarnishing Russia’s international reputation”. The use of this rhetoric is further underlined by Vikki Turbine (2015, 326) when she notes the Russian authorities’ use of the concepts western values and traditional Russian culture to justify restriction of human rights.

The theory agrees with the notion of a Russian state that uses western influence as a way to legitimize the changes in the sphere of NGOs. The question remains, however, of how this idea manifests itself in the relationship between the government and the environmental organizations. My hypothesis stays true to the theory on this matter, and assumes that this anti-Western rhetoric will have consequences for the cooperation between NGOs and government.

5.2.1 Bellona

«You know, working with politics is the first step to become some kind of agent. So, foreign funding plus political work, you will become an agent and it’s officially illegal to cooperate with state organizations after that. It means that it’s not illegal, nobody’s following you or punishing you for it, but the government can just say no, you are agents, go away» (Interview 1.3).
Bellona is an interesting case in this matter. As of 2017 both branches of their organization in Russia have been declared foreign agents (Bellona 2017). Bellona Murmansk was closed after receiving its new status in 2015, whereas Bellona St. Petersburg just recently received their new status and are still operating. Naturally, the organization has also felt the changes. Interestingly, the informants agree on a distinction between the political situation and the state-society relations in connection with foreign funding and western ties. The picture that emerges is one of a dualistic government, on one side striking down on foreign funding and political work, and on the other seeking cooperation.

The most important changes reported by Bellona after being declared a foreign agent, are paperwork and continuous checks. The informants describe the increase in formalities as a way of creating obstacles for the NGOs. They report that they have not changed their activities or the way they work as an organization: the only change is the increased amount of paperwork and financial challenges (Interview 1.2). The reasons given by the Russian department of justice for listing Bellona St. Petersburg as a foreign agent, is also connected to this hypothesis. The label is justified by allegations of political activity and attempts to “form socio-political opinions and convictions” (Digges 2017).

The issue, they assert, is that it is very difficult to be granted Russian funding for their organization. In the past, the organization has received some governmental grants, but only a few times. They also receive funding from ROSATOM which is technically governmental funding. The process for applying for Russian funding, they explain, is complicated, and it is not clear how the competition works and which organizations will obtain grants.

In Russia, many organization, NGOs, which are organized by the government. And have good relationship with government or public authority, because of it they receive such grants... and we think that uh, such activities are connected with corruption and much of this money is not spent on this sphere on the purpose of organize these funds and NGOs (Interview Bellona 2).

In terms of cooperating with the government and their formal opportunities to influence policy making, not much has changed. Their work with schools and universities has not been affected in St. Petersburg, although one informant explains how the Murmansk office has experienced some resistance from the schools after the branch was declared as foreign agents.
Russian society is like in any country, there are a lot of different people with different views. And some people who for them it’s doesn’t mean anything connected with our label, but some people who probably try not to work with us, not to have contact with us (Interview 1.2).

At the same time, there is quite a paradoxical situation going on in Murmansk. At the same time as Bellona Murmansk was declared a foreign agent, ROSATOM went to Bellona to ask for Norwegian funding to work with securing the Andreeva bay. This dualism manifests itself in different parts of the government, and makes it clear that the policy is not completely coordinated throughout the government. The personal relationships are more influential than the official formal opportunities, especially in connection to Western ties. The organizations can still be useful to the government so long as they find the right channels.

So, they ask for help with money on one side, and on the other side they declare us foreign agents. So, it’s really funny, it’s not coordinated what they do. If they need help from us, they can say we’re not foreign agents. We’re Russian agents… So yes, they forget that we are agents. But it’s hard, because maybe one governmental body says it’s ok, while another says no, they’re western agents, they work for Norway, for NATO, they’re ruining our Russia. So, it depends a lot on what kind of personal contacts you have in Russian bureaucracy. As in ROSATOM, you have to make contacts, it’s easier like that (Interview 1.3).

5.2.2 Greenpeace

For Greenpeace, the situation is quite different. There have been few changes in how the organization operates, and how it communicates with the government. This might be because they don’t stand the same risk of being listed as a foreign agent, as the organization is juridically a Russian one, but they represent the interests of an international organization. Greenpeace St. Petersburg is a unit of the international organization Greenpeace, and can therefore technically not be declared a foreign agent. They do however stand in the risk of being labeled after a different legislation, where any organization can be declared an undesired organization. This label will make it illegal for any financial structure within Russia to deal with this organization. This legislation is something they always have to keep in mind when working, and has somewhat modified which issues they chase, and which strategies they choose.
What they have noticed in regard to the foreign agent legislation however, is how the sector of environmental organizations is thinning out. Many of the regional organizations, that used to be their partners, have in the last few years been declared foreign agents (Interview 1 Greenpeace). Some of the organizations were shut down, and some continue operating under different circumstances.

And some of them just shut down their organizations and some not, but it's absolutely like, erasing the whole scene. That's what happened. And probably it's how it happens with time, but I think that in principle there was still some potential for development for all these NGOs and it's quite unnatural that their activities were stopped or made very difficult (Interview 2.2).

5.2.3 Other Sources

The other organizations I interviewed have also experienced some changes connected to the new legislation and cooperation with western donors. One informant reports difficulties in cooperation with governmental structures, after the organization was included into the registry in 2015. Where they once had a good dialogue, possibility for funding through governmental grants and frequent contact, it is now nearly impossible to fill the functions the organization aims to fill. The situation is then similar for other organizations, not just the environmental organizations.

It's because you focus on this issue of cooperation with the state and unfortunately it is so that in practice, it is not somehow possible for organizations who are like foreign agents in this list of ministry of justice to cooperate with the state institutions and organizations. Our personal contacts stay, but officially we cannot cooperate (Interview 4.2).

One informant from The NHC explains how the Russian government uses the memories and impression of war within and outside the country to anchor the concept of unpatriotic organizations. According to this informant, the government uses the memories of the past to build the future. This is to replace the lack of ideology that was established after the Soviet Union. As this informant is a Russian citizen and holds a degree in political science, this statement should also be viewed as personal experience.

So, organizations that receive funding from abroad are labeled agents. And the thought is that everything can be bought, and people cannot have their own opinions, it is a very Soviet and
conspiratorial thought. This law is inasmuch nothing new for our colleagues in Russia, most of them remember the Soviet Union well. But what is new, is that they have become so strong that the government actually see them as a problem (Interview 4.3).

