

Social Change and the Russian Network Society

Redefining Development Priorities in New Information Environments

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Glossary of Terms

NETWORK SOCIETY

Network Society refers to several different phenomena related to the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies.

NETWORKED INDIVIDUALS

Particular people who are able to participate in, and make an impact, on the online public sphere and cultivate their skills for mass self-communication. A networked individual has the power to create a networked institution

NETWORKED INSTITUTIONS

A networked institution is an online platform that can provide space to share information, generate online discussion and enable new forms of collective action that achieve common goals. It can suggest its own agenda and frame a reality that competes against other agendas and frames promoted by other estates.

FIFTH ESTATE

William Dutton defines the growing use of the Internet and related digital technologies, which is creating a space for networking individuals in ways that enable a new source of accountability in government, politics and other sectors, as an emerging "Fifth Estate."

Executive Summary

This paper explores the use of new information technologies in Russia to examine the next generation of media development and to ask how the ability of the “network society” – and the new forms of collective action it allows to contribute to social change can be supported. Building on the idea of the “fifth estate,” and how networked individuals and institutions can use the Internet as a platform to challenge the influence of other more established bases of authority, these examples of social media and online activism – specifically blogging and crowdsourcing – show how Russia’s networked society is helping invigorate the country’s civil society and traditional media.

The first generation of online activism in Russia created a platform for free expression in an environment in which traditional media has been mostly controlled by the state. In contrast, the new generation of online activism seeks to organize citizen behavior and empower networked individuals and institutions. These new platforms are capitalizing on the ability of social media to present a broader range of citizen perspectives, forging collaboration with traditional media to enrich its coverage and its role in civil society, and creating coalitions among various actors such as Internet users, NGOs, businesses and media to address and solve problems and promote good governance and accountability.

The examples in this paper show that the network society’s ability to set the agenda and frame issues depends on the power of networked individuals, the existence of networked institutions that can empower social media and the degree of collaboration between social and traditional media as well as NGOs and other organizations. These examples

allow us to argue that the next generation of media development should focus (1) on developing the capacity of the fifth estate to influence the framing of issues, set the media’s agenda, and develop collaboration between the fourth and fifth estates, i.e. between traditional and new media; and (2) nurture the capacity of networked individuals to create networked institutions that enable collective action for transparency, accountability and positive social change. The next generation of media development should include the ideas and core concepts central to conceptions and scholarship surrounding the information society. Unlike earlier work in media development, which largely focused on what is now considered legacy media, the rise of social networks, the near ubiquity of mobile media, and the transformative nature of convergence and digitalization has reinvigorated media development, and as such a new media development agenda is called for. As the Russian case studies demonstrate, media development must heed the challenges of understanding and being responsive to the media’s Fourth Estate as well as the Fifth Estate.

The paper closes with four recommendations on how supporters of traditional media development can build the capacity of new digital networks and move towards making the next generation of media development a reality:

- How to support study of the network society?
- How to support networked individuals?
- How to empower networked institutions?
- How to promote inter-estate cooperation and coalitions?

1 The rise of social media, the “Network Society” and the “Fifth Estate”

In the summer of 2010, following weeks of unusual heat, wildfires began to spread in western Russia, destroying over one hundred villages. At least 60 people died as an immediate result of the fires; thousands were also left homeless. While villagers defended their homes against the fast-moving fires with buckets and spades, often in the absence of properly organized or equipped emergency services,¹ a group of bloggers created an online community that not only criticized the government response but organized practical emergency help such as shelter, food and medical supplies as well as units of volunteer fire-fighters to help tackle the problem. This online action created a virtual community of cooperation which, this paper argues, demonstrated the role of online networks in increasing transparency and accountability and forming a self-accountable citizenry/civil society.

The transformative effect of the Internet and the rise of social media – an evolution in the flow of news and information – continue to make headlines around the world. Global usage of Facebook, Twitter and similar platforms, along with email, smartphones and the migration of news consumption from traditional media platforms to online or mobile platforms, represent a significant technological and sociological development. Increasingly, studies focus on how people receive and access news and information, how news travels and how the news cycle is produced. Media development practitioners must understand the power of online networks, not only as tools of change within political struggle, as

BOX 1

William Dutton on the Fifth Estate:

The Internet is a platform for networking individuals in ways that can challenge the influence of other more established bases of institutional authority, and that can be used to increase the accountability of the press, politicians, doctors and academics by offering networked individuals with alternative sources of information and opinion. Questions about the governance of the Fifth Estate are likely to become more prominent as people realize that the Internet is a social phenomenon with such broad and substantial implications for political and social accountability.

the most sensational cases are, but also the role they play in social welfare, policy, environment, culture and education. This paper seeks to tease out the concepts, terminologies, ideas and technologies that helped shape the new media space and its intersection with journalism by taking a deeper look at the present day “network society” in Russia.

Manuel Castells, a leading sociologist and the author of the network society concept, has observed that modern society is increasingly constructed around digital communication networks and this world of networks introduces the phenomenon of mass self-communication, in which everyone not only receives but also sends messages to a wide

audience.² The decreasing costs of communication, the increasing speed of information exchange and the breakdown of geographical obstacles in what Castells titles as a “space of flows” together create a new information environment.

If, as according to American scholar Bruce Bimber, social and economic structures derive “from the characteristics of information during the period in which they arose,” new information and communication technologies (ICTs) create new actors and new institutions that enable new forms of collective action.³ According to Steven Livingston, the Internet has had a transformative effect on the formation and exercise of power, not only redistributing power among various actors, but also reshaping the international structure.⁴

Internet scholar William Dutton defines these new actors and institutions, suggesting an understanding of the network society as a “fifth estate.”⁵ The case of Russian bloggers during the wildfires and other examples in this paper suggest that positive social change can be engendered by developing the fifth estate, and in particular its two components: networked individuals and networked institutions (Box 1). Dutton suggests that the communicative power of citizens can be enhanced.

The development of networked individuals means increasing the ability of particular people to participate in, and make an impact, on the online public sphere and cultivate their skills for mass self-communication. The world of networks and globalization provides greater opportunities for a particular person to make a significant impact. One of the major features of the new information environment is that one networked individual has the power to create a networked institution. A networked institution is an online platform that can provide space to share information, generate online discussion and enable new forms of collective action that achieve common goals. It can suggest its own

BOX 2

Ilya Prigozhin, Nobel Prize Laureate:

Especially in this time of globalization and the network revolution, behavior at the individual level is the key factor in shaping the evolution of the entire human species. Just a few particles can alter the macroscopic organization in nature.

BOX 3

Two dimensions of networked power: Inter-estate: Challenging the dominance of traditional media and agenda that promoted by other estates by the fifth estate. Within fifth estate: Creating new meanings and shared awareness for networked individuals, engagement and mobilization for collective action around particular purpose.

agenda and frame a reality that competes against other agendas and frames promoted by other estates.

It is important to distinguish between platforms and institutions. The social network Facebook or the crowdsourcing system Ushahidi are not networked institutions, but rather platforms. However, a Facebook group that organizes a political protest or an Ushahidi deployment that coordinates assistance to victims of wildfires represent networked institutions. Both enable collective action that can contribute to transparency, hold other estates accountable, organize collective behavior to solve social problems and create new modes of governance. The ability of a networked individual to launch a networked institution illustrates Prigozhin’s assertion⁶ (Box 2). The development of networked institutions means increasing the capacity of networked individuals to create institutions, as well as increasing the capacity of institutions to bring positive social change.

