Social Media and Civil Society in the Russian Protests, December 2011

The role of social media in engagement of people in the protests and their self-identification with civil society

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the phenomenon of the December protests in Russia when thousands of citizens were involved in the protest movement after the frauds during the Parliamentary elections. There was a popular opinion in the Internet media that at that moment Russia experienced establishment of civil society, since so many people were ready to express their discontent publically for the first time in 20 years.

The focus of this study is made on the analysis of the roles that social media played in the protest movement. As it could be observed at the first glance, recruiting and mobilising individuals to participation in the rallies were mainly conducted via social media. The research analyses the concept of civil society and its relevance to the protest rhetoric and investigates, whether there was a phenomenon of civil society indeed and how it was connected to individuals’ motivation for joining the protest.

The concept of civil society is discussed through the social capital, social and political trust, e-democracy and mediatisation frameworks. The study provides a comprehensive description of the events, based on mainstream and new media sources, in order to depict the nature and the development of the movement. The structure of the protests is analysed through the new social movement theory. Also, various approaches to engagement of people in the social movements are presented, including political marketing framework.

The research was conducted in several main stages, using content analysis, survey and interviewing as main methods. The main conclusions of the study: relatively minor impact of social media in the engagement of people in the protest, a narrow section of the population as the audience of social media protesters (for them civil society mostly played a role of a customer need), and yet a significant potential of ICT in the future political life of the country.

Key words: Russia, social media, political mobilization, democracy, public sphere, social capital, new social movements, e-democracy, political marketing, digital divide.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSR – *Center for Strategic Research (Rus. Tsentr Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy)*, sociological research organisation (Russia)

FOM – Public Opinion Foundation (Rus. Fond ‘Obshchestvennoye Mnenie’), sociological research organisation (Russia)

VK – *Vkontakte.Ru*, Russian-based social network

VTSIOM – *Russian Public Opinion Research Center (Rus. Vserossiyskiy Tsentr Izucheniya Obshchestvennogo Mneniya)*, sociological research organisation (Russia)
INTRODUCTION

After the Parliamentary elections in Russia in December 2011, thousands of people all over the country took part in protest demonstrations – both inside and outside the country. According to the official list of their demands, the protesters were insisting on annulment of the election results and resignation of the head of the election commission, among the other statements.

The scale of the protest was indeed impressive in various ways: by the number of people engaged in it, by its geography and by wide discussion in media. December protests, according to different opinions in media, were comparable only to the mass demonstrations in 1991 during August Putsch. According to unofficial statistics, there were 150 000 people on Bolotnaya square in Moscow on the 24th of December. It means that it was the first time in twenty years, when people in Russia consolidated around a certain idea and expressed their position by arranging series of massive protests events.

These protests got various names - “revolution of hipsters” (Idov 2012), “net hamsters”\(^1\) revolution”, “Facebook revolution”, etc., because the protest evoked a wide response among social media users. Also, visual evidences of frauds (for example, videos from voting stations with ballot box stuffing) were spreading only in the Internet and opposition media. Mainstream media, in their turn, did not cover the topic of frauds and protests at the very beginning. Facebook, Twitter and VK users were establishing groups, arranged movements, online voting for opposition representatives and even conducted fundraising campaigns for financing protest events. Importantly, one of the keynotes of the Russian political winter 2011/2012 was the strong consolidation of people as an evidence of rising of civil society. This idea was being proclaimed repeatedly both by public figures and regular social media users.

Franke and Pallin (2012) in their study on the Russian Internet and politics in 2011/2012 raise the question: why did the protests happen exactly then? It was not for the first time in contemporary history of Russia that the legitimacy of elections was called into question. Was it really the result of fast penetration of Internet in Russia in general and social media in particular or would protests happen even without them?

\(^1\) Internet slang word (Rus. “сетевой хомячок” [setevoy homyachok]) for active social media users that demonstrate useless and unproductive online behaviour and at the same time are easily manipulated
This question has been often raised regarding contemporary social movements in other countries as well – a conditional question which has no certain answer and can be only discussed on hypothetical level. However, social media undoubtedly played certain roles in the protest escalation in December 2011. This impact can be seen even without deeper analysis, taking into consideration activities of media users mentioned above. Moreover, the relevant studies showed that the Internet penetration in Russia by the time the protests happened was at the level of around 30 per cent on a national scale (54.5 million users). At the same time, in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (the biggest and most developed cities of the state in terms of infrastructure and technologies) the ICT penetration is more than 60 per cent. Importantly, more than 80 per cent of all Russian Internet users have accounts on social media websites (more representative data on ICT penetration in Russia and deeper investigation of the subject are presented in the first section of the Analysis chapter).

These facts, among others mentioned above, give reason to investigate the factual importance and the particular roles that social media played during the events of the winter of 2011.

Research question of this study therefore is “What were the roles of social media in engagement of people in social movements and their self-identification with civil society during the Post-election Protests in Russia in December, 2011”?

Object of the research, therefore, is post-election protests of the Russian citizens, which took part from the 4th of December till the 24th of December. Research subject is the role of the social media in shaping and/or strengthening civic-mindedness among social media users and motivation for being involved in the protest wave.

The research goal is to provide empirical knowledge about the roles of social media during discussed events and define a dominant one.

Subquestions that this study aims to answer in order to provide the answer to the main research question are:

1) What does ‘civil society’ as an idea imply and how do its values and principles correlate with the protest of social media users in 2011?

2) What was the demographic and socio-cultural portrait of protesters?

3) In terms of the Russian Federation as a state, how considerable social media penetration was by the time the protests were happening?
4) What behavioural patterns in their social media activity, regarding the protest, did they demonstrate?

5) What was the connection between discussions around civil society and motivation of social media users to participate in demonstrations?

The **hypothesis** of the study consists of three main statements:

- Social media were the main source of information (or one of the main ones) first about the frauds and then about protest actions, both occurred and planned;

- Social media became an efficient and low-cost platform for discussion and cooperation for Internet users and one of the key tools for arrangement of rallies;

- Social media became a public stage for new opinion leaders with which social media users wanted to identify themselves, as well as they wanted to identify themselves with civic society values.

The study provides detailed chronology of the events of December 2011, focusing on the content produced by *Facebook* and *Twitter* users. The research is of qualitative character and is based on the data provided in the “Study background” chapter, surveys conducted by statistical polling and sociological research organizations. Also, as supportive methods, the researcher conducted her own survey and interviews with several participants of the movement.

The study is mostly analyzing events in Moscow, and there are several reasons for that. First, the most massive protests in terms of number of participants happened there. Then, the protests mostly touched Russian citizens with more than a million inhabitants, as it can be seen from the study background and analytical part of the research. This fact is also tangentially related to technological development and ICT penetration of certain regions of the country. Finally, the interviews were taken in Moscow, during another protest event in 2012, and therefore it can be incorrect to apply their results on protestors outside the capital, even though some behavioral trends can be seen. The fundamental research data is included in the study and can be found in the Annex.

Importantly, for several reasons the study does not provide a comparison of the Russian protests with social movements in other countries, for example, the Arabic Spring or Occupy Wall-Street. The first reason is the specific social and political context of the Russian rallies. Then, at one of the research stages, content analysis of the original social media texts in Russian was conducted,
which would be impossible to do without language proficiency. Finally, comparative analysis would shift the initial focus of the study.
I. Theoretical background and literature review

The theoretical section of this research aims to present a sufficient platform for modeling methodology and analysis. The main focus of the chapter is put on civil society as a notion, on media as a part of civic society and on their place in contemporary social movements. Furthermore, different approaches for analyzing engagement of people in social movement are introduced, both from socio-cultural and mediacentric perspectives.

Taking into consideration the study background presented in the chapter III and the hypothesis of the study, the following theories will be discussed on the first place: social trust vs. political trust theories, social capital theory, mediatisation theory, new social movement theory (along with collective behaviour theory and resource mobilization theory) and political marketing theory. The preliminary connections and arguments for relevance of these theories to the object of the study are provided as well. Other theoretical frameworks are also presented, as a part of the literature review.

The chapter is structured as following: first, explanation of civil society notion is provided, then the concept is discussed through the social/political trust theories. After that, the process of mediatisation of the state and its connection to development of civil society is illustrated, followed by definition of e-democracy concept. In the end of the section, a brief overview of Russian mediasphere is provided.

The next section is devoted to social movements, their nature and the role that social media play during significant social and political processes. Social movements are defined, categorized, and the central part of the section is introduction to new social movements theory.

Further, different approaches on the engagement of individuals into online social movements are discussed,

Finally, political marketing theory is presented, as evolvement from previous chapters.
1. Civil Society and Media

One of the first questions, that needs theoretical support for being answered, is to define the notion of civil society itself. The popular opinion among the Russian Internet users\(^2\) was that December 2011 became the time when the civil society in Russia was born (or reborn). Many social media users identified themselves (judging on their posts) with citizens who fight for their civil rights. In order to see whether their demands and disaffections correspond to classical and contemporary views on civil society, the theoretical background will start with examination of the concept.

1.1. Civil society: definition, approaches and fundamental principles

Civil society is one of the fundamental concepts in political and social studies, yet the definitions, nature, ideas and principles of civil society vary to a large extent depending on the social and political contexts.

The word-group 'civil society' itself emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relationships had developed from ancient and medieval communal society. “Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie” (Engels, F., Marx, K. 1963 cited in Kumar 1993). ‘Bourgeoisie’ is described as “small businessmen” (Bechhofer, Elliott, 1976, p. 80) with various types of occupation, which have one feature in common – capital. In other words, bourgeoisie are self-motivated and opportunistic representatives of middle class that take an active part in economic life of the society.

Classical studies of civil society are often related to liberal theories of John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill who claimed that the foundation of society is a social contract that provides citizens with security of property and person in exchange of guaranteed individual freedoms (Kumar 1993, Walzer 1990). Generally, views on the structure and bases of civil society vary depending on theoretical schools, for example Marxists consider the state as the partner for individuals helping them to act as ‘good civic citizens; (Etzioni, 1995), while conservatives put economic freedom as the main condition of political freedom (Schecter, 2000).

In the 20\(^{th}\) century, with rapid development of human rights in Western societies, the difference between those from Eastern Europe became obvious.

\(^2\) See the chapter ‘Study background’
Exactly at the time when the Soviet Union was going through severe political changes, Michael Walzer (1990) was discussing a substantial difference between views and conceptions of civil society in Western countries and Eastern Europe. In post-Soviet Russia, in particular, one of the reasons for that could be dramatically low level of interpersonal trust, according to James Gibson: “…contemporary Russia is said to lack two crucial elements of a civil society - interpersonal trust and a broad array of nonstate voluntary organizations” (Gibson 2001, p.52).

According to the surveys that he conducted in the late 1990s, only 31per cent of Russians thought that most people can be trusted. Trust, in its turn, is claimed to be a key factor in building civic society: according to Mishler and Rose (1999), for example, "trust is necessary so that individuals may participate voluntarily in collective institutions, whether in political institutions, such as political parties, or in economic and social institutions, such as labor unions, business associations, and churches”. For a country that has faced dramatic political changes in such a short period, it is not uncommon to demonstrate low level of interpersonal trust.

“Central and East European dissidence flourished within a highly restricted version of civil society, and the first task of the new democracies created by the dissidents (...) is to rebuild the networks”, claimed Walzer, speaking about unions, parties, associations, schools and other public institutions. The West, in opposite, had been living as civil society for a long time “without even knowing it”. Therefore, values and principles of civil society were perceived as by-default and pre-given, while the Eastern European countries needed to build it from scratch. According to him, “the words "civil society" name the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks - formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology - that fill this space” (1990). In other words, people, whose basic needs are satisfied, cooperate and collaborate with each other in order to build better social environment for each other.

Continuing this idea, Walzer suggests that civil society and motivation for establishing it are focused on the idea of “good life” (1990) and intention of individuals to achieve it. He discusses four theoretical approaches (or ideologies) that answer the question which institutions should be developed on the first place in order to achieve this ‘good life’. Before even proceeding to detailed discussion of these ideologies, Walzer calls each of them ‘importantly wrong’ for neglecting pluralism of any civil society.

The first one is political community, or democratic state, with ‘freely engaged, fully committed, decision-making members’ (1990), which Walzer criticizes for isolation from the real life. First
of all, he claims, the state is definitely not in hands of citizens, although the power of democracy had significantly grown. The participatory of ordinary people in the political life of state is vicarious, and the whole idea of demos in certain ways is illusory, according to him. Although this statement was made by Walzer more than 20 years before the current study was undertaken, it can still be relevant: none of the democracies existing in contemporary world functions according to this idealist model. Yet, this approach provides the idea of fundamental values of civil society, even though it is impossible to fully implement them in practice.

For the second ideological framework, he refers to Karl Marx, and the focus, according to this approach, has to be shifted from political to economic activity, and productivity becomes free: “There is no intrinsic value in democracy, no reason to think that politics has (...) a permanent attractiveness. When we are all engaged in productive activity, social division and the conflicts it engenders will disappear, and the state, in the once-famous phrase, will wither away” (1990). Here, the main criticism of Walzer is addressed to the denial of any political component in economic processes, since, as he notices, the role of coordinator of the activity still has to be played by some agency, which is naturally called ‘a state’ by a large number of other schools, but not by Marxism.

The third ideology, or answer for a ‘good life’, as Walzer call it, is the market place where citizens are considered to be consumers rather than producers and have a possibility of various options to choose. “To live well is not to make political decisions or beautiful objects; it is to make personal choices” – the central point of this concept. Production here is performed by entrepreneurs, who compete with each other in providing the best options for satisfaction of ‘consumers’ needs, which basically refers to capitalism framework. This concept, says Walzer, is also arguable, since citizens enter the ‘market’ with different resources and therefore cannot equally compete from the beginning. Also, trying to make their own profit from entrepreneurial activity, they become autonomous from each other, and this autonomy provides no support for social solidarity.

And, finally, the fourth answer is “the preferred setting is the nation, within which we are loyal members, bound to one another by ties of blood and history” (1990), which embodies nationalistic framework. The main counterargument for this approach is that in this civil society (or ‘good life’) is not provided for everyone, but only for those who meet certain ethnic/national criteria.
Walzer, as it was stated earlier, criticized all four ideologies for being unidirectional when approaching the idea of civil society, as a citizen is playing various roles as a member of civil society. State, in its turn, ‘both frames civil society and occupies space within it. It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity (including political activity)’ (1990).

Importantly, Walzer also emphasizes that civil society is able to challenge the state when associations can rely for a support from abroad (meaning world religions, pan-national movements, the new environmental groups, multi-national corporations).

Ideally, says Walzer, civil society is a ‘setting of settings: all are included, none is preferred’, which could be explained as that interests of all social strata are taken into consideration, however, none of them obtains privileges. In conclusion, he states that civil society is shaped and maintained by groups ‘much smaller than the demos or the working class or the mass of consumers or the nation’. This argument supports the idea that civil society is a cooperating network of small groups, institutions and associations rather than a large community.

Michael Walzer’s overlook on these four paradigms provides preliminary fundament for the current study. First of all, norms and values of civil society, no matter how idealistic and far they can be from practice, play a role of ideological anchor for democracy in general, and for social movements for civil rights fighting in particular.

Secondly, the economic factor indeed played an important role in events of December 2011 in Moscow. It can be seen that people that were taking part in the movements were of a certain level of socioeconomic status. This statement will be further discussed in the coming chapters, with reference to surveys and statistics.

Thirdly, drawing parallels between civic society and market venue undoubtedly deserves attention for the further research: media, among their other roles, are often used as a marketing channel, and its users – as marketing managers and consumers.

Turning to contemporary political science research on civil society and its fundamental ideas, Darren Lilleker in his study “Key Concepts of Political Communication (2006) provides the following definition:

“Civil society relates to the freedom individuals enjoy to engage in political activity of their choosing, without institutional or societal constraint (...). Thus a legitimate system of
government will build a civic society founded on freedom, which in turn will encourage the political engagement necessary for a strong civil society” (Lilleker 2006, p. 55).

It can be concluded from the definition that a state governed by the rule of law is a central element in the civil society structure. And again, the emphasis is made on voluntary engagement of individuals, regardless of their social affiliation.

Andrew Chadwick (2006) supports this idea, referring to, among other classic scholars, a political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville. He claimed that civil society, which includes such features as “competing interest groups, newspapers and philanthropic associations” (de Tocqueville cited in Chadwick, p. 85), provides “a check on government” and “civic education for citizens”.

Among the characteristics of civil society, Lilleker (referring a research by L.Hodson “Manufactured civil society: counting the costs, 2004) names societal need that drives political policy and group member values as its basis. The other feature is the “partnership networks co-operating to improve society” (p.56). These, and the other characteristics listed in Lilleker’s research draw a picture of mass-party model basing on members’ values and interests. Lilleker claims: “Communication from such organizations not be propagandist, internal and external democracy should be encouraged and there should be a continuous and open line of communication between the organizations and institutions, and the public” (p.56). This gives us the idea that effectiveness of civic society and its members is impossible without constant and open collaboration between institutions that shape it.

1.2. Civil society and democracy via social capital framework: social vs. political trust

Theory of social capital often goes along with discussions of civil society. Kenneth Newton (2001) even calls social capital theory “close cousin” of the theory of civil society (p. 201). Their common idea, according to him, is that “a dense network of voluntary associations and citizen organizations help to sustain civil society and community relations in a way that generates trust and cooperation between citizens and a high level of civic engagement and participation”.

Andrew Chadwick introduces the notion of “social capital” with a definition by Robert Putnam: “the feature of social organization such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1995 cited in Chadwick, p.66). In other words communities – regardless of their focus, increase the level of efficiency and awareness of the political situation.
According to Putnam, engagement with civic associations increases the level of trust between citizens (Putnam cited in Chadwick 2006, p.87). Reciprocity becomes a key issue: citizens believe that throughout common problem solving and negotiations they contribute to the community. Interestingly, straight after this point Chadwick refers to the opinion of several different scholars (Shah, McLeod, and Yoon, 2001, p.465) who claim that the more educated and wealthy individuals in a society are, the more racially diverse the society is, the higher level of employment is – the stronger civic engagement can be observed in such societies.

Newton, however, attempts to demonstrate a difference between social and political trust. This is important, he states, because, in the first place, formal membership in a voluntary association does not always reflect individual’s attitude of trust. Then, social trust between citizens has often nothing to do with their trust towards politicians.

Involvement of citizens in the local community, continues Newton, teaches “habits of the heart” (…) of social behaviors – trust, reciprocity, solidarity, cooperation (p. 202). The idea of the key role of social trust is supported by Georg Simmel (1950, p. 326), who claims that “trust is one of the most important synthetic forces within society”.


Trust itself is defined by Newton as individual’s belief that the others do not tend to cause him harm and in the best case scenario consider his interests and act according to them. Trust becomes a fundament for building stable social relations and therefore productive cooperation and collective behaviour. While trust itself is strongly connected with certain risks for individuals, Newton remarks, it still helps to make the world a better place, roughly speaking.

When it comes to distinguishing political trust from social trust, Newton states that they are “neither different aspects of much the same thing, nor necessarily related to each other empirically” (p.203). Social trust is more often demonstrated by those members of a society, that succeed in it. Basing on his research, Newton presents the portrait of such an individual as a person with high income, high education and social status, most often men in his middle age, who express general satisfaction with their life and position in society. Political trust, in its turn,
is strongly connected with such variables as interest in politics, patriotism, belief in open government and a low priority given to social order and the left-right scale (p. 204).

Political trust has the same theoretical relationship to political capital as social trust has to social capital. The measures of political trust are “civic-mindness and participation, citizenship, political interest and involvement, a concern with the public interest/public good, political tolerance, the ability to compromise, and confidence in political institutions”. Therefore, claims Newton, the concept of political trust becomes a new version of fraternity notion, which is a non-arguable condition for civil society.

One important difference between social trust and political trust is that the first one is built through the first-hand experience and interaction with the other members of society, while political trust is shaped at a distance and quite often through media.

He concludes, however, that both concepts are closely related and, moreover, cannot exist sufficiently without each other: “social capital and a developed civil society help to make good government possible, and good government helps to sustain social capital and the conditions to civil society” (211).

1.3. Civic society and mediatisation of the state

Coming closer to the connection between media and civil society, one can turn to W.Lance Bennett, a researcher that has been investigating the role of media in political engagement of young people. In his study “Introduction: Communication and civic engagement in comparative perspective” (2000) he defines conditions that ‘undermine’ civil society:

- ‘The role of media in delivering political information, with related demand for infotainment (information + entertainment) among audiences’. Thus, the situation when media, apart from being an informer, focuses on entertainment is destructive for civil society, according to Bennett.

- “The increase in ‘lifestyle values’ and decrease of political ones at the same time (this might be related to the growth of consumerism)”. The situation when interest of the public towards political issues decreases and shifts to leisure time and consuming also puts ‘health’ of civic society into risk.
This point, however, is rather controversial taking into consideration the metamorphoses that has happened in Russia in the last 15 years regarding citizen’s well being and consumption. Researching the concept of middle class in Russia, Tat’yana Maleva, director of the Independent Institute for Social Policy in Moscow, found out that 52 per cent of those Russians who identified themselves with middle class, were basing first of all on income and possessions rather than other factors (2008).

The notion of middle class itself is rather debatable, but the income of the Russians has objectively grown in the past 20 years, which has led to growing consumption (Castiglione, Gorbunova, Infante, Smirnova, 2012). Here, one can make an assumption, that the Russian citizens have got a wider access not only to durable goods, but also to travelling and getting education abroad. This, in its turn, has helped individuals to collect new social experience and revise their views on living standards, political situation and interpersonal communication.

Therefore, turning back to Bennett’s point that an increase in lifestyle values can be damaging for civic society, needs further analysis for being approved or disapproved. The discussion about correlation of growing middle class in Russia and developing of civil society will be discussed in ‘Analysis’ chapter.

- “The reduction of joint political experience and actions of individuals”. This is yet another point of view supporting collaboration between individuals as a crucial element of civil society.

- “Globalization of political activities due to the rise of Internet and shifting away from the nation-state”. This statement is related to one of the frameworks analyzed by Walzer where the focus of civil society is inner-national on the first place. However, one can argue here that if some certain values and principles are taken as standards for civil society, it is important for those individuals who live in transitional societies to get experience and knowledge from abroad, too.

- “Global initiatives supported by Internet and activities of political organizations that operate globally and are different from traditional ones because of insufficient local representation and responsibility”. In Russia, in opposite, local insufficient representation usually leads to growing civil activism and initiatives in supporting global programs (“Transparency
International Russia” could be a good example of this). Important role of strong political and nonstate organisations in civil society will be mentioned in the ‘Analysis’ chapter.

Bennett underlines, that all of these characteristics do not lead to or imply abolishment of political engagement at all, but they tend to focus on a global civil society rather than national. Civil society, however, starts within the country on the first place, and not globally, as it can be concluded from his argument. In Bennett’s argumentation, however, the role of the state in connection between media and civic society is presented rather marginally, although certain trends might be found.

Turning back to Lilleker’s study, he presents a definition of “a media centered democracy” – “a political system where a vast majority of political activity is conducted with the media in mind and that the public receive vast majority of their information from media reporting” (p. 110). Even though putting contemporary Russia in one line with Western democracy states might seem a doubtful approach, it is important to remember one aspect of the Russian legal system here. According to the 38th article of the Russian Federation law “About Mass Media”, citizens must be provided with operative information about actions of the governmental authorities. This means that the Russian political forces are obliged to use mass media for informing society about their work. Kiriya and Degtereva in their study about the Russian television system (2010) point out that involvement of the Russian politicians in social projects and their execution has become one of the focuses in news programs (p.45).

Whether Russia could be called democracy or not, as it is stated in its constitution has been a question for many discussions (examples were presented previously) and there are various opinions on that matter. For the current study, Lilleker’s definition is assumed to be relevant for the reasons mentioned above.

Also there is one more argument for considering Russia a media centered state. Among the key features of ‘media centeredness’, according to Lilleker, is a limited access to face-to-face communication with mass electorate during election period caused by the size of the country. He even mentions Russia as one of the examples of that. Indeed, taking into consideration enormous size of electorate in Russia (especially when one refers to the Parliamentary elections which concern all the citizens), it makes it problematic to conduct many face-to-face meetings and thus the role of media becomes even more significant.
The next important characteristic is the role of media used for politicians’ exposure, and therefore leaders are supposed to have ‘good televisual skills and telegenic features’. Media coverage, according to Lilleker, is becoming a goal itself in media-centered democracies. This argument underlines how important personal charisma of politicians/ political activists is in such societies. And although Lilleker builds the whole discussion about media centered society around television rather than with connection to social media (the reason for that is explained below), it is important to remember that in the age of converged technologies, new media are able to provide information in any possible format. Thus, *YouTube* allowed the audience in Russia to watch speeches of Alexei Navalny, Ilya Yashin and other opposition representatives and to form attitudes both to their political positions and personalities. Whether charisma of those political activists and their presentation in new media played a key role in people’s engagement in the protest has to be discovered in this research. However, it is hard to argue that social media became a mediator between the audience (probably, very narrow and limited) and public activists that were encouraging the Russian people to express their discontent with the frauds.

The other perspective of opinion makers’ media exposure is provided by Nick Couldry, when he discusses media as ritual and social form. He analyzes it via *celebrity culture* concept: “The fact that we all know that celebrities are “constructions” does not undermine the category differences reproduced in our practices of orienting ourselves towards celebrity” (Couldry 2012, p. 81). And although his study does not necessarily refer to famous political figures only, the celebrity culture concept is relevant to the Russian December 2011 case. Those Russian citizens, who participated in the protests for the first time in their lives, might never identify themselves and their ideas of civil society with certain public people. However influence of their political performance on citizens via social media could be observed, and therefore it is one of the subtasks of the current research to find out, how significant this influence was.

Lilleker continues to examine the role of media as a mediator between society and political forces and turns to mediatisation theory, which claims that media “shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place” (Lilleker 2006, 117). *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, VK* and blogs, beyond the dispute, impacted political communication during the analyzed period. This can be stated due to the fact that not only were social media providing another angle of event coverage (compared to mainstream media) and delivered users feedback to the government, but also because the authorities were reacting on accusation, both in official statements and personal
Facebook and Twitter pages. However, this cannot be considered as an evidence of shaping and framing political communication processes on a larger scale.

Moreover, Lilleker suggests that mediatisation of politics can be just a part of a broader tendency, the mediatisation of society, and he even provides the simplified formula for describing the process: public demand = market orientation = mediatisation (2006, p. 118). Again, the chosen period is relatively short to observe some major tendencies; however, this one again gives a ground for analyzing media, politics and society through the lens of marketing theory, which will be done in further chapters.

At the same time, Lilleker emphasizes that the majority of studies, related to mediatisation theory, investigate television, and this is based on the fact that it is too early for new [social] media to take a role of mediator for several reasons. Among them is remaining limited access to the Internet, regulated content of many websites, and politics are not the biggest interest of web users. Therefore, it comes to the fore in the current study to provide sufficient relevant analysis of the media audience in Russia and Internet penetration figures in order to estimate the factual role of social media as a mediator during December events in Russia. Even though social media might not have that large exposure as TV in Russia, for certain groups of people who were involved in protests it could play a role of mediator of political communications during the examined period.

1.4. E-democracy

In the end of the 20th century, with drastic incursion of Internet in political life of the economically developed states, scholars began to broadly discuss the notion of e-democracy as a new format of citizens’ political activity.

Andrew Chadwick (2006, p.84) provides a definition of the e-democracy concept referring to the U.K. Hansard Society:

*The concept of e-democracy is associated with efforts to broaden political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and with their representatives via new information and communication technologies. (Hansard Society, 2003)*

One can say, basing on this definition, that e-democracy exists per se (regardless of the current political regime) in many modern societies. Governmental authorities in various countries have
sufficient Internet representation no matter what political program they follow, as well as citizens can express their opinions online even in countries with strong media censorship.

However, e-democracy cannot exist, according to Chadwick, without a number of conditions and should be discussed via a concept of public sphere, which was first introduced by Habermas as “enlightened, critical, and reasoned public debate among the propertied middle class” (Habermas 1962 cited in Chadwick 2006, p. 88).

Lincoln Dahlberg (2001), basing on Habermasian theory, provides several conditions that e-democracy systems must fulfill in order to build reflective public spheres. Among them is autonomy from state and economic power, which means that public discussions have to be focused first of all on the interests of citizens.

