

Civil Society and Human Rights as Part of the Neoliberal Narrative

An Export to the Russian Federation¹

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The end of the Cold War reduced sensitivity about cross-border aid to support transitions to democracy, both in recipient societies and among Western donors (Carothers, 2010:16).

The international assistance to democratization in the 1990s was promoted by western public and private actors, as well as international institutions, which operated throughout Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (*Ibid*: 16). Apart from political and economic reforms to assist regime change from the previous authoritarian rule to representative liberal democracy and a market economy, civil society building and human rights discourses have played a progressively crucial role in international democracy promotion.

Although today a much disputed concept, civil society, as Kalb argues,

[It] is still the only ideological legacy that this late twentieth-century prime time of nations, the so-called Third Wave of Democratization, has conferred upon us. Through ever more active transnational institutions and consultancy channels, it has systematically implanted in all post-socialist countries, including those new nations that had not developed it on their own (Kalb, 2002: 318)

Similarly, Douzinas considers human rights as the ideology of our times: “Care for the victims, defence of rights, promotion of free choices is the indisputable ideology of our post-political world! Humanity has been united not through the plans of revolutionaries, but through universal pain, pity and the market” (Douzinas, 2007:20).

This paper focuses on the idea of civil society and human rights as global tales, presumed universal narratives that are exported to the South and more recently to Eastern Europe borders, as part of the “global governance” ideology. But the question of global tales and their links to ideology can only be analyzed by studying the concomitant global-local dynamics of power, their relevant institutions and social actors. This involves a deeper and situated analysis of how international (Northern-based) discourses and practices regarding human rights and civil society are received, re-appropriated or contested today in countries that receive international democratization assistance. It means assuming, as postcolonial authors like Bhabha, Spivak, Stuart Hall, Dirlik or Slater have emphasized, that “the South” has a voice of its own, and that “globalizers” and the “globalized” mutually constitute themselves and the world we live in, while at the same time, showing the imbalances of power linked to the global governance project. I present the results of a case-study in the Russian Federation,² specifically on St. Petersburg based human rights non-governmental organizations. The Russian Federation is interesting because it is neither a small nor a “fragile” peripheral country, but an emerging power with the capacity of negotiation with Western donors. It does not match the image of a victimized and poor South. On the contrary, today it seems to present a heightened sensitivity to western influence, particularly regarding human rights and democracy assistance.

After presenting the framework and methodology of my research, I propose some general conclusions resulting from the integration of different kinds of data: interviews with local NGOs; observations in conferences, and document analysis.

Human Rights Discourse as Part of the Neoliberal Narrative Its Dark Side Revealed

While it seems critical to engage with human rights and impact this field as it has such significant consequences

for the 'wretched of the earth', we cannot ignore the tug of its dark side. And yet human rights have occupied the space of emancipation so completely that the possibilities of new imaginations and alternatives have received little attention or nurturance. What happens when the faith in human rights as a progressive, universal project is eroded and its dark side exposed? (Kapur , 2008: 2)

The question posed by Kapur is indeed most relevant today, when the post-Cold War 1990s international context of optimism about the expansion of democracy and the market economy and openness to international intervention is being reversed to " (...) heightened concerns about the dangers of democratization in fragile states; the rising attractiveness of authoritarian models of development; the stalling or partial reversal of democracy's global advance; and the emergence of a backlash against international democracy assistance" (Carothers, 2010: 16). This reversal brings with it an exposure of the dark side of human rights discourse, both from western and non-western actors. Kapur (2006) argues that this dark side is intrinsic and constitutive of the human rights ideology and project, promoting a divide based on arguments about civilization, culture and religious superiority, masked sometimes by the ethics of development. Similarly, Douzinas (2007), criticizes this humanitarian focus on protecting others, seen as helpless victims, or as the pre/in-human other. "But this type of humanitarian activism ends as an anti-politics, as the defence of 'innocents' without any understanding of the operations of power and without the slightest interest in the collective action that would change the causes of poverty, disease or war". (Douzinas, 2007:22). This entails a negative approach to humanitarianism, the humanitarian as defence from Evil and suffering, instead of a more political and positive ethical approach focusing on "our ability to do good, our welcoming of the potential to act and change the world" (*Ibid.*:24-25)

Chandler (2006), one of the main critics of present development aid and international intervention paradigm, also criticizes human rights' discourse in terms of its basic premises, namely the assumptions that human rights are universal, empowering and human-centered. As Douzinas, Chandler argues that the human rights discourse entails a very negative view of humans and it is corrosive to

the political and social sphere, ending up by reinforcing the *status quo*. Besides, human rights discourse, although applied to the “South”, conceals “narcissistic” features, and represents more a strategy to build a moral consensus and social cohesion in domestic western contexts, than a real concern with people’s suffering all over the world, or a genuine attempt to bring them relief and justice (*Ibid*: 236). This same argument of ‘narcissistic features’ is consistent with critiques of international developmental aid/democratization assistance revealing its association with the promotion of western donors’ geopolitical and economic interests (see Duffield, 2008; Veltmeyer, 2005).