The emergence of new actors and new institutions creates a new media ecosystem. According to Castells, “the study of the transformation of power relations in the new communication space must consider the interaction between political actors, social actors, and media business in both the mass media and networked media, as well as in the interconnection between different media that are quickly becoming articulated in a reconfigured media system.”⁷

The nature of the new system can be different. Once the fifth estate establishes itself as an authoritative voice in a society it has greater capacity to influence the other estates as well as collaborate with them. Bloggers and journalists can work together to expose government corruption, while traditional media can promote public participation through online institutions. In other cases, bloggers can hold not only government accountable, but also traditional media (the fourth estate) (Box 3).

Analyzing the role of fifth estate, including its components – networked individuals and networked institutions – in creating new media systems supports Clay Shirky’s “environmental approach” to the power of social media (Box 4).⁸ Given that new information technologies not only provide specific tools or advantages to address particular issues, but can also change the configuration of society and politics, approaches to development should focus on developing informational systems, including empowering new actors and institutions, as well as promoting collaboration and interaction between various estates.

Those who have been helping to develop traditional media face many challenges and adaptations in shifting to help the fifth estate in this “reconfigured media system.” Examples of the way the fifth estate functions in Russia give rise to questions that traditional media developers will confront in the near future. This paper suggests that development of the media ecosystem should be a focus of media development (Box 5).

BOX 4

Clay Shirky’s Environmental Approach:

The more promising way to think about social media is as long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere. In contrast to the instrumental view of Internet freedom, this can be called the “environmental” view. According to this conception, positive changes in the life of a country, including pro-democratic regime change, follow, rather than precede, the development of a strong public sphere.

BOX 5

The core assumption of the concept is that media system can not be differentiated from the digital information environment that includes networked individuals and networked institutions. “Media ecosystem development” is holistic concept that expands the range of development beyond media system and addresses both, the actors within media system and the interaction between the media and other estates including the fifth estate, as well as development of the fifth estate.”

2 Russia and the “Network Society”

Russia provides an illustrative example of a developing network society. The essentially free and open forum of the Russian Internet (often referred to as “Runet”), the presence of a political opposition online, rapidly developing ICT infrastructure and penetration (Image 1), renders the Russian network society a compelling case study for exploring opportunities towards improved governance and an empowered civil society.

Russia’s increasing number of Internet users are some of the most active groups worldwide with regard to social networking.⁹ The entire Internet sector is developing dynamically with a dramatic growth of Russian Internet companies, as well as increasing private and state investment.¹⁰ According to the prominent Russian blogger and Internet activist Marina Litvinovich, once the public sphere is developed it can also play a political role. “The future of politics belongs to the networked organizations that will grow from the Internet. Earlier people had to join a political party to participate in social or political life. Now it is not necessary and even pointless. People engage in blogging and social networking, not in party politics.”¹¹

In Russia’s media landscape, the blogosphere remains the country’s least censored public space. (Image 2). At the same time, the Russian government is currently investing in Internet infrastructure and increasing its own online presence through blogs and tweets by its officials, as well as through the proliferation of eGov platforms including online access to public data. Whereas these initiatives may

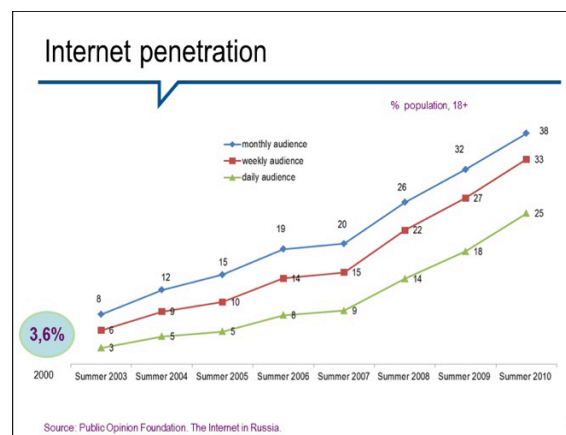


Image 1. Growth of Internet Penetration in Russia since 2000 until 2010, Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Internet in Russia, presentation by Pavel Lebedev, Journalism department, MSU, November 2010

contribute to greater government transparency and encourage greater communication and perhaps trust between officials and citizens, some observers see this as an attempt to reassert control and manipulate public discourse¹² in the context of a society that is increasingly online. Although there is no evidence of systematic Internet censorship, other actions restrain Internet freedom – such as the prosecution of bloggers, legislation regulating the Internet and advanced methods of Internet control. Some researchers argue that selective filtering of Internet content tends to increase before elections.¹³

While the Internet’s impact on Russian politics remains debatable, Russia’s online and offline

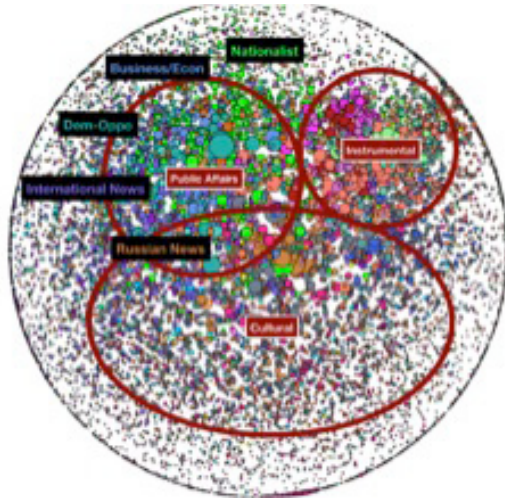


Image 2 The map of Russian blogosphere according to research of the Berkman Center shows presence of significant clusters of oppositional bloggers.

communities are increasingly polarized. A 2010 Berkman Center report¹⁴ concluded that not only does Russia boast a politically active blogosphere, but that its bloggers enjoy a set of information sources shaping a perception of reality that is unique in Russia – consisting of a “news diet” that is “certainly more independent than the news diet of non-Internet users, who are more reliant on and trusting of state-controlled federal TV channels.”¹⁵

Scholars recognize the central role of language and traditional media in the formation of national identity and what Benedict Anderson has called “imagined communities.” Social networks and the blogosphere create a new space of development similar to such “imagined communities.” Russia’s social media users and TV audiences live in the same physical space but in two different information realities, and their responses to the very same event may be different as well. The blogosphere-based “imagined community” also differs from TV audiences in the way it consumes information, in an interactive environment that enables two-way communication.

The Russian information environment serves as an illustrative case study of global trends: On the one hand it addresses challenging social problems, including questions about state transparency and accountability. On the other hand, Russia has a significant and growing network society, with a rapidly growing percentage of Internet users, and centralized online spaces for public discussion with a relatively independent agenda and a low degree of governmental control, for example Livejournal. In addition to the lack of transparency and accountability of traditional political institutions (attributable to a high degree of corruption), Russia’s fourth estate – particularly electronic media is experiencing its own crisis of credibility and effectiveness due to massive state control¹⁶

With the failure of older or traditional institutions, new institutions rise to fill the vacuum, capitalizing on the lack of effectiveness or credibility. This occurs even more radically in crisis situations, e.g. national disasters, which expose the state’s inability to provide emergency response. Therefore, in Russia’s social and political context, the role of the fifth estate remains especially significant, with the Russian network society offering one of the most visible examples of the fifth estate’s role in challenging environments. Russia can serve as a laboratory for evaluating the role of networked individuals and networked institutions in societies where traditional institutions are ineffective. Similar processes may take place in various societies with different degrees of significance and visibility.

2.1. Networked individuals in Russia: the power of mass self-communication

► The following section provides case studies of networked individuals who demonstrate

online leadership through the creation of “shared awareness”¹⁷ and the engagement of other networked individuals towards particular goals.