The other element of a public sphere is reflexivity of its participants, or, in other words, ability to not only cultivate their personal values and views, but also to see themselves and the others in the larger social perspective and deeply understanding how their interests affect their own worldview. The next component is ideal role taking, which implies an ability and willingness to judge from the perspective of the opponent and demonstrate a respect in order to build a productive dialogue. The next condition is sincerity, which Dahlberg explains as an effort to “make known all the information – including true intentions, interests, needs, and desires – as relevant to the particular problem” (Chadwick 2006, p. 89).

Therefore, e-democracy turns to be a much more complex idea than a combination of technological possibilities for participation in political life. It needs deep self-awareness of citizens and their aspiration to serve interests of individuals in their online political activity, as well as trying to consider all existing views and bringing them up to discussion.

Could the events of December be considered as a birth or strengthening of e-democracy in the Russian Federation and social media, in their turn, an effective tool of e-democracy? In order to answer this question, one has to investigate whether e-democracy in Russia existed before the described events. This study does not aim to conduct a research on such scale, so the question that it aims to answer is whether the actions of social media users met requirements for e-democracy that are described above.
1.5. The mediatisation process in Russia: changing political system – changing mediashpere

Relations between media and government in Russia in general have dramatically changed compared to those in the 1990s. Ivan Zassourski confirms Lilleker’s ideas and describes the system that took shape in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and until the Vladimir Putin’s presidency as ‘mediatisation’ as well (2001).

Nordenstreng and Pietiläinen (2010) state that ‘a simple SMI\(^3\) notion of the media has in post-Soviet Russia been replaced by a more complex notion, whereby media are not just technical instruments but more or less autonomous actors, although the term SMI continues to be used (p. 137).

One of the most significant changes that media went through in post-Soviet times, according to them is a shift from instruments in the service of central power to platforms reflecting various social actors (p. 138). This change, according to them, is usually examined in media theory as “along a dimension which runs between the extremes of an outside and neutral observer of events in society, or a mirror for looking at the world, on the one hand, and on the other, an active participant in running and changing society, or a weapon to fight in the world” (138). Basing on this approach, Nordenstreng claims that media in post-Soviet Russia became relatively passive and a neutral mirror compared to ‘active and partisan weapons’ they used to be earlier (Nordenstreng 2006; 2007).

In his research “Virtual Parties in a Virtual World: The Use of the Internet by Russian Political Parties” (March, 2004) Luke March states that the Internet audience in Russia has been rapidly growing during the last decade and makes prognosis about the perspectives of the new media in Russia and its impact on the general social atmosphere, emphasizing the fact that there is undoubtedly a great potential of the role of Internet in improving civil society. Nevertheless, he states, “the Russian case shows that this potential is under-utilized… Although most parties now see ICT’s as vital, in general their use of the Internet remains limited and superficial” (March 2004, 137).

\(^3\)Rus. Sredstva Massovoy Informatsii (Means of mass information)
March’s study was mainly analyzing Parliamentary elections in 1999, and later he provided revised conclusions of his research in the new edition of “The Internet and Politics by Gibson, Oates, Owen (2006). There he states, that the online presence of the United Russia has been increasing, however, “it might not necessarily bring online the worst of the state’s offline ‘virtual politics’, since its success owed so little to ICTs” (p.154). He emphasizes that the political influence of the party still remains minor which provides possibilities for the opposition to use these channels widely and effectively.

Nordenstreng and Pietiläinen state that contemporary media in Russia are more independent and pluralistic than they used to be in Soviet Union. They note, however, that this trend of change can be seen in many other countries. They call it ‘mediasphere’ and it could be defined as an own sphere of media in developed market economies (p. 137). This means that media has not only become more autonomous in delivering public opinion, but they also play a role of mediator in social and economic relations between people and institutions.

Ivan Zassoursky provides a data table (see Table 1) on the changing mediasphere in the Soviet Union and Russia, starting with 1970 and until the beginning of the 21th century. He analyses how media structure and culture were changing with the political system. According to his research, the time when media was the most powerful and independent was straight after the Soviet Union collapse. Then, the political situation changed dramatically overnight, and Communists became the opposition, with their own media representation. The role of journalists, as it could be seen, gyrated – from instrumental to extremely important and then to instrumental and functional again, and it was negative relationship towards changing power of the state. For now, the Russian leaders can use all types of media, while the opposition has several mainstream media as a representation platform, and their main instruments are new media and mobile media.
## Witnessing change in contemporary Russia

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td>Communist/imperialist, evidently false but pervasive. Stable.</td>
<td>Democratization, socialist reforms. Optimistic.</td>
<td>Market fundamentalism, democratic reforms, anti-Communism.</td>
<td>No coherent belief system. Symbolic space around dramatic conflicts.</td>
<td>Nationalism (strong state + monopolism) vs. enemies and global turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social dream</strong></td>
<td>Welfare consumer society</td>
<td>Public sphere + the West</td>
<td>Welfare state</td>
<td>Law and order</td>
<td>Great Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media system type</strong></td>
<td>Propaganda machine</td>
<td>Glasnostpropaganda machine</td>
<td>“Fourth power”, independent media</td>
<td>Media-political system, society of the spectacle</td>
<td>Instrumental media, social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media system structure</strong></td>
<td>Newspaper-based, radio important, statecontrolled TV (3 channels)</td>
<td>Newspaper-based, stronger TV, strong radio</td>
<td>Transforming: printed press in decline, broad-casting on the rise</td>
<td>Media-political system in the commercial media environment</td>
<td>State-controlled media in commercial environment vs. the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journalist roles</strong></td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Important, especially in printed press</td>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>Almost completely instrumental</td>
<td>Defined in professional terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Nordenstreng and Pietiläinen, giving overview on changing culture of media in Russia, remark that the growing social inequalities in Russia are illustrated by media consumption (p. 146).

Describing the changing mediashpere in Russia, Elena Vartanova (2009) considers market as one of the most significant triggers for it. According to her, interests of advertisers and audiences are taken into account more than ever because of growing competition and technologies development. However, she claims, the change is controversial and complex, ‘as indeed is Russian society as a whole’. Vartanova notes that one of the trends the changes have brought is substitution of information as it is with opinions, self-censorship, and increasing role of the state. (p. 297).

As one of the signs of undeveloped civil society in Russia Vartanova and Zassoursky (2003) name weak public service television. Contemporary media map in Russia is shaped in a way that State channels would hardly shift to license fees or budget funding, claim the researchers. Yet, according to them “public service broadcasting is both a part of and a condition for civil society in Russia” (p. 106).

Turning to social media and their impact on contemporary political conflicts in Russia, Florian Toepfl describes (2011, p. 1304) the current media system (see Table 2) with four main types of media outlets: official mass media, mainstream mass media, liberal oppositional mass media and social media. Although the research of VTSIOM underlines the growing number of social media users, their audience is still marginal compared to the official and to the mainstream mass media in Russia. Also, he emphasizes that unlike in mass media, social media do not demonstrate certain trends in attitude towards ruling elites. This point is important, as long as his study was conducted before the December events, so, according to the research, there were no mass and strong pronounced negative sentiments towards the authorities in social media, like it happened in the end of 2011.

| Media opposition | Samizdat, oral speech, anecdotes. Russian language radio stations and newspapers based abroad. | Radical samizdat + conservative Communists (Sovetskaia Rossiia). | Communist newspapers (Pravda, Sovetskaia Rossiia), nationalist (Den’). | Communist, nationalist and alternative media (Trava i volia, Radek). | Representation (TV, radio, press) versus Communication (new and mobile media). |

Table 1. The Media-Political History of Russia Since 1970, according to Ivan Zassoursky
Table 2. The four spheres of the contemporary Russian hybrid media system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official Mass Media</th>
<th>Mainstream Mass Media</th>
<th>Liberal-Oppositional Mass Media</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Channel of Distribution</td>
<td>Broadcast / Print / Internet</td>
<td>Print / Internet / Radio</td>
<td>Print / Internet / Radio</td>
<td>Internet (Network Structure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Media Outlets</td>
<td>Perviy Kanal, Rossiya 1, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, NTV</td>
<td>Komsomolskaya Pravda, Izvestia, Trud</td>
<td>Novaya Gazeta, gazeta.ru, Echo Moskvy, The New Times</td>
<td>Forums, Blogs, Microblogs, Social Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards the Ruling Elites</td>
<td>Unconditional support</td>
<td>Largely loyal but selectively critical</td>
<td>Highly critical</td>
<td>Varying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of the Ruling Elites on the Published Content</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More information about Internet penetration in Russia in general and social media in particular will be presented in the further chapters.

Interestingly, Toepfl calles the Russian political regime “semi authoritarian” (p. 1301) and “semi-democratic” (p. 1302) and the media map – “semi-plural” (p. 1302). These definitions speak for themselves: Russia’s current political situation, mediasphere and their mutual influence on each other are unique in terms of global communication processes. Thus, the current study focuses primarily on the trends that could be observed within the country during the December protests, rather than making comparisons to the other states that faced revolutions or social movements of any kind in the past decade.
2. Social movement goes online

In this chapter, an attempt is made to provide an overview of contemporary theoretical and empirical studies on the Internet in general and social media in particular as a part of democratic state and their roles in national and international protests.

Nick Couldry (2012), whose work is repeatedly used in this research, tends to avoid the “mediacentrism” and concentrate on social theory in the process of shaping the scientific approach to media. This study adheres to this idea and therefore all the theoretical frameworks presented below are on the first place focused on social and political habits and behaviour of media users rather than the nature of contemporary media itself.

2.1. Literature review

In the past decades, the role of media in social and political conflicts between citizens and governments has been widely discussed, and with rapid Internet penetration into different life spheres of individuals in developed country, social media has been in focus in these discussions. It is impossible to provide even a small part of the studies devoted to new media in contemporary political arena, however, a brief review will start the theoretical part of this study.

Already in 1972, John Mathiason was discussing the power of mass communication for social and political change. He claimed that mass media, instead of giving guidelines on how to respond to social and political change, showed “the perspective of the individual and how that individual was responding to and coping with social and political changes” (Mathiason 1972, p. 64-84, p. 169). Thus, already then, mass media (with significantly lower interaction possibilities than media nowadays) were seen as a channel for bilateral communication and a tool for shaping public opinion. Also, discussion of an inevitably growing impact of media on social and political life of the state was impossible to avoid. Some of the trends of mass media impact on shaping civil society were presented in previous chapters, therefore the literature review and theories presented below will be entirely devoted to the role of online/ new media in political life of a state.

Discussing relations between Internet and democracy in general, Sara Oates raises a question whether Internet supports or, in opposite, threatens civil society (2008, p.156). In her study, she provides arguments for both ideas, starting with references to so-called “cyber-pessimists”
among scholars (2008, p.161-162), such as Robert Putnam. They believe that people while spending a lot of time in front of their computers get less involved into traditional political and civic life, while “cyber-optimistic” scholars, in opposite, emphasize contribution of the Internet communication to political engagement of citizens. According to them, online media provide more possibilities for political activity and therefore they play a positive role in building civil society.

The dispute between two approaches can hardly be solved by one argument, however, the idea provided by Nick Couldry (2012) lets us to look at the problem from a different angle. Discussing “liveness” and “reality” of media, Couldry states that through media we are connected to something relevant for us right now. “Both categories – live and real – underpin not just ritual forms, but the wider capacity of media discourse to frame social reality (...) and, connectedly, to name the contents of social reality” (2012, 42). Thus, it can be questioned that media itself and its technological development influence political activity of users in a negative or positive way. What is important is its content that shapes social reality and reflects trends that are circulating in the society, and therefore stimulates online users to act in a certain way.

At the same time, Internet media from the perspective of usability has not been neglected by scholars either. Sara Bentivegna (2006) sums up the democratic potentials of the Internet as “interactivity”, “co-presence”, “disintermediation”, reduced costs, speed and lack of boundaries (Bentivegna cited in Couldry 2012, p. 110). “We can now meet and organize politically with people we don’t know and can’t see, doing so at great speed, across local, regional and even national boundaries”, she claims.

Bentivegna’s statement is supported by Yochai Benkler (2006), whose study “The wealth of networks: how social production transforms markets and freedom” claims that structure of protests has changed significantly due to development of technologies. The new infrastructural support for “social production practices” (p. 72) creates enough of a context for short-term, interruptive political action. Especially it happens at election times when the legitimacy of the whole democratic process is at stake. The point about the election time has a crucial meaning for the current research: not only was the Parliamentary election in Russia taken as a study focus, but also two stages of analysis were accomplished around Presidential election and inauguration periods.
The new organizational possibilities provided by new media are also discussed by Andrew Chadwick (2006): “Internet enabled organizations often lack the bureaucratic structures that make rapid changes so difficult for traditional groups and movements” (p.136). The processes of planning and approval, dividing responsibilities, coordination and reporting take a lot less time and human resource intensive than earlier.

Undoubtedly, when it comes to social movements, a number of scholars refer to Manuel Castells who made a considerable contribution to the network society theory. Castells states that the real power is held by network societies which efficiently use modern communication tools in their activities. “Network society is a social structure constructed around (but not determined by) digital networks of communication”, he states, pointing out that network societies exist across national borders (Castells 2009, 18) and effectively use digital technologies, producing and spreading information themselves. He claims that the foundations of societies are social values rather than “relational power”. Also he tries to avoid mediacentrism as well as Couldry, pointing out that modern technologies are not the only factor that shapes contemporary network societies, but just one of them – among social, cultural and political issues. “Values” in their turn are not a certain ideal notion, as “whoever holds power decides what is valuable”, he states. Internet activity of social movements becomes “both its organizational form and its mode of action” (Castells 2006, p.338).

Nick Couldry criticizes Castells for “under-theorizing the long-term contexts that sustain individual action: the individual cannot simply put these together him- or herself” (Couldry 2012, p. 117). In other words, putting a lot of attention to consolidate individuals into groups and their further online activities, Castells ignores individual behavioural trends that could explain an intention of a person to be a part of network society.

2.2. Types and classifications of online social movements

Andrew Chadwick in his study “Internet and Politics” (2006), that was mentioned above, examines relationships between social movements and Internet from three main dimensions: “organisational change among traditional interest groups; new forms of transnational mobilisation; and “pure” Internet forms of direct action” (Chadwick 2006, p.114).
According to Chadwick, the first one – traditional protests (or, in other words, offline) – benefits from Internet due to wider possibilities for recruitment, fund-raising, organisational advantages, etc. Therefore, Internet becomes an additional and yet a very helpful tool for increasing efficiency of movements. For example, as he notes, already in the very beginning of 2000s, most interest groups in the United States went online via homepages, emails and newsletters. Here, Chadwick refers to Bruce Bimber, who sees strong connection between two developments within traditional interest groups – organisational change and external mobilisation (Bimber, B. 2000, Chadwick 2006, p.118).

An interesting example is provided by Chadwick, regarding Environmental Defense Fund, which gained a lot of new members after establishing its website. Via that website the Fund explained how members and supporters get benefit from being involved into environmental protecting activities, even without financial contribution. They explained how air and pesticides impact life of every individual. Only then, when those individuals realised that it was a matter of their personal concern, and not just one of the world’s discussed problems which is far away from them, - only then they got involved in the movement. By changing of organisational structure, the Fund made it an easy and efficient process to inform members about upcoming campaigns or to request for a petition signing.

Technologically, 1999-2000 are far away from 2011-2012, and the sociopolitical conflict in Russia is not the same issue as environmental defense in Western countries. But one can argue that the social and psychological difference in both discussed cases is not that big. Protesters in Russia (as could be observed from their social media posts in the previous chapter) felt personal dissatisfaction with the current political situation. And with such effective organisational tool as social media (much more effective than a website or e-mails, as in Environmental Defense Fund case), the process of their personal involvement into the process became much easier.

Diana Owen supports this idea when she touches the topic of online protests among young people. Owen puts a lot of attention on online communities created by young people which have been producing a significant number of Internet campaigns. “New styled social movements emerge from decentralized networks of previously uncoordinated groups that may be associated with a vast array of individualized concerns” (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p.35).

Transnational e-mobilisation – the second type of social moves discussed by Chadwick – has become possible, among the other factors, due to a wide usage of the Internet as well as mobile
technologies. As well as Oates predicted the increase in a level of credibility towards new media among the Russian people just a few years before the trend started, Chadwick made a prognosis about the role of mobile technologies in the future political protest: “Unlike traditional computers connected to the Internet, which are often used by solitary individuals sitting in a quiet corner, mobile technologies are deeply embedded in the context of everyday experiences” (2006, p. 128). Also, Chadwick mentions that blogging has become much easier and more available in terms of technical skills required. In the early 2000s, one had to at least have an idea of HTML\(^4\) in order to share an interesting link in their LiveJournal diary, not to speak about stand-alone website updating. With a rapid development of XML\(^5\) and other techniques, it has become possible to link one’s profiles in different social media with each other and share links on few profiles at the same time, as well as make posts in all profiles at the same time via smartphone applications.

The third type of online activity Chadwick relates to so-called “hacktivism” (Chadwick 2006, p.115) – combined “hacker” and “activism” which implies new forms of mobilisation that have become possible only via computers and Internet. More importantly, the methods that they use can be applied only to Internet. Techniques that he describes, however, might be called “old-school”: defacing, ping storms, email bombing, etc. (although they have been still widely used worldwide for various purposes). Hacktivists tend to have destructive rather than producing motivation, therefore they cannot be analysed in terms of civil society building.

McAdam and Snow (2009) frame the concept of social movements by types – crowds, riots, and revolutions, and by cause – animal rights, environmental protection, homosexuality, etc. Among tens of reasons for social movements, the authors name civil rights and governmental intrusion. According to McAdam and Snow, social movements attract public attention, because “they bring into bold relief sizeable numbers of people attempting to promote or resist social change as they act on behalf of common interests or values about which they feel strongly” (p. xviii). Giving an overview on various definitions of social movements, authors come to the conclusion, that they all include a few core elements:

1) Collective or joint action
2) Change-oriented goals

\(^4\)HyperText Markup Language – a markup language for creating webpages

\(^5\)Extensive Markup Language – a markup language encoding documents
3) Some degree of organisation
4) Some degree of temporal continuity
5) Some extratemporal collective action, or at least a mixture of extratemporal (protesting in the streets) and institutional (political lobbying) activity.

Taking into consideration those elements, McAdam and Snow give the following definition of a social movement: “collectivity acting with some degree of organisation and continuuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part” (2009 p.xviii).

Researchers also provide an overview of social movements’ classification, and first they turn to Neil Smelser’s study (1962) who defined two basic categories: norm-oriented and value-oriented social movements. Norm-oriented actions are aimed for a change of very specific and limited issues in the social system. Those could be connected, according to Smelser, to child labour law or drugs legalisation. Value-oriented movements, in opposite, fight for changes on a more fundamental level, and here he even mentions the Russian revolution in the beginning of the 20th century as an example.

Giving the final touch on shaping of the concept and categorisation of social movements, Snow and McAdam focus on their temporal continuinity. Social movements differ from one-time gathering exactly by a certain period of time in which they exist. Therefore, a single protest action that has no extension and, what is more important, no motivation for it, could not be considered social movement, according to them.

2.3. ‘New Social Movements’ framework

Although often academics mean Internet in general when speaking about online protest movements, it is important to distinguish the role of new (social) media in particular. In the research “Alternative and Activist New Media” (2011) Leah A. Lievrouw focuses mainly on them. At the same time she takes into consideration classical social theories and discussing them from a modern movements’ perspective. Since the current study tends to discover social roles of new media during the Russian protests, Lievrouw’s research will be presented in a detailed way.

First, Lievrouw explores the main sources of impact on activism in new media, and among the others, names social and political roots.

“The “new” social movements perspective contends that the ideologically driven, society-wide movements of the industrial age [...] gave way in the postindustrial, post-modern era of the
1960s to the 1980s to smaller-scale movements more focused on wide-ranging issues or concerns (...) or group identity or lifestyle (Lievrouw 2011, 42).

Turning to theoretical approach to explain the nature of social movements, Lievrouw concludes that none of the existing classical theories can be used as originally framed. First, she refers to the collective behaviour theory. By the end of the 20th century (and here he addresses to the studies of Diani, Eyerman, Neidhardt and Rucht), collective behaviour was defined as a “sudden, spontaneous, disorganised outbreak of crowd behaviour that denied “normal” social conduct (Lievrouw 2011, 43). Aldon Morris (2000, p 445 cited in Lievrouw 2011) connects new social movements with “mass excitement, enthusiasm, rumor, social contagion, and mass hysteria”.

Initially, a various number of scholars, including Robert Park, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (Lievrouw 2011), were stating that mass movements have sudden and irrational nature, that they are disorganised and have random appearance. Later, Turner and Killian (1969, p. 390), in opposite, proposed the idea that social movements could be the first stage of social reorganisation, and there is always a set of values that stands behind each movement.

Resource mobilisation theory is developed from the collective behaviour theory, and unlike the latter one, the resource mobilisation theory focuses on the “logic of costs and benefits as well as opportunities for action” (Lievrouw 2011, 45). The other significant difference between both theories is the fact that collective behaviour theory approaches the mass action as an entity, where participants are engaged to the action by the same “mass” emotions and beliefs. The resource mobilisation theory discovers how those movements organise themselves and nature of individuals’ choices for mobilisation.

The researcher points out that the RMT theory was developed in the middle of the 20th century. Therefore, a view on the role of communication channels was less significant and limited by delivering messages and ideas of the movements. Furthermore, it did not fully take into consideration a fact that new-wave movements (1960s-1990s) to a large extent were identity-based and therefore did not fully describe the role of personal commitment and individual engagement of activists.

In this regard, new social movement theory (NSM) became a logical evolvement and natural development of both CBT and RMT theories. Neither of them were able to answer two questions – “why” and “how” – at the same time. Thus, neither collective behaviour nor resource
mobilisation could explain the nature of “unconventional” forms of activism, such as environment protection movements, feminist, gay rights, etc.

As Lievrow claims, “a central tenet of NSM theory is that new social movements arose the context of larger social shifts in the late twentieth century from industrial to “postindustrial” or information society. The key difference from the previous movements is its participants: unlike in previous times, they are not representatives of the industrial working class who acts against economic inequalities, but rather they are united by the same values, interests and professions. The author provides the following characteristics of New Social Movements (2011, 48-49):

**Actors**

Participants and Constituencies - knowledge/information workers. Well-educated and creative. This statement is also supported by Robin Thompson in his study about media radicalisation. He calls them “high profile individuals” who “use social media to rally support for their causes, and combination of social media to market themselves” (2011, p. 170).

Collective identity – independence from institutional structure and categories, focus on constructing and sharing common subjectivity, worldviews, and experiences; identification with personal attributes – age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, professional background; emphasis on cultural and symbolic causes.

Participants in NSM are more likely to focus less on class division, but rather on ideas and shared worldviews. Importantly, Lievrouw states that the participants of new social movements are usually represented by better-educated, as she calls them, knowledge workers, and more precisely, they tend to be somehow connected to media, culture and information production. New media, as she concludes, provided “a platform ideally suited to the concerns with cultural codes, values, creativity, the search for identity, and meaning and personal experience that typify NSM” (Lievrouw 2011, 42).

**Meaning and symbolic production**

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6Here and further – ‘new social movement’
The characteristics of new social movements in terms of symbolics are construction and control of information, symbolic resources, representations of group interests, expertise, norms and values.

**Action**

Movements are seen as loosely affiliated, informal, anti-hierarchical networks of interpersonal relations; micromobilisation; small, diverse groups in ad hoc linkages; segmented, diffuse, decentralised, autonomous organisational forms; focus on particular, local concerns, constant flux and reorganisation.

**Everyday life**

Movement activities integrated into daily life rather intense, episodic events; action linked to lifestyle, personal issues; conflation of personal and collective concerns; action by example, prefigurative action, “prophecy”, acting by personal example. “Participants in new social movements also tend to “practice what they preach” in their everyday lifestyles”, claims Lievrouw (p. 42).

**Use of media and ICTs**

Extensive, sophisticated use of media and ICT (information and communication technology), communication and representation as principle field and for of action itself. Important argument from Couldry could be added here that one of the complex everyday media-related practices is keeping up with the news (Couldry 2012, p.54).

“Unconventional” Action Repertoires

Reliance on expressive, creative, ad hoc disruption and resistance, decentralised action; “sub-institutional”. “Extra-parliamentary” exertion of power, spontaneous action.

**Permanent, Transnational Campaigns**

Movement action extends over time and space, consistent with daily life (vs. focused on specific grievances, events, or remedies in particular times/places); continuous realignment and reorganisation within a broad field of interests and values; movements and actions as ordinary, everyday modes of change and perpetual engagement.

“Using global media and information networks, the multitude organises and disorganises rapidly and unpredictably, “swarm”-style, in response to the oppressive, totalising operations of
“Empire” – a postmodern form of global sovereignty “composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of [late capitalist] rule” (Lievrouw 2011, p. 58).

In her study, Lievrouw provides a so-called genre framework where she investigates activist art movements, new social movements and online activism within their major theme links: size, stance and agents. Sufficient arguments for all three criteria are provided, but here it is important to mention the latter case – agents. As she claims, participants of all three “genres” consider themselves and their actions as agents of change. “As interventions and actions, alternative and activist projects, activist art and new social movements alike are often perishable, short-lived responses to rapidly changing cultural contexts and meanings” (Lievrouw 2011, p. 69), she notices. This emphasizes unstable and constantly changing nature of contemporary protests and shifts in their agendas. Speaking about progress and outcome of movement, “like the communication links and traffic flows on the digital networks that support them, activist projects online organise, disorganise, and reorganise more or less continuously, with a high rate of attrition as a result”, states Lievrouw (2011, p.69).

One of the most important hallmarks of NSM compared to the other theories that focus on social movements is that it emphasizes the engagement of participants based more on shared values and identities rather than grievances and collective discontent. NSM, therefore, has become a sufficient platform for theorising a place of social media in movements. Here, Lievrouw refers to Castells idea that “…power is not a matter of programming, reprogramming, and switching among socio-technical networks” (Lievrouw 2011, 152).

Lievrouw points out that mobilisation is a fundamental notion in most relevant social theories existing nowadays, as “we can think of it as what makes a movement a movement (Lievrouw 2011, p.152). Developing the role of media in social movements, she suggests that their roles are “means for expressing and circulating activists’ interest, values, and symbolic representations of issues and for shifting popular discourse…” (Lievrouw 2011, p.156).

NSMs, media and information technologies not only provide channels for transmitting information. They actually constitute the real practical field of action where movements themselves are created, contested, and played out” (Lievrouw 2011, p.156). This, according to her, deserves most attention, as it means that media plays an active role in the process, constituting movements, and not just sending out information. It is not likely, she claims, that without getting a possibility to “interact, recognize, and articulate their shared values and goals,
form and maintain relationships (…)” (p.161), activists would be able to arrange social movements.

Lievrouw develops one more considerable role of social media during movements. Giving the example of global justice activists in Seattle who created their media production platform and technology labs, she mentions that using these tools they were mobilising protests around every significant economic summit in the next ten years. In other words, temporary social protests lead to creating permanent media sources, platforms or channels that provide relevant content and engage new participators in a long-term perspective.

One of the key concepts that Lievrouw leaves in the end of her research as a superlative in discussion of new media and social movements is mediation, which was mentioned in previous chapters. She presents a scheme that demonstrates dynamics of the process of mediation (Lievrouw 2011, p.232).

![Figure 1. New media and mediation](image)

The central part depicts constant and consistent interrelation between reconfiguration (uses of communication technology) and remediation (communicative action). Reconfiguration can be expressed in different forms, such as reinvention, rebuilding, adaptation, etc. Remediation is divided in three categories: content, interaction and relationships. By content remediation, the author means “synthesis, repackaging, augmentation, refashioning, and absorption” (Lievrouw 2011, p.232). Remediation of interaction is “imitation or modeling processes and performance”, and the most interesting point is remediation of relationships. The provided examples of it are “social cohesion or exchange, the negotiation of authority, or the cumulative advantage or “long-
tail: processes that characterize social networks, where some actors may attract more relationships or enhanced reputations than others” (Lievrouw 2011, p.232). This last point evolves into two sub-roles of social media that has been demonstrated since the protest began in 2011. The first one is, using Lievrouw’s term, social cohesion, that was not only exemplified by the help that activists where providing to each other during the active phase of social movements in Russia, but even after that. The other sub-role that will be put under analysis is enhanced reputation. It deserves attention as long as it is also a part of the discussion about self-identification of the protesters with opinion-makers.