The strength of these organization might also be the challenge for the Russian government. The apparent influence from western donors was present before, but is becoming more visible with the increasingly strong civil society of NGOs. According to another informant from Centre for Independent Social Research, environmental NGOs might be in a special situation because these organizations have traditionally been supported by foreign funds. But, as with other sectors the communication depends more on the position and the strategies chosen, than on the funding and “western ideology”.

I think that of course there are some open channels of communication. So, it is not true that the state is totally closed towards NGOs in Russia. Actually, the state needs NGOs in different spheres. In social sphere for example, it attracts NGOs through particular grants, grant programs, financial support. And I think that environmental NGOs may use these channels also, if they demonstrate loyalty, if they demonstrate their readiness to work in a particular way. But again, it depends on the position of the NGO. If it is ready to communicate with the state, to use the states language and to demonstrate loyalty, then they have chance for constructive dialogue with the state (Interview 4.1).

The informant from FOE Norway repeats the impression of a dualistic governance that Bellona also experienced. The laws are implemented in quite different ways in different parts of the country, which also means that there are many other factors at play. Their partners in Russia cannot always understand why some organizations are labeled foreign agents, while others are not. And the consequences for these organizations also differ between the regions and organizations. Some of their partners continue to have frequent formal contact with the government, not necessarily governmental structures, but with governmental employees. This is also similar to other organization´s experiences: the label does not necessarily exclude any form of contact or cooperation with the government, but it depends ever more on the people and on the organization itself. At the same time, the informant confirms the insecurity many of the other organizations have mentioned.

In the fall, they’re having a conference where many of these government officials are coming. And suddenly, the university that was supposed to be co-hosting the event withdraws,
obviously from external pressure. It’s not a given, they have to feel their way forward (Interview 4.4).

The evidence found reviewing this hypothesis outline the same argument as the previous one. It gives support to the hypothesis that western ties and funding makes it more difficult to operate as an NGO in Russia, but this is not the entire picture. It seems that, even with western ties, the government is more than eager to cooperate with certain organizations, depending on their established relationship. The data presents a picture of a dualistic state, on one hand deeply concerned by western ties and the risk of western influence, and on the other still dependent on the expertise that the established partners provide.

5.3 Hybrid Regimes and Formal Structures

*Hypothesis: The formal structures established by the Russian government are an important arena for the state to fulfill its aims.*

The dualism noted by both Tarasenko (2015) and Aasland et al. (2016) concerns the mutual benefits of the relationship between civil society actors and the authorities. This hypothesis delves further into the theory of hybrid regimes, and assumes that the Russian authorities are also beneficiaries to this communication with the NGOs. The formal structures are not only put in place to give the organizations an arena, the NGOs can also fill a function for the state. Aasland et al. (2016, 149) note that there is an apparent will to include civil society actors into formal structures, and at the same time make attempts to diminish the sector.

Davies et al. (2016, 135) explain this interest with the state’s limitations, and underline that “there are limits to the efficacy of the state”. Both the authorities and the non-state actors can make use of each other to achieve their respective goals, and the NGOs can be a useful source of expertise and knowledge for the government. They outline a cooperation that serves also to strengthen the state’s authority: “there is cooperation and dialogue, but state power is not nullified” (ibid.). In this, they accentuate the necessity for the authorities to gain legitimacy from cooperation with non-state actors and that such organizations may provide “valuable expertise, knowledge and skills, of voluntary man hours and alternative, additional financing” (ibid.).
This claim is furthermore discussed by Tarasenko (2015, 309) who shows in her study of the Russian welfare reform, how the authorities have put in place a system where they remain successful in keeping the status quo because they benefit from the cooperation with NGOs. By implementing a dualistic welfare system, the social NGOs are encouraged to cooperate closely with the authorities, which in turn diminishes the risk of open contention. This conclusion gives the Russian authorities good reason to invite the NGO sector to participate. This can be viewed in the lens of Petrov et al. (2016, 10) and their theory of dilemmas faced by hybrid regimes. They show through their study, that if the state fails to balance between taking liberties and the reaction from society, it will likely end in demonstrations as the ones we saw in 2011.

Looking at the data, I expect to find evidence of a interdependent relationship between the government structures and the NGOs. I expect to see a regime that employs the resources they have in the NGOs as experts and sources of knowledge, skill and additional funding.

5.3.1 Bellona

As previously mentioned, Bellona has established a close relationship with ROSATOM, in their years of working with nuclear issues in Northern Russia. Therefore, it is not surprising that the organization reports having frequent contact. The data shows that the governmental structures are also known to contact Bellona on certain issues, most significantly because they hold the expertise in the area. This might be because Bellona has established itself as a reliant partner in the region, and holds significant expertise on the matter of nuclear energy.

«But when the state needs us, for example in May in Murmansk we have a seminar in cooperation with the Murmansk administration... And the state has a year of ecology that they have to report on. And now we’re proposing a seminar about clean energy. So they’re willing to cooperate. They utilize us when they want. But when we propose things that are not interesting to them, then it’s hard». (Interview 1.3)

Other informants also underline Aleksander Nikitin’s importance, when it concerns the role the organizations play for the government. Nikitin’s work is by one informant labeled the main activity of Bellona, and further explains that ROSATOM contacts him because he is a known expert in the nuclear industry and nuclear energy (Interview 1.1). Another informant
weighs in that he, with his international connections, represents an important person for
ROSATOM when it comes to organizing international events (Interview 1.2)

If they need our help, then they can say that we’re not foreign agents, we’re Russian agents.
So, we work for Russia. So, actually, it’s not like they think in Russia, that we work for
Norway, that we want to stop oil extraction in Russia because Norway wants to expand their
oil projects. That’s not true. But when the state needs us, for example in May in Murmansk,
we have a seminar in cooperation with the Murmansk administration (Interview 1.3).

As described in chapter 2.3.2, this representation is one of the most important activities for
Bellona. Niktin is a member of the ROSATOM Public Council, and there represents Bellona
as an environmental expert. This finding is closely linked with Davies et al.’s argument about
an interdependent relationship between the government and the organizations. Bellona
contributes with its expertise about nuclear energy and waste, and the employees manage
work as independent advisors to the government even without an organization. Furthermore,
the government benefits from additional funding, as predicted by Davies et al. One example is
the funding Bellona attracts from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the
Nuclear Action Plan, which is used to finance their project on nuclear security (Holm-Hansen
2015, 7). In addition, the nuclear safety projects in Russia have since the 1990s attracted
substantial international funding (Holm-Hansen 2015, 11).