Several recent examples from Russia’s blogosphere demonstrate the ability of bloggers to raise and place issues on the public agenda, expanding discussion on topics only cursorily covered by traditional media. Examples include the [case of Anna Shavenkova](#), daughter of a high-placed regional official in Irkutsk who caused a deadly car crash, but who was captured on video appearing more concerned about the damage to her car than the loss of life,¹⁸ and the [fatal auto accident at Moscow’s Leninsky Prospekt](#), caused by the vice president of Russia’s largest oil company, Lukoil.¹⁹ In both incidents, blogs generated public pressure for police investigations, which otherwise would have remained outside of the public eye. Prominent Russian blogger Marina Litvinovich terms the ability of Russian social media to influence traditional media in this way “blog waves,” and those who are able to influence framing or agenda-setting²⁰ as those who make waves.²¹

Other examples of blog waves include appeals to Russian leaders, such as Alexey Dymovsky, a police officer who used YouTube as a tool to expose corruption in the police force.²² In another case, Stanislav Sutyagin, whose car was used by police as a live barrier, told his story through YouTube and raised a blog wave that ended with an internal police investigation.²³ Bloggers raised another blog wave when they discovered that a Moscow police spokesperson had a tattoo of a criminal group on his finger, which he consequently removed.²⁴ More recent examples include protests against the governor of Saint Petersburg, after an icicle fell from a roof and killed a child in the city,²⁵ and protests by the blogger community against education reform in Russian high schools.²⁶ More comprehensive and intensive blog waves can occur when recurring themes appear in different stories, as Litvinovich

BOX 6

Blue buckets campaign:

The Little Blue Buckets protest is citizen organization against state officials who use blue flashing emergency lights on their vehicles to violate traffic rules and drive recklessly. Drivers fitted their cars with blue plastic buckets as a sign of protests and organized car manifestation on the roads. The first protest took place in April 2010 and it was organized by bloggers who opened a special blog community for coordination of the protests.²⁸

characterizes an anti-police wave; another is the wave against emergency vehicle sirens, which included the “blue buckets” campaign²⁷ (Box 6).

Social media and coverage of major national news

Social media can serve as a primary source of information and impact the content of traditional media, demonstrating the capacity of the network society to set agendas and frame the news. Significant examples can be found in recent media responses to emergency situations in Russia. When the wildfires broke out in summer 2010, the Russian government presented a misleading portrait of a situation under control, for example, by denying increased mortality rates attributed to smog in Moscow. Even when the chief of the Moscow health department broke weeks of official silence and confirmed the increase, Minister of Health Tatyana Golikova responded that the statistics were misleading and could not be considered official.²⁹ However, blogger stories showed that in the era of social media, deaths are difficult to conceal and instead become more public and personalized, as bloggers write about their own lives. For example, a blogger *molitva-i-post* wrote on

her blog that the Moscow medical services failed to remove the decomposing body of her grandfather who had died of heat and smog during the wild-fires.³⁰ Her blog was cited in Russia's traditional media and had a significant influence on the media's representation of the situation.

Citizens are also challenging government owned data (and maps) by creating their own tools for surveillance and data gathering online. Challenging data and challenging framing are closely linked because the media coverage relies heavily on data. The struggle begins when we see a clash of frames, and it is based on ability to gather alternative data, or contradict data that was provided by government. An "Ushahidi" map is a crowdsourcing based collection of data that suggests alternative framing (and it can be used by media for suggesting this framing). (Box 7)

In another emergency situation, following the January 2011 terrorist attack on the Domodedovo airport, new media proved to be a significant source of firsthand information and shaped the framing of the first hours of media coverage. Russia's *Moscow News* reported that many Russians heard about the Domodedovo bombing not through TV or other traditional media, but from online social networks.³¹ Some rumors claimed that even the Russian president received information about the attack from social media. A woman who worked at the airport first broke the news on Twitter, with social media continuing to lead coverage not for minutes, but hours. (Box 8)

As described by Global Voices' Alexey Sidorenko, Twitter and other social media platforms provided on-the-ground information, photos and videos that were later broadcast on traditional media.³² Blogger *Rokoto* conducted detailed analysis of the media coverage of the Domodedovo attack and argued that with Twitter one could get information as fast as the president (Image 3).³³ The *Slon* news portal con-

BOX 7

Ushahidi:

The open source free crowdsourcing platform, Ushahidi (Ushahidi.com), has been deployed in many crisis situations, including the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Ushahidi (testimony in Swahili) was created following the aftermath of Kenya's presidential election in 2007 for collecting eyewitness reports of violence. The platform crowmap.com by Ushahidi makes it possible to deploy a map for use by anyone.

BOX 8

Alexey Navalny, blogger:

Right now we are witnessing the final death of TV and traditional media as a source of firsthand information in emergency situations. Information agencies, radio and TV - they are all quoting information from Twitter. The first time when I thought about it was during the "events on Manezhnaya square," but now it's obvious. The first hour and a half there is only Twitter. (From a blog by Alexey Navalny)

ducted a comparative analysis that showed that "TV channels totally lost the first hour and a half when people found information, photos, and video on the Internet."³⁴ In contrast, Russia's central broadcasters did not interrupt their regularly scheduled programming with breaking news, but instead continued to broadcast entertainment programs.

Not only has TV lost its credibility, but these events also point to the lack of credibility present in government information. The real shift now occurs in that there are ways for citizens and non governmental entities to gather data on their own that challenge the dominance of the state collected data. At the same time, it is not only about collection but alternative analysis of open data that was provided

by government. Not only is crowdsourcing a tool of collection alternative data, but it also presents real political consequences - an emergence of alternative framing that competes against the state-favoring framing of traditional media.

This case illustrates that once social media has earned a reputation as the primary source of information, it can also shape and frame coverage.

The terror attack in Domodedovo case and the wildfires in 2010 show that social media are able to challenge the leadership of traditional media and authorities in coverage of major national news and framing the events for a wide audience.

Creating and measuring “blog waves”

Blog waves resemble what Castells calls “mass self-communication,” or the ability of a person to communicate him/herself to a wide audience. Litvinovich says that she aims to make waves and turn them into massive networked campaigns. The ability to raise a wave depends not only on the popularity of the blogger raising the wave, but

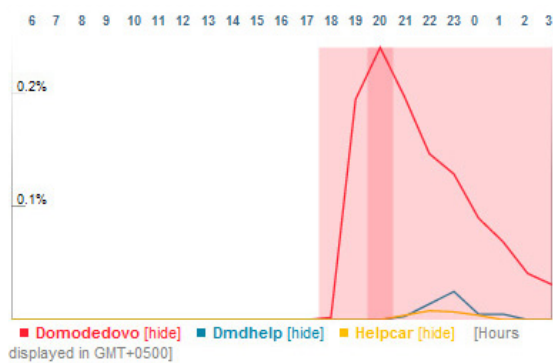


Image 3: The dynamics of hestags following terror attack in Domodedovo airport shows the significance of discussion based on <http://trendistic.indextank.com/>. The graph was published by Rokoto blogger (reference no. 30).



Image 4: Marina Litvinovich, Russian blogger and new media expert, Moscow 2011, photo by Gregory Asmolov

on the quality of the blogger’s content (Image 4). According to Litvinovich, stories that are able to make waves contain “factual evidence (a video, photo or an official document). If you can confirm the story, it increases the chance that it will be accepted by people. The issue of trust is crucial for a blogger.” Also key is the existence of eyewitnesses (“not a journalist who tells the story based on other sources, but a witness whom the reader can trust,”), and injustice (“the story will be even more influential if it is of an existential nature - if it’s a matter of life or death.”). Waves can also be created through the collaboration of networked individuals who have the story, and networked individuals with sufficient connections to attract attention to it. The power of a blog wave depends on the ability of the networked individual to successfully mass self-communicate, the existence of networked institutions, the support of other networked individuals in these institutions, traditional media’s susceptibility to influence of mass self-communication and the degree of collaboration between traditional and social media.