In sum, international developmental aid/democratization assistance and associated human rights/civil society liberal understandings can be criticized for promoting western donors’ interests through the use of securitizing technologies. This critique resembles, in a way, the Marxist critique of the liberal human rights discourse. Marx posits that, as a bourgeois ideology based on the idea of egoistic man and freedom as protection from interference, “Security is the supreme social concept of bourgeois society, the concept of the police, the whole society exists only to ensure each of its members the preservation of his person, his rights and his property” (Marx, 1844/2010). Similarly, Marxist critical theorist Slavoj Žižek (2010) argued that liberal understanding of human rights entails an idea of “tolerance” regarding the other which is linked to “the right not to be harassed, that is, to be kept at a safe distance from others.” And that right not to be harassed is becoming increasingly central in present capitalist societies.

This critique seems to gain pertinence today when security concerns appear to override other human rights or even justify its abuse within the “war against terrorism” or recent immigration policies, and especially in the present global economic crisis context.

On the whole, these critiques point to a crisis of human rights discourse as a global discourse, in its links to international democratization assistance. Some authors, like Santos (2009: 3), see this as a sign of a paradigmatic transition, in which we witness “(...) the final crisis of the hegemony of the socio-cultural paradigm of western modernity”, and consequently, of conventional human rights thinking. According to Santos, the “conventional understanding of human rights” has the following characteristics:

(...) they are universally valid irrespective of the social, political and cultural context in which they operate and of the different human rights regimes existing in different regions of the world; they are premised upon a conception of human nature as individual, self-sustaining and qualitatively different from the non-human nature; what counts as violation of human rights is defined by universal declarations, multilateral institutions (courts and commissions) and established, global (mostly North-based) non-governmental organizations; the recurrent phenomenon of double standards in evaluating compliance with human rights in no way compromises the universal validity of human rights; the respect for human rights is much more problematic in the global South than in the global North. (*Ibid.*:3)

Today we are confronting a “strong question” regarding the lack of coherence between human rights discourses and principles and its practices (*Ibid.*:4). This resonates with the neoliberal legalistic approach to democratization, whereby “(...) pressure of various international bodies, Western governments and NGOs often led to formal acceptance of concepts and legally binding obligations that did not correspond to local realities and therefore had few chances of being implemented in practice” (Müllerson, 2008: 3). Democracy export to the South was usually done top-down, without any attempt of intercultural dialogue regarding the meaning of democracy and human rights in the recipient country and contributed to mask the “mixed motives” of both importers and exporters of democracy (*Ibid.*: 3). The dark side of human rights is revealed in these mixed motives of both exporters and importers of democracy and its links to geopolitics and biopolitics. A Post-Colonial approach on human rights would analyse these processes, in its links to power and would favor an openness and intercultural dialogue on different understandings of human rights, civil society and democracy.

Towards a Post-Colonial Perspective on Human Rights

From a post-colonial perspective, the humanitarian is not something fixed, but it changes and reformulates itself, according to the context it is inscribed in. Indeed, postcolonial studies have sought

to demonstrate the relational, dynamic, multiple, messy, and performative character of identity, as well as its linkages to power, and to deconstruct essentialist notions of identity.

Specifically, the analysis of Edward Said on “Orientalism”(1978) and the writings of Stuart Hall (1996) and Homi Bhabha (1994), have shown how the colonizer has constructed the identity of a colonized “Other” by contrasting it with the western self, through a process of homogenization and essentialization of identities fixed into modernity binary oppositions. But as Hall and Bhabha have also shown, identities are dynamic and insecure and any attempt to fix and naturalize the identities of colonizer vs. colonized is never fully achieved, leading to the colonizer’s constant vigilance and iteration, through the use of control devices and stereotyped representations.