5.3.2 Greenpeace

Greenpeace does not have the same close ties with governmental structures, and has a
different way of working. Nevertheless, they account for extensive contact with governmental
structures and report being included as experts and asked for advice in several processes. On
one particular “rapid response” campaign, they arranged a petition for the state Duma. In
connection to this, they also cooperated with the Presidential Council for Civil Society and
Human Rights through the director on Greenpeace who is a member of this council. One
informant pinpoints the dualism of these structures:

It's like quite interesting structure, it seems to be like formal because it's arranged by the
president who impose all this stuff, but at the same time this council has some freedom to
raise some issues (Interview 2.1).
The reason that this communication is important, the informants say, is because the power of the Russian state is so centralized. They claim that this is an arena to raise important issues, and to reach the decision makers, because as one informant points out, they are not sure that the president and the Duma always know what the other is doing. It is then their responsibility as an NGO to raise their heads and make the decision makers aware of what is going on. This corresponds with the theoretical assumptions made by Davies et al. (2016), that the state has a limit. The state is incapable of keeping control over every sphere, and the NGOs are a useful source of information and expertise in these instances.

And the director of our organization, he is a member of this council, so this is for us like kind of window to raise the issue to the higher level, at least to start talking to the decision makers that it could be the problem, because sometimes even despite the power is very centralized in our country, sometimes the president and Duma they work not like you know, they even, Duma can't even, or president can't, eh, can't know what the one doing or the other, so it's sometimes even the good way just to inform president or some like people close to them that look, what your guys are doing so we should stop it. (Interview 2.1)

What is more, one informant explains how the organization became a member of the local public council in the Leningrad oblast. The evidence suggests that the governmental structures, and in this case the governors, can use these councils to show the citizens that they are hearing them. This is a way of publicly reassuring the community that their voices are being heard, and that the NGOs can voice their concerns with the frames of the legislation. This can additionally be a strategy of diminishing the risk of open contention, as noted by Tarasenko (2016). Both because the public is reassured, and because it gives the organizations less incentive to mobilize outside of the legislative frames.

It was, I know that it began where Greenpeace criticized governor for something, for as I remember, illegal lodging of trees. And then the governor said, ok Greenpeace, he like publicly invited GP to be a part of this council (Interview 2.2).

Greenpeace have also developed a good relationship with some governmental structures over years of systematic work. In this way, it appears that the organization has established itself as an important actor in the field of environmental politics. There is evidence suggesting that when there are demands for a policy change, the government uses organizations such as
Greenpeace as advisors and include them into the process. This is evident in both national and international issues, as demonstrated by these examples:

*Probably because of our systematic and constructive work on zero waste for example, now we feel a bit more desire from the governmental side to work to deal with us on that issues especially on the regional level, or even on the governmental one, because the issue, the problem of the waste, is like a top issue for the for the government also in Russia, they have, of course, they see different solutions, alternatives, like they more promote the incineration but not the recycling, but they accept that this is the real problem and they like investigating different options and they are more like open for the contacts on that issue* *(Interview 2.1)*

*This was the issue we brought to the HELCOM agenda and the governments of Germany and Finland, and Estonia. And after, they came to us asking 'what do you suggest' because we brought this issue to the international fora and it became the problem even for the federal government because all the president. And after that they also asked for some recommendations and gave a kind of green light for the governments on their side to start at least hearing what the NGOs are talking about.* *(Interview 2.1)*

The evidence gives some support to the theoretical claims made by Tarasenko (2015) and Petrov et al. (2016). The examples show that, when the political climate demands a response from the Russian government, the NGOs can act as advisors and as a means of calming the demands before they develop into a full-blown storm. In the case of separate waste collection, this is an issue that has been discussed on a federal level, and that has been an important issue. As one informant explained, this is an issue that has become increasingly important as Russians travel more, and question the way Russian handles its waste *(Interview 2.2)*.

The impression that Greenpeace has established a solid cooperate relationship with formal government structures, is also evident through the issues they are able to raise. Several of the other interviews reveal that many employees of different environmental organizations spend their spare time volunteering for Greenpeace, precisely because they are more free to speak their minds. In less established organizations, they are more careful with the issues they chase in fear of the repercussions for the organization. This is naturally a cause for concern within Greenpeace too, yet it seems that they are less limited by it.
5.3.3 Other Sources

The hypothesis is also supported by data from the external sources. One of the anonymous environmental organizations explains that the contact initiated by government officials is usually because they are obliged to ask the advice of an NGO, and that this is a part of the attempt to present Russia as a democracy.

Sometimes it's happened for... they need by some documents or something, they need to have an NGO representative. So sometimes they do it just because they need some person from an NGO. So, it happens mostly so... Well, it's a part of democracy. Because we are democracy on paper you know? (Interview 3.2)

It is also noted by the informant from CISR, that the state has certain openings in its policy directed at the social sphere. The environmental organizations may fall under the same branch as long as they demonstrate loyalty, and work in a particular way. This statement is in accordance with the findings of the previous hypotheses and the recent implementation of legislation concerning socially beneficial NGOs. Certain issues are not defined as political, and this includes protection of flora and fauna.

So, it is not true that state is totally closed towards NGOs in Russia. Actually state needs NGOs in different spheres. In social sphere for example, and it actually somehow attracts NGOs through particular grants, grant programs, financial support. And I think that environmental NGOs may use these channels also, if they demonstrate loyalty, if they demonstrate their readiness to work in a particular way (Interview 4.1).

The informant from FOE Norway also highlights the importance of establishing a relationship with governmental structures and officials. This also implies that the officials are to some extent dependent on the NGOs, and are therefore willing to cooperate despite of the issues these organizations are working on, and the ties to the West.

And through these government contacts, they have gained access to hearings in the regional dumas, and the debate has come up, they've established cooperation with workgroups in the dumas and across the dumas. And this is a development that we've seen with our partners that has gone the opposite way, that actually has improved (Interview 4.4).
Moreover, FOE Norway has noted that after their prolonged cooperation with the Russian government on the future plans for nuclear reactors in Northern Russia, the political parties are following. In their report from 2014, they notice an increased use of the organizations statements and positions among the political parties (Naturvernforbundet 2014, 27). This indicates that when the information is available, the government representatives will make use of it.