Blog waves are not just a metaphorical concept, but a networked media phenomenon that can be measured through various online tools. In Russia,

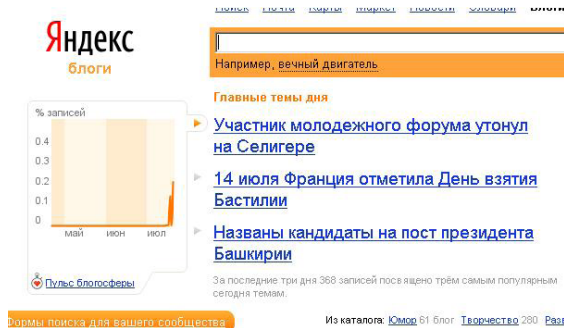


Image 5: “Pulse of blogosphere” yandex service for analysis of trends in Russian blogosphere (<http://blogs.yandex.ru/pulse/>)

a special service from the Russian search engine Yandex, “Pulse of the blogosphere,” makes it possible to evaluate the significance of a particular issue in the online public sphere and compare it with other issues (Image 5).³⁵ For instance, it can compare the frequency of particular words by a Russian blogger and compare it with other words, demonstrating the significance of certain discourses within the blogosphere (Box 9). Discourse in the traditional media can also be measured by other tools, which track news content and allow quantitative analysis of media trends.³⁶ One of the more popular comparisons examines which members of Russia’s elite are mentioned more often over a given timeframe – Prime Minister Putin or President Medvedev, for example.

Online leadership by networked individuals

Certain networked individuals are in a position to create meaning and shared awareness for the online community, as well as have the ability to organize social behavior and collective action around a specific purpose. Such individuals can be described as “networked catalysts” (Box 10).

BOX 9

According to Russian media analysis company “Medialogia,” social media tend to be more negative towards the present government than traditional media. (according to presentation “Bloggers against agencies” by F. Husnoyarov, deputy director of “Medialogia that was presented at Russian “E-Gov 2.0 best practices” conference, November 2010, <http://gov2russia.ru>).

BOX 10

Networked catalysts:

According to Brafman and Beckstrom, authors of *The Starfish and the Spider* (2007), catalysts are able to create and maintain a highly decentralized organization with numerous loose connections, rather than a small number of close ones. They do not try to control the behavior of the members of the decentralized organization but are able to be a source of inspiration.

One such catalyst is Russian blogger Alexey Navalny, (Image 6) who has conducted many high-profile anti-corruption investigations and engaged thousands of networked individuals in his cause, using his blog to create meaning and organize social behavior. “The blog is everything. In the contemporary Russian conditions, a blog is a tool for the collection and distribution of information, organization of civil campaigns and political pressure. Blogs do work. A blog is personal and interactive mass media. I can find specialists in any field, I can find people ready to write thousands complaints to the anti-monopoly committee. It’s not purely online. Online and offline are connected through the blog.”³⁷

The skills of networked catalysts include the ability to launch blog waves and deploy networked platforms. Successful online leadership requires

development of an online presence with a notable reputation, the ability to provide frequent and valuable content, and advanced skills for online communication and interaction. These can be summarized as the development of an online identity.³⁸ In many cases, journalists who become active bloggers succeed to turn into online leaders and catalysts since they can bring their reputation from the offline world and they already have advanced skills for creating content.³⁹

2.2. Networked institutions and platforms in Russia: new spaces for collective action

- The following section illustrates how networked institutions can organize the social behavior of networked individuals around particular issues, such as emergency situations and social problems.

Through mass self-communication networked individuals can influence traditional media, create agendas for the online community and engage people in collective actions; networked platforms, in turn, can provide spaces and tools for the organization and coordination of collective actions around a specific purpose. These networked platforms can be created both by organizations and individuals.

The simplification of online technologies makes it possible, for instance, for networked individuals to create networked platforms that can have a significant impact on coverage of a particular event. One example is Vadim Semenov, a young programmer from Irkutsk, who launched the platform Domoded24.com shortly after the Domodevo airport attack, which served as a clearinghouse for essential information (such as hotlines, names of casualties and wounded, lists of drivers willing to assist), to bring order to a chaotic situation (image



Image 6. Alexey Navalny at presentation of the map of Russian blogosphere by Berkman Center, Washington DC, October 2010, photo by Gregory Asmolov.

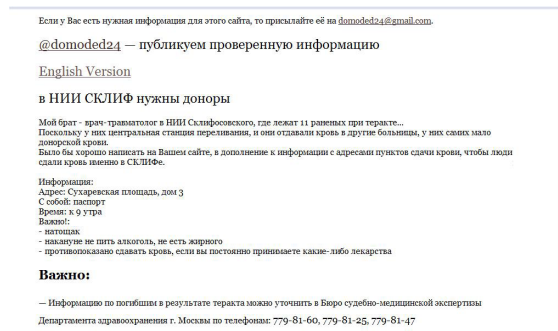


Image 7. A screenshot of Domoded24.com website that was created by Vadim Semenov.

7). Semenov said that for under \$20 he created something that the authorities seemed unable to do, going live less than three hours after the attack. Generating interest about the site on Twitter, using the #domodedovo' hashtag, and networking among IT professionals, Semenov mobilized a team of volunteers to help manage the platform, moderate its content and encourage citizens to send vital information. Four hours after the attack, Russian State TV Channel Vesti 24 carried reports about the website, and within its first 24 hours, the site had

150,000 unique users and received 200 letters and 1,200 comments. Users primarily came from Twitter and social networking websites, but many knew about the platform from coverage by traditional media. “The situation showed, that in a time of emergency, people need one place with all essential information,” Semenov said. “My experience showed that this type of platform can be made very fast with a minimal budget, and play an important positive role.”⁴⁰ The main message of Domoded24 is how simple it is to make a platform that will attract the attention of tens of thousands. The website filled an information gap left by both the government and the media, but its role in organizing collective action remained relatively limited.

► The next case presents a clear example of platforms that turn into networked institutions.

Navalny, mentioned above as an example of an online leader, has found that a blog is not always sufficient for conducting a campaign against corruption or engaging a broader network. In 2010, he created a new platform Rospil.info that collects crowdsourced information about suspicious cases of government spending and brings in experts to analyze data to detect cases of corruption (Image 8). Rospil is a tool of coordination for collective action against corruption that includes not only information, but also analysis.

Marina Litvinovich, who used her blog to launch “blog waves,” also found that a blog is not always sufficient for launching powerful blog waves and creating alternative agendas. She has created a new online platform, the BestToday.ru, which aggregates the most interesting content in the blogosphere, aggregating blog posts discussing particular issues that are high on the agenda of Russia’s traditional media (Image 9). The platform serves as a powerful tool to make blog waves that can impact the news agenda, or introduce a broader range of opinions on a particular issue



Image 8. Screenshot of Rospil.info website that was created by Alexey Navalny.

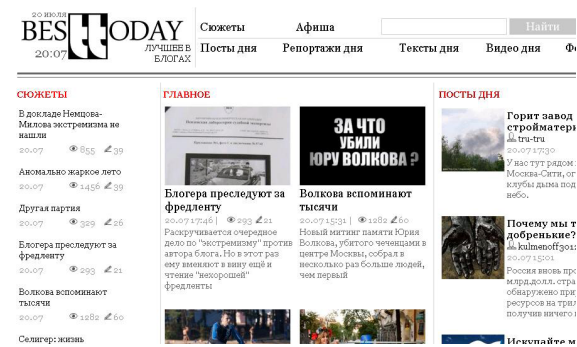


Image 9. Screenshot of Besttoday.ru website that was created by Marina Litvinovich.

and challenge and influence framing by traditional media. As seen earlier, development of a shared awareness based on an alternative framing and agenda setting is important element in organizing social behavior.