An analysis of international development/ democratization assistance should also entail an analysis of the aid providers’ discourses and how these relate to processes of identity construction of donors as saviours, in its democratizing and civilizing mission. But this study would be incomplete if we did not also analyze the way recipients of aid represent aid, donors and themselves, how they interact with donors, receive, re-appropriate or contest democratization discourses that are imported from the North. It is thus, important to study these dynamics of democratization assistance in their links to power in global-local relations. Several post-colonial authors have been recently focusing on the question of the clash of globalizations (Dirlik, 2007; Santos, 2007) and its geopolitics (Slater, 2008). These approaches have considerably widened previous cultural studies to propose a more politically oriented critical research on globalization, including the export of human rights ideology to the South.

From a post-colonial approach, human rights should be studied in their links to power dynamics and from the perspective of the excluded subjects (Kapur, 2006). Kapur gives the example of how neo-liberal governmentality via humanitarian/ developmental aid, contributes to mask the effects of economic globalization in Africa while simultaneously victimizes the recipients of aid through a “non-threatening” focus on poverty alleviation (*Ibid.*). This promotes the idea of human rights as universal and non-political and contributes to the exclusion of aid recipients from any form of agency or participation, as well as excusing western donors from

taking a more active standpoint on structural inequalities and the causes of poverty.

On the other hand, powerful democratic nations like USA are able to export the dark side of human rights to places like Guantanamo or Iraq, deflecting attention from “ (...) the ways in which the possibilities for disorder and instability are produced in and through the discourse of rights, which sets out the terms for inclusion and exclusion” (*Ibid.*: 682). The dark side of human rights being revealed, “thoughtful reflection” about a post human rights time, about what will happen after we completely lose faith in human rights ideology may be desirable, instead of insisting on “(...) old tattered frameworks or a project that now exists in its broken form” (*Ibid.*: 683).

Although the question Kapur introduces is an interesting one, I argue we should center our reflection on the present and the already existing contested visions of human rights and their power dynamics, focusing also in highlighting potential emergent emancipatory alternatives of human rights and democracy (cf. Santos, 2007, 2009).

International Assistance to Democratization in Today’s Russian Federation

In many of the former Soviet Republics, development aid and democratization assistance did not achieve the expected results, as stated by the Club of Madrid:

(...) the majority of former Soviet republics, including Russia, are poorer, more unequal, plagued by economic difficulties, choked by massive corruption, and increasingly authoritarian. Some countries in this group have ended up as “consolidated autocracies,” in Freedom House’s terminology, while others muddle through as semireformed democratic-autocratic hybrids. (Ekiert, Kubik, & Vachudova, 2007: 9)

The Russian Federation has indeed been described as a hybrid regime, an “overmanaged democracy” (Petrov, Lipman & Hale, 2010), or a “sovereign democracy” (Krastev, 2006) with imperialist re-emergent ambitions of becoming “the other Europe, an alternative to the European Union” (*Ibid.*). Following the 90s transitional period, many international organizations working on human rights

and democratization have left the country, and international funding has decreased. Nevertheless, today, most human rights NGOs still depend on foreign funding, and rely on western donors like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED); Ford Foundation, European Commission; Soros Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); UK Department for International Development (DFID), among others.

There is in today's Russian Federation an atmosphere of suspicion, instilled by the Kremlin, yet possibly representing the general public opinion, towards international and national organizations working in the sphere of human rights protection. National NGOs that are funded by foreign donors are associated with the Western agenda and Western imperialism, mainly the USA. The Kremlin has been trying to control human rights NGOs' work, namely, by passing, in 2006, a law that "(...) significantly expands government control over NGOs and considerably restricts the right to association and the right to privacy of NGOs and NGO members" (Kamhi, 2006) demanding from these organizations frequent reports and documents, and enabling the possibility of surprise checks that have been occurring also in 2010. Most NGOs members I talked to mentioned this law as well as the difficult process of NGO registration and the surprise checks on the part of the Kremlin as obstacles to their work. Additionally, human rights defenders continue to face grave security problems, being victims of attacks, including severe beatings and even killings.

St. Petersburg has a relatively small but quite active and committed community of human rights defenders, working in registered and non-registered NGOs. Public protests are quite common, for instance in defence of the right of assembly, as protected by article 31 of the Constitution, but these usually end with police repression which then leads to further criticisms from the West.