The evidence analyzed in connection to this hypothesis confirms the assumptions made on the basis of the two former hypotheses. The issues and Western ties make a difference for the organizations in some instances. But what is more important, is the governments dependence on a close relationship to these organizations. This is also underlined with the introduction of new legislation for providers of socially useful services in 2017, where the president expressed to the Federal Assembly that they should involve NGOs in the social services as much as possible and “not to be greedy and whilst not abandoning their normal preferences for public institutions alone…Let’s just say NGOs never lose sight of the importance of having empathy in their dealings with people” (BEARR 2016)

5.4 Consentful Contestation and Formal Structures

_Hypothesis: The formal structures established by the Russian government constitute an important opportunity to influence policy for the organizations’ consensual contestation._

This hypothesis is closely connected to the third one, in that it describes a mutually beneficial relationship between the authorities and the NGOs. Considering the model of consentful contestation presented by Cheskin and March, it is a way to further explore what opportunities do exist for Russian civil society and NGOs. The hypothesis is that there are formal structures put in place so that the organizations might influence policy, and that these structures are not a mere facade, but are also an important arena for these organizations. “What the consentful contention model adds to previous analyses is that it focuses on how even co-option is a nuanced, changing phenomenon, that is not simply a form of state control. In fact it allows a certain level of challenge and contention. However, the balance between co-option, control and contention varies over space, social sector and time” (Cheskin and March 2015, 267).
There is much evidence in the theory to support this hypothesis. Tarasenko (2015, 307) argues that the presence of political institutions works as a tool for activists, and that this accounts for the apparent lack of open mobilization. This goes back to the third hypothesis about what benefits the Russian state. But in this argument, lies also the implication that the NGOs take use of these institutions. Aasland et al. (2016, 166) support this implication by stating that the non-state actors are more interested in maintaining such structures than the state actors are, because the non-state actors have more to gain from the structures. Moreover, the assumption can be found in Owens article (2015, 279), defining characteristics of consensual contestation. She states that one characteristic is absence of radical activism: the activists use the political status quo to their advantage and make use of existing legislative frames to make their claims.

Reviewing this hypothesis, I expect to find evidence of cooperation between governmental actors and the NGOs. In addition, I expect that the formal institutions constitute a path for contention, and that the organizations use them as such.

5.4.1 Bellona

When it comes to formal structures, Bellona is working with a few. They are closely working with the ROSATOM public council where Alexander Niktin is a representative. There are many indications that this type of formal structure is vital for the work that Bellona does, especially connected to the nuclear issues. This was one of the reasons the informant gave when explaining how the nuclear issues were actually easier to work with, compared to many of the other issues. Without the backing from ROSATOM, the situation might have been very different. And, as this informant said, the support from ROSATOM makes cooperation with local governments easier, as they are represented by someone from Moscow (Interview 1.3). Apart from this council, the organization has contact with the ministry of natural resources, where it prepares for them an annual report on the environmental situation in Russia. In addition to this, they have a meeting to discuss these issues with the local government in Moscow (Interview 1.2). A few years ago, they also had a representative in the local public council, in the region of Leningrad.

As mentioned in chapter 5.1, Bellona and other organizations have experienced the dualism of the Russian government first hand. The dualism is also represented in the reasoning for Bellona, when the informants say they do not have problems in connection with the government, only with their activities as an NGO (Interview 1.1). This dualism might be due
to the solid top-down structure of the Russian bureaucracy. The reason why it is possible for Bellona to influence policy on the nuclear issues, is because of their close relationship with ROSATOM. As long as they have friends in high places, it is possible to cut through to the top, and to cooperate with the local governments.

So, it’s still possible, but many of the bureaucrats are afraid. They cannot decide for themselves, their boss tries to call their own boss, and they are very afraid to make decisions. And it’s the same in ROSATOM, they’re very afraid. They are afraid to ask their boss, so they come to us and ask: can you bring this up at the meeting, and it’s no problem for us (Interview 1.3).

This makes it all the more important for the organization to be constructive in their work.

We’re trying to be constructive in Russia. We’re not going out with posters, yelling stop! Attention is good, but it can be hard to go to the government after a protest and ask for cooperation. That doesn’t work in Russia, they would look at us like freaks. (Interview 1.3)

5.4.2 Greenpeace

Greenpeace has experience with some of the same type of structures that Bellona had. They have worked with the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, where the director of the organization is a representative. This is described by one informant as a window to raise their issues to a higher level, and at least start a conversation about the problems with the decision makers. The organization also has a representative in the local public council, which has regular meetings. The top-down structure and centralized government is also here mentioned as an issue. The impression is that the state Duma and the president are working around each other, and that the important factor is to get information across to the president, or the people close to him. There is also communication between the organization and the federal government on certain issues, for example instances where they would be asked for advice on air pollution or other topics.

The informants tell a story of close cooperation with the government on several levels. Because the Russian government is centralized and described as the main decision maker, nearly all of the organizations work goes through direct contact with governmental structures.
Additionally, they have different experiences with cooperation with the government, depending on the level of government:

*With the municipality, it is easy to talk, because they are more conscious, and they care more about the real situation in the region. And especially if we speak about the waste, for them it's real, so they are open for the communication. So, they were open for us and for talking about the like green economy and the green development of the municipality. So, in that way, lobby work was quite enough. And in at the regional level, it depends on the region of course, if it's quite a rich industrial region so it's like completely impossible to start talking, because they like don’t care on the environment at all (Interview 2.1).*

On the federal level, it depends on the interest for the issue. The main impression however, is that international pressure makes it harder to ignore. If the pressure is coming from outside Russia’s border, at the international level, it might be easier for the organization to cooperate with the government. Furthermore, it seems that in these instances, the government also recognizes the organization as a source of information and cooperation. As noted by Bellona, they may seek the help of these organizations in these cases.