3. Engagement of young people into social media movements

Partially, the topic of engagement of young people was discussed in previous chapters, however, it is important to answer two questions in order to give a comprehensive picture. Those questions are “who participate in social movements today?” and “what is their motivation?”.

3.1 Social portrait of online activists

Answering the first question of the two, Henry Jenkins in his discussion the notion of “convergence culture”, defines “early adopters of media cooperation” as “disproportionally white, male, middle class and college educated” (Jenkins 2006, p. 110).

Discussing the role of “who” and “what” of politics, Couldry suggests several main categories. First of all, there are “network actors” – distributed agents of political coordination that link multiple persons, groups and positions across space, without need for a physical headquarters or a bounded social membership (Couldry 2012, p. 120). He claims that new media provide brand new possibilities for “non-formal political actors” to influence political life by forming and building communities.

Secondly, there are also individual political actors: “no longer just the charismatic party or strike leader, or the authorized commentator on mainstream politics (journalists), or the silent party member or demonstrator, but the individual – without any initial store of political authority – who can suddenly acquire status a significant political actor by acting online” (Couldry 2012, p. 121). Here, he specifically emphasizes the growing role of “latent political actors” – the ones that
lead active online life yet do not realise their own impact in political processes. As an example, he refers to blogs of British doctors, teachers, army officers and representatives of the other professions, who cannot speak in public about social problems they have been facing but can only do it online.

“A socially oriented approach to media theory is concerned fundamentally with action. Media prove an entry point for understanding the organization of human action” (Couldry 2012, p.8). Referring to James Curran, Couldry states that proficiency in English increases one’s chance for “a wide readership” (Couldry 2012, p.8).

Sara Oats analyses the division of Internet users, and aside from geographical differentiations, she also presents, as she calls it, ‘digital division’ (2008, p. 164) by wealth, education, technical possibilities, age and time of adoption. Summing up all those criteria, according to Oats, the younger, the wealthier and the more educated the person is, the more actively they use Internet tools and the faster they proceed from being consumers of an Internet content to being its producers. The latter point is the most important since it provides an argument for choosing Russian megapolises (where the level of income and education is significantly higher) for geographical focus of the current study. Since urban citizens get access to web technologies faster than people in rural areas, by the time December protests happened, for example, Moscow citizens had been using Internet already long enough to feel confident to actively use social media in content creating, rather than just passively observing the virtual protest.

3.2. Motivation of individuals for being a part of social movements

Attracting the youth to the political processes in the country has been a complicated task due to generally indifferent attitude of the young people towards political parties (Dennis, Owen, 1997). However, alongside with spreading of political news and wider usage of election tools via Internet, the tendency of growth in their interest to participate in the political life has become more obvious in the past decade. Diana Owen refers to a research of Pew Research Center regarding the elections in 2004 which focuses on 18- to 29-year-old voters. One of the first trends in that campaign mentioned by Owen is the fact that young voters were not only using Internet for searching information about the campaign, but also using it as a platform to express their opinions and get feedback (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p. 32). More precise ‘factors of participation’ were presented in the Pew Research Center election study using an
ordinary least square regression analysis. The research offers seven different types of online election activities (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p.32) demonstrated by young voters:

1. Participating in online discussions about the ongoing elections
2. Registering opinions on parties’ websites
3. Getting information about voting records
4. Finding out when and where they vote
5. Emailing support or opposition to a candidate
6. Contributing money
7. Looking for issue information

All the participants of the study were categorized by age, gender, race and political preferences. The study revealed that the Internet and the information young people were getting from reading online source became a significant factor for them in their decision making process. According to the study results, 54 per cent of all the voters were influenced by the materials they had read online. The motivation for going online for the majority of the young people was the need of reading information that was impossible to get by watching TV or reading newspapers. Interestingly, younger cohorts demonstrated significantly higher engagement in online activities, connected to the election, than the older ones. According to the research, age was a “statistically significant determinant of Internet influence on vote choice as described in bivariate analysis”.

Diana Owen in her book “The Internet and youth civic engagement in the United States” introduces a development of young people’s interest in political life of the US. In the very beginning of the research she provides a statement that “youth are less likely to register to vote and turn out to vote in elections than older people” (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p. 20). She explains that young people in general show less interest in offline political activities, such as meetings and campaign arrangements, than their parents in general. Important to mention, that by ‘young people’ Owen means those who have not achieved the age of 35 (this cohort is also widely called “Generations Y” or “Millenial Generation”) or, in other words were born between the end of the 1970s and the early 2000s). Her categorisation is supported by a recent research of a monitoring company Pingdom. It demonstrates that more than a half of all Internet users (51%) in the US are people 25-44 years old (ToWave, 2011).

The research by Pew Research Center, as well as Owen’s findings, undoubtedly provides a ground for the further studies on the online youth engagement in social and political issues of their countries. However, only behaviour and demographic characteristics of the young people in the United States were analysed in that study. As it was discussed in previous sections, following
elections online and participation in social movements are different sides of the same coin – interest in building and maintaining civil society. However, social movements are usually connected with a certain conflict, and therefore the reasons for youth engagement in rallies and protests have to be discussed more comprehensively.

In the chapter called “Getting People on the Street” Lievrouw analyzes the concept of mediated mobilization, which she calls the fourth genre of alternative/activist media. Importantly, she claims that one of the key ideas of mediated mobilisation is ‘the promotion of radical and participatory democracy’. Participatory democracy she defines as “a widespread, direct involvement of citizens in both political processes and governance” (Lievrouw 2011, p. 149).

In her attempts to explain individual’s motivation for engagement in movements, Lievrouw again turns to resource mobilization theory that was discussed in the previous chapter. From the perspective of RMT, movements can be described in a following way:

“...rational, collective efforts in which participants act deliberately and strategically to articulate grievances, identify and gather material and cultural resources, organize hierarchically, and employ tactics that will achieve their goals, usually through established institutional channels rather than by the disruption and overthrow of those channels”. (Lievrouw 2011, 152).

Sara Oates also suggests reasons for Internet users to be engaged into political life (2008, p. 168), and the first one is a possibility to get more information on “hot” topics at a low cost. In other words, it is not just the different angle of media coverage, but also the better and the easier access to that information that attracts young people. Then she mentions an ability of users to respond to current events and to post their ideas and reflections online and share it with the others. Finally, as well as the other scholars mentioned above, she states that Internet provides an opportunity to mobilise Internet users and organise events at certain occasions.

Another important point concerns the role of social media in protest engagement: previously, they served as an additional (to mainstream media) source of information, but nowadays, more and more people are “turning exclusively to new media for news and information. Innovation promotes greater public accessibility to media outlets that accommodate a broader spectrum of voices – including youth” (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p.23). Therefore, new media becomes mainstream media for those young Internet users. Credibility that has been given to new media, according to Owen is impressive – 80 per cent of people using online news sources
consider them trustworthy and, more than that, even more reliable than mainstream media (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p. 24).

Generally, in recent years, political activity of young people – worldwide – has grown mostly due to the development and expansion of web technologies, according to Owen. “The Internet has become a conduit for significant youth political activation, as desperate groups organise protest movements online in conjunction with other new media formats, such as talk radio and low-power FM radio” (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p.21).

With transformation of political activism that goes online, young people become leaders of protests, managing movements via their mobile phones and netbooks, claims Owen. And what is also important, this kind of mobilisation goes far beyond national borders and can attract many people around the world to participate in the certain actions, concludes Owen.

Furthermore, she underlines that limitless capacities of the ICT provide a solid platform for amateur news production, and the big part of citizen journalists are exactly young people, as “they have developed technical skills, accept new media channels as legitimate, and perceive online journalism as a mechanism for bypassing roadblocks to entry into mainstream media establishments” (Gibson, K., Owen D., Oates S. 2006, p.24).

This idea is developed by Couldry: “When political need exists (creating new demands for information, coordination, problem solving and mobilization), then out of media-related practice may emerge not just new sources of news and mobilization, but a new type of media user who demands comment and information from a social pool excising far beyond institutions” (2012, p. 131).

Turning from media-centered approach to more social-focused view, Mark Granovetter (1973, p. 1422), investigating the reasons for an individual to get engaged with a social action of a certain character (protest or strike), argues that before being involved in these movements, a person estimates their own risk of participation, seeing many references to threshold theory. “In brutally simple terms, threshold theory recognises many instances of different action involving “you first” and “safety in numbers” scenarios” (Granovetter cited in Chadwick 2006, p.140). Therefore, those individuals, who have significantly high threshold, most likely participate in a social movement only if their own risk or possibility of negative consequences is relatively low. Internet, as scholars claim (Rheingold 2002, p. 176), can reduce threshold effects. An
explanation for that will be that Internet is a rapid and efficient channel of communication and mobilisation, and if an individual informs the others about his or her plans to get involved into some action, he might get a support from his online friends and readers and engage even more people into the action. This will lead to easier achievement of safety numbers.

Another approach to the reasons for being involved into group activities is provided by Mancur Olson (1965). It implies a preliminary assessment by individuals of their benefits, before they become a member of the group. He provides an example of factory employees: a small group of them are union members and is trying to get a wage rise for all the employees, including themselves. The rise is given to all the workers regardless their membership, so those who do not participate in the activities and still get a benefit from the actions of others, simply do not have a motivation to spend their time and money (on membership). In this case the individual also does not see a difference in potential success of the collective action with or without their personal participation, as there will always be more active and motivated people who are willing to take all responsibilities and concerns on themselves.

In their research “Social Networks and Social Movements: a Microstructural Approach to Different Recruitment”, Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson (1992) raise a question “Why are some people rather than others recruited into particular social movement organizations?”. They come to a conclusion, that there are two important conditions for the most effective engagement into social movements: 1) links to one or more movement members through preexisting or emergent interpersonal tie; and 2) the absence of countervailing networks. In other words, it is more likely that an individual joins a movement if someone from his environment is already involved in it. At the same time, a potential member of a movement is usually does not identify themselves with ideas and values, oppositional to the movement.

Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen in their study “Specifying the Relationship Between Social Ties and Activism” (1993) discuss the reasons of decisions to participate or not to participate in the social movements, emphasising four limiting conditions: (1) the occurrence of a specific recruiting attempt, (2) the conceptualisation of a tentative linkage between movement participation and identity, (3) support for that linkage from persons who normally serve to sustain the identity in question, and (4) the absence of strong opposition from others on whom other salient identities depend. (McAdam, Paulsen 1993, p.647).
W. Lance Bennett, a researcher who has been focusing on the connection between civil society and digital media in his book “Civil Life Online” (2008) points out that recently, young people have “demonstrated interest in making contributions to society” (Bennett 2008, p.1). Young people, according to him are those who are between fifteen and twenty five. He analyses the youth engagement concept within two contradictive paradigms – the engaged youth paradigm and the disengaged youth paradigm. The first one is based on the fact that the social identity that has been changing rapidly within the last years resulted a growing importance of online activity: “this paradigm emphasizes the empowerment of youth as expressive individuals and symbolically frees young people to make their own creative choices” (Bennett 2008, p.3). On the contrary, the disengaged youth paradigm assumes that increase in more independent, autonomous forms of opinion expressions results with occasional online protest. At the same time, the factual connection to the government, as well as civic involvement, is declining. He provides engagement patterns of young citizens and among them are:

1. Participation in civil society, mostly local
2. Social trust
3. News consumption/ Interest to online content
4. Knowledge about the government
5. Political participation
6. Efficacy/trust in institutions
7. New media

Basing on that, Bennett provides two scenarios of the development of youth engagement in online politics, and according to him, in case there is no bridge built between two paradigms, the youth will be disconnected from the conventional politics.

The second scenario seems to be more optimistic, as Bennett supposes that with convergence of technologies and political practices, political experience will be integrated in the educational system, and not only to classrooms, but also to youth programs, elections – to show young people “how their concerns can gain public voice within the conventional arenas of power and decision making” (Bennett 2008, p. 21).

3.3. Engagement potential of social media in Russia
Despite the fact that the research “Introduction to Media and Politics” by Sarah Oates (2008) was published before Russian protests of 2011-2013, it gives a clear view of the special place of the Internet in conflicts between governments and citizens. She puts fairly big attention to the topic of Internet protests in Russia, mentioning that mainstream media have been under governmental control and therefore cannot be considered as a source of objective information. Interestingly, back then, in 2008, before the protests of 2011-2013 happened, Oats wrote: “Theoretically, the Internet could serve as the medium for those who oppose Putin’s monopoly… The challenge is in gaining the attention and trust of the audience” (Oats 2008, p. 180). Her forecast appeared to be very precise: before 2011, protest movements in Russia involved significantly fewer people and were more segmented (“Dissenter’s March”, “Strategy-31”, pickets for support of political prisoners, etc.). The demonstrations of the late 2011 attracted those citizens who had not any discernable political preferences and had not been demonstrating any interest in the political life of the country\(^7\). Therefore, one can assume that during the described events, Internet contributed to a large extent in gaining the audience’s attention to the frauds during Parliamentary elections.

As one of the challenges for the arrangement of effective social movements and campaigns in Russia, Oates mentions relatively low access to the Internet of Russians (2008, p. 180). However, as it was already mentioned in the chapter about the Russian mediasphere, the number of social media users had significantly increased by the time of the protests, compared to previous years. Also, according to Internet World Stats’ report, Russia took the 9\(^{th}\) position in the World Internet penetration list by the end of 2011. Yet, the level of Internet penetration in Russia is relatively low in terms of proportions; therefore the argument of Oates is relevant even in the year of 2013.

The other challenge described by Sara Oates (and that one is a follow-up to her previous statement) is that the level of trust to online media is considerably lower compared to the trust towards mainstream media. At the same time she is repeatedly mentioning the “systematic repression of major media outlets”, and the combination of these two factors results in the fact that many people get “filtered” information via traditional media channels.

Also, claims Oates, “there is relatively little evidence of systematic government control of the Internet in Russia and Ukraine, although there remain general worries about pressures on highly visible websites” (2008 p. 183). Indeed, the first widely discussed law on this regard was taken

\(^{7}\)This point is supported by studies and discussed in further chapters.
by Duma in July 2012. The new law seeks to control sites containing paedophilia, promoting drugs or advising on suicide, but was at the same time considered with the large number of human rights activists as a significant step towards Internet censorship (Euronews 2012).

In their research “Russian Politics and the Internet in 2012” (2012), which will be also applied in the study analysis, Ulrik Franke and Carolina Vendil Pallin explore the way that the Internet influenced the political situation in Russia in 2011/2012. They state that the political role of the Internet in Russia should not be exaggerated, as long as it is mostly used for entertainment8 (p. 39). Giving overview on different political roles of the Internet, they discuss it through the Russian perspective.

1. Effects on the transaction costs of collective action. This point was already discussed above and supported by the majority of scholars that study social movements on the Internet. Franke and Pallin notify here, that this function of the Internet eliminates the necessity of the central organisation and considerable resources for mobilisation.

2. Sorting effects, or homophily. Here, the researches claim that Internet impact not only the way we interact, but also which individuals we communicate with. As they state, earlier it was harder for one to find those who share the same interests with them. Now, there are many more people we can communicate with, but what is also important is that searching technologies that help us to find those that we want to interact with, has improved.

3. Effects on preference falsification, or the tendency to conceal someone’s preferences in social settings. Individuals often hide their real political views in order to avoid a conflict. “In an authoritarian state, the regime may be widely loathed, yet everyone puts on a smile for everyone else for fear of the consequences of revealing their true preferences” (p. 40). If Internet in these kinds of societies can serve as an arena for revealing

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8 More information about behavioural patterns of the Russian users are presented in the analytical part of the study, as well as by surveys provided in the annex.
preferences without dangerous consequences, Franke and Pallin say, it may seriously impact the general view on the support of the government.

These three roles, according to the researchers, can be definitely seen in the contemporary Russian political sphere. Internet has become a platform for certain political activities, and to a large extent because of the state control of other information sources.

They provide three more perspectives on roles of Internet in Russian politics:

4. The visibility concept, presented by John B. Thompson (1995) concerns the relations between politics and television, which has been recently developed applied to the Internet by the other scholars (Silverstone, R. 2007, Dahlgren, P. 2009). The logic of visibility, notice the authors, might be a threat for governments, as they have been more and more scrutinized by citizens. At the same time, it could be an opportunity for those who are in power to shape their political image by, for example, discrediting opposition parties.

5. The interactivity factor, that has also been presented in the other scholars’ studies above and that emphasises shifting from one-way communication (“from the rulers to the ruled”) to two-way communication. This change provides a solid platform for criticism and citizen journalism, and the last factor in its turn means that mainstream media face the necessity to revise their strategies.

6. Eventually, the Internet, according to Franke and Pallin, is able “to change the meaning of politics as such” (p. 41). Here, they turn to social media which revise borders between private and public spheres. Political discourse, as they mention, can be influenced by social media behaviours: “likes”, demonstration of sympathy or discontent with certain actions of the government. As an example, the authors discuss the ban on ‘homosexual propaganda’.

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9 By the time Franke and Pallin finished their research, the law was under consideration, and by the rime the current research was finished, the law was approved by the President on the 30th of June 2013.
In their conclusions, Franke and Pallin state that it is methodologically problematic to examine interrelation between the Internet and the politics in Russia. The reason for that is, first of all, the big number of connections to other patterns of change, such as social, political, economic and technological (p. 66). That is why, they say it is difficult to predicate that the Internet indeed play a role in the protests or that they would happen anyway, or whether those movements became a result of the growing middle class in Russia.

However, say Franke and Pallin, there are two significant reasons why Internet impact on the Russian should not be underestimated. On the first place, there are a number of ‘plausible mechanisms’ (p. 66) of the Internet impact, that have been discussed by a number of scholars and that can provide ‘plausible explanations’ of certain phenomena observed in Russia.

Secondly, they put their attention on a feedback from the authorities. By the latest actions of the Russian government, one can conclude that its representatives believe that the Internet can indeed play a considerable political role. Here, they refer to ‘the black list law’\textsuperscript{10} mentioned above, the criminal libel law\textsuperscript{11}, the Civil Code and the Penal Code that are used to limit unwanted contents on the Internet; and other attempts that the Russian government is making to gain control over the Internet users.

\textsuperscript{10} A database of websites and Internet pages containing content that is forbidden by the Russian law.

\textsuperscript{11} The law that was taken in July 2012 that set out new restrictions on the rights for free expression, assembly, and association
4. Social media as one of channels for political marketing

A sufficient number of academic views presented above (Vartanova, Lilleker, Walzer) analyse civil society and political processes as a market place. These ideas lead to the conclusion that the role of social media in movements cannot be only analysed from the perspective of those who are mobilised, but also of those who mobilise.

There is certainly a big part of people who get involved into one-time action in the series of social movements within one country (and according to the statistics which will be provided in the further chapters, the majority of Russians who participated in the December protests, lost their interest in protest activity in 2012, and part of them got involved again in 2013). But at the same time, there are a significant number of new media users who were structurally working on arrangement of protest events (and many of them continue doing that in the moment the research is being performed).

This phenomenon corresponds to the theory of political marketing which is considered to be relatively new in the field of social and political science. Before the definition of the term itself is provided, as well as the scientific framework is described, it is important to mention that in this research the notion of political marketing has no negative or positive connotation.

The term ‘political marketing’ is often discussed in terms of “increased ‘marketisation’ and ‘professionalization’ of politics” (Johansen 2012, p.3). The new stakeholders of communication between authorities and electorate are so-called ‘spin-doctors’, or, as they are also called, ‘external political consultants’, and their participation in political processes leads to a decrease of the significance of volunteers, as it is observed by the number of scholars (Sabato 1981; Bennett 1992; Bowler, Donovan 1996). At the same time, as it is claimed by researchers within influential marketing (Lazarsfeld, Berelson 1944, Downs 1957), all the stakeholders of the political conflict should be considered engaged in marketing, regardless of whether they act on commercial or non-commercial basis. Margaret Scammell (1999, p.719) claims that political marketing “changes the relationships between leaders, parties and voters. It has consequences for democratic practice and citizen engagement”.

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Bruce Newman suggests the following definition of marketing: it is “the process by which companies select customers, analyse their needs, and then develop product innovations, advertising, pricing, and distribution strategies on the basis of this information” (Newman B 1999, p.3). Speaking about its implication in politics, Newman marks that it focuses on the first plays on needs of voters and citizens. The promoted product is a complex of politician’s image and his publically presented ideology (or, as Newman calls it, platform). This product has to be delivered and presented to appropriate audiences. Already then, in 1999 predicts the deep penetration of Internet technologies in political life of individuals and their online practices (for example, voting online). Also, he states that these tendencies proclaim development of democracy in a state.

In her political marketing research, Johansen uses the basic definition of democracy – democracy that declares government “of, for and by the people” (p. 54). However, she points out that democracy itself is not a state variable and it has to be constantly adapted to changing world, to strengthen in order to face new challenges. “Democracy is a muscle – it needs to be exercised in order not to be feeble or worst case, dysfunctional” (Johansen 2012, p.54).

Yet again, one of the most controversial questions of this research is that Russian governmental system (as it was discussed in previous chapters) – ten years ago, in December 2011, or nowadays – do not correspond to this portrait of democracy. Franke and Pallin (2012)? For example, call the Russian political system (with the reference to the previous studies and wide-spread onions among scholars and political analysts) “controlled democracy, money autocracy, hybrid regime and virtual politics” (p. 11).

However, political marketing theory can by all means be used for the analysis of the performance of social media activists, as well as that of governmental authorities, for the following reasons. First of all, it would be idealistic to say that the ‘classic’ version of democracy does exist in any state of the contemporary world, as long as the model is always adapted to a certain society with a certain cultural and historic background. Russia is often claimed to be behind Western states in providing rights and freedoms of man and citizen. Yet, protesters of the winter 2011, according to their own messages presented in the chapter of study background, named democratic values as their key point for concern. Moreover, the Russian government has been constantly claiming that the country is following the line of democracy. One of the enormous numbers of examples for that is the article ‘Democracy and Quality of the State’ in Kommersant newspaper from 2012, where Vladimir Putin discussed evolution of democratic institutions in Russia: “Sustainable
development of the society is impossible without a capable state. Genuine democracy is an essential condition for building a state that focuses on serving interests of the society” (Putin 2012). The article was released as an answer to the protests of the previous winter. “Political competition”, claims Putin, “is a nerve of democracy and its driving force”. Summarising the article, the newly (by then) elected President of the Russian Federation shows engagement to the idea of democracy and points out necessity of creating new mechanisms of citizens’ involvement in the political processes, putting an emphasis on Internet as a tool of political activity of individuals. This research does not aim to discuss and analyse the practical implication of these statements, but only the positioning of the government in media. And since it has been publically expressing the willingness for sharing democratic values on the daily basis, one can now turn to deeper overview of political marketing theory as a relevant one for this study.

Johansen presents two core frameworks of political marketing – the managerial perspective and the relational perspective. The managerial perspective, as she claims, can be compared to a worldview of company manager based on the potential profits. This framework evolved from the attempt to connect economic theory and practical business which seemed to be isolated by a number of scholars in the 1950’s (Dean 1951, cited in Johansen 2012). The consumer in this approach is represented as a ‘rational self-interested utility seeker’. One of the front features of managerial perspective is that the ‘companies’ (parties, governmental authorities or opposition leaders, if one judges from the political perspective) act aggressively (‘dog-eat-dog’ environment), trying to set leadership in providing satisfaction of customers’ needs (Ingebrigsten and Petterson 1979, cited in Johansen 2012, p. 63).

One of the assumptions of the current study, that evolved from the theoretical research and collecting data process, is that civil society turned to be exactly that ‘customer need’. That ‘need’ was promoted in an efficient way via social media.

As Johansen states, one of the marketing tasks is not only to ‘segment the market accordingly, take the product to locations where the consumer is willing to purchase it”, but also to “promote it through various advertising and sales activities” (Halbert 1965 and Doyle 1998 cited in Johansen 2012, p. 63).

Sheth and Gardner (1988, p. 190) present eight key principles of managerial perspective, summarising main theoretical approaches. Among them, they mention independent actors, competition and conflicts and focus on mass communication.
The main criticism of managerial perspective focuses on the fact that when the approach is used for analysis of some other fields than consumer goods, it might be valid only to some certain extent, and ‘sometimes even destructive as [theories] fail to recognize the unique features of service marketing and industrial marketing’ (Gummesson 1987, p.10). In other words, this approach lacks differentiation between certain areas of marketing implication.

As an alternative to the managerial perspective, in the 1970s – early 1980s the concept of the relational perspective was developed. The key difference from the managerial perspective here is that the approach itself is broader and taking into consideration the “long-term processes of ongoing interaction […] and all the company’s stakeholder groups – both internal and external” (Johansen 2012, p.70). The focus shifted from analysing individual organizations to studying networks (Mattson 1997; Håkansson and Shehota 2000, Gadde Huemer 2003 cited in Johansen 2012). Consumers in the relational marketing remain rational in their behaviour, but as Johansen claims, this rationality leaves more space for emotions and individual’s engagement: “The opportunity to participate in the production processes may in some instances provide utility itself” (Liljander and Strandvik 1997; Grönroos 2000, cited in Johansen 2012, p.75).

Also, a distinctive feature of the relational perspective is the mutual cooperation that increases the efficiency and value of the marketing activities. Relational political marketing follows certain principles:

- Simultaneous Production and Consumption
- Interaction and Long-term Relationships
- Independent Actors and Networks
- Collaboration and Competition
- Cross-Functional View of the Organisation
- Focus of Customer Retention + Acquisition
- Focus on Product as Both Process and Outcome (Value Creation through customer Participation)
- Focus on Dialogue + Planned Communication.

The main emphasis is made on retention of the customer rather than aggressively getting a new one.

Both approaches, however, tend to get the same result in a short-run: to gain as big audience as possible. Greg Simons (2012) in his research about Vladimir Putin’s political image between 2000 and 2012 claims that “the hook for the communicator is to create something that is attention grabbing, and then draws the audience in to a relationship with the messenger”. This
statement, undoubtedly, is relevant for the both frameworks, so one of the tasks of this study is to understand what that ‘hook’ was for the Russian protesters in December 2011.

5. Summary: basis for empirical research

Generalising approaches to civil society, one can conclude that it is not only certain freedoms provided and protected by the state, but also intention of citizens, of each and every individual, to contribute to the building and maintaining “good life”, as Walzer puts it. Reciprocity is a cornerstone for citizens’ activity. Ideally, civil society has to consider interest of every member, and the fundamental for this is rule of law.

Civil society is impossible without social and political trust, two notions that are not the same constructs, but are strongly connected to each other. Therefore, the role of social networks and groups (families, associations, institutions, etc) and collaboration between them is crucial for healthy and functional civil society. Trust, however, is connected to a certain risk, and this risk is normally well thought through when taking decision in social movement participation. Social trust is more likely to be demonstrated by more successful members of civil society.

According to Bennett, civil society could be endangered by shifting of media to infotainment format, as well as improving life-quality of individuals.

Russia in its current condition demonstrates the features of media-centered societies, where interpersonal contacts between politicians and citizens are low due to the size of the country, and therefore media becomes the main channel of communication. In media-centered societies, personal charisma of political leaders is essential for commanding loyalty of citizens.

Mediatisation theory puts media on a dominating position in the process of political processes framing and shaping, as they play the main role in the dialogue between government and citizens. One of the signs of mediatisation of the state is existence of e-democracy – technological embodiment of the idea of public sphere as an open dialogue of society members which belong to a certain social strata.

The mediasphere in Russia has significantly changed in the last decades, and these changes are strongly connected to political changes in the state, both from structural perspective and content.
The role of social media is growing and is considered to be the main public stage for the opposition. According to Sara Oates, they have a good chance to create a sufficient preponderance of the current regime, however, there are serious challenges for that, connected to low Internet penetration and increasing censorship.

Social movements are often spontaneous, but at the same time continuous and are always focused on a certain important issue. After some time, this issue can be changed and developed, or the accents can be shifted towards the other topic.

Social movements has been definitely influenced by developing online technologies (and social media in particular) in many ways: organisation becomes a faster and easier process, individuals get many more ways to express their views on the political situation and, most importantly, get the opportunity to be heard.

Online activists organise and reorganise themselves in protest movements, with a high rate of attrition as an outcome, according to Lievrouw. New social movements’ participants are more likely to be young educated people (up to 35) who effectively use ICT and speak foreign languages. They tend to have little trust in mainstream media and often use social media as an information source. New media activists show strong interests in civil society and practice its norms and values in their everyday lives.