Crowdsourcing platforms

Crowdsourcing platforms are websites that make it possible to collect information from a large and widely dispersed population through various channels such as the Internet and mobile phones, to evaluate and categorize this information and to make this information publicly available through

visualization and interactive mapping. The ability of crowdsourcing platforms to provide alternative agendas and frame events in ways that present an alternative to traditional media can increase transparency and contribute to the emergence of a “shared awareness.” Additionally, crowdsourcing platforms can offer an effective mechanism for coordinating collective action, making them a networked institution and one of the tools that can significantly empower the fifth estate to initiate change.

Crowdsourcing and the 2010 wildfires

In the aftermath of the 2010 wildfires, while traditional media praised the Russian leaders’ robust response, Russian social media carried reports about the scale of the disaster and showed that the government response had many failings, raising questions about the government’s ability to manage a crisis, as well as its accountability. Distrust in government was a major leitmotif in online discourse about the wildfires, with bloggers expressing their dissatisfaction with the government response.⁴¹

The online community demonstrated that their active participation in covering tragic events could also lend itself to self-organizing by providing assistance to those in need during the crisis, taking part in rescue activities, organizing citizens’ humanitarian aid centers, deploying volunteer teams, and collecting food, medicine and clothing for those who had lost their homes. A special blog community called *Pozar_Ru* (Fire_Ru) was launched for those interested in providing help. Bloggers also created units of volunteer firefighters. One blogger/volunteer, *i_cherski*, operated as a virtual “Minister of Emergency Situations” through the *Pozar_Ru* community, and blogger *doctor-liza*, the alias for Elizaveta Glinka, served as “Minister of Health and Social Assistance,” converting her apartment into the headquarters for coordinating assistance and serving as a storehouse.

The overwhelming number of offers to help, and the overload of information, made efficient coordination difficult, leading to the development of a management platform called Help Map (Russian-Fires.ru).⁴² This initiative was the first use of the crowdsourcing platform Ushahidi in Russia and was used to coordinate assistance to victims via a virtual “situation room” set up in Moscow. Shortly after the platform was launched, hundreds of citizens wrote in with appeals for help and hundreds of others wrote in offering help. The crowdsourcing element of Help Map made it possible to expand the range of people who could share information beyond bloggers and Internet users. Help Map created a useful database and launched a coordination center that connected those who needed help with those who offered help, relying on information submitted to its map section,⁴³ thus building a bridge between the two groups. The map’s data was broken into categories, including “What is needed” (subcategories: need home, need clothes, need food, need evacuation, etc.) and “I wish to help” (subcategories: “I have clothes”; “I have transport”; “I have food”; etc.) (Image 10).

Information about the platform was distributed not only through social media but via traditional media, which provided significant coverage, increased public awareness and engaged people to provide information and volunteer. Additionally, the popular Russian search engine company Yandex embedded reports from Help Map within their own [Wildfires Map](#). The Help Map site had more than 60,000 unique visitors in the first week and received extensive coverage in Russia’s press. In November 2010, it won the Russian National Internet Award as the best project for 2010 in the State and Society category.⁴⁴

In part, the success of Help Map can be attributed to its extremely rapid launch. Because as it was based on the existing Ushahidi platform, it only took two days to get off the ground, drawing in a worldwide network of volunteers and transcending

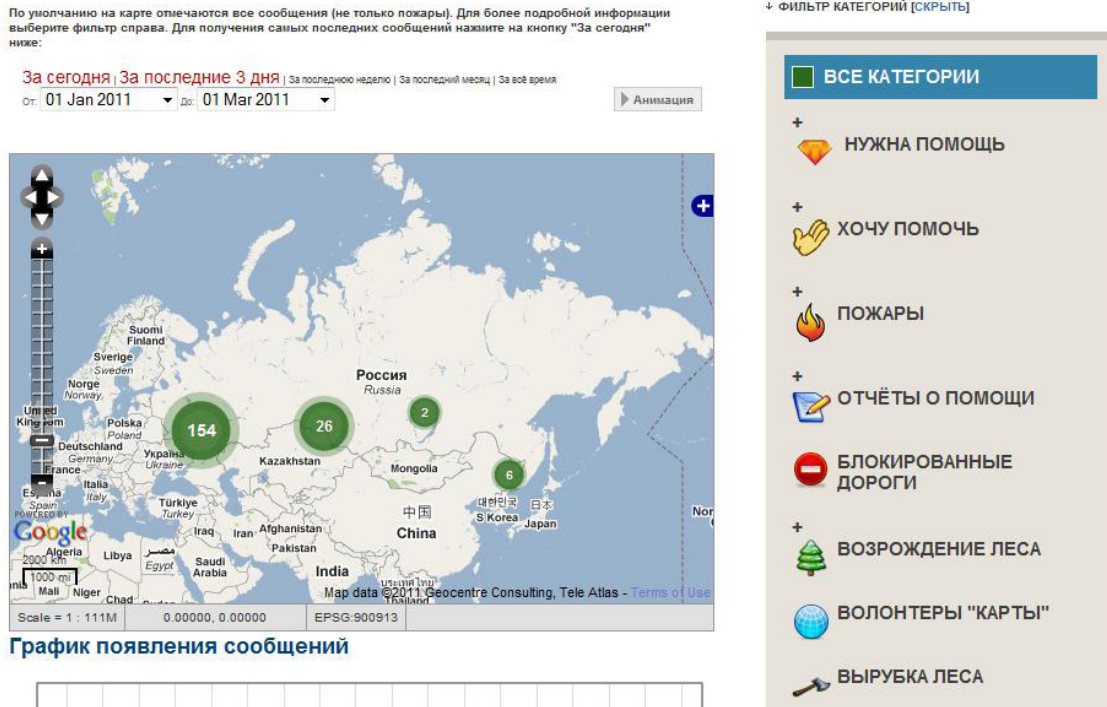


Image 10. Screenshot of "Help Map" crowdsourcing platform (Russian-fires.ru)

borders. Significantly, as a network it emerged without any financial or organizational support and stimulated the creation of offline structures (the situation center) and offline behavior. The platform was able to coalesce a dedicated online community, online leaders, NGO partners, media, Internet companies and a coordination center, creating a new model of on- and offline cooperation capable of responding to an emergency.

Help Map highlighted some of the failings of the Russian government in caring and providing services for its citizens during this emergency. An inspiring case for media development practitioners, it demonstrated the role of the fifth estate in increasing transparency and forming a self-accountable citizenry/civil society. Help Map expanded the range

of channels to contribute information and introduced tools to organize information from various sources, preventing the government from concealing the true dimensions of the disaster and pushing them to provide a more effective emergency response. When holding the government to account was not enough, the fifth estate filled some of the gap, thus taking on the role of government, helping to coordinate a system of mutual assistance – including humanitarian aid and volunteer firefighting units (Box 11).⁴⁵

Accountability and sustainability of networked institutions

Interest in Help Map waned as life returned

BOX 11**Marina Litvinovich:**

If people see something as threatening enough to them personally, and the government also demonstrates ineffectiveness, the next step is for people to self-organize. And they use social software like Ushahidi and LiveJournal. The wildfires story is all about networks. It is an example of how a society will react to various threats when it's ready to respond to them. (From Interview with "Global Voices")

to normal.⁴⁶ Arguably, it marked a leap for the development of Russia's networked individuals to cooperate and help each other in other difficult situations. The Help Map case, however, raises two major questions: first about the legitimacy and accountability of networked institutions; and secondly about the sustainability of such efforts. Both issues are interrelated. While Help Map may have held the government accountable, it doesn't answer the question: who holds networked institutions accountable and who answers for their failures, particularly given their non-traditional and decentralized structure.