The liberal discourse on human rights and civil society promoted by NGOs has been contested and re-appropriated by both the Russian Orthodox Church and by the Russian State. On the 6th of April 2006, the Tenth World Council of Russian People adopted a "Declaration of Human Dignity and Rights," a document that intended to challenge the 1948 "Declaration of Human Rights" passed by the United Nations. This manifesto openly questions the system of lib-

eral values, calling on Russian society to revise the universally accepted concept of human rights and expressed the Russian Church's conclusion that the secular understanding of human rights imported from the West did not correspond to Orthodox believers' moral and ethical views. In this same year, the Russian political elite passed the law on NGOs (see *supra*), in an attempt to control their work and restrict western influence and funding.

Russian political elite discourses on civil society have sought to deprive civil society associations (CSOs) of their monopoly of civil society and establish a divide between genuine and non-genuine organizations, by associating to the latter group those CSOs receiving funding from western donors and mostly linked with human rights, ecological issues and fair elections (Belokurova, 2010). These CSOs were seen as working against national interests and could not represent Russian civil society, which became a broad and ambiguous concept including many political and social representatives. This situation has made both the neutrality of CSOs and their dialogue with the State and international actors, more difficult to achieve, contributing to a "souring of Russia-EU relations" (*Ibid.*: 468). Belokurova argues, however, that these political elite discourses on civil society did not have such a strong, pernicious impact on Russian CSOs and their partnership with the European Union, as one might have expected. The reason was that these CSOs have chosen "pragmatic strategies" both in their domestic agendas and international networking and found a way to escape the ideological discussion on what was civil society. This was especially achieved at regional and local levels where cooperation with government was possible. Belokurova concludes with a positive note about an ongoing domestic debate in Russia around civil society concepts, reflecting an attempt of achieving some coherence. She claims this debate is largely domestic in origin, although sometimes connected to Western actors, understandings and policies regarding civil society, and western partners should try to understand these discussions before formulating their policies towards Russia.

This argument for a pragmatic policy in civil society international cooperation resembles recent analyses of Russian foreign policy, under Putin and especially Medvedev, as revealing a pragmatic approach to politics, one that is often opposed to Yeltsin's

policies and the hardship endured by Russians during that time. Mr. Medvedev's modernization project, on the other hand, portrays Russia as an "open country", that "has already become part of the world community", as a country "undergoing dramatic changes" and "moving forward", and sets out the goals of "establishing the rule of the law" and "strengthening democratic and civil society institutions in Russia".³ This discourse has in fact been associated to a pragmatic politics seeking to attract foreign investors and strategic partnerships within EU, but with few real implementations in terms of democratization and human rights in the Russian Federation.

It is difficult to discern the public opinion in Russia on the subject of democratization and human rights in face of these adverse or apparently contradictory discourses by Russian institutions. While some may appreciate the moderate discourse of Medvedev, he is often seen as lacking the charisma and leadership qualities of Putin. And democracy and human rights could be associated to the hardship and to some extent, national humiliation following Perestroika, instead of being linked to development and improvement in the quality of life. Human rights NGOs do seem to face a crisis of legitimacy in Russia, and are perceived as linked to Western interests. If there is, a domestic debate about civil society, this might be restricted to CSOs and not reaching the public sphere. On the other hand, present conditions of relative political stability and the pursuit of pragmatic policies bring back the hope of Russia as a great power, or at least as an emergent power seeking only for equal partnerships within the international community.

Methods

Design

This is a qualitative case-study of Russian Human Rights' NGOs based in St. Petersburg. Qualitative case-study methodology enables the use of different methods, techniques and data and this study included observation of discussion dynamics in conferences related to the theme of human rights and civil society; in-depth qualitative interviews face-to-face, with members of human rights NGOs (see annexes), and document analysis (NGO reports and other documents, news related to human rights activities, etc.).

Setting and sampling strategy

The setting of the research is St Petersburg, the second city of the Russian Federation, and a very active context for Human Rights NGOs. Sampling strategy was based mainly on asking my interviewees for the names of the most important organizations/movements/persons working on human rights issues. Apart from this sampling procedure based on NGOs names and personal contacts suggested from my interviewees, I used World Wide Web search engines (Google search engine), to find out about the most active and also controversial human rights NGOs in Russia, and the respective activities.

Data collection techniques

Data collection was primarily based on in-depth interviews with representatives (if possible directors) of Human Rights NGOs, during a 4.5 month stay in St Petersburg in 2010-2011. Open questions covered the topics of the history of the organization, since it was established until the present; its major goals and frameworks; major achievements and obstacles/difficulties; relationship with donors and the influence of international community; civil society and human rights organizations in Russian Federation; human rights discourse in Russian Federation and perception of the future of human rights system in Russian Federation. Following informed consent,⁴ interviews were recorded and later subjected to critical discourse analysis.