The process of their engagement in social movements is complex and depends on several factors. Among of them are a condition of being somehow connected to current participants before joining movement; seeing benefits in getting involved, assessing their risks of participation as significantly low and identification of themselves with interests and values of the other members.

A number of scholars cited in the research see a connection between civil society as a market place, and citizens as consumers. The two frameworks of political marketing – managerial and relational – are presented in the current study, which define customer’s behaviour in a different way and explain relationship between company (political unit), customer (citizens) and product (idea/value).

The theoretical background helps to model the study analysis in various ways. First of all, it preliminarily determines the target group of the study. Then, it provides the idea of civil state and its principles which will help to relate them to the ideas expressed by the target group in
December, 2011. Furthermore, some of the roles of social media in movements are presented, will be a platform for the analysis, as well as behavioural trends of social media users described by scholars.

Finally, the discussion of the results will be made from the perspective of the main theories presented in this chapter.
III. Methodology of the study

1. Overview

The guidelines for the study are taken from the “Researching Communications” guide by Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock (1999). The study combines three main methods:

- Content analysis of primary and secondary sources – method that applies textual (in this case) analysis of communication;
- Survey methodology. Survey is data accumulation from individual units from population using questionnaire. For this research, a survey was arranged. Also, a number of surveys provided by sociological organizations are presented and analysed;
- Interviews – qualitative research performed by verbal questioning;

The research is designed to provide answers to the subquestions, that were presented in the introduction:

1) *What does ‘civil society’ as an idea imply and how do its values and principles correlate with the protest of social media users in 2011?*

The answer for the first part of the question is provided in the theoretical part, and the further analysis aims to provide and answer to the second part of the question. All three methods mentioned above will be used.

2) *What was the demographic and socio-cultural portrait of protesters?*

The analysis here will be based on several reports by sociological research organisations and independent agencies. The choice of resource is explained below.

3) *In terms of the Russian Federation as a state, how considerable was social media penetration by the time the protests were happening?*

This question also needs statistic data from research institutions, focusing on Internet penetration. Both data from Russian research organizations and foreign agencies are provided

4) *What behaviour patterns in their social media activity, regarding the protest, did they demonstrate?*

Certain types of online activities are presented in the study background. Also, several reports from the researchers of sociological institutions are provided. They contain necessary data for analysis, that is supported and supplemented by the survey and the interviews conducted by the researcher.

5) *What was the connection between discussions about raising civil society and motivation of social media users to participate in demonstrations?*

Data collection was conducted in four main stages:
- Compilation of a detailed course of the events, basing on secondary sources – mainstream media and blogs/social media posts. The choice of certain sources is substantiated in the next section. The results are provided in the chapter “Study background”;
- Picking relevant surveys and sociological researches. Criteria of relevance: 1) they were conducted in December 2011 and/or 2) they are assumed to partially provide answers to one or several subquestions;
- Primary data collection, stage 1: Conducting own survey that covers issues that are important for the research;
- Primary data collection, stage 2: Conducting face-to-face interviews with several participants of the December protests.
2. Representativeness, authenticity and credibility of the sources

In this section, only secondary data sources are analysed. The survey and the interviews that the researcher conducted herself will be discussed in the next sections.

Deacon, et al. suggest three main issues that have to be considered in the process of choosing resources of data collections (p.26):

1) **Representativeness**, or how typical the analysed cases are, and in case they are not, the explanation for that has to be provided;
2) **Authenticity**, which demands proof that the information is genuine;
3) **Credibility**, or whether the source is competent and information is accurate and trustworthy.

Therefore, secondary sources (texts provided in the study background and sociological researches) have to be checked for correspondence to these three rules.

Data for discourse analysis

Authors’ methodology of data sampling is based on decisions in four areas:

*When?* – a researcher has to define the exact time period for the study. As long as this research is focused specifically on social media analysis during the December protests in Russia, the time frame was easy to decide on. Thus, the time frame is limited by the period between the 4th of December 2011 and the 24th of December 2011. There are also references to online articles which were published later on, but those are supplementary sources that are needed to support certain arguments. Example for this could be a reference to the article published in 2012, where Vladimir Putin speaks about the Russian Federation as a democratic state.

*Where?* – a researcher should be aware of social and cultural geography when collecting their data. As it was explained in the introduction, the study is mainly Moscow-focused. This factor concerns both media outlets (mostly federal ones are taken, with main editorials located in the capital), and social media users who are quoted in the research background chapter (posts of users from Moscow are mentioned most often).

*Who?* – The authors emphasize that this issue is to a large extent relevant to historical research. Undoubtedly, there were thousands of media users who were posting on the topic during the whole December, and it is technically and methodologically impossible to conduct analysis that would consider all of them. Therefore, when it comes to defining
whose social media activities that have to be taken into consideration, two criteria are important. First, there are ratings of public figures (not only those who are related to politics). These people gained most attention and support during the movement period, and some of their posts regarding topics are presented in the study. The other criterion is choosing media users, whose tweets and Facebook posts were read by a large number of people. Evidence for that would be reference to their accounts in mainstream media (Kommersant, Forbes, BBC, etc.), or the significant number of “likes” and sharings. Significance in this case is not supported by quantitative analysis, but the researcher correlated the number of social media users registered for the event to the approximate number of readers of the certain post. For example, 30 000 people confirmed their willingness to come to Bolotnaya square on the 10th of December on Facebook event page. The post of LJ user lady_spring “To all the demonstrators” collected 2943 comments directly under the post. Also, at least several hundred times it was shared on Facebook (including the event page mentioned above where it gathered several thousands of “likes” and hundreds of comments), VK and different websites. It means that a large proportion of those who confirmed their participation in the event, with high probability read her post. This fact reasons using popular posts for discourse analysis.

What? – Deacon, et al. put attention on criteria of representativeness that might be different because of differences in researchers’ approach to the data collection. In the process of picking relevant information from mainstream media that was needed for building sufficient and comprehensive chronology of the events, two criteria were considered. First, if the sources were Russian, they had to be well-known officially registered mass media outlets (according the Russian law “About Mass Media”), for example, Lenta.Ru, RIA Novosti, etc. Otherwise, the sources must be presented by famous international news agencies and online newspapers (The Telegraph, BBC, Forbes, etc.).

Authenticity of all data sources mentioned above does not need to be questioned, first of all, because there is no issue of big historical remoteness. All the data – both social media posts and online articles – are still available on the Internet and is of a genuine character.

Credibility is also not a challenging point for this study: their research either deals with “first-hand” texts (Deacon, et al. 1999, p. 29) – social media posts, or with trustworthy secondary sources.
3. Opinion polls, surveys and sociological research

Analysing reports of sociological research organisations, one can again turn to Deacon et.al. “four-decision” model:

When? – opinion polls about participation of citizens in the movement, ratings of political leaders and public activists, and surveys that show demographic portrait of protesters were published in December 2011. The poll representing people’s trust towards mainstream and new media was conducted in February 2012. This one is used for the current study, since no relevant survey on that matter, performed by a trustworthy institute, was published in December. Reports on Internet penetration are usually made periodically and do not depend on political situation in the country. The studies on Internet penetration in Russia concern the period of 2011/2012.

Where? – one of the surveys by Levada Center illustrates a portrait of an average protester, provides rating of public figures and types of sources that were informing people about the movement. It was made during one of the protest events in Moscow, which makes it relevant both by content and circumstances of data collection. The survey that analyses trust of the population towards different types of media was of all-Russian character. Wide geography of the collected data helps to show whether the role of social media as news provider was as significant in the whole country, as it seemed to be in million cities.

Who? – Levada Center's research on the 24th of December only deals with those respondents who attended the protest event that day. According to the official introduction to the report, 791 respondents in total were asked survey questions. No information about selection criteria is provided. However, the fact that the respondents were people who were not only active online, but also joined the offline movement, is essential for the study.

The survey about trust to media was conducted via representative sampling from urban and rural population among 1600 people of the age 18 and older from 130 localities in 45 regions of the country.

What? – Levada Center, according to Franke and Pallin (2012, p. 10) is considered to be one of the most reliable sources of sociological information in Russia, as it demonstrates
“good methodology and independence”. They emphasize that *Levada Center* is represented in 65 subjects of the country and therefore covers 80 per cent of the population. The Foundation of Public Opinion, according to the authors, is less trustworthy, but as long as it regularly publishes reports on Internet penetration, they also included that data in their research.

The research of Franke and Pallin is used as a secondary source as well. It provides a sufficient summary of data about impact of the Internet on the Russian politics in 2011/2012, focusing, among other issues, on society and civil society.
4. Online survey for collecting supplementary data

All the secondary sources presented above, as well as the study of Franke and Pallin, do not put social media on a special place but discuss it just as a part of Internet. Since the current research focuses on social media, it was decided to conduct an additional survey. Its main purpose is to show certain behavioural trends in social media activity of the respondents. On the first place, it was necessary to find out whether the respondents got to know about frauds and protest events in social media or somewhere else. Then, their engagement in the political situation in general was of interest (also, before the December protests). Finally, it was important to know whether they were producers of relevant social media content or just its consumers.

4.1. Designing questionnaire

Deacon et.al. define a survey as a *self-completion questionnaire*, which is a highly structured method. This is a time- and cost-efficient method that is even easier to use now, when there are various online tools for that. Its main advantage is that the questions are easy to summarise and analyse. However, the main drawback is limited data, as long as the researcher does not get a chance to ask a certain individual more on a certain topic if needed.

It was decided to arrange the survey just three days before the Presidential election on the 4th of March. This decision was based on the assumption that those social media users, who showed discontent with the government in December, would be excited about possible changes after Presidential elections. Undoubtedly, an individual cannot feel the same feelings even towards similar events after two months. However, the discussions on the political situation in social media were again at their heights at the end of February-in the beginning of March, so that period was chosen for the next stage of the data collection.

The high level of excitement in social media also made it clear that the survey should be as short and as concise as possible. Social media users were actively following the news, discussing upcoming elections and registration as election observers. That meant that they most likely would not spend much time on a long questionnaire, so it was decided to have a 10-question survey.

Deacon et.al. divide questions (both for surveys and interviews) in four main categories: *behaviour*, *believes*, *attitudes* and *attributes*, so the questions used in the survey will be presented through this categorisation.
Attributes—questions aim to provide some background information about respondents. Due to limitation in survey length, it was decided to ask only about their age. Gender or ethnicity of respondents was not as important as their age, as it could provide more information about how “young” the social media protest was in Russia. Therefore, the first question looked like that:

1. Your age: [empty field]

This question was of an open-response format, so the respondents could write their age themselves. It was made this way because no quantitative analysis was planned to be done basing on collected data, so it was important just to see the mode (the most frequent value).

The next category of questions is behaviour. These are questions about daily routine and habits of respondents, also they may refer to their actions in the past. Several questions from the survey could be related to this category.

2. Which social media do you have accounts on? (it is possible to choose several options)

This is a closed-response question which is subcategorized by the authors as “checklist”. Respondents got to choose between several popular social media: Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, Liveinternet and Livejournal. A respondent also could choose “Other” option, which he could explain in the commentaries. For example, they could have no accounts at all, or a certain medium that they would like to choose was not provided in the answers.

The next question from the behaviour theory is the following:

3. Did you vote during Duma elections in 2007 and 2011? (it is possible to choose several options)

It is impossible to answer “yes” or “no” as the question provides two options to choose. Therefore, respondents were provided with three options: 1) Voted in 2007; 2) Voted in 2011 and 3) Did not vote. This question was asked to see whether they were politically active and interested in voting before the December events.

4. Did you participate in protest movements before December, 2011?

This was a close-response question, with “yes” and “no” as options to choose between.

The fifth question was put to see which of the December protest events that gathered most social media users.

5. Did you participate in protest events in December 2011? If yes, please, specify which one? (it is possible to choose several variants)
Four main Moscow events were suggested to choose from: 1) 4\textsuperscript{th} of December, on Chistye Prudi, 2) 5\textsuperscript{th} of December, on Triumfal'naya square 3) 10\textsuperscript{th} of December on Bolotnaya square and 4) 24\textsuperscript{th} of December on Sakharova prospect. Also, it was possible to choose an option “other city/country” in case the respondent was not from Moscow. In the commentaries they could put the missing location. For those respondents who did not participate at all, there were two answers suggested: 5) “I wanted to participate in protests, but was not able to” and 6) “I did not participate in the events because I did not consider it necessary”. The latter option was added for random users and for those who were interested in discussing and reading information about frauds and protests, but did not see the point in attending those.

The next question is investigating the role of social media as an information provider:

6) \textit{How did you know about the upcoming demonstrations?}

The choice could be made between Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte, Livejournal, TV/Radio/Printed media, “from friends and/or relatives”, and “other”.

The question #7 was designed to see how fast the information about the protest events reached respondents – whether they had enough time to consider their participation or if it was more of a spontaneous decision.

7) \textit{How much time in advance did you here about the first demonstration?}

It was an open-response question, mostly because respondents could write any possible variant – from “half-hour “to “three weeks”, and there was no necessity in categorisation of values.

Continue with ‘behaviour’ category of questions, the next one was aiming to see whether the respondents were producing some content, and not just reading posts of others:

8) \textit{Did you post text information, photos or videos, relevant to the elections, on your social media accounts?}

This one was a closed-response question, with “yes” and “no” as answer options.

The last question in the behaviour category was the following:

9) \textit{Did you participate in relevant discussions in social networks? If yes, please specify which ones.}

The answers for this question were supposed to show whether it was important for the protesters to share their opinions with the others. And despite the fact that there were only “yes” and “not” options, respondents could provide further information in commentaries.
Deacon et al. notice that the most common problem with behaviour questions is that people tend to forget what they did some time ago (p. 72), as well as they can do some things mechanically and do not keep them in memory.

The most sensitive questions, according to Deacon et al., are the ones about beliefs and attitudes. They can have an ‘agenda-setting’ effect or contain hidden “blaming” of respondents for their ideas. That is why for the last question regarding respondents’ motivations the word ‘why’ was avoided, since the question form indirectly obliges to justify the answer.

10. How would you formulate the reason for your participation in the protests?

This open-response question with neutral formulation provides no indirect “pushing” to certain answers. It also does not define any category for the possible reasons for protesting – social, political, psychological, etc. Neither does it frame the answer in any way. Thus, respondents were free to write the reason they considered relevant for themselves. Also, it was an optional question, so the respondents would not feel obliged to make up reasons in case they did not remember them or they did not want to answer at all.

The questionnaire was written in Russian, and after the data was collected, it was translated to English.

4.2. Holding the survey

The questionnaire was published on SurveyMonkey.com\textsuperscript{12} website on the 01.03.2012 and was closed on the 05.03.2012, after the results of the Presidential elections were announced. The date of closing the survey can be explained basing on the assumption that the level of excitement decreased after the election results were known. Thus, general disposition of people with protest views was much different compared to the pre-election period.

It was also decided not to use ‘Facebook survey’ option provided by SurveyMonkey. It would shift the focus to Facebook and attract only those respondents who were already registered there. It was important, in opposite, to examine gradation of popularity of different social media among protesters. Therefore, a stand-alone questionnaire was applied instead.

\textsuperscript{12}Website for designing and conducting surveys and analyzing collected data
The data was collected in the following way: the researcher was publishing requests to fill in the survey in relevant groups (communities for discussion and arrangement of the protest demonstrations) on *Facebook* and *Vkontakte* (three groups on each of the social media platforms), as well as in her *Twitter* account. The latter option was used, because almost half of the people subscribed to her account were at least once publishing relevant tweets. Also, the researcher was sending direct messages to the members of the groups mentioned above. The researcher in her posts or requests in private messages introduced herself and the research institution, and explained what the data would be used for. The sampling was made by two criteria: age (people under 35) and city (Moscow). The age of respondents was defined that way basing on Owen’s research about Generation Y (see the chapter “Theoretical background and literature review”). The geographical sampling was made due to Moscow-focused nature of the study, as it was discussed above. 57 answers were collected, and 14 of this number skipped the last question about their motivation for protesting. Justifying the needed number of respondents from statistical point of view is complicated. The population was unknown because there is no available data on the number of individuals who was actively supporting the movement online and attended protest events, therefore the correct sample could not be taken. Also, as the focus was made on a very short time period before the election, there was a time limitation for collecting answers. However, as a supportive method for confirming certain trends from Levada Center’s research and supplementing it with online survey’s social media focus.

4.3. Analysis of the data from the survey

Data from the close-response questions regarding social media activity during December movements and behaviour patterns, as well as the age of respondents, will be summarised and related to the data from the secondary sources mentioned above. Further, they will be discussed from the mediatisation and new social movements frameworks.

For the question about people’s motivation, content analysis will be performed. The chosen word/phrase categories are *social capital* (meaning intention to cooperate and act for interests of the others) and *civic discontent* (resentment about civil rights violation and political situation in the country in general).
5. Interviews

Secondary surveys, as well as the survey conducted by the researcher, do not provide sufficient information on two important points. First one is related to one of the hypothesis of the study: people were attending protest actions because of certain public figures among social media activists, whom they were sympathising with and to a certain extent identifying themselves with. Ratings are presented in secondary sources, but a disadvantage of this method was the provision of certain names as options for answers. People had to choose between them, and even though the “other” option was provided, they could assume it easier to just pick one or two from the list. Also, even if there were social activists they shared views with, it is not necessarily that those public figures played a crucial role in their decision making about participation in the protests.

5.1. Interview modeling

5.1.1. Time and place

For interviews, the key factor was time and place, which influenced the character of the interviews in many ways.

In May 2012, right after inauguration of the new president, it was announced in social media as well as opposition mainstream media, that the Russian culture workers (writers, artists musicians) would arrange a “so-called” control walk in Moscow (‘Protest Walk’ with Writers Gathers 2,000 in Downtown Moscow’, RIA Novosti 2012). It was not announced as a protest action officially in order to avoid formal problems with the authorities. As the organisers claimed, they wanted to see whether Moscow citizens could gather and take a walk around their own city, without being arrested or beaten by the police. The event itself aimed to express grievance towards the rough attitude of the police and to the arrests that happened during the demonstration on the 6th of May\textsuperscript{13}. Many journalists and opposition politicians took part in the ‘Control Walk’ as well.

\textsuperscript{13}A large-scale protest action before inauguration of Vladimir Putin that led to a big number of arrests under 2012/2013 and became known as “Bolotnoye case” (after the venue’s name).
For the invitation to the walk, the same “December” groups on Facebook and VK were used (“We were on Bolotnaya square and we will come again”). Therefore one could assume that there would be a certain proportion of people who participated in December protests there.

5.1.2. Interview format and method limitations

The researcher decided to conduct short interviews right there, during the walk. This type of interviews, Deacon, et al. define as semi-structured interviews in a free format (p. 65). As he claims, semi-structured interviewing “abandons concerns with standardisation and control, and seeks to promote an active, open-ended dialogue” (p. 65). Interviewer has a basic list of questions, but they are also able to collect more data from the interview, asking additional questions. One of the most significant drawbacks of this method, according to Deacon, et al, is interviewer bias. Live presence of the interviewer can influence results in many ways: from encouraging to certain types of responses to inaccurate recording of the answers.

In case of interviews that are taken outside and, especially, in the middle of a walking crowd, there are many distracting factors for interviewees. They can make it challenging for them to focus on their answers. Moreover, due to limited duration of the event itself, the researcher could not perform interviews longer than 5 minutes each, because the walk ended after 40 minutes near Abay Kunanbayev monument where several public activists were holding speeches. Potential interviewees would rather be listening to them than being interviewed.

However, regardless of all the limitations, the most important for the researcher was the assumption that people were as much emotionally involved in the movement as they could be. They were surrounded by a large number of other citizens with similar ideas, so they all were very open and inspired at that moment. Also, face-to-face interviewing was dictated by the need of an “offline” research in order to see whether the role of social media was crucial in the engagement of people.

5.1.3. Questionnaire modeling

As it was mentioned in the previous section, the list of questions was not standardised for every interviewee. But the basic list was prepared in order to gather needed data:

1) **Could I please ask you how old you are?** – this question was asked after the researcher presented herself and explained her need in taking an interview and after a potential
interviewee agreed to participate in the study. If they were older than 35, the researcher would continue with the next interviewee due to pre-set age sampling. However, running ahead of the story, none of the interviewees was older than 35.

2) *Did you participate in the protest events in December 2011?* – another question for making sure that an interviewee meet the requirements of the study.

3) *Could you please formulate your motivation for participation in the protest movement?* – beside the importance of answers for this questions per se, the assumption here was that an interviewee will somehow mention some certain information about the election frauds they stumbled upon. Therefore, the researcher could ask the next question.

4) *Where/how did you get information about the first event you participated in?* – even if it was hard for an interviewee to remember the exact media outlet, they would presumably thinking of a source where they were getting the most information about the situation.

5) *Was there a certain moment when you realized that you had to join the protest movement?* – here, two possible answers were expected. The first one that would start from “it happened after I saw/ heard/ read something in media”. The other type of answer would be personal discontent with the situation in the country (not connected to a portion of certain news from traditional or social media). Depending on the type of the answer, it would be easier to see the impact of social media in a certain individual’s case.

6) *Did your friends participate as well?* – this question aimed to find out whether there was a networking factor that influenced interviewee.

7) *Were you yourself posting information about protests in your social media accounts?* – as in the case with the survey, it was important to find out whether respondents were producers of social media content, as well as consumers.

8) *Is there a certain public figure among public activists (politicians, culture workers, journalists, bloggers, etc.) whom you support most?* – in order to support or, in opposite, disprove the study hypothesis about ‘celebrity culture’ influence, this question was included in the basic list.

9) *What is civil society for you personally?* – this question was not of a leading character, as Deacon, et al. put it (p. 74), so no examples of guidelines for the answer were provided. People answer according their own settings which was essential for the current research.

5.2. *Interviewing*
The interviews were taken while people were moving from Pushkinskaya square to Chistye Prudy. There were two main criteria for choosing potential interviewees from the crowd: they were presumably younger than 35 years and they were walking alone. The latter criterion was important for three reasons. First of all, if a person was not alone, they would feel uncomfortable to switch their attention to the interviewer. Then, the presence of the other person could influence the answers. Finally, there was an assumption that if a potential interviewee came alone, then at least they were not just accompanying someone and might be really engaged to the idea of protesting themselves.

Every person the researcher approached to was first provided with an explanation about interview goals. Then, in case they did not mind being interviewed, the researcher asked her permission on using a voice recorder. The device was used to provide maximum accuracy in data collection. Then, the first two questions were asked in order to determine whether the interviewee meet study requirements. As a result, six people from ten matched the requirements and were asked further questions. Interview transcripts are presented in the Annex. Collected data from the interviews will be further used for content analysis.

Importantly, the last interviewee turned to be an administrator of two groups on Facebook, that were accumulating information about protests starting from the 5th of December. He was interviewed as a regular participant of protest events, and also he was asked about users’ behaviour from a perspective of a Facebook group manager: how spontaneous people were subscribing for the group updates, how many of them were making post themselves, and how many were commenting group posts, etc. This interview was taken straight after the event, so there was no strict time limitation for it.

5.3. Study limitations

Aside from limitations of each method, which were provided above, the researched face certain general limitations.

Language

The study is presented in English, while all the genuine data is in Russian, except for some of it from secondary foreign sources. And if in case of close-response survey questions language was not a big obstacle, answers to open-response questions both in the survey and the interviews contained language peculiarities and might be translated incorrectly.
Changing views of respondents and interviewees
The survey was conducted more than two months after the last December demonstration took place. The respondents had collected new social experience during that period and could potentially be providing different answers than if they had been asked the same questions exactly when the protests were happening. Especially, it concerns the last question about reasoning their participation. The same limitation, even to a bigger extent, can be applied to interviews. These limitations, however, could be compensated of the fact that the data from secondary sources is relevant to the focus period.

Access to the interviewees
The researcher lived in a different country, and it was only for a short period of time when she got access to potential interviewees. Still, it was decided that none of the interviews would be conducted by Skype or mail. The nature of interviews via technical tools is different from that of face-to-face communications. Written interviews allow an interviewee to take longer time to think over the questions. Using technical tools for interviewing would also affect the data collection process: Deacon, et al. state that “it is often difficult to establish a relaxed rapport with a distant and disembodied voice” (p.64). So, if several different formats of interviewing were chosen, the data would be hard to compare. Short face-to-face interviews during a demonstration were chosen as the only method. These kinds of events do not happen every day, so it was the only possibility for the researcher to collect her data. Thus, interviews had to be limited in time.

Bias elements in the research
The researcher is a Russian citizen, and she was also involved in the protest activities (in Stockholm). However, this should not create serious obstacles for the research objectivity for following reasons. First, the analysis was made in 2013, more than 1.5 years after the discussed events. By that time, the researcher was not interested in being involved in the protest actions anymore. At the same time, the study was of a personal interest for her: she herself and many people in her network, for the first time, got interested in the political life of Russia that much. Interest in discovering possible reasons for this mobilisation within the field of media and communications can be considered as an incentive rather than an obstacle.
In this chapter, the December protest rally series are observed day by day, basing on various media sources, both mainstream and new media. Furthermore, referral sources for the descriptive part were chosen regardless of their political orientation and scale or format, in order to gain the most independent representation of facts. Thus, references to the state-owned Channel 1 are given alongside with quotes from the Internet newspaper Kasparov.Ru. A large number of references are articles written in Russian, but using them was a necessary measure for the study, as long as international media coverage was not able to present the events that thoroughly due to language barrier. Also, there was a constant circulation of information between Russia social media users, involved in the protest, and Russian media. Translation of the materials into English is performed as carefully and close to the original as it is possible. International media as reference sources are presented in this chapter as well. More detailed discussion about credibility and representativeness of the sources can be found in the chapter “Mehodology of the Research”.

It is necessary to notice that focus in event description is made on Moscow protests, although protest events were arranged in many other cities of Russia. Also, the emphasis is put on the reflection of the rallies in social media. The latter one includes first online discussions around the fraud and online organisation of the rallies. It also introduces social media opinion makers and quotes Facebook and Twitter users in order to examine the connection of the lexic with civil society values in further chapters of the research. In order to avoid infoglut, this chapter does not contain detailed accounts of events surrounding the protests offline (for example, comprehensive lists of speakers or all clashes of protesters with security services) unless it had a serious impact on information realm of social media.

In the conclusions to the chapter, preliminary discussion on the roles of new media in December 2011 protests are introduced in order to provide a ground to both theoretical framing and empirical research.

14 Named after the founder of the newspaper, Russian writer and political activist Garry Kasparov
December protests: day by day

December, 4

The first mass protest started in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg on the 4th of December 2011, straight after the Russian legislative elections were held and even before the election results were officially available.

At around 14.00 Moscow on the 4th of December time several activists of “The Left Front”\(^\text{15}\), including Sergey Udaltsov, the leader of the movement, were planning to arrange a protest action on the Red Square, but were stopped by the police. Ten other “left” activists were arrested the day before (Grani 2011).

The month before the election, in the beginning of November 2011, activists of the organisation “The Russians”\(^\text{16}\) announced their plans on holding a protest action on the elections day after electoral districts would have been closed for voters. They did not get governmental permission for the demonstration, however, at around 21.00 Moscow time unauthorized demonstration with 100-150 participants started. The keynote of the protest was disavowal of elections (SOVA Center 2011).

Already then, on the late night December, 4, information about fraud mechanisms allegedly used by administrative workers during voting were randomly appearing in LiveJournal, Facebook and Twitter posts, as well as relevant videos on YouTube were distributed (for the examples see the reference list). In the videos made with ‘hidden camera’\(^\text{17}\) one could observe how ‘fraud organisers’ were giving instructions to ‘hired’ voters or how the same people were attending up to tens of different election districts. These videos even gave birth to a new political term ‘Carousel’\(^\text{18}\) which was later used in various international media outlets, especially for description of the Presidential election on March 4, 2012 (BBC 2012, Reuters 2012, The Guardian 2012).

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\(^\text{15}\) “The Left Front” (“Leviy Front”) is a far-left political organisation in Russia

\(^\text{16}\) “The Russians” (“Russkiye”) – Russian nationalistic movement

\(^\text{17}\) Quotation marks here and further in the sentence are put since there has been continuous discussion about the origins and authors of these videos (‘Experts find layouts on video clips exposing frauds at Russian parliamentary polls – election commission chief’, RIA Novosti, 2011) and whether they were fake or genuine

\(^\text{18}\) “Carousel” in this context means a special method of vote rigging when a bribed voter makes a circular moving from one polling place to another
Presumably, one of the triggers for the protest movement that day was also an article “The Carousel got broken” by famous blogger and photographer Ilya Azar in online newspaper Lenta.Ru which was immediately reposted and shared by Facebook users. There, Azar presented a journalistic investigation performed by him and his colleagues on the day of the election. The group of journalists participated in ‘Carousels’ arrangement under the guise of hired agents. According to the official information from the police, 258 activists in Moscow were arrested that day (Svoboda radio 2011).