The accountability of a networked institution is strongly related to its legitimacy, which is based on the trust inherent in being a community. If a networked institution loses trust, the central tenet of this community ceases to exist, since unlike traditionally organized institutions, the existence of a networked institution is based on trust and participation. To some extent, we are witnessing a re-distribution of trust when people who previously placed their faith in traditional institutions (e.g. government) as a solution for their problems, lose faith and re-place it into network institutions. If citizens commonly expect a response from firefighters in the case of fire, they will contact the Emergency Services Department, but they may also

seek assistance through a platform such as Help Map (and compare the effectiveness of each).

The nature of networked platform accountability has two elements. First, in many cases its trust and legitimacy is personalized and depends on a specific networked individual (since networked platforms can be created by networked individuals). The legitimacy and accountability of Rospil.info platforms, for example, derives from the personality of its creator – Alexey Navalny. People use the platforms, send information, collaborate within investigations and even contribute money since they trust Navalny the individual. In this case, trust is built on how the networked individual manages his/her presence in the online space. Navalny's blog, the way that he communicates with his audience and the way he manages his online identity represent crucial factors for the legitimacy of the institution he created.

The second element of network institution legitimacy is that – unlike classical institutions, which are based on law or tradition – the legitimacy is inherent in the existence of the institution. Inherent legitimacy means that the existence of an institution is based on the participation of people, or that the institution, as a bottom-up construct, is based on a community of users. Once a community is motivated to take part in a collective action that is based on an online platform, the institution comes into being. Once people cease their engagement, the institution vanishes. The Help Map case demonstrates the fragility of trust and inherited legitimacy. When, for a single day, the platform was erroneously suspected to be in collaboration with the United Russia party, the site saw a significant decrease in trust and participation, which took significant efforts to rebuild.

The nature of the legitimacy of a networked institution is an important component in understanding its sustainability and capacity to be replicated. Platforms become sustainable when they address a

grassroots issue that responds to people's concerns and therefore create an engaged community. To some extent, networked institutions – with their bottom-up nature, decentralized structure, inherited legitimacy and community focus – can be more sustainable projects than the bureaucratic hierarchical organization of an NGO. Networked institutions illustrate that civic engagement does not necessarily need to be constant in nature. Rather, civic engagement can opportunistically address a problem when it emerges, and return to daily life when the problem is solved.

Crisis situations illustrate the importance of bottom-up inherent legitimacy; emergencies such as wildfires can increase people's motivation to collaborate and empower networked institutions. Platforms like Help Map can exist and be maintained year-round, but become active institutionally only when required. Importantly, once the platform exists and people are familiar with it, it enables the opportunity for immediate collective action when needed, rather than requiring the start of a new initiative.

However, what happens to the sustainability of platforms that do not address large-scale emergency situations like natural disasters? Holoda.info, for example, uses crowdsourcing in a low-intensity crisis situation, the Russian winter, when many find themselves without heat, electricity, other utilities, and support, a permanent, “common crisis” situation which generally receives less attention from media and government and affects remote areas of the country. Holoda.info collaborated with the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* to raise awareness of the problems people face in winter, particularly those in distant regions, as well as the government and local authorities' response, which is often insufficient. The platform aims to help fill the gaps left by government and enable people to solve their problems through mutual aid (Image 11).

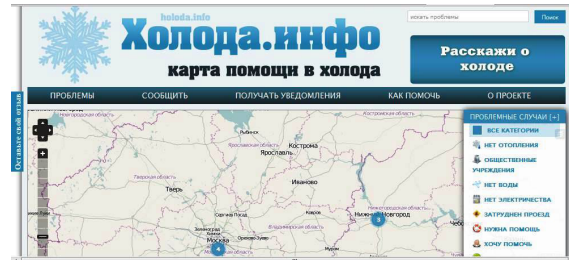


Image 11. Screenshot of “Help Map” for Russian Winter (Holoda.info)

Public engagement in the Holoda.info platform has been much less significant than in the case of the wildfires, but once winter problems gain prominence on the traditional media agenda, such as when ice rain paralyzed Moscow and left many stranded in Russian airports on New Year's Eve 2011, awareness and motivation to help is significantly increased.

This case seems to indicate that crowdsourcing is more effective as a tool in response to issues already on the agenda, rather than for setting the agenda; or in this case, cooperation with traditional media increased the capacity of the platform to set the agenda. But since crowdsourcing platforms can also increase transparency and expose a lack of accountability, they also can contribute to motivating collective action and participation. Platforms cannot only provide information but also enable collective action for solving the problems they raise.

- An analysis of networked institution legitimacy shows that it can be based on the identity of the networked individual who created the platform, or be effective in addressing emergency situations that trigger participation and create motivation for mutual aid. In next case we can see that networked institutions can be launched by anonymous bloggers in non-crisis situations and still be highly effective – and even reach the Russian president.

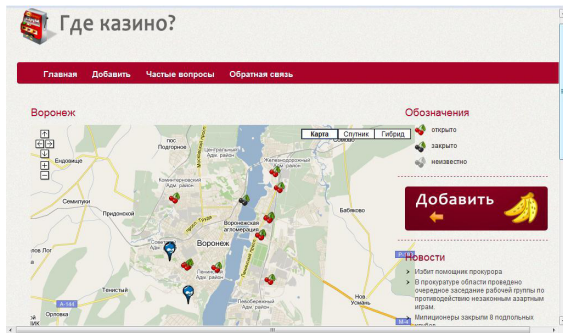


Image 12. Screenshot of the crowdsourcing platform for mapping illegal gambling sites gdecasino.ru

Concerned citizens report illegal gambling

Creating a crowdsourcing platform is an act of networked leadership by particular individuals who care about a particular local problem and create a “community of concern.” The possibility for success increases when skilled, networked individuals launch platforms that address local issues that emerge as bottom-up initiatives.

In 2009, gambling machines were declared illegal in Russia, driving gambling underground under the guise of stores, supermarkets and lottery centers. A student of the Saratov University of Technology created the platform gdecasino.ru to map illegal sites in the city (Image 12). The website’s founder, Anton Heystver, began by mapping his own neighborhood, checking streets, taking photos of illegal sites and publishing them online; citizens soon followed with additional comments, reports and photos. Heystver then mobilized other users to map their own neighborhoods as well as physically verify any items posted; within a month the platform had mapped the entire city of Saratov, and later expanded to other cities.⁴⁷

The map became the basis for activists to write

complaints to the local police, leading to the closure of at least seven gambling dens. A representative of the police told the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* that the police were already monitoring the issue, but admitted that the website was very helpful for closing illegal casinos.⁴⁸ A representative of the local prosecutor’s office said that they would designate someone to track the sites posted on the website and investigate sites that weren’t already closed and how they remained open.⁴⁹

As the platform’s founder wrote on the site, “The Internet community already demonstrated many times that it could provide real tools for the solutions of social problems. When you add a location of an illegal site to the map, you block the ability of the authorities to ignore illegal activity.”⁵⁰ In this case, it also reached the top level of the state. In March 2011 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev launched a campaign against illegal gambling. He called the Russian chief prosecutor to his office and showed gdecasino.ru’s map of illegal gambling sites on his iPad as proof of the weaknesses of Russian law enforcement.⁵¹

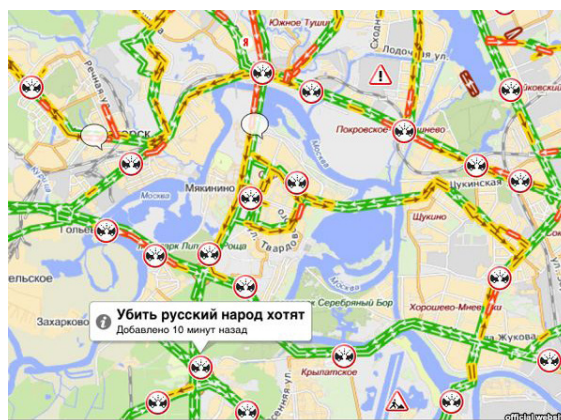


Image 13. Screenshot of Yandex Probki map of Moscow (the traffic map) with a nationalist message against migrants (the image shared by radio Svoboda website <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/2249429.html>)

While gdecasino.ru stands out as an example of how crowdsourcing can create a “community of concern” that responds to specific local issues, collective action is not always positive and networked platforms can fall prey to the wrong hands. For instance, Yandex Probki – a crowdsourcing map for monitoring traffic – was misused by Russian nationalists following racially motivated riots in Moscow’s Manezhnaya Square in December 2010 (Image 13). The group used the map to publish the location of ethnic communities from the Caucasus under a caption calling on people to attack communities in these locations.