Relationship between Researcher and Participants

All my interviewees were quite open and transparent, and none had any objections to my recording of the interviews.⁵ Only one of the interviewed asked for an interpreter – that was provided by a sociology graduate, a volunteer in the CGES⁶, and all other interviews were carried out in English. The fact that neither I nor the interviewee was a native speaker of English was taken into consideration in the analysis. Also, as a way to deal with possible language bias, during the interview I consistently reformulated the key ideas (including feelings) of what I perceived from my interviewee's speech, to make sure I understood it correctly.

Analysis

The analysis of the interviews followed a critical discourse analysis approach, using the framework and categories proposed by Norman Fairclough (2003).

Results

Following integrative analysis of the data collected from interviews, documents, and observations in conferences, I propose some general conclusions related to how human rights and civil society western discourses are received and re-appropriated in the Russian Federation.

- i) Western human rights and civil society are relevant concepts within the Russian Federation NGOs community, but do not seem to mobilize the general public.
- ii) While Russian human rights NGOs discourse incorporate some elements of western understanding of human rights and civil society, there are also some critiques to this understanding.
- iii) There seems to be some openness to debate within NGO community, perhaps as a way to adjust to a changing national and international environment

Regarding my first conclusion, in spite of the heterogeneity among Russian CSOs, their focus and structure,⁷ in general, these organizations still identify themselves with human rights discourse, as the Human Rights Council coalition proves. There does not seem to be any emergent, alternative discourse to the western concept of human rights.

The difficulty in raising awareness and mobilizing people to human rights activities came up both in conferences and interviews. At the conference “Higher Education and Civil Society: A New Social Mission of the University”, one of the panels became quite similar to a support group for teachers of human rights, who complained about the lack of culture, disinterest and lack of empathy of students, as well as difficulties generated by the Russian authorities to those engaged in human rights teaching or defense. In some interviews this problem of mobilization was linked to costs of activism, with examples from students who got expelled with bad

records from university because of their participation in public protests against university policies. In other interviews, this problem is linked to the human rights discourse itself, and its general perception as an “old, 1990s idea, like democracy”, or as connected to Western agenda and imperialism. Other mentioned difficulties to the mobilization of people to human rights activities were the current security and economic priorities, the fragmentation of society, and also the “post-modern condition” of the new generation, who gets bored easily, and prefers experiencing new things than committing to one activity and also tend to choose more lucrative fields like working in commercial or banking sphere. Indeed, there seems to be a need of professionals like lawyers and judges, to work in human rights activities.

Regarding my second conclusion, western ideas of human rights and civil society are both accepted in some of their aspects and contested in others. Thus, especially in the conferences I attended, universality of human rights was sometimes questioned, and attention was called upon the double standards in evaluating compliance with it. On the other hand, some aspects of western human rights and civil society understanding seem to be less contested, as their foundation on a conception of a self-sustaining individual; their implicit idea of an opposition between State and civil society; the importance of the rule of law and the adoption of a legalistic/educational approach to human rights, also linked to the use of international legal instruments, as the European Court of Human Rights⁸, and concerns with professionalization of NGOs, associated with managerial discourse. Regarding this last issue, the concerns with professionalization and management may also represent a re-appropriation of the Kremlin discourse on successful management and leadership (as in the case of Memorial NIC, that mentioned it as a comparison/contrast) or as an assertion of the importance of strong leadership when the NGO becomes associated with its director (as in the case of Regional Press Institute).

There is a genuine interest towards Europe civil society, as the conferences I attended attested, but simultaneously, emerge concerns about an “Europeanization of civil society associations”. There is also an appeal to more support and action from the international community, and a strong commitment to self-ownership and agency. These NGOs’ call for a more active position on the part of the

western community regarding human rights violations in Russia, as well as more “moral and intellectual support” to Russian human rights defenders, could mean a rejection of being treated as victims by an international community not wishing to interfere with national politics and taking a non-threatening stance towards human rights, knowing this will not change anything (see Kapur, 2006). Pragmatic arguments are also used in this appeal for a more active support from western community, as when one of my interviewees asked me to warn Western community that if they don’t take a more active standpoint, there is the risk that Russia could again follow a more isolationist and autocratic approach and that would not be good for anyone, nor to the West.