Important to mention that there was no sufficient statistic information published by research institutions, as long as the demonstration on the 4th of December appeared to be spontaneous. And also, engagement of the individuals that were considered to be apolitical previously turned to be unexpected, so no relevant surveys were performed then. However, later statistic research showed that the protest actions that day mainly attracted those people who had been previously showing political activity and/or were aware of the nationalist’s demonstration rather than apolitical citizens.

December, 5

On the 5th of December, several demonstrations in Moscow took place: Communist Party gathered a few hundred people on the Pushkinskaya square, several dozens of “ROT Front” activists held unauthorized demonstration and some got arrested.

The biggest rally was arranged by the movement “Solidarnost” under slogans “Elections are farce!”,”Give the country right to choose back!” and “Give the people power back!”, and it engaged 4000 -10 000 people (figures differ between the data provided by police and bloggers). The action was approved by the authorities in advance, but when the crowd started moving towards Myasnitskaya street after listening to the speakers, it was confronted by the police. Exactly then, the “bomb” that was set on the 4th of December exploded. One of the reasons is the fact that unlike during previous opposition rallies, regular people (not political activists) and journalists (Ilya Varlamov from Ridus Citizen Journalism Agency, Ilya Barabanov from The New Times, Ilya Vasyunin from TV Rain) got arrested. The latter ones, as well as popular bloggers who were taking part in the movement, were publishing updates about the situation on their personal Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Messages about the cruel methods that OMON was using against protesters

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19 “Russian United Labour Front” (Russian: “Rossijskiy Objediniomnijy Trudovoy Front”)

20 “Solidarity” – Russian liberal democratic opposition movement

21 Otryad Mobilniy Osobogo Naznacheniya, Special Purpose Mobile Unit in Russia
who, according to videos and social media posts, were acting peacefully and were not provoking the police for these kind of measures, exploded the Russian blogosphere. Among the most discussed issues that night were arrests of Alexei Navalny\(^\text{22}\), who was already considered to be the leader of the opposition (Ioffe 2011), and Ilya Yashin\(^\text{23}\). Navalny was publishing cheerful and sarcastic tweets from a prison ward accompanied by Instagram pictures: “Sitting with fellows in OMON truck. They say hi” (@navalny4, Instagram, December, 5, 2011).

In the very end of the gathering, Nikita Batalov, Kommersant’s correspondent who was covering the event in a live mode wrote: “…It was one of the biggest mass demonstrations. And one cannot say that it was attended only by those who always participate in opposition rallies. I met people whom I had never met on these kind of movements before. Those were just regular people who work in the offices” (Batalov 2011).

Alongside with Moscow, protest actions took places in Saint-Petersburg, with around 120 people arrested (Fontanka 2011), and Ryazan (7+7 2011).

Coming back to online events, the screenshot from the news report on TV channel Rossiya 24 was published on the page of Anarcho-News project at the Russian Social network VK. In the picture TV-presenter announces the election results in Rostov district, and according to this data, “United Russia” got 58.99 per cent of the votes, “Communist party” — 32.96 per cent, “Fair Russia” — 23.74 per cent, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia — 19.41 per cent, and “Yabloko”— 9.32 per cent. Calculated percents resulted in 146.47 per cent instead of 100 per cent.

\(^{22}\) Alexei Navalny – a Russian lawyer, popular blogger and political and financial activist, who has been investigating cases of corruption in Russia and putting them into the public domain.

\(^{23}\) Ilya Yashin - a Russian activist and liberal politician, one of the leaders of “RPR-PARNAS” party, co-founder and one of leaders of political movement “Solidarnost”.
(VK.Ru 2011) Election results in Rostov region

Similar situation happened in Voronezh region: Oleg Kashin, famous Russian journalist\textsuperscript{24} and blogger published a relevant screenshot from Rossiya 24 Channel with the comment “Voter participation resulted with 130 per cent in Voronezh”.

Although Central Election Commission of Russia denied its relation to the inaccurate result tables shown on Rossiya 24 (“CEC is indigent about the preliminary election results with voter participation at 146 per cent shown on Rossiya 24”, 2011, Gazeta.Ru), these incidents provoked significant criticism to the authorities in general and to Vitaly Chruv, CEC’s chairman, as well as it gave birth to enormous number of Internet memes. For instance, the users replaced Harry Potter’s face on the movie poster with the picture of Churov with a tag line “Churov: the beginning”. Here is another example:

\textsuperscript{24} In 2010, Kashin was assaulted by unknown attackers, and it has been considered that the reason for the attack was Kashin’s professional activity (“Leading Russian reporter Oleg Kashin attacked in Moscow” BBC, 2010)
This kind of pictures were rapidly spreading over the Russian Internet on the night of December, 5, and the debate around election results and arrest was not dying off the whole night.

**December, 6**

In the afternoon next day, December 6, law-enforcement authorities in Moscow made official announcement about bringing military troops to the capital “because of the authorized mass rallies, and also in order to prevent attempts of unauthorized actions” (*RBC Daily* 2011). This information aggravated tension in social media. Those citizens who were following updates on *Facebook*, *Twitter* and online newspapers about severe preventative measures against activists the day before, understood that message as one more sign of society division on “us” and “them” (representatives and supporters of the Russian authorities).

Spontaneous rallies (without the permission of the city authorities) continued that night. Leaders and representatives of different opposition blocks (including Eduard Limonov25) were encouraging people to go to Triumfalnaya square, and, according to unofficial data, that rally gathered up to 5000 participants (*Newsru* 2011).

*Facebook* and *Twitter* users were able to follow the protest online due to constantly updated accounts of famous bloggers and journalists. Below, several of them are presented:

18:12, @adagamov26: “Attention, there are bands wearing green waistcoats [presumably, activists of “Nashi”27] on Triumfalnaya. Aggressive, threatening”.

18:43, @ottenki-serogo28: “On the left they are shouting “Victory of Medvedev!”, on the right – “Putin, Russia!”, I am gonna lose my mind because of this kind of stereo. Also, drums as a background [some activists of Nashi were beating the drums]. *This noise makes it impossible to hear any voices of the opposition. Brilliant tactics*”.

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25 Eduard Limonov – a Russian writer and leader of National Bolshevik Party and one of the leaders of The Other Russia party

26 Rustem Adagamov, also known as LiveJournal user “Drugoi”. Has been called “Russian blogger #1” by many local and international media outlets including *The Daily Telegraph* (Osbourn, A. 2011)

27 Nashi (*Molodezhnoye demokraticheskoye antifashistskoye dvizhenye “Nashi”, eng. Youth Democratic Anti-Fascist Movement “Ours!”*) – political youth movement that with pro-Presidential ideology

28 Popular Russian blogger Sergey Muhamedov
18:46, @podgorny29: “The boys in green waistcoats are hiding their faces and hitting my camera. Policemen help them”.

For the first time since protests had started, pro-Kremlin youth took part in them. The police, which was trying to stop the opposition activist reasoning it with “illegality of the rally”, at the same time, were not paying attention on the big group of young people acting aggressively and chanting “Putin! Russia!” That fact gave the rally participants and social media users more reasons to think that the government had strong intention to stifle the rebellion and was applying different tools for that.

19:32, @varlamov30: “Scuffles and a fight! They are overspraying gas”.

The number of arrested people reached its peak since the protest movement started: even according to the official data provided by the police (which was placed in doubt by Facebook users, especially those who participated in the rally themselves) next day, at least 569 were taken to police stations (Lenta.Ru 2011).

19:34, @aavst31: “He [Boris Nemtsov32] didn’t even make it to the square [as he got arrested]”.

19:37, @A3AP33: “OMON is pressing really hard. Beating legs from the back with their boots, prostitutes”.

At 20:29, Ridus news agency reported that discussion of the protest action on Triumfalnaya became a world trend on Twitter, gaining at least 10-20 thousand tweets per hour.

After the rally was over, those who got arrested continued updating their walls from police trucks and stations.

21.15, @mitrokhin34: “Sitting with Limonov in OVD35Tverskoye. Arguing about the political situation in the country). Oh, they formulated accusation: it turned out that I was shouting ‘The government should leave!’”.

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29 Igor Podgorny – a Russian blogger
30 Ilya Varlamov – a Russian blogger and photographer
31 Alexei Venediktov - a Russian journalist, editor-in-chief and host at the Echo of Moscow (“Ekho Moskvi”) radio station, president of the Echo TV Russia.
32 Boris Nemtsov – a Russian politician (liberal), one of the Solidarnost leaders and a co-chairman of the RPR-PARNAS political party. Famous for his critic towards Vladimir Putin
33 Ilya Azar, a Russian journalist, correspondent at Lenta.Ru
Important to mention is that on that night, more prominent people got arrested or assaulted by the police. One of them was Bozhena Rynska, journalist who writes about personages and Russian elite, and who is not related to the politics from the professional perspective. Yet, being an active blogger and Facebook user, Rynska was permanently updating information about her current location after the arrest and ongoing situation. She was kept in a police station till late night, and only thanks to mediation of other celebrities who came there especially for Bozhena, she got released. Nevertheless, according to her Facebook reports, she took personal control over the situation with all the other detainees who were kept at the same station with her.

Later, on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of December, she published a post on Facebook and Livejournal, giving the official comment regarding her unexpected political involvement:

“...I am not a revolutionary at bottom, I am a woman, and I love good living. And I have this living. But the lid came off. It’s impossible to live like that (...) I want everyone to be protected by the law, and not by the assets. And the government that encroaches the law needs to be deposed (...) I wish OMON doesn’t dare to hit my leg not because I am Bozhena, but because they would be f*cked by the law if they do that”.

The post got around 700 “likes” that day.

\textbf{Court case of Navalny}

At the same time, the trial of Navalny was also in the spotlight that day. Arrested on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of December, the lawyer and opposition activist got a 15-days administrative arrest as a measure of punishment. The court did not take into consideration mitigating circumstances of Navalny – two small children and clean record.

Live webcast of the court was available at Twitter and Facebook pages of bloggers and journalist admitted to the courtroom. Nikita Batalov (@nikbatalov), mentioned earlier and Petr Shkumatov\textsuperscript{36} (@petunder) were one of those who were keeping social media users updated and providing their opinion about the process:

\textsuperscript{34} Sergey Mitrokhin, Chairman of “Yabloko” party

\textsuperscript{35} Otdel Vnutrennikh Del (Local police station in Russia)

\textsuperscript{36} Russian public activist, coordinator of the social movement “Obschestvo Sinikh Vederok” (‘Societ of Blue Buckets’), created against abuse of authority on the roads of Russian cities by governmental workers (self-serving use of emergency rotating blue flashers).
“ok, it is not working well, the judge is interrupting Navalny’s lawyers”;

“NAVALNY HAS NOT EATEN for 16 hours!”

“Navalny also pushed OMON in the chest – with his third pair of hands” [sarcastic comment, implying that Navalny physically was not able to do that at the moment, as he was surrounded by policemen who were keeping his arms behind the back].

Many bloggers also described the moment when the counsel provided the court with a laptop which had photos and videos of the arrest moment, and those could prove that Navalny was not acting aggressively or confronting the police during the arrest. The judge did not allow to show them, “because the court does not have technical possibilities to watch the materials”, according to Twitters of the journalists.

“Well, one more nasty thing: witnesses of Navalny and Yashin’s arrests turned to be THE SAME PEOPLE! It’s impossible – both were arrested in different places”.

“Yashin and Navalny’s sentences coincide with every single coma!”

Outside the courtroom in the streets, the group of Navalny’s supporters was yelling “Shame!” and “One for all and all for one!” almost the whole time, and the grade of angriness was increasing once new tweets about unjustful attitude of the judge and witnesses’ lies were coming from the courtroom – the outside activists were also checking Twitter permanently. Several people got arrested there as well.

Geography of the rallies across the country kept expanding: several hundred people gathered in Saint-Petersburg (Konfisakhor 2011), 70 people – in Yekaterinburg (Ismailov 2011); silent demonstration took place in Rostov-na-Donu and gathered around 100 people (Gribtsova 2011), and slightly more than ten people protested in Novosibirsk (Mezdrikov 2011).

December, 7

Subdivisions of police and Ministry of the Interior gathered around Triumfal’naya square (Lenta.Ru 2011). Popular Twitter users @adagamov (mentioned earlier), @plushev and others retweeted a post “several helicopters incl. MI8 are landing on the FSB building roof at Lubyanka, 20”. At the same time pictures of helicopters started appearing on Facebook.

These messages raised a discussion that the government was planning to announce the state of military emergency in Moscow.
Later in the evening several rallies happened all over Russia, but they were significantly smaller than in the previous days. *Lenta* with a reference to *Interfax* and *RIA Novosti* wrote about 80 participants and names Drugaya Rossiya as the organizers.

At the same time, social media users start planning a new protest action on the 10th of December. *Facebook* event “*Saturday on Bolotnaya square*” was opened by three Russian bloggers, and one of them, Ilya Klishin, was at the same time a journalist at online journal *Slon.Ru*. On the event page, the details of the action were discussed and, what is more important, list of protestor’s requirements was brought to the agenda.

Protest actions continued in Saint-Petersburg, according to the participants, the rally gathered around 1500 people (Ivanova 2011), and in Kaliningrad (the number of participants is not certain due to controversial information from different sources).

**December, 8-9**

23 500 people confirmed their attendance of the event on the 10th of December on the *Facebook* page. The alternate group on *VK.Com* gathered almost 12 000 potential participants.

The following message from supposedly the police chief Victor Golovanov was circulating in social media: “If there are 5 000 people in the streets, this rally will be cleared away. If there are 50 000 – the police will stand silently, and if there are 500 000 – the police will take their side” (‘Moscow police before the rally’ 2011). The police were quick to deflate this rumour circulating in social media.

**VK incident**

Focus of the protest movements shifted to Saint-Petersburg where rallies were still taking place, but that time the reason for public attention was an official request from FSB received by Pavel Durov, founder of *VK.Com* (their office is located in Saint-Petersburg). Security Service asked Durov to block five online communities (four of them had the words “Against the United Russia” in their titles) and two pages of upcoming events (‘Head of VK put out dog’s tongue to secret services’, *Lenta.ru*, 2011). As the official answer, Durov publishes a photo of a dog showing its tongue on his

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37 Was later renamed to “We were on Bolotnaya Square and we will come again” and used for organisation of the other protest events

38 Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, KGB successor
VK wall. Later, he said that he refused doing that, because VK is a politically neutral organisation that does not support neither the government, nor the opposition. Later on, he commented that his decision was also based on the competitive practices: first of all, he stated that Internet users should not be thankful to him for immediate upgrades of online voting system and event arrangement, as VK was just trying to provide the same options that competitors had (presumably meaning Facebook). Also, he claimed that “if foreign websites continue exist in a free field, and the Russian ones start being censored, Runet\(^{39}\) will be facing a slow death” (Durov, P., “Common sense”, VK, 2011).

By morning December, 9, the number of people confirming their participation in the rally was 30,000 on Facebook and 16,000 on VK.

Information about the upcoming events was at the same time spreading across the world, and the Russians in 27 cities in 16 foreign countries opened pages for similar Facebook events in order to support compatriots (“Rallies supporting fair elections in Russia will take place across the world”, Lenta.Ru 2011).

Conflict in the opposition: Twitter skirmish

All of a sudden, a conflict occurred between opposition leaders: Moscow city authorities gave their permission for a protest action on Revolyutsii square\(^{40}\), with up to 300 of participants. The application was submitted by Sergey Udaltsov, on behalf of Leviy Front movement with support from Solidarnost organisation (“On Saturday, the opposition is arranging a demonstration after the crackdown of the movement on Triumfalnaya Square”, Gazeta.Ru, 2011). Then, on the 9\(^{th}\) of December (the day before the rally), Mayor’s office made a public announcement that the protest action will take place on Bolotnaya square\(^{41}\) due to security reasons, as the number of people subscribed for the event via social media was already a hundred times more that it was approved previously (“Victory in a figurative sense”, Grani.Ru, 2011).

According to Boris Nemtsov’s Facebook post the day before, it was made by the government to ruin the protest:

\(^{39}\) Acronym for ‘Russian Internet’

\(^{40}\) eng: Square of Revolution

\(^{41}\) eng: Bog Square
“...Putin’s premeditation is simple – the permission for Bolotnaya will be most likely given, but tomorrow. Not everyone will get to know about it. Some will come to Bolotnaya, and some – to Revolyutsii Square. Putin’s premeditation is dumb, because those who will come to Revolutsii square will move to Bolotnaya. By provoking people for marching, he tries to use police force to suppress the protest. This stupid and aggressive tactics will bring nothing good to him and his regime. He will not manage to break the opposition down anyway” (Boris Nemtsov, Facebook post, 2011).

After the official message from the government about changing the venue, the number of opposition leaders started blaming Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov and Sergey Parkhomenko, who were negotiating with authorities on that matter and agreed on Bolotnaya, in betrayal. Among them – Eduard Limonov, saying that “the only negotiations we can have now with the power can be only devoted to its capitulation” (Grani.Ru 2011), and Yevgeniya Chirikova, who was tweeting that she will be still going to the first chosen venue (@4irikova, December 9, 2011, 07:07). However, all the sides of the conflict achieved reconcilement and agreed that it was unacceptable for the protest movement to be challenged by internal disputes – it was decided to arrange the event on Bolotnaya square and those people who would come to Revolyutsii square would be led from there to Bolotnaya by activists.

**Recommendations for protesters in social media**

Alongside with practical advice about preparation to protest movements (for example, informing as many people as possible about participation in rallies, having a copy of passport instead of the original one, taking into consideration one’s right to call from a police station in case of arrest, etc.), a text by Livejournal user lady_spring became subject of much controversy in social media and on Facebook in particular. The user focused on a civilized and peaceful approach to participation in social movements. For example, she recommended to remain unprovoked and not to chant in chorus with everyone else before thinking whether the mottos correlate with one’s personal views. Also, she recommended to be attentive to each other, not to push people nearby and to help seniors. “Even if you meet someone who supports “The United Russia” in the crowd, you may laugh at them, talk to them or try to persuade them, but never use your physical power! Guys, our power is in the fact that

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42 Russian liberal politician, a co-chairman of political party «RPR-PARNAS»

43 Russian publisher, journalist and political analyst. Since 2003 – radio host at Echo of Moscow

44 Russian environmental activist, known for opposing the building of a motorway through Khimki forest (Moscow suburbs) in 2010. Was active participant in the protests of 2011
there are many of us and that we stand for the truth! We do not want to and we will not beat anyone! Calm down those people who look aggressive. Smile to people” (@tema_tema “To participants of the rally on December, Ridus, 2011). The police, claimed the user, was on the side of the protesters, and encouraged readers to be polite with the police and to thank them for providing safety of protesters. “What [the authorities] are afraid most of all is that there will be civilized, intelligent and polite people who are just fed up. And people who are ready for the certain legal actions. If we demand re-election, we are RIGHT. If we demand Putin’s deposition (…), we are unthinking revolutioners. We are not AGAINST something of someone, but FOR – in this case, for re-election”.

Further in her post, the user addressed to the organisers asking them to clearly understand the level or responsibility and not to give a word to ‘provocateurs of revolution’. She wrote that it would not only lead to violence during the event, but would also provide a possibility to state-supportive mainstream media to present the rally as “protest of thugs”. The audience, which was not involved in movements, could only judge by the picture in media. There should be not even a single image with aggressively looking people, fights or extremist posters, she claimed.

In the end of the post, the user stated: “Let’s show them that we are not a crowd, we are PEOPLE, CITIZENS. I beg you. For our parents, children, for our future”.

This message spread across social media and gained a lot of support among people who were planning to join the rally on December, 10 for the first time. Moreover, it was quoted by a big number of traditional media outlets, including, for example, Echo Moskvi. And although the post garnered criticism among “experienced” protesters for way too “gentle” recommendations which would not lead to any result, most protesters took it as a guideline to follow, judging on further events.

**Politics of Russian mainstream media before the 10th of December**

Important to mention that until the next day, the Russian television was completely avoiding the topic of protests. In opposite, it was reporting about mass demonstrations of support towards the leading party. On Tuesday night news programme, December 6, Channel 1 Russia mentioned only demonstrations by “Nashi” and “Young Guard of the United Russia”46. Interestingly, the report was aired under the title “Several thousand strong demonstrations in the center Moscow were devoted to

45 The Russian channel with the biggest audience, partially owned by the Russian government (75%)

46 “Molodaya Gvardiya of the United Russia”, youth wing of The United Russia – an organisation aiming to engage people to social and political life of Russia
the election results” (Channel 1 2011). In other words, the opposition rallies were also alleged to be the part of The United Russia supporting events. A similar approach was demonstrated by several other TV channels like Rossiya 1\(^{47}\) and NTV\(^{48}\).

Not surprisingly, people who were not using social media, had very poor idea about the essence of the protest movements. For example, Livejournal user someoneblack wrote that her mother whom she had been telling about the protests the whole day had just called her after watching news: “According to the federal channels, there are folk festivals in the center of Moscow glorying the victory of the Party of Crooks and Thieves\(^{49}\). People are partying, and war-dogs and police are defending them. Aside from the festival, there is also badminton in the news” (Mikhailov 2011).

Stanislav Kutcher, correspondent at Kommersant FM published an official critical letter to fellow journalists:

"When thousands of people go in the centers of two capitals of our – so far – common motherland to express their attitude towards the elections (…), you don’t say a word, and that is unprofessional (…). You are hiding information from millions of people, and this information could at least change their moods”. Kutcher advised his colleagues to throw away all the awards for the best news programmes (Mikhaylov 2011).

This letter spread immediately over Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

December, 10

The rally on the 10\(^{th}\) of December was one of the biggest in the modern Russian history, and not only due to the number of participants, but also in terms of geographical coverage and international attention.

As it was expected by the opposition, a few thousand people came to the Revolutsii square, according to the initial plan. Surprisingly for many participants and observers, OMON did their best to provide safety of the protestors while they were moving towards Bolotnaya square (The rally on Bolotnaya square gathered from 85 to 150 thousand people, Grani.Ru 2011). Respectable media

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\(^{47}\) ‘Russia 1’ – a state-owned Russian television channel, which belongs to the All-Russia State Television and Radio Company (VGTRK)

\(^{48}\) A Russian television channel that belongs to state-owned Gazprom Media since 2001.

\(^{49}\) The term first used by Alexei Navalny in his interview that became one of the symbolic phrases during the protests
outlets, for example, *Vedomosti, Kommersant, TV Rain Channel* were not only publishing reports on their websites, but were also constantly tweeting and posting updates on *Facebook*.

Already around 11 am (two hours before the official start of the event) *The Moscow Times* newspaper posted on Twitter: "An absolute sea of people are cramming Bolotnaya square. Difficult to count numbers. @Vedomosti claims 30 000. It is believable" (Batty 2011). *Forbes* magazine, even though they had their own correspondents at the place, interspersed online-coverage article with tweets of those who were participating (Kamensky, Levin 2011).

**Social media origin of the White Ribbon as a symbol of protest**

Interestingly, before the rally started, *Forbes* posted that “there are many people with white ribbons. One can say that these are not actually *Facebook* audience, as long as there are many aged people, and some of them are carrying flowers”.

The background of the white ribbon in the Russian protests was widely discussed during December protests: the domain name *belayalenta.com*\(^5\) was registered in October, 2011 – two months before the elections. That fact (among the other issues) gave a soil for many discussions around the fact that the whole rally programme had been planned in advance and, most likely, by the US. The idea about support of the opposition forces by the US even mentioned by Vladimir Putin: “She [Hillary Clinton] set the tone for some opposition activists, gave them a signal, they heard this signal and started active work… Pouring foreign money into electoral processes is particularly unacceptable. Hundreds of millions are being invested in this work. We need to work out forms of protection of our sovereignty, defense against interference from outside” (Gutterman, Briansky, 2011).

The owner of the domain name, a Moscow citizen Elena Tikhonova, however, refuted these accusations, saying that the idea appeared after the 24\(^{th}\) of September 2011, when President Dmitry Medvedev suggested the United Russia to nominate Vladimir Putin to run for president at the next election (Whitmore 2011). “After I saw that our leaders publically assign each other for the positions in Kremlin, I realised that we have to do something” (Tikhonova, E. ‘Answering questions from the conspiracy theory supports’, 2011). Elena was even criticized for choosing the American blog platform *Blogger.Com* for the website, as some saw traces of the U.S. intrusion even in that fact, which she explained by simply better usability of the platform.

\(^{5}\) Russian name for ‘white ribbon’
In the end of her post, Elena wrote: “All the resources of The White Ribbon project are created to engage the whole country in the movement, and not only Internet users. […] We all need to assert our country. We need to make the government remember that they serve the people, and not that the people serve them’ (Tikhonova, 2011).

Earlier in 2011, Alexei Navalny initiated RosAgit project51, and a white badge became the symbol of identification of members. In the fall, 2011, it was decided to use white ribbons instead, and on the 11th of November, 2011, the first 1000 ribbons were printed and distributed in Moscow. Thanks to popularity and authority of Navalny and his projects among social media users, the idea of white ribbons as symbol of protests was supported by thousands of Internet users. People put them on their profile pictures, and even TV hosts on the TV Rain channel while reporting about the movement on Bolotnaya square had ribbons fastened to their clothes.

Coming back to the events on Bolotnaya square, Batty mentions that before the official start of the rally, protesters were “handing flowers to police. Some of the slogans on the banners include: “I did not vote for these bastards. I voted for other ones”, ”Do not hit me – I am here by an accident”, ”Send Putin to Azkaban” (referring to social media memes that were connecting the whole situation around the elections to Harry Porter, miracles and Churov as a wizard),”2*2 = 49. Only in Russia”. Many placards had popular Internet memes or demotivators as prototypes, or were referring to them.

Webdiscover, 2011. Placards at the rally on December, 10

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51 Social and political project aiming on raising of citizens’ activity and informing people about corruption and outrage of the Russian authorities [http://www.rosagit.info](http://www.rosagit.info)
Russian politician Dmitry Gudkov\textsuperscript{52} described the participants in Twitter:

@gudkovd: “Who said that there are marginals here?! Great people, many young ones! Real citizens! I am impressed. Energetics! Proud of us!”.

Based on the recommendations for protesters that appeared in social media on December, 9, a number of users printed leaflets with quotes from the post, which was also saying “Guys, please, take care. Your 15 days in isolation ward won’t help Russia” (Frolov 2011).

One of the first persons appearing on the stage was Leonid Parfenov, famous Russian journalist who ‘warned the crowd about the increasing control of media by the state’.

The list of speakers in Moscow included famous people from diverse backgrounds: writers Boris Akunin and Dmitry Bykov, politicians Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov, Grigory Yavlinsky\textsuperscript{53}, journalists Oleg Kashin and Yevgeniya Albats\textsuperscript{54}, and even a philosopher, political and social activist Konstantin Krylov famous for his nationalist-democratic views. Almost all the speakers had been active social media users and demonstrated high interaction with their Internet audience. Also, important to mention that a big number of those public activists who held a speech that day, had not been previously engaged in any political activity, and had been rather involved into entertainment industry. One of them, Tatiana Lazareva\textsuperscript{55}, wrote on her Facebook page after her speech: “…I said that I do not belong to any political party and never thought I would participate in a rally. I addressed to the youth and told them to use their head (…), to soldiers and OMON (…) saying that both we and them have children and we all want them come back home safe and sound”.

Alexei Navalny, who was in prison during the event, handed over his speech to Kashin, so he could read it from the stage. In his speech, Navalny called to “fight for citizens’ rights” and not to forget about the feeling of self-respect (Samsonova 2011): “We are not cattle and we are not slaves. We have voice and energy to assert it. (…). One for all and all for one!”\textsuperscript{56}.

\textsuperscript{52} Was a member of A Just Russia party until March 2013

\textsuperscript{53} Russian politician and economist, famous for his leadership at “Yabloko” party. Was a candidate for the Russian presidency twice (in 1996 and 2000).

\textsuperscript{54} Russian investigative journalist, political scientist, writer and radio host.