*If they feel the pressure from the public or from the media, or from the international media or international decision makers or stakeholders, they can even call to us and say look guys, we have the problem, I know that you are working with this, and probably you are one of who like pushed the decision, let's do something, I mean, what are your suggestions (Interview 2.1)*

The strategies adopted by Greenpeace differ from Bellona in the way that they use public pressure and international pressure to cooperate with the government. Like Bellona, they also focus on a constructive strategy with systematic work towards the government, to establish close relations and contacts to make the work smoother. International pressure proves useful in the sense that it does not pressure the Russian government directly, but makes it their problem by bringing it to the international agenda. This strategy is also used through petitions and consumer pressure campaigns, where the mobilization of people brings the issues to the federal agenda. Mobilizing people is nevertheless only a small part of their work, and is used when direct contact with the governmental structures gives feeble results.
And, no, different, all government structures who can change situation. But if this contacts doesn’t work, we use actions to attract the attention of people of newsmakers, journalists. But actions usually it’s maybe 5 % of our work. Most of the work for our organization, is to try to have conversations with our government, deputies who produce different laws. Most of work it’s try to change situation legal and constructive relationship with government (Interview 2.2)

5.4.3 Other Sources

There is disagreement on whether the different structures actually work, and whether this is a real arena for the NGOs to influence policy in the local, regional or federal levels. Naturally, some are very critical, condemning for example the public council to be highly bureaucratic. What most agree on is that the function of these councils and other formal structures vary considerably between regions, and largely depends on the government representatives working there.

But somehow officially you have that this public chamber is place for interaction between NGOs and state and it depends in the regions. There are regions where there are very active and very professional people leading these but it’s very few examples. Mostly it’s very bureaucratic institutions and it doesn’t work (Interview 4.1).

One of the other environmental NGOs describes the public council as a means to receive information first hand. It is a place where issues can be discussed, where different NGOs are represented and operate as experts in their field. The council can therefore be a useful source for information, and be used as a tool to stay on top of the game, even though many of the organizations do their most important work elsewhere. This is something that most of the informants agree on, even though their opinions of the structures differ. Some members call it a “show”, although they appreciate the source of information it provides, whereas some actually think their input matters to some extent. The informant from the NHC highlights the importance of having these institutions. Some of these institutions, the informant argues, already have people doing important work.

There are many ombudsmen in regions, and most of them are of course just nominated figures who don’t do their jobs. There are some who do, and depending on how the local development is turning out, the local organizations have the opportunity to use this situation.
And I think that the more local people use the local representations, the likelihood increases of strengthening these institutions and filling them with content (Interview 4.3).

What most of the informants highlight as the most important contact, is not the governmental structures necessarily, but the people in government. All the organizations report working with establishing contact with different governmental bodies through personal contacts, and this is indeed their most important resource.

I think it has been hugely important. And through these government contacts, they have achieved hearings in the regional dumas, and the debate has arisen, they have achieved cooperation with workgroups in the dumas and across the dumas. And this is a development that we’ve seen with our partners that has gone the opposite way, that’s actually become better (Interview 4.4).

The other environmental organizations also reported success with the strategy of mobilizing people. One of the organizations is dependent on mobilizing people, as their main goal is to achieve separate waste collection in St. Petersburg. The other organization combines mobilization with communication with the government. They describe their role as an NGO as a buffer between the people and the government, and to mobilize people to look after their own interests.

Well, mostly it's work with public who we are trying to push to go to the local government. As NGO we are between government and people, so we are this kind of buffer. And as most organizations, I think NGOs are trying to do that. So we are trying to educate people to, how to defend your rights, so there is a right in the constitution, to have clean environment around you. So we just use it to ask people, well now you know... Yeah, and I think nowadays it's kind of the only instrument which we can use successfully. People are power (Interview 3.2).

People can be power in the sense of numbers as well. These organizations take advantage of the opportunities they have, to use people and the formal structures in combination. One example came up from a public hearing in 2016, about the construction of insinuators. The informant says it was far easier to mobilize people when it affected them in such a direct way, as the building of insinuators right next to their homes. Reportedly, three times as many people as the auditorium would hold, showed up at the hearing. Consequently, public hearing resulted in cancellation, and forced the company to rethink the project (Interview 3.2).
FOE Norway have additionally noted a trend, suggesting that environmental NGOs are increasingly becoming important stakeholders. After years of cooperation, the organization and their partners have experienced a surge of invitations to relevant events and are being listened to (Naturvernforbundet 2014, 26). The coalition of organizations has over the last ten years established close contacts with government representatives, and are engaging in constructive dialogue.

The results of this hypothesis are twofold and somewhat surprising. Firstly, the findings concerning work with formal structures is as expected. The formal structures provide an important arena for contestation in some cases, and the organizations make use of them as such. The formal channels are even said to be more effective than lobby work. Secondly, the findings suggest that new channels for contestation emerges through social media and the use of people. The organizations all report using mobilization of people to achieve their goals, and this is often an aim in itself: to mobilize people in order to convince the citizens to fight for their own political rights. This is nevertheless, consistent with the type of contention that Owen (2015) concentrates on when she outlines the absence of radical activism.

5.5 Additional Results

In the search for an answer to my hypotheses, I made some other important discoveries about the development of civil society and the NGO sector in general. These findings can be divided into two parts: 1) a development towards more cooperation and coalition building among organizations and sectors, and 2) to some extent, a positive view of the future.

5.5.1 Coalitions, Cooperation and a New Way of Life

The increased cooperation between organizations is something many of the informants mentioned. The informant from the NHC stated about the recent implementation of the law on foreign agents, that the aim was in the end to stop organizations. But, the informant says, the law has had an unexpected effect; it has given the complete opposite outturn. Even though many organizations have suffered with this new legislation, and many organizations have seized operating, the organizations that remain have developed a completely new way of working.
We know more organizations which started new organizations, who don’t need to organize. The goal is not to stop, the goal is to survive, to find new opportunities. And as I see Russian state and society, the Russian authorities are quite conservative, rigid, old fashion, and have the old way of ruling. But society is much more modern (Interview 4.3).

The organizations are forced to regroup, to reorganize. The different informants mention many different strategies to keep the organization alive. Bellona Murmansk for example, no longer has an established organization but works through three people. Bellona St. Petersburg are adamant on the fact that they will not change their strategy and their work, even though they have been affected by the legislation. The Centre of Independent Social Research reported having discussed a variety of different options that other organizations also adopted. This means that the organizations fight to stay alive and continue their work, within the frames that the legislation allows for.

We discussed establishment of commercial company, separated from the NGO because all the connections will provoke checking from the side of the state... Another strategy was to reorganize this NGO to association of independent research. So, it could allow to, remove this organization out of this law of foreign agents...We have established another similar research institution outside of Russia in another country...And I, I would say that these are rather typical strategies. I've heard that other NGOs have realized these strategies, so diversification, establishment of new agencies, new faces which allow to realize the projects, to save funding, to save people in the organization. But this is also a huge amount of duties, new additional duties for the administration (Interview 4.1).