My third conclusion is that there seems to be some openness to debate within NGO community, as Belokurova (2010) suggests, and in spite of the presence of GONGOs. This domestic debate could be a sign of these NGOs trying to adjust and survive in a new, changing domestic and international context. A sign of change whose result we cannot predict. There are, on the other hand, no signs of enlarging this debate to the public sphere and thus, no signs of questioning the civil society liberal understanding as composed of CSOs and excluding the citizen.

Conclusion

Human rights and civil society liberal narrative are being presently transformed and re-appropriated in today’s Russian society, by the State, the Church and civil society organizations. Although there is not a full refusal of these liberal concepts by Russian human rights organizations, neither is there a clear alternative discourse, NGOs seem to be simultaneously resisting and initiating a reflexive process/discussion among themselves and with western donors – and in some instances with the Russian government, at different levels. While certain elements of a liberal understanding are kept – like the legalist and educational focus, there are also some critiques to the liberal concepts of human rights and civil society. In particular, there seems to be a rejection of the victimization status, related to an appeal to a more active position and support to human rights in Russia by western community. Self-ownership and agency seem to be important drives for Russian NGOs and this resonates well with today’s Russian status as an emergent power. It also resonates how-

ever, with the nationalist discourse on successful management/ leadership, sometimes re-appropriated by the NGOs. And like Russia, NGOs also seek for equal partnerships with the West, but they are also, especially human rights NGOs, dependent on the west for funds and recognition.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Drazen Simic, Paul Stubbs and Ricardo Pereira, as well as the reviewers of the Academic Quarter for their valuable comments, revisions, and encouragement.
- 2 This study is a part of my PhD thesis which compares the influence of international development/ democratization assistance in Russian Federation and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The results presented on this paper regarding Russian Federation are based on four and a half months of field-work in St. Petersburg (September, October and November 2010; and from mid January 2011 till the present time).
- 3 See Mr. Medvedev speech on this year Davos Forum: <http://deal-book.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/medvedev-defends-russias-modernization-efforts/> See also Mr. Medvedev discourse in 2010 annual Russian-German summit, held in Yekaterinburg: <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/medvedev-moots-russiagermany-modernization-alliance-210881-eng.html>.
- 4 Before each interview and also previously in the first contact, usually by email, I would briefly explain the purposes of my research as part of my PhD studies at the University of Coimbra (Portugal), and assure my interviewees that data would be used solely for the purposes of my research. Then I would ask their permission to record the interview.
- 5 In my interview with Regional Media Press I did not ask to record though, because of technical problems.
- 6 CGES - Center of German and European Studies, St. Petersburg State Institution, my host institution in the Russian Federation
- 7 The NGOs I interviewed are performing quite different activities if we compare them, which probably represent their actual heterogeneity in the Russian Federation. Some of them work with minority groups' protection, as Anti-Discrimination Center Memorial; or with specific issues like DE-Sovietization (Memorial NIC). Soldiers Mothers of St Petersburg works with legal rights of conscripts; Media Regional Press Institute is a media organization working with journalists training; Strategy

presents itself as a think tank; other organizations work as information and resource centers for NGOs - the cases of Human Rights Resource Center and the NGO Development Center (CRNO). Human Rights Council is a coalition of Human Rights NGOs; Street University is a social movement, just to mention some examples.

- 8 Human rights defenders and organizations using the European Court of Human Rights have nonetheless referred the problem of implementation of the law, which lead to the use other strategies, like international media pressure to force authorities to act.

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Annexes

List of NGOs contacted

Association for co-operation with Nordic countries "Norden"; Soldiers Mothers St Petersburg Regional Press Institute; Memorial NIC St Petersburg; Anti-Discrimination Center "Memorial" St Petersburg; Human Rights Resource Center- Independent non-commercial organization of information and legal services; St Petersburg Institute of Law: Clinical Legal Education Center; Saint-Petersburg Center for Humanities and Political Studies "Strategy"; NGO Development Center (CRNO); Citizen's Watch; Human Rights Council; Street University Movement.

Conferences Attended

International Conference "Higher Education and Civil Society: A New Social Mission of the University", St. Petersburg State University, Department of Philology Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Program in Liberal Arts and Humanities), October, 14-15, 2010.

International Conference "NGOs in Europe and Russia: Responding to New Challenges and Opportunities", St. Petersburg State University, November 12-14, 2010.