\textsuperscript{55} Russian comedy actress and TV-host

\textsuperscript{56} That slogan had been actively used by Navalny in his social media posts as well
Following recommendation which seemed to be shared by the majority of the users, the participants were demonstrating peaceful and respectful attitude towards each other and the police and showing strong negative reaction to a group of nationalists who started burning smoke pellets, shouting “Boo!” and “Provocateurs!” to them.

The official demands of protesters were voiced during the rally (Batty 2011):

1. Freedom for political prisoners
2. Annulment of the election results
3. Resignation of Vladimir Churov, head of the election commission, and an official investigation of vote fraud
4. Registration of the opposition parties and new democratic legislation on parties and elections
5. New democratic and open elections

The organizers announced that the government was given two weeks for the reaction on the demands, otherwise, the new rally would be arranged on December, 24.

After the rally was over, media kept following feedbacks posted by participants in their blogs and Facebook pages. Forbes quoted the Russian designer Alexander Zaks: “…the tone of the action was against the elections and for the new ones. But not for the revolution. I would rather say about the revolution in people’s souls – those people who finally decided to express their opinion”.

In his report, Batty called the movement on December 10, ‘the largest political event of this kind since the fall of the USSR’. Again, different sources provided controversial information about the number of protesters in Moscow, starting with 25 000 according to the official information from the police and to 150 000 according to the organizers (‘December 10: chronicles’, Lenta.Ru, 2011). According to opinions of many users, the most likely number could be found between 50 000 – 60 000 people. Rallies also took place in at least 34 cities in Russia and in around 20 cities outside the country, including the US, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Indonesia and Sweden.

The rally was covered by hundreds of foreign media outlets, bloggers – and for the first time by the Russian television. Already during the protest event itself, news was soon carried round social media that Alexei Pivovarov, NTV’s journalists, refused to host evening news, if the editorial would not cover the rally (Batty 2011). Surprisingly for many participants, mainstream media started evening news reports with coverage of the rally, which, according to some sources, was a personal merit of
the President Dmitry Medvedev (Federal TV-channels showed reports on the rally as first pieces of news programs after Medvedev’s decree, Gazeta, 2011).

December, 11-23

During two weeks before the next all-Russian rally, protest movements were happening in different parts of the country, organised by various political and civil forces (Yabloko, Communist party, A Just Russia, The Left Front and others).

On the 19th of December, 157 workers of culture signed an open letter where they encouraged people to participate in the rally on December, 24 (Workers of culture call to fight for the rights in a “happy and well-minded way” on the rally of December, 24, Gazeta, 2011). The text of the letter was shared on Facebook and Twitter by many users.

On the 21st of December, which was the first official working day for newly elected Duma, civil activists tried to arrange a protest demonstration near its building, but since it had not been approved by authorities, it did not last long. With around 100 participants, 25 got arrested (Ivanov, V., Muromskaya, M. 2011)

December, 24

As it was announced on the 10th of December, the protesters gathered again on the Academician Sakharov Avenue exactly two weeks later. In total, rallies took place in 108 locations around the world (primarily in Russian cities, but also in several other countries). Almost every location had its own official group on VK or on Facebook, where information for participants was accumulating (Feldman, E., 2011). By the late evening, December, 23, around 60 000 people approved their willingness to take part in the rally on the Facebook page of the event (Podpryatova, A, 2011).

Although that action became a continuation of the previous December protest, with similar messages and demands, it had significantly different nature on many different levels.

First of all, the list of public people involved in the protest activity expanded considerably. Those who were just attending previous rallies as participants were offered to hold speeches on the 24th. This was made, according to Podpryatova, to “satisfy all the strata that were presented on the rally on December, 10, and also to reach new audiences” (Podpryatova 2011). Even nationalists, whose participation in the whole protest movement became a topic for wide polemics in the Russian Internet, got a stage that day, represented by Vladimir Ermolayev, Konstantin Krylov and Vladimir
Big surprise for those who were following the situation was appearance of Alexei Kudrin, former Minister of Finance, on the rally stage.

Secondly, that time the list of speakers of the meeting was defined by online-voting in the event’s official group on Facebook. Members of the group suggested candidatures they would like to hear on December, 24, and the ones that got the majority of voices was asked by organisers to speak in front of rally participants.

Moreover, a week before the event, it was decided to open an account in Yandex.Money system, so people could transfer money for the organisation of the protests, and it was decided by the organisers to make journalist Olga Romanova responsible for this account which got a name “Romanova’s wallet” (Olga Romanova, Facebook post from December 18, 2011).

The process of preparation for the event was well-organised, and was discussed not only in social media, but also a special committee of organisers was holding meetings where they discussed details of arrangement. Social media users could easily keep track on those meetings in online-mode, as long as almost all activists engaged to preparations were posting updates in their social media accounts.

It was emphasized that the rally was a “general civil protest”, as it was mentioned everywhere in social media by that name.

Analyzing the situation around the rally on the 24th, Podryatova wrote: “In fact, virtual shaping of a new political force or party is happening right in front of us: the main idea has come to fruition, the list of demands has been maturating, new leaders are being selected, the budget is being collected, and people’s support is being gained, too”.

Another trend that puts the social movement of the 24th aside from the previous ones was that the preparation in social media became less centralised (more groups on Facebook were created) and more localized by types of activities (each group took a certain activity like volunteering or press communications or stage equipment, etc.), states Podpryatova. At the same time, although the number of users that confirmed their participation on Facebook and VK was bigger than on the 10th, the geography of protests clearly focused on Moscow, as long as the number of people interested in

57 Later on he even became a member of Coordination Council of the opposition.

58 Widely famous in the Russian media sphere because of her battle against imprisoning of innocent people in Russia.
attending rallies worldwide or even in other cities of Russia decreased considerably. Concluding her analysis, Podpryatova stated: “Now the crowd is following principles, ideas and even is starting to follow newly appeared leaders”.

The demands of the protesters stayed the same as two weeks before, except a new one was added – “No single voice for Putin on the 4th of March” (Rally on the Sakharova Avenue, Grani.ru, December 24, 2011), referring to the upcoming presidential election of 2012.

Visual ‘dressing’ of the rally again migrated from the social media memes, as it was on December, 10. For example, Artemy Troitsky was giving his speech dressed up as a condom (several days earlier Vladimir Putin mentioned in an interview that he mistook white ribbons of the protestor for condoms which explode social media with a flow of demotivators and Photoshop images).

Alexei Navalny started his appeal to the protestors with the words “Net hamsters say hi to Bandar-logs”, also referring to Vladimir Putin who called the opposition “Bandar-logs”. Putin was implying that it was serving to the needs of Western states and was ready to satisfy any wish of those (Poteeva, K. 2011). “Bandar-logs” were used by the other speakers as well.

Significantly, the speeches were not only devoted to clamor, but also had many positive connotations. The speakers repeatedly expressed their joy about seeing so many people of different ages and political views on that day, were talking about volunteers and were sending their acknowledgements to the police.

Data about the number of protesters again turned to be contradictory and ranged from 29 000 to 120 000 people (‘Motley white ribbon’, Lenta.Ru, December 24, 2011). RIA Novosti asked geodetic engineer to count the participants with a help of professional equipment in order to get more precise figures, and according to them, 56 000 people came to express their dissatisfaction with the election results and the current political situation on December, 24 (Vinogradov, D. 2011).

59 Vladimir Putin won the election with 63,6per cent of voices according to the Center Election Comission

60 A Russian journalist, music critic, concert promoter and broadcaster

61 Also ‘lemmings’ – a term from the Russian Internet language meaning the net crowd which actively comments events that are being discussed online, always express their opinions, but rarely shift their activity from online to offline
Alongside with the event on Sakharova, there was a protest demonstration on Sparrow Hills in Moscow\textsuperscript{62}, and also in more than 30 other cities of Russia and at least in seven other countries (Quotes of the Moscow orators became mottos in New York, NTV, December 25, 2011)

\textbf{Summary and preliminary conclusions}

The study background, or the events of December 2011 in Moscow and other cities of Russia is presented in chronological order, including information from social media posts. It can reveal certain tendencies in the evolvement of the social media roles – even before the actual analysis is performed.

1. The very first protests on the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} of December were of mainly spontaneous nature, and attention of the society was focused on the disrespectful attitude towards the Russian citizens, demonstrated by scarcely disguised frauds during the election and result calculations. Crucial point here is that not all protesters participated in elections as observers, and a huge part of them did not even vote then, having no interest in politics before the first social movements. Therefore, they got to know about the fraud cases via social media and several media outlets (Echo, TV Rain, Kommersant, etc.) that tended to be critical towards the current regime.

2. The fraud cases were presented in social media in various ways: screenshots from news programs, pictures and videos made by election observers, long posts with the description of what was happening on electoral districts, and also on many different social media platforms, which made it possible to reach a big audience.

3. The second trigger for the movement was arrests and acts of violence from the side of the police during the very first protests that were also widely pictured in social media.

4. The 10\textsuperscript{th} of December became a defining moment in several different ways: the movements nature shifted from spontaneous and chaotic to better organized, and also with participation of people outside Russia and focused international attention. Undoubtedly, social media became one of the most effective tools for the organization and information delivery.

5. The second critical point of the 10\textsuperscript{th} of December was the fact that mainstream media started to respond to the protests and cover it comprehensively, as well as the Russian officials began to provide official commentaries on the situation. Hypothetically, the reason for that was that

\textsuperscript{62} Russian: Vorobyovi Gory
the critical information mass, circulating around the events within social media, was gained. The protest messages started spreading further than Facebook and Twitter, or Internet in general, therefore that response from the government might be considered a part of crisis communication campaign.

6. The social media became not only an information provider, organizational tool and social impact instrument, but also an online platform for building new fully-featured ‘political party’ or, one could say, democratic online community, which became mostly obvious by the 25th: people were establishing Facebook event groups, consolidating in work groups and sharing organizational duties, creating micro-media outlets and marketing materials and electing people who would publicly deliver citizens’ messages.

7. At the first glance, it could be concluded that social media in December Russia not only became a channel for marketing democratic/civil society ideas, but also for marketing of the opinion makers. Certain social media users had had relatively strong popularity which strengthened during the protest, the other ones just became known for their political online activity, and, finally, a number of Russian celebrities discovered their new sides as political activist via social media.

8. The protest series was city-centered and urbanized, and here the correlation between Internet penetration and online civic activity is hard to argue with.

**Enlarging the study hypothesis**

The general study hypothesis is, as it is stated in the introduction, that social media played significant role in self-identifying protesters in December 2010, with civil society, as information provider, opinions expression platform and organizational tool.

However, there are undoubtedly more roles and sub roles of social media that have to be discovered, as long as there is still an open question: what was people’s motivation for participating in both online and offline political life of Russia for the first time in December and how social media helped to get this new audience?

Frauds during elections had not been a matter of surprise in new Russian history, and one can, of course, claim that it was for the rising Internet penetration, that more people got to know about them. This might be partially true, but at the same time dynamics of Internet penetration was even lower in
2011 compared to 2010, by 5.4%, up to 70 million people, according to data provided by Ministry of Communications and Mass Media (‘The number of Internet users in Russia grew up to 70 million’, RIA Novosti, 2011). Therefore, there should be other factors that influenced the growing discontent and willingness of people to stand for their civil rights. These factors lie in the borderland between political science, economic theory, sociology and psychology. The current study aims to focus only on the social media perspective; however, related areas also have to be taken into consideration.

Summarizing the study background and in combination with theoretical research and opening further empirical discussion, the following possible sub roles of social media during Russian protests of December, 2011, are to be examined:

1. **Information channel.** One of the key functions of new media, especially in countries with hybrid regimes, which Russia is related to, according to a number of scientists (Robertson, G.B., 2010). In hybrid regimes, traditional media provide selective political information, which practically makes Internet in general and social media in particular a pluralist source of information, especially when it comes to civil rights violation within a country. According to theoretical studies, new social movement participants tend to use social media as information source alongside with entertainment and communication.

2. **Organizational tool** that reduces cost of collective movement transaction. Having a rapid access to online groups on Facebook that provides various functions for users, such as online voting, open discussions, invitations for events, it becomes much easier to arrange an offline social movement.

3. **Political marketing tool.** The idea of democracy, civic society and human rights is also a product that has to be marketed, as any other political and social message. The open question still is whether the “consumer” was already prepared to perceive and accept these ideas, or it was the matter of the effective promotion policy.

4. **Public discussion platform.** As it was stated earlier, in the middle of December, social media became not only the voice of opposition-minded users, but they also presented a certain feedback from public authorities. This raises a discussion about establishing a debate platform, or ‘public sphere’ – discussion arena for well-educated representatives of middle class. Another side of this social media function is, as claimed by Franke and Pallin, arena for revealing political preferences that had not been possible to create before the December events.

5. **Launching platform for ‘new heroes’.** Frauds and violations of electoral system had not been news for Russia, however, they had never raised those wide social movements before.
The assumption can be made that political activists of new media became role models for young educated people who had not seen someone they could actually follow, or identify themselves with, before December events.

These hypothetical roles and contribution of social media to civic society development will be discussed and analyzed through theoretical frameworks in further chapters.
V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the analytical part of the research, the empirical material from both secondary and primary sources will be analysed in order to answer the research question and to define the roles of social media and civil society state of mind among the protesters. There are around 15 different sociological studies taken for the analysis and the main ones can be found in the Annex.

The chapter will start with an overall analysis of Internet and social media in Russia in the period around the protest movements (October 2011 – January 2012). Then, the level of social and political trust in Russia will be examined, as these two categories were specified as fundamental ones in the discussion about civil society (see theoretical part of the study).

Then, the researcher takes a closer look at the protests and protesters – status, preferences, usage of Internet and social media and, finally, the way they reasoned their participation in the movement. Their online behaviour patterns during the protests are investigated. After that, they are related to their offline political activity. Special attention is put on the ‘faces of the protest’ and their contribution to the public sentiments among social media users.

Importantly, general attitudes to the protest movement among the Russian citizens is examined as well (based on the secondary sources), in order to investigate how wide the ‘diffusion’ of the protest ideas were and how big support they gained.

Later, the social media protests of December 2011 is analyzed through new social movement and political marketing theoretical frameworks.
1. Internet penetration in Russia in 2011/2012: patterns and dynamics

Vast majority of approaches to investigating contemporary social movements, as it can be concluded from theoretical part of the research, see a connection between their emergency and penetration of ICT in protesting regions. In order to find out how relevant this argument is in the Russian case, one has to turn first to the statistics on digital divide in the country, relevant for the study period.

1.1. Overview

According to the report of International Telecommunication Union, published in 2011, Russia took the 47th place of 152 in ranking of ICT penetration (Franke, U, Pallin, C.V. 2012, p. 36).

In March 2012, Levada Center published a report about Internet penetration in Russia, referring to statistics from Yandex and comScore (“The proportion of Internet users has grown by 20 per cent in one year”, Levada Center, 2012-03-30). According to it, the number of Internet users reached 54.5 million people by the beginning of 2012, and the share of Internet users increased by 20 per cent. This tendency of growing Internet penetration was also noticed by FOM that publishes its reports several times a year.

It was important to take the one that was presented at the end of 2011. According to the data, not only did the number of Internet users in general increase, but also the share of active users (those who were using Internet on a daily basis, had grown by nine per cent compared to the previous year.

1.2. Geography

Levada Center’s analysts pointed out that the overwhelming majority – 93 per cent – of new users in the examined period lived outside Moscow and St.Petersburg. FOM’s report confirms Levada’s observation about rapid development of ICT in the regions Analysts of FOM divided the Russian Internet users in three geographical zones on basis of Internet penetration:

1. Zone of active growth (towns and villages) – 33 per cent
2. Zone of moderate growth (million cities and localities with 500 000 and fewer inhabitants) – 15 per cent
3. Zone of stability or insignificant growth (Moscow and St. Petersburg and several other cities) – 15 per cent

As it can be concluded from the Table 3, Moscow and St.Petersburg were still keeping the lead in the examined period. At the same time, one can see that the other high-populated cities also demonstrated sufficiently good figures of growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/ locality</th>
<th>Internet penetration (per cent)</th>
<th>Share of the Internet users in Russia (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of 1 million and more</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of 500 000 - 1 000 000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of less than 100 000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>47</td>
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*FOM* visualised geography of Internet penetration in Russia with the following map:
This strong growth was to a large extent possible because of increasing accessibility (technical and financial) of Internet access and active marketing activity of Internet providing companies, concluded analysts. Referring to a report of NITs Ekonomika, Franke and Pallin also state that the broadband had become the main mean of Internet connection in Russia by 2011, with 36 per cent in Russia (82 per cent of it in Moscow).

Providing data on private usage of the Internet, in August 2011, FOM found that home internet access increased by 10 per cent, “but since household broadband penetration remained flat, they attributed the increase to mobile internet usage”. eMarketer at the same time reported a significant growth on the Russian broadband market in the past few years (see Annex). According to their data, the number of fixed broadband households had grown to 11.9 million in 2011.

1.3. Internet users in Russia by age and patterns of their online behaviour

Analysing the age of the Russian Internet users in 2011 (see Annex), based on FOM’s data, comScore divided them in several age cohorts and showed how many percent of each of the groups that uses Internet (see Graph 1, Internet users in Russia, by age, in 2011 (per cent of respondents in each group):
Commenting the report on the Internet penetration in 2011-2012, sociologist of Levada Center Denis Volkov emphasized that the number of Internet users had grown considerably due to the increase in younger audiences. They, according to Volkov, use it for communication, entertainment, movies and only then – for following the news.

In Graph 2, one can see patterns of the ways Internet was used by the Russian people in the end of 2011, based on data from Levada Center (comprehensive table covering the period from March 2011 to February 2012 is presented in the Annex). There were two relevant surveys conducted in December and both are included in the graph.

As one can observe, communication, information searching and means of entertainment (altogether) go before reading the news. Still, Volkov stated, the importance of the Internet as a news source had been growing too, by older users. “73 per cent of people learn about world news from central TV channels, and only 13 per cent via Internet”, he noticed. Trust towards online and mainstream news sources will be discussed in more detail in the further sections.
Turning to the online activity statistics, the Russian Internet user spent an average of 21.7 hours online in the previous month, consuming 2,332 web pages, reported *comScore* in October 2011. As for mobile Internet technologies and applications, *FOM* estimated smartphone penetration at 11 per cent which is relatively low compared to the Western countries, but *eMarket* specialists considered that “as a matter of time before middle-class and younger users demand more engaging mobile content” (November 2011).

### 1.4. Social Media and User-generated content in Russia

Data presented by *VTSIOM* in the beginning of 2012 (right after the December protests) showed that the share of social media users had grown up to 55 per cent of the population, and just a half-year before that it was 49 per cent. More than that, 82 per cent of Internet users had accounts in one or several social media websites. This means, at any rate, that the level of awareness about social media and their functions was incredibly high among the overwhelming majority of the Russian Internet users in the end of 2011.

*eMarketer*, however, provides different statistics. The surge of Internet protests in the end of 2011 made it seem that the number of social media users increased by 25 per cent. Later research showed that the growth was 11.6 per cent instead. Their detailed research revealed that Internet is used by
33.5 per cent of the population in Russia and 75 per cent of Internet users had social media accounts (29.9 per cent and 74.2 per cent respectively in 2010). comScore estimated the growth in Facebook and Twitter users to 74 per cent (35 million registered users).

In the beginning of January 2012, Denis Volkov was interviewed at Ekho Moskvi about the growing role of social media. In his estimation of the social media scale in Russia, he was rather skeptical and pointed out that there were only 20 per cent of social media users among the whole population of Russia. Also, he stated that 96 per cent of them were younger than 25 years. “Social media is more of young people’s portion in life”, he noticed. “Their presence in social media at least to some extent changes their behaviour” (“Social media: harm or use”, Levada Center, 2012). The proportion of active social media users in Moscow remained low even in 2013: 16.7 per cent only used VK every day, and only 3/8 per cent were active on Twitter (‘Aktivnye pol’zovateli Vkontakte i Twittter: Reyting rossiyskih regionov’, 2013).

Volkov also paid attention to the fact that self-arrangement of social media users can be both good and bad. In the first case, he mentioned civil activists, animal’s rights protectors as an example. At the same time, sometimes young people arrange scuffles online. According to Volkov, some respondents of Levada’s research even said that they would not have participated in a street fight if it was not planned in advance.

For older people, he said, social media remained mostly a news source.

Summarising the data on Internet in Russia by the end of 2011, it would be fair to say that although there had been significant growth in regional expansion of ICT, Internet penetration was still on a relatively low level (not even 30 per cent in the Central region). The core audience consists of urban citizens below 25 years of age, and the main purposes for using the Internet are searching for information and entertainment. The proportion of social media users is quite big, yet not massive on a national scale.
2. Social and political trust in the Russian society

A considerable number of scholars, as can be seen in the theoretical chapter, agree that trust of individuals towards each other and the government is a fundamental principle of civil society. This section aims to provide data about the level of trust in the Russian society during the examined period.

2.1. Trust towards institutions and interpersonal trust

Franke and Pallin claim that civil society in Russia is rather weak and mainly consist of non-profit organisations that are financed from abroad. Russian organisations are generally allied by the state and are often used to mobilise the community during elections to support the leading party (2012, p. 24).

In order to create an illusion of a democratic state, claims the authors, the Russian government established various institutions and sub-institutions. These are supposed to compensate the lack of political plurality and freedom of press. Among these institutions and sub-institutions, authors specify the Federation Council, ‘loyal’ opposition parties, state companies, and the State Duma. None of these organisations are able to provide accountability to the Russian citizens. And even when civil society succeeds in its attempts to start a dialogue with the power representatives, those institutions are not involved in the process. Referring to three Russian main sociological research organisations 63, Franke and Pallin conclude that the level of trust to these institutions declined dramatically by 2011, compared to 2004. Also, according to Romir research group, in that period the share of the Russian citizens who did not trust institutions, had grown from 23 per cent to 37 per cent. Opinion polls showed that trust towards the President decreased most of all. Trust towards the Government, the Duma and the Federation Council was at more or less the same level, which, however, was very low from the beginning (around 5 per cent in case of the Duma). As it was mentioned in the theoretical part with a reference to Gibson (2001), a broad array of non-state voluntary organisations is a crucial element of civil society.

63 VTSIOM, Levada Centre and FOM
It is not only low political trust that challenges the development of a healthy and strong civil society in Russia, but social trust as well. Individuals in Russia in 2007, according to international surveys of trust, demonstrated low trust towards each other. In the list of 24 countries, Russia was on the 19th place (Franke and Pallin 2012, p. 30).

Interestingly, in March 2011, before the protests started, the Centre for Strategic Research (CSR) published a report about potential political crisis in Russia (Belanovskii, S. and Dmitriev M, 2011). Conclusion of their report was that political confrontation inside Russia was possible due to growing middle class and economic growth. They wrote: “We suppose that continuation of sustainable socio-economic development of the country will open additional opportunities for promotion of comprehensive democracy in the future”. At the same time, CSR’s research, based on their own opinion polls, confirms significant decrease in trust to the government among the population in recent years.

The study of Levada Center conducted in November 2011 reflects trust of the Russian citizens towards various social and political institutions, relevant to that period. As one can see from the Graph 3, governmental representatives were not having sufficient credibility among the Russian population. At the same time, school teachers, church workers and military men were trustworthy according to the respondents.
One can put the same figures in a different way and try to see whether the Russians were showing more trust or mistrust towards social and political institutions in general. Although the “trust completely” option was not chosen that often, more than one-third of respondents claimed to trust the institutions. An even bigger percentage was having mixed feelings (36 per cent). Putting together the number of respondents who “do not trust” and “do not trust completely”, one will get 22 per cent. Although this, undoubtedly, is a big proportion, the level of distrust after all did not seem extremely critical. Yet, it is important to remember that respondents from different places in Russia were participating in the research, and not only Moscowites.
2.2. Trust towards media

Another evidence of weak civil society that Franke and Pallin mention is governmental control over media. In 2011, Freedom house rated Russia ‘non-free’ again in its annual report on press-freedoms around the world. Referring to various studies, Franke and Pallin claim that free media are represented by several outlets (e.g. **Ekho Moskvi** and **Novaya Gazeta** that were mentioned earlier). These, emphasize the researchers, “only reach a limited section of population, mainly the educated middle class in metropolitan areas” (p. 25). Graph 3 presented above depicts ambiguous feelings of the Russians towards media, however, further investigations on that matter has to be done.

After the December events, Russian media in their discussions figuratively divided all the Russians in two main audiences – ‘TV party’ and ‘Internet party’ (Sergey Parkhomenko, **Radio Svoboda**, 2012). Franke and Pallin also refer to this opinion when investigating trust to media sources in Russia. The ‘Internet party’ is very narrow and fragmented, with leaders that are mostly well known for online audience and have no access to “the big television”. TV party members are practically the rest of the Russian citizens, who use mainstream (often pro-governmental) media as their main sources of information.

In the Graphs 5 we can see that more than a third of the Russians did not make their mind towards Internet as a trustworthy source of news. Television (Graph 6) showed much bigger credibility among the population.
These figures bring us back to the conclusion that despite the growing penetration of ICT, new media could not be considered as sources of information of federal importance. Looking ahead, or more correct to say, later than the examined period, Levada Center has been constantly marking an increase in new media audience and ‘aging’ of this audience. This trend demonstrates hopeful prospects for new media to become an alternative source of information on a federal scale in Russia, however, it is a question of a long-term perspective. At the examined period, new media was a news source for a very limited audience, as one can conclude from the data.

Source (Graphs 5 and 6): Levada Center, March 2012, n=1600, margin of error ≤ 3.4 %
3. Civil society rhetoric in social media during the protests

This chapter overviews rhetoric of social media texts and their messages, that were ‘shared’, ‘liked’ and cited in mainstream media. The main focus of analysis is their connection to the notion of civil society as it is presented in the theoretical part of the study. In fact, every day of December 2011 in Russia can potentially serve as a priceless collection of empirical data for researchers within different areas and for media scholars in particular. Therefore, only several examples of texts are taken, in order to demonstrate the connection between the ideas that were promoted via social media and the ways they could potentially impact individuals’ behaviour.

3.1. Social media texts

Before proceeding to the analysis of the connection of those messages to the idea of civil society, one can shortly summarise the idea of the concept, basing on key words and phrases: social trust, political trust, social capital, reciprocity, human rights, state of law, co-operation and coordination for mutual benefits, solidarity and individual freedom. Briefly, summarising the concept itself, civil society is built on the power of groups and relational networks, with sustainable communication between them. Interpersonal trust and reciprocity become fundamental principles, and an ability for the individual to make its own political choices is one of the central values of civil society. These are the anchors, the main keynotes that are included in the majority of approaches to civil society – and the same key words and phrases (in a direct way or implicitly) were used in social media content in December 2011.

These messages can be divided in to three major groups by character:

1. Direct or indirect appeals to be engaged in the protest activity, starting with voting instead of ignoring the elections, and finishing with calls for joining the protest events. These types of messages reasoned the necessity of getting involved in the current political events of the country by citizens’ duty. The main focus was made on a need to a stand against the violation of the law.

2. Positive image of protesters: messages, emphasizing civility, ethics, refinement, sophistication and good intentions of the protesters. These messages aimed to create an attractive picture of the movement and its participants – the picture which potentially ‘recruited’ individuals would like to identify themselves with. This type of addressing, as
well as the previous statement, also lets the protesters see benefits of engagement (according to Olson’s approach to engagement to movements). In the first case, these benefits were more of a social capital character – contribution to the society improvement and each of its members’ well-being, prosperity and success. The second point stresses out personal benefits – possibility to bring oneself in one line of the ‘best representatives of the society’ and identify oneself with values of a ‘right’, civil-minded person.

3. ‘Threshold’, ‘safety in numbers’ and ‘collective action’ messages – these posts pointed that there had already been significant number of protesters involved in the actions, and that representatives of various social and political groups were acting altogether with the same good purpose. These messages were decreasing a threshold of fear that potential protesters could have, and motivating them for mobilisation.

Proceeding to examples for each category of messages, it would be interesting to look at the time period right before the elections. Alexei Navalny, together with other popular bloggers, was agitating social media users to vote instead of ignoring the elections, and if possible to register as observers at voting stations at election wards. But also they were convincing people to talk with as many friends, relatives and acquaintances – and even strangers – as possible. “The final three days before the elections are very important. Everyone has to fulfill their duty as a citizen and patriot” (Navalny’s blog on LiveJournal, December 3). This is a message from the first category: one can see parallels between the last sentence and political trust with its measures – civic-mindness and participation, citizenship, political interest, involvement and, finally, patriotic feelings. It encouraged individuals to get engaged in political activity by their own choice, without any institutional or societal constraints, and just for their own good. This is also important because that formulation put the audience that Navalny appealed to in contradiction to Nashi members who did not seem to act by free will and thoughtful political choice.