One of the anonymous environmental NGOs try to adopt certain strategies to avoid being targeted by the state, and says that the label foreign agent is a constant concern. At the same time, they report having success with grouping together with other environmental organizations to achieve their goal. This turns out to be a useful strategy to reach more people, and to have several ways to pressure different parts of the government and decision makers. These coalitions are based on different issues that the organizations can cooperate on, and certain hot topics that require rapid mobilization and quick response. One example is a new coalition in St. Petersburg around recycling and separate waste collection, of which Greenpeace is a member. A different example of coalition building and cooperation, are the anti-corruption protests that took place all over Russia on March 26th 2017. This was on the initiative of Aleksei Navalny, where over 100 cities participated (Mortensen et al. 2017).
I won’t say that it was a positive effect, that organizations are labeled, but it has suddenly given the organizations an opportunity to develop methods of solidarity, to work together, to coordinate their work, to have a good overview of Russia and what’s happening. To develop methods of survival, to give each other advice and divide tasks in-between the organizations. It has given opportunities, and they continue without taking the state into account (Interview 4.3).

Greenpeace is also an organization in transition, slowly focusing more on the strategy of working to mobilize people and create involvement. They view it as increasingly important to not only work on the matters themselves, and solve issues for the people. As one informant says; they want the people to be the heroes, to give them the tools to fight for their own rights. Recent developments have given the organization a good indicator that this strategy is working. They are, along with other organizations, able to mobilize people in a very short amount of time. Furthermore, they have seen an interesting development in the wake of the law on foreign agents.

Yeah, what I also want to say, as I said previously a lot of NGOs were closed as foreign agents, but at the same time is what I can see is increased level of the civil society activity in the regions, so ordinary people are arranged in an initiative group by themselves without any support of the NGO etc... It’s really inspiring, very helpful now when we don’t have much NGO partners, but we have local activities initiative groups in the regions who are becoming our partners (Interview 2.1).

This is something all of the informants from Greenpeace have noticed and view as a positive development. Moreover, they experience more often that people are taking the initiative themselves, to contact Greenpeace in environmental issues. They are ready to accept the advice of such organizations, instead of relying on the state to fix it for them. Ordinary people, not connected to any environmental NGO, are learning how to build campaigns, how to attract media attention, and how to engage people. One of the informants is concerned that these initiatives are not critical enough, that the people are not in any real opposition to the government. What is clear, however, is a growth in grass root activity.
5.5.2 Hope for the Future

This change in the grass roots gives some of the informants hope for the future of Russia’s civil society development. Even though all agree that the recent developments from the side of the state have been trying, the organizations are unyielding in their attempt at making the best of their circumstances. All the informants add positive notes of change in the sector. The informant from FOE Norway underlines the positive cooperation their grass root-partners have achieved with government contacts. The informant for the NHC emphasizes the development of international networks and horizontal networks. In the wake of the anti-corruption demonstrations in March, there was also signs of public discussion spreading in social media. The fact that there is potential for discussion, and that knowledge is spreading throughout the population is a positive development.

*And it’s important, in this way the institutions are strengthened. I see these committees, and they have to go to court, to challenge politicians, members of the state duma, lobby their rights, which I see as a positive thing...Because the trust between state and people in Russia is very low. And civil society organizations work with strengthening institutions and building trust between the state and the citizens,*
6 Concluding Remarks

The relationship between state and society is fraught with complications, and this thesis shows that Russia is no exception. What from an outsiders point of view might resemble a country crushed under a strict authoritarian regime with little or no activities of civil society, is in reality a narrow picture of the entire truth. This thesis has showed that the relationship between state and non-state actors is dependent on a system of interdependence, where the actors need one another in the scheme of things. These relations might depend on different aspects such as western influence, foreign funding and political activity. However, the findings in this thesis suggests that what proves to be the defining characteristics of this relationship are mutual benefits.

With this concluding chapter, the thesis will summarize the main findings of the study. It will assess the hypotheses together with the research question, and how the findings relate to the theoretical framework. Additionally, the chapter will give an account of the supplementary results discovered in the study, and assess how these fit into the theory of consensual contestation.

6.1 Research Question

I have approached this thesis using a mixed method of interviews with different experts and organizations and document analysis. The data has been analyzed using the framework of consensual contestation in addition to theoretical arguments on hybrid regimes. The hypotheses were derived from the theoretical assumptions to answer the following research question:

What kind of interplay exists between civil society organizations and the governmental structures? What formal opportunities exist for civil society organizations’ influence? And in what way are these opportunities limited and/or encouraged by the current regime?
The theoretical baseline of this thesis outlined a hybrid regime that attempts to disengage society, through censorship and control rather than open repression. President Vladimir Putin emerges as a strong leader, succeeding in shaping the civil society sector with a “vigilant state”. Suspicion of Western influence after the color revolutions in former Soviet states has led to implications for foreign funding and support for the organized civil society. Meanwhile, the state attempts to shape the sector through categories of acceptable forms of contention and forms less accepted.

The aim of this thesis was firstly to discover what kind of interplay exists between civil society organizations and governmental structures in Russia. The interplay can be said to be clearly there, and complex in its workings. Following the theory, the interplay is marked by an interdependence and a mutually beneficial relationship. The analysis points towards an image of a dualistic state, which is outlined both by Tarasenko (2015) and Aasland et al. (2016). Aasland et al. describe a strong government which allows for civil society participation on a normative level, yet still intent on limiting the room for development. Tarasenko shows that there is still room for civil society participation, because the government has established spheres of influence to keep the status quo and limit open contestation.

The aim was thereafter to discover what formal opportunities there are for the organizations to influence. In the theory, Owen (2015) contends the outright dismissal of governmental bodies such as the Federal Public Chamber and the Presidential Council of Civil Society and Human Rights, and claims that there are numerous examples of success being accomplished through these bodies. Davies et al. (2016) discuss the governments interest in promoting civil society participation and cooperation and that this is also reflected in the policy, for example through establishing these formal opportunities.