2.3 Inter-estate cooperation in Russia: the interface between social media, traditional media and the government

- Until now, this paper has discussed the role of networked individuals and networked platforms as the two key components of the network society. This section will address co-operation between the fifth estate and traditional institutions.

However, creating successful change depends not only on empowering the fifth estate, but also on developing the entire system of all estates, including media, governments, NGOs, businesses and the academic community. The question is not only to what extent the fifth estate has the power to make an impact, but also to what extent other estates are open to cooperate with it, create coalitions for reaching common goals and through that, maximize impact. Inter-estate synergy and the openness of the entire system to that synergy is a crucial factor for empowering the fifth estate and creating positive social change.



Image 14. A screenshot of a blog aggregator created by “Echo Moskvy” radio. <http://www.echo.msk.ru/blog/>

Connecting with traditional media

This paper has shown how networked individuals can launch influential blog waves through tools of self mass-communication. A blog wave’s impact can be augmented by promoting cooperation between social and traditional media, i.e. between the fifth and the fourth estates, for example, as on the website of the popular radio station Echo Moskvy, which has a special space for promoting interesting blog posts from the Russian blogosphere (Image 14). Traditional media can do more than just post information from social media. Radio Echo Moskvy also served as a mediator between the Russian government and the blogosphere during the 2010 wildfires, when chief editor, Aleksey Venediktov, passed on a blog post to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin complaining about the government’s lack of preparedness for natural disasters. This became known as the “Rynda” letter and became emblematic of the disconnect between the realities promoted by the authorities on TV and those reflected in the blogosphere (Box 12). It was also the first time that Putin, who has always been circumspect regarding the Internet, personally responded to a blogger.⁵²

The Federal Reporter news agency in Yekaterinburg (Image 15), which produced an interactive

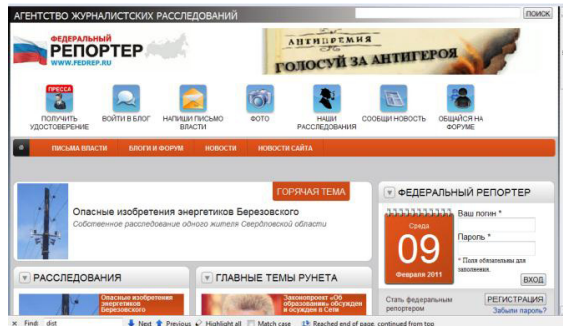


Image 15. A screenshot of “Federal reporter” website (<http://fedrep.ru/>)

BOX 12

“Rynda” case:

Rynda is a Russian name of emergency bell that was used by people to call for help in case of fire. A blogger top-lap whose village was surrounded by wildfires questioned how authorities use budgets and demanded to replace the useless phone with rynda and requested to restore the lake with water that can be used in case of fire. The main message of the post was a collapse of emergency response by the authorities.

online investigative journalism website, represents another example of cooperation between the network society and traditional media. The website sought to empower networked individuals and give them the opportunity to become temporary journalists, obtain training and an official press card, and access a platform that would heighten the exposure of their message. The project encouraged local citizens to voice their concerns on such issues as irregularities in the workplace, signaling cases of corruption by the police and the courts and raising awareness about the illegal raiding of business activities with the complicity of security authorities. The project’s impact was enhanced by

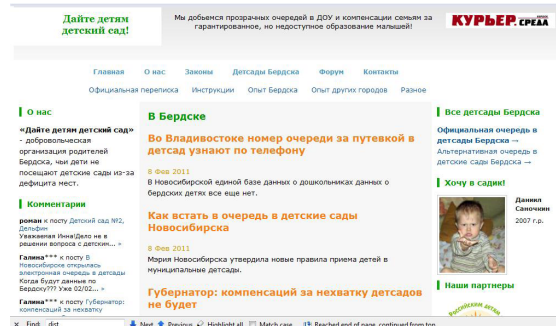


Image 16. A project “Give a kindergarten to children” that was initiated by “Berdkiy Kurier” newspaper. <http://detsad.kurer-sreda.ru/>

the cooperation of citizens and journalists, who assessed each highlighted case and, if necessary, launched a journalistic investigation.

Despite the increasing power of new and social media, traditional media remains an important player with the resources to focus on a particular problem, and the ability to engage the network society, set agendas and organize offline behavior. Local media is particularly powerful for this purpose, as their greater proximity to their readers enables a stronger capacity to address and engage with audience issues. For example, the newspaper *Kurier Sreda Berdsk*, from the small town of Berdsk, created an interactive website to increase transparency around the allocation of kindergarten space for children in the city. An apparent lack of space, with private waiting lists, had forced part of the city’s population to stay home with their children, casting a widespread suspicion of corruption (Image 16). The newspaper created a discussion forum in which parents learned more about their rights, organized public protests against the municipal administration and sponsored community meetings to attract the attention of the authorities.

This example shows how traditional media can construct meaning and engage networked indi-

viduals in social behavior, or in other words, has the capacity to create networked institutions that enable the collective action of readers. The Kurier Sreda Berdsk newspaper defined issue of concern and engaged people through an online platform that coordinated social behavior for the solution of a particular problem. Moreover, it provides an example of cooperation between the fourth and the fifth estates, as a way of increasing the power of both estates in challenging authorities and addressing citizen concerns.

The crowdsourcing platform [Streetjournal](#) serves an example of a networked institution that forms a bridge between the fifth estate and local authorities. (Image 17) Streetjournal was developed in the city of Perm. Through the platform citizens can report various problems they encounter on the streets: potholes, public transportation, garbage, illegal sale of alcohol, etc. These problems appear on the site's online map, to which citizens can submit photos and video documentation in addition to text, and reports are automatically transferred to the appropriate local authority. The platform not only provides an environment for citizens to report on issues, with the hope that their report will reach those charged with resolving them, but enables different branches of the local administration to respond with action. The platform also includes a section in which citizens can define the site's priorities, voting for the leading issues to be resolved. An additional mechanism shows how many problems were addressed and the status of other reports. Reports are monitored by a community of users.

The Perm Streetjournal suggests two determinants of success for crowdsourcing platforms as a space for citizen engagement. First, the platform can cover a wide range of issues, but it needs to have a local geographical focus that people care about. Second, the platform needs to demonstrate that it contributes to solving problems, in this case, by engaging local authorities. On a larger scale, the platform's

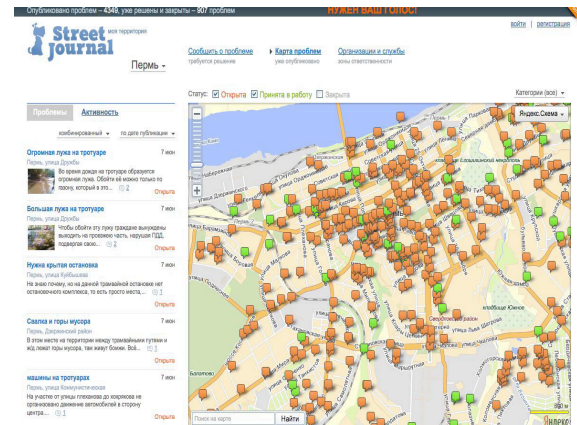


Image 17. A screenshot of “My territory” Steetjournal.org crowdsourcing platform

major breakthrough is in providing an open line of communication between the fifth estate/citizens and the government, and at the same time, empowering both. This demonstrates how the power of the fifth estate depends on collaboration with other estates and the significant role e-government plays in developing the fifth estate.