Generally, Navalny in his rhetoric was addressing to his readers as ‘citizens’ rather often.

Convincing the audience to vote for any party, but United Russia one day before the election, LiveJournal user k_p wrote “…the government of Russia is outside the legal terrain”. As it was discussed by the scholars, civil society can only exist in a legal state. There were generally a lot of messages showing that the current Russian governance with its methods practically stood on the way to building a strong civil society. The other example of that is a popular post of one of the election’s
observers which contained the following phrase: “They can calculate the way they want. They just don’t care”.

In the daytime, on the 5th of December, a post under a title “Navalny calls for going to a demonstration” was many times shared on Facebook and LiveJournal. It started with “Absolutely impudent and total fraud on the elections of Moscow simply obliges us to show our civil position and express our protest towards the situation”. In the end of her post, Elena Tikhonova, the ideologist of The White Ribbon, wrote: “All the resources of The White Ribbon project are created to engage the whole country in the movement, and not only Internet users. […] We all need to assert our country. We need to make the government remember that they serve the people, and not that the people serve them” (Tikhonova, 2011).

December, 5, Navalny: ‘We [citizens] have built a new political environment of the country. We TOGETHER – are against the United Russia. Russia is against Crooks and Thieves” – the message that both relates to the first category (implication: the citizens are against the illegal system) and the third one, pointing out cooperation of the big number of people against the ruling party. The other – more radical – call for protesting, that corresponds to those two categories, was written by LiveJournal user nomina obscura: “…Either you are a citizen or you are shit. If you are a citizen – this is your city, your country, but this is not your government. Go outside and say that. Go to the square and join thousands of those who are just like you – smart, honest, brave and dissatisfied”. The last statement of that message, as well, belongs to the second category that stresses out the best characteristics of the protesters. The same encouraging pattern could be seen in live reports from the places of protests, for example, Deputy Dmitriy Gudkov’s tweet: “Who said that there are marginals here?! Great people, many young ones! Real citizens! I am impressed. Energetics! Proud of us!”.

As it was mentioned in the study background chapter, a message from supposedly the police chief (which was later claimed to be fake by the police representatives) was circulating in social media: “If there are 5,000 people in the streets, this rally will be cleared away. If there are 50,000 – the police will stand silently, and if there are 500,000 – the police will take their side”. An individual that stumbled upon that message was getting the idea that in fact everyone was openly or silently engaged in the protest ideas, even those who were not expected to.

One of the top-shared posts about the frauds was written by an observer, who revealed manipulation with the election results on his voting station and tried to prevent them. He faced strong counter
stand from the election committee representatives and simply could not do anything because he was all alone. He wrote: “When I was going home, tears were burning my cheeks. I was feeling crazily ashamed that I didn’t make it, that I didn’t cope with all that responsibility that 697 voters of our voting station put on me” (LiveJournal user vyrodok, 2011, December, 6). This post, again, underlined lawlessness of the election process and, at the same time, demonstrated high standards of integrity of those who were ‘on the other side’, like the author himself.

The other aspect of human rights and law violation was devoted to cruel actions of the police. Anton Nossik, one of the oldest and most famous bloggers in Russia, wrote: “...the government allowed them to do so with the population of occupied territories”. Violation of law and human rights were also clearly demonstrated via tweets of Twitter users about Navalny’s case directly from the court: “ok, it is not working well, the judge is interrupting Navalny’s lawyers”; “NAVALNY HAS NOT EATEN for 16 hours!, “Navalny also ‘pushed OMON in the chest’ – with his third pair of hands, apparently”, “Well, one more nasty thing: witnesses of Navalny and Yashin’s arrests turned to be THE SAME PEOPLE! It’s impossible – both were arrested in different places”, etc. The audience was reading these messages in a real-time mode and was getting a picture that the crimes against human and civil rights were happening right before their eyes. And the fact, that those messages were hundreds of times ‘shared’, ‘retweeted’, quoted by top newspapers and gathered tons of angry commentaries, - that fat was creating an illusion of a large and soaring surge which was going far beyond Twitter and Facebook.

The messages from the third category are also represented in posts of ‘latent political actors’ (the concept examined in the theoretical part of the research). Lyudmila Petranovskaya, famous Russian psychologist, wrote: “They have violated rights of everyone – communists, fascists, glamour journalists and even ‘nashists’. Therefore, I don’t understand why we cannot just altogether demand new elections” (as LiveJournal user ludmilapsycholog). This refers to the civil society ideal setting – ‘everyone is preferred, no one is excluded’. Continuing this idea, one can refer to the Deputy Mitrokhin’s tweet from a police car after his arrest, provided in the study background chapter: “Sitting with Limonov in OVD Tverskoye. [we are] arguing about the political situation in the country. He says hi”. That, from the first sight, meaningless post shows that when citizens collaborate for common goals, political background and preferences (like those of Limonov and Mitrokhin) fade into insignificance. This dogma can also be related to the conflict between the opposition parties about the demonstration’s venue on the 10th of December. Boris Nemtsov, involved the conflict, was commenting the compromise they had reached with the other part: “This
stupid and aggressive tactics will bring nothing good to [Putin] and his regime. He will not manage to break the opposition down anyway”. The stress in his message was made on the fact that personal preferences of the participants of the conflict did not matter. What was really important was their cooperation for the sake of the Russian citizens.

Continuing with messages with a more positive connotation, one can take a post from LiveJournal user bocharsky. The post was written right after it became clear that there were not 100 or 500 people in the streets of Moscow, but thousands of them. The text itself was claiming that the authorities were actually scared, and revolution – with violence and deaths – was definitely not their goals. The user was claiming that once people show that there are issues for discontent and they are ready to go outside and express their opinion loudly, the government will start listening to them. “It is unbelievable, but the power is moving as far as the society allows it to […] All we have to do is to change those borders […] The more people that protest, the further those borders will be”. These statements have three main ideas: 1) what protesters were doing, actually led to a certain positive outcome; 2) the protesters are citizens, and after all, only citizens have real power and not the government 3) there is no need for the protesters to use physical force or illegal actions to be heard by the authorities. Those three messages could possibly become perfect motivations: it was not dangerous to join the movement, and it was actually bringing some visible results – joining a successful campaign could seem beneficial to social media users.

Positive rhetoric of Alexei Navalny was very clear, sharp, laconic and stimulative, and he was often quoted by mainstream media. For example, a fragment of his post “The only, but the most powerful weapon we have is a feeling of self-respect” became also a title for several newspaper articles. That message was clearly showing that only those who have a feeling of dignity and self-respect can affront the power of a lawless regime.

Another interesting phenomenon that is also mentioned in the chapter about faces of the protests is a broken framework of ‘celebrity culture’ that was demonstrated both in social media rhetoric and in online and offline behaviour of famous people involved in the movement. The journalist Bozhena Rynska, a person with a certain media influence, was released after her accidental arrest quite fast. However, she wrote a long post with the words “I want OMON not to dare to hit my leg not because I am Bozhena, but because they would be f*cked by the law if they do that” (see chapter “Study background”). Therefore, even though her civil rights were significantly more protected than those of regular citizens due to her status, she demonstrated caring about them as well. In her online activity,
she was constantly emphasising a necessity of building a state that functions by the rule of law and not by the power of wealth.

One of the most quoted and ‘shared’ messages during the whole protest wave was the post of Livejournal user lady_spring, as it was mentioned in the the study background chapter. The long text that was underlining a peaceful nature of the coming event and motivating people to act in the borders of law and civil ethics contained the following phrases:

“...our power is in the fact that there are many of us and that we stand for the truth! We do not want to and we will not beat anyone! Calm down those people who look aggressive. ...What [the authorities] are afraid most of all is that there will be civilised, intelligent and polite people who are just fed up. And people who are ready for the certain legal actions. [...] We are not AGAINST something of someone, but FOR – in this case, for re-election”. - “Let’s show them that we are not a crowd, we are PEOPLE, CITIZENS. I beg you. For our parents, children, for our future”.

This text, even in a shortened form, contains key principles of civil society and can be related to all the three categories at once. The message did not aim to argue people out of participating in the protest event – in opposite, she called it ‘a legal action’ of people who were ‘fed up’. It also shaped a positive image of participants of the movement and their values (family, children, future). What is more important, it was pointing out that there were many people sharing the same values and they had a potential to make a real change. Interestingly, there is a common trait in her post and in a status update of a TV host Tatyana Lazareva, straight after she was giving a speech on Sakharov avenue: “…both we and them [the police] have children and we all want them to come back home safe and sound”. Lady_spring also was claiming that the policemen were just doing their job and were encouraging people to smile to them. This approach is a form of ideal role taking, that was discussed in the theoretical section within e-democracy concept. A member of civil society has to cooperate with those who share their values, but also, it is important to understand ‘the other side’, try to ‘walk in their shoes’ and to do one’s best not to do any harm to them.

3.2. Feedback of the protesters

Here, the rhetoric of those protesters who were participating in two stages of the data collection for this study is presented, and only open-response questions are analysed in this section. The
respondents of the online survey were asked about their motivation for protesting, as it was described in the methodological part of the study. The majority of them put general tiredness of the situation and the government, without clarification of certain issues. Those who provided explanations were emphasizing lies, inability to make free political choices and a feeling of being excluded from the shaping of the history of the country. Also, there were answers that were stressing out civic motivations, willingness to collaborate and belief in coming changes.

*I want to express my civil position and demand FAIR elections.*

*Belief that something is going to change*

*Love and friendship, respect and cooperation*

*Dream to live in a free, economically and socially healthy state.*

*Civil position*

*I felt like with help of that revolted “crowd”, there is at least some chance to change something.*

*And I decided to become a part of this crowd.*

However, the majority of the answers state how the protesters did not want it to be, rather than providing a picture of what should be in their opinion.

Interestingly, the rhetoric of the protest leaders was often criticised for being destructive rather than positive – they were not presenting a model of ‘good life’. In opposite, they were showing why the current life was ‘not good’. If one judges from the sample of respondents participating in the online survey, these tendencies found their way in opinions of the social media protesters.

Turning to the respondents of the face-to-face interviews – or one can say, offline protesters - they, for obvious reasons, had more possibilities for detailed answers. Therefore one can see even clearer reasoning in their responses. As a closing question, some of them were asked how they would define civil society for themselves.

For example, the respondent #2 as the very first condition of civil society named an ability to make free political choices. However, he also uses negative formulation (not ‘we need to have a right to choose’, but ‘now we do not have the right to choose’):
“...we’ve chosen the president that we like, but we don’t like how he rules, so we choose another. We don’t have this. This is what I stand for. What is happening right now reminds me of the Tsarist epoch more: the government said “this way”, and then it will be this way. If you don’t agree, then, I am sorry, you are a goner”.

Then, he emphasizes a non-humanistic approach towards citizens from the police’s side:

“When we go on such movements, OMON beats women. Of course, sometimes OMON is being provoked to, but they are OMON, they have to be taught to be self-restrained. And what do we have? We have it the other way round! They are not qualified at all. I hope today [May 13] it is going to be fine”.

Here, ‘what-should-not-be’ rhetoric can be observed as well.

The respondent #3 defined civil society as following:

“It’s when people who are not connected by professional relations or fellowship can consolidate in order to reach certain goals that they are interested in. To begin with, their house and yard, and to this kind of a large –scale community that is called the Russian Federation. So, it’s when they can cooperate informally and achieve their objectives. This is happening exactly now”.

According to his own words, the respondent was not using social media at all, therefore his view on civil society values was most likely not affected by social media messages. At the same time his narrative of civil society is more constructive than that of the previous respondent and corresponds with the theoretical definitions.

Respondent #5 did not define the concept of civil society, answering the relevant question. However, in his statements one can clearly see the ‘threshold’ idea:

[Civil society] exists, but it’s just deeply hidden. These events help to express it all outside. People of course discuss [the [political situation] between each other anyways, but they do it not openly, they act discretely. These actions help to stick together and give people a chance to see that they are not alone who think that way.

Also, his opinion takes us back to one of the social media roles suggested by Franke and Pallin’s – a platform for revealing real political interests and expressing opinions in a state with strong
censorship. However, the respondent was not speaking about social media - in opposite, he was calling a real time (or offline) action motivating and constructive.

To sum up, social media indeed was distributing certain messages and ideas that correspond to civil society principles. Mainly, they were saying the following:

- What is happening is not right;
- You are not alone in your dissatisfaction with the situation;
- Those who share your ideas are smart, educated and active people who are ready to build civil society in Russia – in case all individuals start productive collaboration.

At the same time, there is a probability that the last message was at some point lost in the traffic of the first two.

Also, according to the answers of online respondents, they were at some point feeling themselves ‘agents of change’ (Lievrouw). This idea contained both in the messages that were spread in social media, and the answers of the respondent. They were motivated to participate in the process of social and political change, and the accent in the rhetoric was made on a special role that every individual can play in fighting the regime.
4. Who, how and why was attending the protest events in December 2011?

This section aims to define patterns in social portraits of protesters, primary sources of information about the protests and their further online activity.

4.1. Portrait of protesters

*Levada Center* provided a comprehensive socio-demographic portrait of the protesters, that was later presented by Denis Volkov in his report. Important to notice, that only data from the event on the 24th of December was collected.

Source (Graph 7, 8 and 9): Levada Center, December 2011. 791 respondents (margin of error ≤ 4,8%)
Summarising the data from the graphs, one can see that the majority of protesters were in 25-39 age cohort (30 per cent of respondents, see Graph 3) and proportions of men and women were 60 to 40 correspondently (see Graph 2). The youngest respondent of the online survey, conducted by the researcher, was 18 years old and the oldest one 46 years old, with mode=24 years (11 out of 57 respondents). Other common answers were 25 (10 respondents) and 30 (8 respondents).

The social media marketing agency *Green* (2012) presented their own statistics based on 20,000 Facebook and VK profiles of those users who confirmed their participation in events on Bolotnaya and Sakharova. The gender proportion is different from that of *Levada Center* – 80 per cent men and 20 per cent women. Age mode coincides with that of the online survey presented above – 23-24 years old, and 55 per cent of them are in 21-25 years cohort.

The vast majority of respondents had a higher education (62 per cent) and Volkov emphasizes that only one third of the Russian population has a higher education (see Graph 5). The majority identified themselves as ‘specialists’ from the professional point of view (see Graph 6).

![Graph 10. Division by professional status](image)

Source: Levada Center, December 2011, 791 respondents (margin of error ≤ 4.8%)
As it can be seen in Graph 11, a significant number of protesters defined themselves as ‘democrats’ and ‘liberals’. The survey did not aim to find out the meaning that they put into these political categories, but one can make an assumption that they are implying general civil society freedoms and rights as the main values, when speaking about their political orientation.

Turning to the places of living of the protesters, Levada Center’s report from the 24th of December cannot be considered representative: the survey was conducted during the protest events in Moscow, so it is not surprising that a vast majority of them lived there too. However, according to Green’s analysis of social media profiles of the event-group-members, 77 per cent of them lived in Moscow too. 60 per cent, however, were born outside Moscow.

Interestingly, the most common company that online protesters were employed at was the Internet technology company Yandex (at least 15 people). Also, according to Green, there were many users who put ‘journalist’ in career fields on their social media profiles.

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64 A Russian Internet company
4.2. Accounts of protesters in social media

Green also checked which other social media networks that protesters had profiles on, and the following list was presented (in decreasing order): livejournal.com, formspring.me, twitter.com, facebook.com, lastfm.ru, sprashivai.ru.

The researcher’s own online survey provided the following statistics: 98 per cent of the respondents had profiles on Facebook, 84 per cent on VK, 60 per cent on Twitter, 60 per cent on LiveJournal, 49 per cent on Odnoklassniki and 3.5 per cent on Liveinternet and 3.5 per cent on LinkedIn.

In summary, one can see several interesting patterns in the analysis of the protesters. First of all, the research that was taken directly at the protest event, showed that the majority of the protesters were in the 25-39 age cohort. Those who confirmed their participation on social media groups/events, but whose factual participation was not proved, were younger – 23-24 years. Also, the ‘offline’ protesters seem to be less active in social media than ‘online’ ones, judging on the number of social networks that the latter ones were registered in. All the studies, at the same time, show that the protesters (‘online’ and ‘offline’) were people with university education and with a current professional occupation. Indistinct political orientation shows that the movement did not emerge because a certain political party became more popular than the others. The interviewees on the May walk also denied reckoning themselves among people with a strong political orientation. Furthermore, one could not observe any successful political campaigns of existing political parties in social media either.

4.1. Awareness of frauds and protest events among the Russians – information sources

Social Research Fund (Samara) and Monitoring Center of Social processes (St. Petersburg) provided data on the role of Internet, online communities and modern mobile resources in online self-organisation and establishment of civil society and formation of so-called ‘a new Russian’. Their surveys were conducted by telephone on the 20-21st of December 2011 via representative sampling of Moscow citizens from 18 years old.
4.1.1. General awareness about demonstrations and demands of protesters among the citizens

Only 9.5 per cent of the Moscowites were not aware of the protests in Russia at all, while a vast majority (more than two-thirds, or 68 per cent) were well-informed about the event on the 10th of December. 2.5 per cent confirmed their participation in the demonstration. Around 23 per cent of the respondents had a general idea about the situation in the country.

It also turned out that 43.5 per cent of the Moscow citizens did not know anything about the main protest demands proclaimed by the movement organisers on the 10th of December. 19.5 per cent had a vague idea about them, 6.5 per cent knew about only one statement from that list, and in most cases it was the demand for fair elections. As Levada Center sociologists pointed out, despite that the movement’s resolutions were not announced on TV channels, 11 per cent of respondents were aware of all the five statements.

4.1.2. Attitude towards protest and protesters

30.5 per cent of respondents totally approved the idea of protesting against the election frauds, 15.5 per cent approved it less categorically. Only 13.5 per cent of the Moscowites were strongly criticising protests and their aims, and less than 12 per cent were disapproving them in a more moderate way. It is possible to say, conclude Levada’s sociologists, that there were 46 per cent of supporters and around 25 per cent of opponents towards the rallies. The rest were either not sure about their attitude or preferred not to answer.

Among those who were aware of all the five statements and supported the idea of protests itself, 73 per cent were approving the demand of punishment of all parties guilty of the frauds. Less popular was the statement of recounting of the election voting. Then, there were more or less even numbers of those who approved and disapproved cancellation of the voting results at all. In other words, noticed the sociologists, Moscow citizens were not very strong supporters of radical measures. At the same time, a share of those who wanted resignation of the Head of the election committee was 1.5 times bigger than those who did not support that demand. And, finally, although the attitude towards the demand for freedom of the Russian political prisoners was generally positive, there was a large proportion of respondents who did not provide any response on that issue.
Providing an advanced overview on the response to the protest - not only that from Moscow citizens, but the Russians in general, - the results turned to be different. *Levada Center* performed a wide research on that matter, and there are several questions that are in a focus of interest for this study. First of all, when people in Russia were asked whether they were satisfied with the results, 15 per cent answered ‘completely satisfied’ and 36 per cent- ‘satisfied’. Only 35 per cent of the population was ‘not satisfied completely’ or ‘not satisfied’, and 14 per cent could not answer. In other words, more than a half of the population did not show any discontent either with the voting process or the results.

Then, answering the question whether they would participate in a protest event if it took place in their city or area, 77 per cent said that they would not do that. One of the questions concerned a widely spread belief that many the protest movements were sponsored by the United States, and 31 per cent agreed with that idea, 37 per cent could not answer and only 33 per cent did not share that belief.

Analysis of the citizens awareness and their attitudes to the protest events is yet another proof that the movement was rather Moscow-focused than national. And even though penetration of Internet and social media in particular was relatively high in other big cities, the effect of the media campaign was far less visible. This argument relates both to geographical coverage and ideological impact: even those who were aware of the protest activities were not supporting them and were not ready to take part in the demonstrations.

### 4.1.3. Sources of information about the movement

Looking more closely to those citizens who were getting sufficient information about the movement and decided to take part in the demonstrations, it is crucial to find out their sources and therefore to see, which of them that was most popular. *Levada Center* asked people that came to the protest rally on the 24th of December what their channels of information about the rallies were, and the results are presented in Graph 12.
For a more detailed investigation of the role of Internet in social media, we can turn to the online survey results by the researcher. There, different social media platforms were presented as different options and all mainstream media were united in one option.

The question about how much time in advance the respondents got to learn about the first protest movement did not provide surprising answers. Before the results are presented, it is important to notice that it was not specified in the questionnaire that the first one was the event on the 4th of
December. ‘The first’ one for a certain individual could be chronologically the second or the third one – as soon as the information reached them for the first time.

32 per cent of the respondents wrote that ‘one week’ was the time period before when they learned about the event and the day it was organised. Presumably, those were the events on the 10th or 24th of December that were implied. 18 per cent put ‘two weeks’ as an answer (event on the 24th of December), 20 per cent knew about the first event 2-3 days before and, finally, for 6 per cent it was not more than 3 hours before the event started. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that a small proportion of protesters got engaged or ‘recruited’ spontaneously, since one week is enough time for an individual to learn more information on the topic and to form their own opinion.

Those interviewed on the 13th of May, 2012 provided various versions about the sources where they first heard about the frauds and protests. The first respondent, for example, got a YouTube link with the first videos of rallies from his mother, who was following the news. She, in her turn, first saw it on a citizen journalist news agency Ridus. The second respondent named Facebook and Twitter as his information sources, but when he was asked about the reasons for participation (see in the further section), he started talking about videos with Victory day parade or Vladimir Putin, that were not related to the December events.

The respondent #3 was the only one who was participating in the rally on the 4th of December and this was how he commented his awareness of the situation:

“... it seems that no one knew anything. Everything happened very spontaneously. People just came outside. And they went to different places. There was no certain place where everything happened. And then everything continued like an avalanche, also during the next protests... I used no mainstream media or social networks... I just listened to a speech of Dmitry Bykov on [the radio station] Echo Moskvi and I understood that it is a next step, next action. Of course, I never thought there would be so many people here”.

The next respondent also heard about the protest on the same radio station and went to the place of the demonstration straight away, without searching for additional information.

Respondent #5 was not sure about his source, but most likely, he said, it was Alexei Navalny’s blog on LiveJournal. However, he noticed that he was not using social networks actively and did not discuss the topic there:
I would say [my source was] Internet in general and not just social networks. I use Internet quite actively. I read a lot, so I don’t have any problems with getting information about these kinds of actions (Respondent #5).

Finally, the 6th respondent first characterised his trust towards any kinds of media, saying that it was hard to judge about the events even being in Moscow, so none of the outlets, according to him, was covering the December situation sufficiently objectively. When he was asked to name a certain source he heard about the frauds from, he provided the following answer:

It’s hard to remember now; it all emerged very spontaneously and from throughout. Something on VK, something on Facebook... I guess mostly from these two social networks as I am not that much on LJ, and nor on Twitter. I was on that moment subscribed to two people only – [Karl] Lagerfeld and my friend, and both were very apolitical in this regard. And I am not using Twitter that much.

Before drawing further conclusions on the topic, it would be interesting to see the distribution of the protesters by protest events.

4.2. Participation in the protest events

The Graph 14 represents event attendance rate, based on data from the online survey conducted in March by the author of the study.

Source: research by Daria Dmitrieva, March 2012, n=54
Summarising results from Graphs 13 and 14, one can conclude that the more time people had to make a decision about the participation, the more participants the events had. There could be several explanations for that. First of all, there was more time for those online activists that were involved in event organisations to deploy wider mobilisation campaigns. The other possible reason is that more public activists were engaged in these campaigns, shaping a ‘positive’ face of the protest. Then, there was simply more time for information to spread itself, via ‘word of mouth’. Furthermore, basing on views of scholars, there could also be individual’s engagement to someone who was already involved in the movement that played role. Therefore, when social media users, seeing how many Internet ‘friends’ were discussing and commenting on the topic, their ‘threshold level’ got lower. Finally, people just had more time to shape their opinions and to find out to which extent their own believes and values were corresponding to the protest mottos and ideas.

Before getting to reasons the respondents proclaimed as motivations for participations, one can turn to the political engagement patterns they had been demonstrating before and during the December events.
4.3. Behaviour patterns of protesters

4.3.1. Political activity offline

In this section, the participation of the protesters in the December movements will not be discussed, because all the necessary data on that matter is presented above. There are two main questions to answer here, and the first one is if people actually voted during that election. As Franke and Pallin mentioned, manipulation during elections were not surprising information for the Russians even before 2011. Taking into consideration the low level of trust towards governmental representatives, one can assume that there could be a big proportion of the population that did not see a point in voting. According to the official statistics, voting turnout during the elections of 2011 was three per cent lower than that of 2007, with 60.2 per cent vs. 63.71 per cent (Novikov, K. 2011).

If the respondents did participate in the elections of 2011, it would be interesting to see whether they were voting on the Parliamentary elections previously, in 2007 or even earlier. This would help to better understand whether ‘Facebook revolution’ supporters were as apolitical as they were claimed to be before the 4th of December.

First, we can turn to Levada Center’s research on the 28th of December about the general attitude of the Russians towards the protest movement. An overwhelming majority of the Russian citizens (63 per cent) voted on the State Duma elections in 2011, 53 per cent- on elections in 2007 and 37 per cent - in 2003. Importantly, here, the whole population is considered, and not only Moscowites and, especially, only those who were protesting against the frauds in 2011.

Turning more specifically to those Russians who were actually engaged in the movements, one can see the following voting statistics (based on the online survey data): 67 per cent voted in 2011 and 54 per cent - in 2007. 26 per cent did not vote at all. Lower figures in 2007 can also be explained by the age of the protesters: many of them could be younger than 18 years by then. However, we can see that the proportion of voters engaged in the protest is comparable to overall voting pattern in Russia.

In general, protesters of 2011 did not show significant protest activity before the December events: only 21 per cent indicated their participation in earlier movements. Among interviewees from the 13th of May, only one person turned out to be an active protester (respondent #3, see Annex) who participated in ‘Strategy 31’ demonstrations.
No [I did not participate in previous protest movements]. Those were December events that really touched me (Respondent #6).

Thus, the demonstrations of 2011 were indeed the first protest experience for the majority of people. The analysis of voting activity, however, results in interesting statistics: a quite considerable part of the Russians in general and Moscow protesters in particular did not even vote on the elections of 2011. It means that the message ‘YOUR voice got stolen’ could not be taken by them personally. This can be considered as another evidence of the fact that the frauds, (and all the related posts, videos and pictures in social media) as an isolated case of civil rights violation, were not the reason for protesting.

4.3.2. Online activity

From information that could be seen from outside, there was indeed a surge of discussions around the elections, and Facebook, Twitter and VK users were posting and sharing posts constantly. Yet again, it does not prove that those were the same people who were actually protesting in the streets. Also, it cannot serve as an evidence of high efficiency of the active social media mobilisation campaigns.

In his report "Protest movement in Russia 2011-2012" (2012) Denis Volkov states that the audience for the protest action on the 5th of December was ‘recruited’ mostly via social media. According to Levada Center’s qualitative research, one of the respondents was sending personal Facebook messages to celebrities and to Facebook users with a big number of subscribers (public activists, journalists, poets, etc.). In these messages, he explained how important it was to go to Triumfal’naya square the next day. As Volkov states, it was not difficult to engage Facebook users in the protest: its audience had been discussing the events for the last days and was irritated at the situation around the election (p. 10).

Again, we can turn to Levada Center’s research from the 24th of December. Answering the question “Have you been discussing the State Duma election and the events connected to it in social media or blogs during the last three months?” a fairly big number confirmed that they did. 37 per cent participated in discussions regularly and 31 per cent - from time to time. It gives us 68 per cent of social media users who expressed their interest in the topic and their opinion publically. Slightly more than one-third of the respondents were not involved into any public online discussion regarding the elections.
The online research of the author showed, at the same time, that only 56 per cent of the respondents discussed the election results and the frauds. It is to a certain extent surprising statistics, because in the case of Levada Center’s research, not only social media users were questioned, and still they seemed to be more involved in online debates.

Almost 60 per cent of the online survey respondents stated that they were publishing relevant posts, pictures and videos in their own social media accounts.