Lastly, the aim of this thesis was to learn in what way are these opportunities limited and/or encouraged by the current regime. Henderson (2011) maintains that although the current regime takes the form of a vigilant state vis-à-vis NGOs and civil society, the strategy is more than pure repression. As both Henderson (2011), Bindman (2015) and Turbine (2015) all argue, the state draws a clear line between political and social claims, which in turn affect the opportunities these organizations receive.
6.2 Main Findings

Analyzing the first hypothesis, I find that the division outlined by among other Bindman (2015) between economic and social rights, and civic and political rights, is highly relevant also in the case of environmental organizations. The organizations are careful in the way they pursue certain issues, and they underline the importance of having personal contacts in the sphere. The same discovery is made in analyzing the second hypothesis, where the divide is set between patriotic and unpatriotic contention. The relations are here found to depend somewhat on the Western affiliations and foreign funding, most notably through the implications of the law on foreign agents. Nevertheless, the interplay is shown to be much more complex and depends much more on interaction through formal structures and informal structures in an interdependent relationship between state and NGOs.

The analysis of the third hypothesis shows that the government makes use of the organizations, and that this relationship is far more important than the limitations implemented through the legislation surrounding NGOs. The data shows that the formal opportunities offered by the authorities, are both limited and encouraged. This paints a picture of a dualistic Russian state, offering formal opportunities to the NGOs for the governments benefit, but still trying to limit the full influence the organizations may provide. Furthermore, analyzing the fourth hypothesis, the data shows that there are existing formal opportunities for influence. The formal structures where NGOs are included, are to a certain extent utilized by the organizations. Even though the opinions differ as to what use some of the formal structures have, the well-established organizations are shown to use the structures to their benefit. Organizations seeking influence, have also discovered the usefulness of establishing relationships and lay the foundations for becoming established partners.

The additional results discovered through extensive interviews also gives the impression of a sector that keeps renewing, and that seeks a larger goal in establishing a well-developed civil sphere outside of formal organizations. The mobilization of citizens to fight for their own constitutional rights gives hope for a sector under pressure, in addition to their formal opportunities. This is not necessarily the same contentious claims that could be seen through the protests previously mentioned in the introduction, but more of a manifestation of civil society activity outside formal organizations. Neither is it necessarily a sign of a struggle for democracy. But it might imply a sector that is more intent on cooperation to reach their goals,
and a sphere of civil society that is engaging and mobilizing rather than staying purely professional and elitist.

The examples show that this unorganized civil society, through contact with the formal organizations, also learns to make use of the formal opportunities as they present themselves today, be it the legal system, petitions, or in addressing government officials directly. The conclusions drawn by for example Howard (2002) after the dissolution of the USSR was that Russian civil society remained weak, a conclusion that was supported by the organizational membership statistics. This development goes to show that membership statistics might not be sufficient measure for civil society development.

The analysis shows that the framework of consensual contestation and theory on hybrid regimes are fruitful theories for assessing the implications of governance for the hybrid regime that Russia has evolved into. As Cheskin and March highlight, this framework views social movements as “political claim-making within a specific…political regime” and not as a part of a “wider struggle for democratization” (Cheskin and March 2015, 265). The theory is advantageous in describing the complex interplay between NGOs and the Russian government today, without making the assumption that civil society activity and contestation is purely a sign of struggle for democratic development.
Literature


Appendix

A. Letter for Informants

Research project on the interplay between non-governmental organizations and the government structures in Russia

I am currently a student writing my master thesis at the University of Oslo, Department of Political Science. The thesis will be a research project on the interplay between non-governmental organizations in Russia, and the Russian government structures. More precisely, the research will focus upon what formal opportunities there are, for organizations to influence the government structures, and in turn what constraints the government structures put on such organizations.

I am very grateful for your participation in this project, and for you taking the time to share your knowledge through this interview. The interview is expected to last about 45 minutes, and will with your permission be recorded. It will be for my own note-taking purposes only, and it will not be used by anyone not directly involved with this project, released or distributed in any way. Your anonymity will be strictly preserved, and the material will be deleted after the interview has been transcribed and used for analysis. The material will only be published anonymously, so that it will be impossible to discern individual responses. Your participation is of course voluntary, and you can end the conversation or withdraw from the project at any time.

If you should so wish, I am more than happy to supply you with a copy of the finished project when this is ready. Thank you for your help with this project.

Sincerely,

Linn Buhaug Solbakken
Forskningsprosjekt om samspillet mellom ikke-statlige organisasjoner og myndigheter i Russland


Jeg er svært takknemlig for din deltakelse i dette prosjektet, og at du tar deg tid til å dele kunnskapen din i dette intervjuet. Intervjuet antas å vare i inntil 45 minutter, og vil med din tillatelse bli tatt opp. Dette vil i så fall utelukkende være til eget bruk for bedre notater, og vil ikke kunne brukes av noen andre som ikke er direkte involvert i dette prosjektet. Din identitet vil bli holdt anonym dersom du ønsker det, og materialet vil bli slettet etter at intervjuet er ferdig transkribert og analysert. Din deltakelse er selvfølgelig frivillig, og du kan avslutte samtalen og trekke deg fra prosjektet når som helst.

Dersom du ønsker det, sender jeg deg mer enn gjerne en kopi av den fullstendige oppgaven, når denne er ferdig. Tusen takk for ditt bidrag til dette prosjektet.

Vennlig hilsen,

Linn Buhaug Solbakken
B. Interview protocols

Interview Protocol Organizations

Interview protocol

Introduction of the project and verbal consent

First of all, thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. As I mentioned in the e-mail, I am a student with the Department for Political Science, at the University of Oslo in Norway. This research project is a part of my thesis, and the purpose is to examine the interplay between non-governmental organizations in Russia, and the Russian government structures. More precisely, the research will focus upon what formal opportunities there are for organizations to influence the government structures, and in turn what constraints the government structures put on such organizations.

[REMEMINDER OF CONFIDENTIALITY FROM THE INTRODUCTORY LETTER]

1. What, in your opinion, has been the greatest success the organization has had? Could you describe what you were trying to accomplish and what type of action you were taking to make this happen?

2. Is there any communication with governmental structures today?
   a. What kind of communication?
   b. Is the organization officially asked to participate in any type of process?

3. What formal opportunities does your organization have to influence governmental structures?

4. Does the organization itself take initiative to talk to government structures?
   a. What form was this contact made in?
   b. What kind of or which government structures?
5. Has the organization been included in certain governmental processes or taken in an advisory capacity?