In the case of an unresponsive government, such platforms can also serve as a tool to get citizens to take responsibility to solve local issues. Ben Berkowitz, a co-founder of the U.S.-based SeeClickFix application, which enables citizens to report local problems, calls such platforms a way of “redistributing governance to the hands of citizens.” To be truly effective, fifth estate engagement projects should not be based only on reporting neighborhood issues, but also encourage active participation by citizens in addressing these issues, with or without cooperation of the local government.⁵³

eGov platforms can play a role in empowering the fifth estate and create opportunities for cooperation between authorities and networks as a part of inter-estate synergy. Whereas we have seen an example above of how the fifth estate can be a source of information that empowers the government,

governments can also provide information that will empower the fifth estate.

Examples of eGov platforms in Russia that contribute to transparency include the opengovdata.ru platform, which provides access to governmental documentation, and the rosspending.ru platform, which monitors government spending based on government contracts. Both platforms were developed and launched by the government's Institute for Contemporary Development and can serve as a resource for researching incidents of possible corruption. For instance, some of the corruption cases reported on Navalny's Rospil.info anticorruption crowdsourcing platform have been based on information drawn from the open government data, indicating a level of collaboration between the fifth estate and government in exposing mismanagement.

Moreover, the Russian authorities have increasing motivation to cooperate with the fifth estate. Blog waves and crowdsourcing initiatives can challenge the framing authorities impose on state-controlled traditional media or can give voice to issues that the authorities deliberately strike off the public agenda. At the same time, officials are increasingly aware that blog waves are not only a threat that should be controlled, but are also a source of valuable information that reflects the primary concerns of Russia's citizens. The attitude of Russian politicians to blog waves is shifting to seeing them as an opportunity where they had once seen a threat. This is particularly important in a large country where the central authority struggles to monitor what occurs in more remote places.

3 Concluding Questions/ Recommendations

The examples in this paper and our examination of the new information reality in Russia – understanding its complexity, the role of new technological tools, the capacities of various actors and the interactions between them – suggest several new approaches to media development. This shifting landscape provides a clear opportunity for donors and media development organizations to support networked individuals and empower networked institutions to increase transparency and accountability, as well as create new mechanisms of self-accountability and foster positive social change. These findings beg various questions: how can media development harness the power of technology in non-emergency or non-local situations and engage citizens on a sustained basis? Since there is a tendency in Russia to develop the network society through government-directed initiatives (such as Skolkovo – the Russian equivalent of Silicon Valley), how can initiatives succeed in a sector that has thrived on individual innovation and bottom-up motivation?

As the field is new and few strategies and approaches have yet to be tried and tested, we offer a set of questions as discussion points for the media development community, donors and policy makers that have emerged from the Russian case studies addressed in the paper. As the paper has sought to illustrate, new media and the rise of the fifth estate has the potential to bring about positive change. Questions remain as to how and when media assistance can best be directed to foster that change.

1. How to support the study of the network society?

This rapidly changing context requires a framework for ongoing academic discussion, including offline platforms and venues for representatives of the various estates to meet and discuss the role of the Internet. Academic departments with educational programs focused on new media or academic institutes, such as the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, should be fostered elsewhere. Such facilities could support discussions, events, conferences and research as well as serve as a hub for federal and regional research centers focused on the analysis of ICTs, the Internet and the information society. Within Russia, a small number of academic departments and institutions have started to discuss and research the socio-political role of the Internet; however, the country's traditional educational system faces significant problems incorporating innovative and emerging issues.

2. How to empower networked individuals?

Effective mass self-communication requires building the capacities of networked individuals to enable them to “make waves,” help set the media agenda and frame the coverage of specific issues. Such capacities would allow networked individuals to take a leadership role in organizing and implementing

social actions offline and create online platforms that can function as networked institutions. Furthermore, networked individuals must also develop a trustworthy and credible identity and achieve legitimacy as leaders of networked institutions. For example, citizens seeking to expose corruption using new media may first need the skills to create video, upload it to a file-sharing service such as YouTube and promote it online to gain the attention of audiences, authorities and traditional media. Ideas for practical support could include:

- **training for bloggers**, including developing a trustworthy online identity and reputation, core journalistic skills to produce and edit content, tech skills (programming, web design), skills to promote information online (viral marketing) and cooperation with traditional media and other actors;
- **cooperation between networked individuals**, such as “tech camps” that provide skills and raise awareness about the role of information technologies as well as promote cooperation between IT experts and civic activists, putting people with ideas and technological tools together to collaborate on solutions;
- **training for online leadership**, on engaging people, organizing social behavior online, social networking (developing a network and managing weak relational ties), creating online platforms and making them effective networked institutions;
- **online security**, such as mitigating attempts to limit the power of networked individuals, discussing the value of anonymity, protecting data and establishing links between online and offline security;
- **training traditional journalists, as networked individuals**, on how to develop an online presence and have greater online impact.

3. How to empower networked institutions?

Most successful networked platforms that transform to networked institutions have a bottom-up nature and address local problems. Supporting local technical capacities to deploy various online platforms – including basic web design, programming and mobile phone applications – may therefore enable local communities to employ various types of crowdsourcing platforms. Such support could include the adaptation (translation, modification) of IT tools from the “global market” that have been proven successful for supporting local, bottom-up initiatives (e.g. Ushahidi, Frontline SMS, SeeClickFix, etc.), as well as other platforms that can facilitate the creation of “communities of concern” focusing on local issues, remote areas and non-emergency situations.

Projects could help expand the physical range of networks using mobile networks (e.g. crowdsourcing that uses short text messages), as mobile phone penetration often far exceeds Internet penetration in remote regions. Furthermore, projects can raise awareness of and promote platforms through social marketing campaigns related to specific crowdsourcing platforms.

4. How to promote inter-estate cooperation and coalitions?

Interdependence between the fifth estate and other estates and actors requires that the development of the online community increase interaction and the capacity for cooperation/coalition building between estates/actors, such as media, government and local authorities, NGOs, educational institutions and

businesses. Cooperation between the network society and traditional media could be addressed through developing convergent newsrooms, in which traditional media incorporates information from social media, networked individuals and online platforms, as well as through helping traditional media become online leaders who cooperate with networked individuals to set agendas around particular issues and organize social behavior. Media editors and journalists should also acquire skills to develop networked institutions that can foster collaboration between traditional media and audiences.

NGOs working with the media could develop this approach, identifying everyday problems that have an immediate impact on the life of citizens (for instance, problems linked to corruption), thus opening the way to mobilization and activism. The network society could work with governments to support eGov projects that address bottom-up initiatives to increase transparency, become engaged in crowdsourcing platforms and cooperate within networked institutions. The network society could work with universities as partners for bottom-up initiatives, to engage students in social activism and develop experimental platforms for students to participate in crowdsourcing projects and conduct research.

Those who have been helping to develop traditional media face many challenges and adaptations in shifting to help the fifth estate in this “reconfigured media system.” Examples of the way the fifth estate functions in Russia give rise to questions that traditional media developers will confront in the near future. This paper suggests that development of the media ecosystem should be the focus of media development.

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