6. To what extent would you say the communication from this organization has had success in changing or influencing a certain outcome?
   a. Could you give some concrete examples?
   b. In what area do you think this organization's knowledge and views make the most of an impact?

7. Has there been any changes in these opportunities?
   After 2006?
   After 2012?
   What changes have you noticed?
   What changes have influenced the organization the most?

End

8. To conclude, is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything else you think I should know, or should have asked you? Do you have any other comments?

That concludes all my questions for you today. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. Your participation is very valuable for the research project, and it will bring valued insight to the workings of civil society organizations in Russia.

Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions. Here are my contact details should you wish to contact me at a later time. [OFFER CONTACT DETAILS]
Intervjuide

Introduksjon av prosjektet og muntlig samtykke

Først og fremst vil jeg takke deg for at du tar deg tid til å møte meg i dag. Som jeg nevnte i eposten, er jeg student ved institutt for statsvitenskap ved Universitetet i Oslo. Dette forskningsprosjektet er en del av min avsluttende masteroppgave, og formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke samspillet mellom ikke-statlige organisasjoner i Russland, og russiske myndighetsstrukturer. Mer presist vil prosjektet dreie som om hvilke formelle muligheter som finnes for denne typen organisasjoner, for å påvirke myndighetsstrukturer og tilsvarende, hvilke begrensinger myndighetene legger på disse organisasjonene.

[PÅMINNELSE OM KONFIDENSIALITET FRA INFORMANTBREVET]

1. Hva, etter din mening, har vært den største suksessen til din organisasjon? Kan du beskrive hva dere ønsket å oppnå og hva slags tiltak benyttet dere for å gjennomføre dette?

2. Har organisasjonen noen kommunikasjon med diverse myndigheter per i dag?
   a. Hva slags type kommunikasjon?
   b. Har organisasjonen offisielt blitt spurtt om å delta i enkelte prosesser?

3. Hvilke formelle muligheter finnes for din organisasjon til å påvirke myndighetene og få gjennomslag for deres saker?

4. Tar organisasjonen selv initiativ til å snake med ulike myndigheter?
   a. Hva slags form kommer denne kontakten i?
   b. Hvilke myndighetsstrukturer tar dere kontakt med?

5. Har organisasjonen noen gang blitt inkludert i ulike statlige eller lokalpolitiske prosesser, eller blitt spurtt om råd?

6. I hvilken grad har kommunikasjonen mellom organisasjonen og myndighetene ført til gjennomføring eller endring av et utfall?
   a. Kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler?
b. På hvilket område tror du denne organisasjonens kunnskap har størst mulighet til å påvirke?

7. Har dere sett noen endringer kommunikasjonsmuligheter?
   a. Etter 2006?
   b. Etter 2012?
   c. Hvilke endringer har dere merket?
   d. Hvilke endringer har påvirket organisasjonen mest?

Avslutning

8. For å konkludere, er det noe annet du gjerne vil tilføye? Er det noe du mener jeg burde vite, eller som jeg burde har spurt deg om? Har du andre kommentarer?

Det konkluderer alle spørsmålene mine til deg. Tusen takk for at du tok deg tid til å møte meg i dag. Din deltagelse er svært verdifull for masteroppgaven min, og gir meg verdifull innsikt i hvordan Russlands ikke-statlige organisasjoner fungerer.

Dersom du har flere spørsmål til meg, ikke nøl med å ta kontakt. Her er kontaktenformasjonen min, skulle du ønske å ta kontakt ved et senere tidspunkt. [TILBY KONTAKTINFORMASJON]
Interview Protocol for Independent Sources

Interview protocol

Introduction of the project and verbal consent

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[REMINDER OF CONFIDENTIALITY FROM THE INTRODUCTORY LETTER]

1. What, in your opinion, is the state of the Russian NGO sector today? What are the most pressing issues that you are working on at the present time?

2. To what extent do you see NGOs communicating with governmental structures today?

3. Are there any formal opportunities for these organizations to influence governmental decision making?

4. Has there been any changes in these opportunities?
   a. After 2006?
   b. After 2012?
   c. What changes have you noticed?
   d. What changes have influenced the organization the most?

5. What strategies do most organizations use to promote their cause?
   a. Do they include communication with governmental structures?
6. Do you see any differences between different sectors?
   a. For example environmental NGOs?

End

7. To conclude, is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything else you think I should know, or should have asked you? Do you have any other comments?

That concludes all my questions for you today. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. Your participation is very valuable for the research project, and it will bring valued insight to the workings of civil society organizations in Russia.

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Introduksjon av prosjektet og muntlig samtykke

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[PÅMINNELSE OM KONFIDENSIALITET FRA INFORMANTBREVET]

9. _Hvordan er din oppfatning av situasjonen til russiske ikke-statlige organisasjoner i dag? Hva er de viktigste spørsmålene dere jobber med?_

10. _I hvilken grad ser dere at ikke-statlige organisasjoner kommuniserer med myndigheter i dag?_

11. _Hvilke formelle muligheter finnes for disse organisasjon til å påvirke myndighetene og få gjennomslag for deres saker?_

12. _Har dere sett noen endringer kommunikasjonsmuligheter?_
   a. Etter 2006?
   b. Etter 2012?
   c. Hvilke endringer har dere merket?
   d. Hvilke endringer har påvirket organisasjonene mest?

13. _Hvilke fremgangsmåter bruker de fleste organisasjonene for å fremme sitt budskap?_
   a. Inkluderer de kommunikasjon og samarbeid med myndigheter?
   b. Lokale, regionale, statlige?

14. _Ser dere forskjeller mellom sektorer og fagområde?_
   a. F.eks. miljøvernorganisasjoner?
Avslutning

1. For å konkludere, er det noe annet du gjerne vil tilføye? Er det noe du mener jeg burde vite, eller som jeg burde har spurt deg om? Har du andre kommentarer?

Det konkluderer alle spørsmålene mine til deg. Tusen takk for at du tok deg tid til å møte meg i dag. Din deltakelse er svært verdifull for masteroppgaven min, og gir meg verdifull innsikt i hvordan Russlands ikke-statlige organisasjoner fungerer.

Dersom du har flere spørsmål til meg, ikke nøl med å ta kontakt. Her er kontaktinformasjonen min, skulle du ønske å ta kontakt ved et senere tidspunkt. [TILBY KONTAKTINFORMASJON]
C. List of Interviews

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