Turning the interviewees results, there were only two persons who were engaged in the discussions (respondents #5 and #6). Interviewee #5, however, emphasized that these discussions were held by him not on VK, Facebook or Twitter, but on the closed forum of Moscow State University alumni. Respondent #6 said that he only published one long text with his ideas on his Facebook page. At the same time, together with his friend they established a Facebook group for the events discussion and observing media coverage.

> [what were our] goals... I guess to survive information blockade by the central TV channels. To know and to inform about what was really happening. Ok, maybe not “really”, but to show not only a point of view of the central channels, which, in my opinion just cannot be not agenda-driven. Also, [to show] what participants of the events were writing, how foreign press was reacting. I, for example, was reading and watching attentively what BBC, CNN, Time was saying. (Respondent #6).

The group was established on the 5th of December, right after the first protests, and just in a couple of days gained 600 subscribers, according to the respondent.

> “I was adding almost all my Facebook friends to that group, except for maybe those I didn’t know personally, casual acquaintances, or those who could think my invitation was weird. So, I invited maybe 95 per cent of my friends. Those who were not interested deleted themselves from our group straight away... First, those were our friends and acquaintances, and then it was spreading via ‘jungle telegraph’. As I could notice, the most active users were those with rather good education and quite adult ones... 25 years and older. My friend and co-administrator of the group, and also several less active administrators – they are older than 30... Around 15-20 people were constantly publishing something. Also there was a number of people – and it’s hard to say the exact number – who were publishing 1, 2, 3 posts, who were commenting something. There were more of commentators, let’s say. (Respondent #6).
Respondent #3 expressed quite skeptical opinion on the role of social media in the protest events:

“I am pretty sure that the majority of people that are walking beside us right now are not subscribers of those groups, not bloggers; they might not even be registered in social networks. I guess many of them listen to Echo Moskvi. It’s important, but it’s not really the main thing. The main thing is, I don’t know [laughs], that people already guess what they should do”.

In his interview to Ekho Moskvi Volkov emphasized that social media organisation and activities in general had never been in large-scale in Russia. “We usually speak about a few per cent of those who are doing something, planning something, organising something in social media”. The December protests, however, were much more massive, he noticed. Around one-third of Moscow was discussing the elections in social media. “Their eagerness to go out and protest was much higher than among regular Internet users. As usual, combination of Internet with a certain interest is important”, he stated.
5. The ‘faces’ of the protest and their role in mobilisation of people

Dozens of public persons were attracted for participation in the winter protests of 2011. Some of them had certain political background (representatives of opposition parties), some were famous for their societal activities and projects, and others were culture workers who had never been associated with politics before. Also, almost all of them were somehow connected to media and content production.

In his research, Volkov pays special attention to journalists who were supporting the protest. Responsively reacting on the situation, having a large number of acquaintances and, what is most important, access to the audience, the journalists contributed to the engagement of that audience to the rallies. According to one of the respondents of Levada Center’s research “today's leader is that person who has media resource” (p. 12). The other respondent considered publicity of the December events as ‘headache for the government’ (p. 12): “When they understand that there is increased attention – both federal and inter-regional – on their elections, their city, it feels bad for them. Because they want to do everything sneakily”.

Those were journalists who suggested inviting celebrities to speak from the stage during the rallies. It was not an accident that famous writers, TV hosts and musicians joined the movement, states Volkov. They were engaged to shape a certain ‘face’ of the protest that would not provoke rejection of the audience. “Politics does not look that dirty when such people as Boris Akunin or Lyudmila Ulitskayaf65 participate in it”, Volkov quotes one of the journalist-respondents.

Importantly, many of those people who held a speech during the events (some of them are mentioned in the “Study Background” chapter) were not interested in politics or in being a deputy and therefore did not raise suspicions of publicity. At the same time they had been demonstrating civil activity before the December eventsf66. Those people had a positive image and, as stated earlier, almost all of them were active in social media and responsive in communication with their subscribers.

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f65 Russian writer

f66 Helping orphanages, protection of Khimkinsky forest in Moscow, establishing ‘Blue Buckets’ community that was fighting with arbitrary behaviour of government representatives on the roads
Involvement of public activists and celebrities in the movement extended oppositional agenda, claims Volkov. New established public associations that they were coordinating were widely used as a source of spreading the information about protest events in social media. For example, Workshop of Protest activities was founded as a place where everyone could come and suggest their ideas and projects.

In opposite, those who were associated with politics – both governmental representatives and the opposition – did not gain that big trust among the protestors. Only 15 per cent of those who came to the rally on the 24th of December said they were associated with the oppositional parties who were among organisers of the event. And 13 per cent was talking about a bond with the oppositional leaders. Most of all people liked TV-host Leonid Parfenov (41 per cent), public activist Alexei Navalny (36 per cent), writer Boris Akunin (35 per cent) and musician Yuriy Shevchuk (33 per cent).

Interviewees’ answers did not reveal any ‘celebrity culture’ trend either. Only respondent #4 said that she was fond of Akunin’s books as well as she was admiring his civil position. However, she only started speaking about him after the question about trust or interest towards some certain public activist was asked,

Respondents #2 and #5 mentioned Navalny, but only in a context of his blog as information source. Apart from that, no special attraction that motivated people to protest was revealed. 

You know, in our common cause I am ready to hold out a hand to everyone: to Udaltsov, Nemtsov, Navalny, and all those who are ready to follow us. There is no person I would not hold out a hand to (Respondent #3).

The list of reasons for participation in the protests that people named (presented in the next section) also shows that ‘having a bond with certain organisers’ was far from being the most common motivation among the protesters.

Yet, one observation could be made here, based on the mediatisation theory and the ‘celebrity culture’ concept. Even though the political or non-political ‘faces’ of the protest did not play as significant role in people’s engagement as it was expected by the organisers, a very efficient

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67Rus. Masterskaya protestnykh deystviy
relational marketing tool was used here. As stated in the theoretical part, among other Russian features of media-centered society, there was an inability of face-to-face contact. The protesters were not interested in a media-centered approach to that political campaign, because they had already had it for a long time with the current ‘vertical’ power (Alfred, Evans 2006, p. 148). They wanted to identify themselves with those people who declare civil society values both with their words and actions (Lievrouw’s concept ‘practice what they preach’). At the same time, they wanted to look at them not from the bottom upwards, but from the same level – that would be a brand new approach to communication between persons in politics and civilians. And they got it – public activists were talking to the protesters not only via TV Rain channel programs, but also from the stage on Bolotnaya square and Sakharova avenue. And what is more important, they demonstrated incredibly high responsiveness during their performance in social media, replying on commentaries and even personal messages. They were constantly emphasizing the fact that they were regular civilians with the same social needs as all the other people. As long as an average protester, as it was analysed earlier, was a well-educated person, quite successful in their career, they got tired of patronising and disrespectful behaviour from the authorities. Therefore, that ‘total equality and accessibility’ maneuver worked fine with the protest audience. This was exactly mediatisation described by Lilleker, when media ‘shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place’. Furthermore, it is a perfect example of his formula working: public demand = market orientation = mediatisation.

In general, one can say that latent political actors/network actors that were presented by people with certain positive reputation did play their role. First of all, their various backgrounds showed that the December protest was a movement ‘of everyone’. Then, they were not putting themselves in the superior position – this would be a doubtful strategy with the protesters who were dissatisfied with disrespect and ignorance of the power. Finally, their access to media – their own accounts with thousands of subscribers, Internet and mainstream news outlets they were working at and wide network of acquaintances in media sphere provided a platform for discussion of the movement itself. However, one can conclude that their influence was more visible in promoting civil society values rather than in direct engagement of people in the movement. People’s awareness about their involvement in the campaign (in case those celebrities were of a national level) was limited with social media users. The other public persons were only popular within social media borders, so their impact was narrowed per se. Finally, those people who were not irritating the protesters were not engaged to politics and therefore people liked them just as culture workers, but not as role models for political activity on the first place.
6. Declared motivations for participation

In order to get a better picture on the roles of social media in the mobilisation of people, one needs to analyse the motivations people announced. There were certain messages and mottos circulating on Facebook and Twitter, and it is important to follow how they intercross with the ways people explain their eagerness to participate in the movement.

Volkov (2012) writes, that Levada Center’s respondents were pointing out that the atmosphere created by the young protesters in December was ‘inspiring’ (p. 11). This feeling was a stimulative for establishing public associations or changing work of the existing ones. That is how the organisational committee of the rallies was started, for example, or so-called ‘Workshop of the Protest’ mentioned previously. Putnam claimed that engagement with civic associations increases the level of trust between citizens. Since trustworthy associations did not exist, people had to establish them themselves.

First, we can turn to the Graph 15 that represents data based on the answers of demonstrators on Sakharova avenue.
As it was expected, dissatisfaction with the election frauds was one of the most popular reasons. However, one can see that another incentive that was pronounced by the equal number of people was the general situation in the country. If we combine it with ‘disappointment with Medvedev’ as another point of irritation with the political situation, the category of ‘general dissatisfaction’ gets the overall majority. The third place is taken by an impression of the respondents that certain individuals or social groups – or even then people as a whole – were excluded from the decision making process. It was not specified which decisions exactly were meant here. Therefore, this data reflects a long-term feeling that an individual was having before and regardless of the certain situation with the frauds. This point correlates with the first of Walzer’s four dimensions of civil society – people want to be involved in political life of their state.

The answers that were given by the online survey respondent, where they could write any reason possible, also reflect the trend of the overall grievance:
I have been participating in rallies from my teen ages and I am used to that. Speaking about the December events, the motivation was to change the government if it was possible. All the further actions I attended just not to soft-pedal the whole thing...

An attempt to change something.

I got fed up by what we’ve had. The government has ventured too far.

I was frightened and resented by the fact that in the country which claims to have a status of a democratic country, the government is still controlling media, which never even covered the topic of unauthorized demonstrations in the beginning of December, and also showed total arbitrariness from the side of the police.

I dream to live in a free, economically and socially healthy state.

The last statement combines almost all necessary elements of civil society: ‘free’ – core condition for civil society, ‘economically healthy’ – Walzer’s second dimension of ‘good life’, and ‘socially healthy’ – high level of social trust and collaboration with each other for building that ‘good life’,

Disrespect of the government towards its people has reached unbelievable scale! I am tired of being despised in my own country and not be considered as a thinking unit that has rights and possibilities to control the government. Fair elections are the cause, but the first reason is respect to people.

Among 43 people who answered that question, only five mentioned fair elections as such and only three of those answers did not touch any other topic. The words that the respondents were using most often (at least twice) were ‘tired’, ‘respect’, ‘lies’ and ‘stagnation’.

The interviewees provided their own motivations as well. They were very different, but had one common trend: they claimed that that exact situation with the frauds touched them a lot, for the first time. And when they were asked in which way exactly they were touched or what particular issue concerned them most of all, their answers were not connected strictly or only to the frauds.

For example, the respondent #2 started speaking about social inequalities in the Russian society, and those towards veterans in particular.

“…when I look at the videos of those veterans, in their shabby apartments, with leaky walls, it gives me the creeps. And the authorities live in clover, go on vacations, entertain themselves. I don’t like
it, it makes me irritated. I want it to be more fair, and I want the people to rule the country, I mean over the government, and not the other way round. In my opinion, it would be right”.

The respondent #3 was an active opposition activist, and he was interested in more radical measures like revolution and changing the government. However, he started his answer with the following words:

*I guess we should have some other life except for our family life, professional life – some kind of political activity. Some shaping of civil society from below should be happening. This is basically my motivation.*

The respondent #4 also said nothing about the election or frauds; instead she said ‘we should not live like that’. She emphasized that she was reading news and was traveling a lot, and she compared life in Russia to that in other countries. Then, she claimed, participation in the rallies was a certain challenge for herself, and she could not help but joining the protest.

The fifth respondent said he was an observer during that election, so he knew exactly, he said there was a reason for the protest.

Finally, the respondent #6 provided the following answer:

“..before the situation with the elections of 2011 I was pretty distant from the political life of our country. When all those Dumas elections happened, it became obvious that not everything was that clean and clear there, and smoothly, as it should be nice to be in a civilised European country”.

Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson; McAdam and Paulsen, as well as the other scholars (see the chapter “Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review”) claimed that in order to get involved into a movement, an individual has to have a link to its current participants. As one can see in the Graph 15, the respondents did not put “accompanying friends” as a popular reason for protesting. Undoubtedly, it does not mean that involvement of one or several members of their network did not play its role in their motivation. It might be, again that the ‘threshold’ mechanism worked when they were observing wide discussions among their friends. And even if they were not directly asked to join some company to attend one of the protest rallies together, they could see that the whole idea was approved by a huge number of their online friends.
However, as it could be seen from the previous graphs and reports, social media platforms were not the dominant sources of information for Moscow protesters. And if we turn to interviewees’ answers, we will get an interesting picture.

Respondent #1 remembered very clearly that he first got information from his mother, while naming a certain website, that his mother sent him a link to, was problematic for him. The main motivation, according to the respondent, was discontent with the frauds he was observing in the videos. Further, he mentioned that his mother showed an active interest in political news, even before the elections. Respondent #2 answered very categorically that none of his friends attended protest events. And if we come back to the issue of his social media activity, he was not using his accounts on Facebook and Twitter that much, and was just subscribed to some blogs. Therefore, the influence of network linkage for him could be considered lower than that of the previous interviewee. The third respondent remembered that he just heard about the fraud scandals and went to Triumfalnaya alone. The similar story was told by the respondent #4. Moreover, she said that none of her friends would not even support the conversation about the protests, and some of them even asked to change the topic as they “didn’t want to know anything about that”. This kind of reaction was not understandable and acceptable for the respondent, she stated. The protester #5 came to the protest on the 13th of May alone, as well as he did in December. He said he did not have any discussions on social media with his friends. At the same time, he was involved in a large online network of MSU alumni where the discussions on the topic were held.

The most interesting case was that of the respondent #6. He could not exactly remember where he learned about the protests first (most likely VK or Facebook), but straight after he got the first portion of information, he established his own Facebook community, where almost all his Facebook friends were invited. He pointed out, that his offline network (professional) was very wide and diverse – from professors to top-models, and they all, regardless of their background, started actively discussing the events. On the 10th of December, he posted a request on Facebook asking his friends to join him on Bolotnaya square (there was not appeal to protest in his post, as it could be understood from his interview – he just wanted to have some company there). Also, many people from his social network were not only discussing, but also participating in the demonstrations.
Yes, I would say quite many [of my friends were participating]. Several people were definitely attending those actions. There were not only those who were working there as journalists, but those who just went there as participants, I mean. Some of them I met right there, at the place. We were arranging ourselves for that, and I saw many familiar faces, as well as I did today.

Answering the question whether he would go if his social media friends were not thrashing over the subject, he firmly stated that his political position in general was not anyhow influenced by online activity of his friends. However, further he stated that he did not fully share the mottos of the movement, and more than that, he did not trust the leaders of the protest that much. He said that he was curious about what it would look like and wanted to take some pictures also.

68 The interview is a journalist himself and has many friends among his colleagues
7. Features of the New Social Movement in the December protest

In order to more deeply investigate the importance of social media in the post-election rallies in Russia, one can turn to new social movement framework and analyse the structure and the specific characteristics of the protest via the distinctive features of NSM according to Lievrouw (2011).

1. **Participants and Constituencies** – high-profile, creative and well-educated urban citizens, according to Lievrouw and other scholars. Generally, this point is practically assured in the previous chapters and does not need further arguments – this description mostly corresponds to a portrait of an average December protester, as can be seen.

2. **Collective identity.** As Lievrouw claims, participants of social movements tend to construct common subjectivity based on shared worldviews and experiences. She states that it is not likely for NSM participants to concentrate on class division (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.). What indeed is important is shared ideas and views, and new media here becomes a platform for engagement of users based on cultural codes, values and creativity. This aspect can also be related to Franke and Pallin’s *homophily* framework, that emphasizes the new media technologies provide possibilities to search people with shared identities for communication and further collaboration. Shared collective identity can also be named as one of the features of the social media movement in December 2011. Social media users who were actively discussing the events were representatives of the same, or a nearby social stratum and many of them upheld liberal political views. Lievrouw also noticed that NSM participants are often connected to media in some way. The relevance of this argument to the Russian protest movement has been approved in previous sections. As it was mentioned, almost all the online protesters were active bloggers; also there were many journalists from liberal media involved in the protest – both from professional and civil points of view.

3. **Meaning and symbolic production** – quite soon after the movement began, the White Ribbon was set as a symbol of the protest, both online and offline. Online protesters put the ribbon on their profile pictures in social media accounts, and the participants of the demonstrations had the ribbons, as well as white roses and balloons on the demonstrations.
4. **Action**

At this point, the relation of December protests to NSM does not meet contradictions either. Online movement that started on the 4th of December was indeed ‘loosely affiliated and informal’, supported by ‘anti-hierarchical networks of interpersonal relations’ (Lievrouw 2011). Micromobilisation was the main form of recruitment: users were inviting their Facebook friends to groups and events, sending out recommendations for protesters; arranging real-time events for preparation to the rallies (making posters, printing out leaflets, etc.). Lievrouw points out their decentralised character, and indeed, there were no ‘guidelines’ sent to the regional protester from the organisers in Moscow, and all the participants were focused on their local concerns first of all. Most importantly, there was indeed ‘constant flux and reorganisation’ in protestor’s activity: new ‘faces’ were engaged to the movement permanently, organisation committee was established quite soon after the first protest, all decisions were taken or changed on an on-going basis (for example, transferal of the rally on the 10th of December from Revolyutsii square to Bolotnaya square).

5. **Everyday life**

“To practice what they preach” in their everyday lifestyles” – that is one of the distinctive features of NSM participants, according to Lievrouw (p. 42). The protesters were not satisfied with the huge gap between people in power on regular citizens, first of all, in adherence of civil rights. If one looks back at the certain protestor’s background, it can be seen that many of them were involved in socially important projects – charity, *Blue Buckets*, *Fund for Fighting Corruption* (Alexei Navalny), *Gov2People*, etc. However, it is hard to investigate previous societal experience of the regular protesters.

6. **Use of media and ICTs**

Here, various means of use for media are implied: news consumption, action arrangement, communication, etc. Importantly, following news via new media becomes a key feature of NSM protesters. According to the statistics from the previous section, the protesters were indeed using...
new media extensively for information. However, not that big proportion was producing related content of any kind, but mostly just consuming it.

7. “Unconventional” Action Repertoires
“Reliance on expressive, creative, ad hoc disruption and resistance, decentralised action; “sub-institutional”. “Extra-parliamentary” exertion of power, spontaneous action” (Lievrouw 2011, p. 42). This point is probably the most controversial when related to the December protest. Some of the protesters were indeed radical, but the majority wanted ‘mild’ changes (if one turns to the statistics about protest demands’ supporters).

Comparing the December protests with NSM characteristics, one can come to the conclusion that December 2011 could to some extent be considered to be the new social movement, but not on all levels. The external picture definitely coincides with the typical NSM. There definitely were radical and at the same time well-profile protesters, involved in social projects previously and producing social media content on the protest matter – but this cohort was very small. Therefore, one can speak about new social movement inside the protest surge in Russia in 2011.
8. Four different ‘Russias’ and usage of political marketing in December protests

Who was actually protesting – and why?

As could be concluded from the previous sections, social media campaigns – spontaneous or planned, latent or open – did not play a decisive role in the engagement of people in the protests of 2011 in Russia. Still, for the first time in 20 years, that big number of people was out, expressing grievance towards the political establishment. It means that there had been major social and political premises for that, and social media became a recruitment tool of certain individuals and an information source that met the needs of the age. This research does not tend to cover major social issues and to investigate the political realities that existed before the protests started happening. However, it is necessary to provide an overview on the changing of the societal map of Russia that has been happening for the last 13 years.

As one of the most significant factors in the discussion of civil society in Russia, Franke and Pallin mention the sustained economic growth that started in 2000 and led to the emergence of an urban middle class (2012, p. 31). This trend was already mentioned in the previous chapters, and Franke and Pallin make an attempt to define what ‘middle class’ means in terms of Russian realia and what criteria should be taken into consideration in this case. In the politically focused research, the authors use such criteria as self-identification, professional status and education. This multi-criteria approach is used by acknowledged Russian sociologists (Tikhonova, N.E., Mareeva, S.V. 2009).

According to the researchers, one can see a strong correlation between an enlarging middle class (around 40 per cent of economically active population before crisis in 2008-2009) and Internet penetration. The most active users are “well-off, young urban dwellers, accounting for the digital division between big cities and the countryside (p. 31).

This urban class is on its way to become a country inside a country, state Franke and Pallin. They turn to a research by Natalia Zubariievich who divides Russia into four different parts from sociological viewpoint. The “first Russia” is represented by 30 per cent of the population who live in big cities (more than 500 000 inhabitants). The Russian middle class and 35 million

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Internet users live in that “first Russia”. This part of Russia demands some changes, according to Zubarevitch.

The “second Russia” (25 per cent of the population) is shaped by citizens of medium-sized industrial cities (20 000 – 700 000 inhabitants). These people are often involved in the work of local economical mainstays and are concerned more about employment rather than “first Russia’s” problems.

The “third Russia” lives in small towns and localities and makes up around 38 per cent of the population. This social group is generally older and does not demonstrate protesting dispositions.

The “fourth Russia” (6 per cent) is defined geographically: it consists of the citizens of North Caucasus. It is very different from the rest of Russia because of regional instability and industrial underdevelopment.

Zubarevich tends to show which of the four “Russias” that are more likely to start protests, and Franke and Pallin compare her findings with Internet penetration reports, and the statistics on that matter is discussed above. Briefly, “first Russia” demonstrates an Internet penetration on 47 per cent (60 per cent in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg), while in the “third Russia” it is nearly 20 per cent. In the ‘second Russia’, they say, it is just below average (p. 32).

The difference in terms of Internet penetration is just one of many other peculiarities that separate the “first Russia” from the rest of the population, state the researchers. The others are higher education level and different consumption patterns; they travel abroad a lot and are interested in events outside Russia. What is also important, claim the authors, is that the middle class has invested more not only in human capital, but in real-estate as well. In this regard, the “first Russia” is considerably less dependent from the government economically.

Summarising these ideas, it can be clearly seen that by 2011, a new audience – sharply segmented demographically, defined by locations, with distinct behavioural patterns, habits and values, - had been formed. That audience consisted of people, whose concerns were of the other nature than those of the rest ‘three Russians’ – ‘the first Russia’ was not searching for financial stability. This audience was well-educated and spoke foreign languages, which gave them a possibility to extend their information realm by reading foreign media sources and communicating with people all over the world. For these too options, they also had sufficient technical possibilities. That new audience could afford travelling and therefore got to see the life in developed Western states – not always exactly the way it was shown by the Russian
mainstream media. One can assume that the picture of ‘good life’ outside Russia, regardless of where it was taken, made them start thinking about the missing elements of that ‘good life’ at home. This statement is also supported by the answers from the respondents and interviewees. What is important, when discussing ‘good life’, they were not only considering themselves and their needs and demands, but also those strata of the Russian society that were not getting the same privileges that the citizens of ‘the first Russia’ did.

This new audience was those potential customers with a certain need – a product that they had been consuming by small portions from abroad or from media, that product was civil society, with equal relations between citizens, respect to them from the governmental side and the possibility to participate in the political life of the country.

This need, as can be concluded from the previous sections, did not appear on the 4th of December, with the first YouTube video or Facebook post on the fraud matter. Yet, when the situation was on its peak – several days before the election and until the last December protest – the audience was emotionally open and ready to consume more information on the topic of their interest. Therefore, it was a prepared platform for deploying political marketing activities.

One can now take a look at which perspective of political marketing – managerial or relational (Johansen 2010) – that would be right to choose in the discussion of the December social media campaign. First of all, it is important to remember, that actors in political marketing do not always have financial or political interests or consider their actions as marketing in general. Therefore, ‘actors’ here are not only politically affiliated public persons, but also regular social media users who were producing content and demonstrated organisational activities of different kinds.

The managerial perspective at a glance does not seem appropriate for several reasons. First of all, the campaign was not conducted by individual actors. In opposite, the protest leaders and/or organisers were permanently claiming that they were ready to collaborate even with public people who shared different ideas. Then, there were competition and conflicts (one of the features of managerial perspective) within the movement which the users could follow in live regime. But they were again just showing the willingness of the stakeholders to collaborate. Counter actions towards the current regime were not presented as competition, but more as fight with an obstacle on a way to the development of civil society. Finally, there was no focus on mass communication simply because an access to mass mainstream media could be provided.
However, the opposition forces were to a large extent relying on media power and put a lot of attention on their performance in social media.

Finally, the managerial perspective implies the idea of the consumer as ‘rational self-interested utility seeker’ (Johansen 2012, p. 54). As can be seen from the discussion above, the December consumer was in fact rational – they had been collecting discontent a long time before the protest. The political marketing actors, in their turn, were putting stress on the emotional aspect and ‘right here’ human rights violation.

At the same time, there is a feature of the social media campaign that makes it possible to relate it with the managerial perspective. In the focus of the framework, there are short-term relations, first of all: getting an as wide audience as soon as possible, with superficial engagement of the audience.

Turning to the relational perspective, many of its features seem to be included in the December campaign on the first sight. Still, one can make a short analysis here:

1. **Simultaneous Production and Consumption** – the whole social media campaign was built on the permanent coverage of the events and involving as many users in the discussions as possible.
2. **Interaction and Long-term Relationships** – as it was claimed above, long-term relationships would not be a proper concept to use in relation to the December protest. There was by all means a certain group of social media users who were following Navalny’s anti-corruption campaign from the middle of the 2000s. The majority of the protesters had a quite vague idea about the ideology of the movement and about previous political activity of the movement leaders/organiser.
3. **Independent Actors and Networks** – ‘independent networks’ is a more relevant term than ‘independent actors’. There were many networks engaged in the process, from both sides – ‘recruiters’ and mobilised participants. In the first case, those were, for example, media workers, certain oppositional party members, etc. From the side of consumers – university classmates, colleagues, users of certain social media (like the MSU forum), etc.
4. **Collaboration** was an idea, a guideline for the protesters and as a crucial element of civil society was widely promoted via social media.
5. **Focus of Customer Retention + Acquisition** – this point could be relevant to the strategy before the middle of December. Then, the audience started wondering what solutions will be proclaimed instead of existing negative rhetoric of the opposition. Nevertheless, the keynote of
the protest remained on the stage of ‘what-should-not-be’ till 2012. Without drawing conclusions, one can turn Levada’s recent report that demonstrated a decrease in the protest engagement among the population (‘Gotovnost’ uchastvovat’ v protestah’, Levada Center, 2013).

6. Focus on Product as Both Process and Outcome (Value Creation through customer Participation) – this point was one of the main advantages of social media campaigns of the opposition, compared to the strategy of authorities. The protesters were welcome to engage with the fight for civil society (or more correctly to say, against barriers for its establishment and development) in many ways. They were contributing with money for the organisation of the rallies, creating posters, voting for the opposition leaders on Facebook, participating in the demonstrations themselves, etc. Thus, they were engaged both in the process and the awaited result.

7. Focus on Dialogue + Planned Communication. Dialogue was another considerable advantage of the protest in comparison to the governmental (vertical) model of communication. However, conduction of a dialogue on everyday level did not result in the building of a productive dialogue with the engaged audience on the core issue – shifting from politics of negativity towards suggestion of productive solutions. As for planned communication, one can only speak about short-term planning because of the spontaneous nature of the events and a short period of examination for the research.

In that political marketing campaign, social media became the main platform for delivering the ideas and promoting a ‘civil rights’ product to the customer who demonstrated strong interest in it. Social media tools were used for the engagement of the customers in the process of ‘fighting for civil rights’ and building a productive dialogue between the citizens and the opposition representatives.

Having an audience (the customer) that had been formed for the past decade and an appropriate environment, the actors of the December movement were practicing both managerial and relational approaches of political marketing during the protest campaign. The main distinction and positive feature of that strategy was the combination of an open dialogue with the customer and attempts to engage them in the process of product (civil society) creation. However, the biggest drawback was the focus on short-term relation and an unclear picture of the outcome, resulting from negative rhetoric mostly.
VI. CONCLUSION

The goal of the research, conducted in several stages, with using of three different methods and referring to various sociological questions, was to investigate certain roles that social media played in the protest movement of 2011 in Russia. The other major task was to find out which contribution social media made in self-identification of the protesters with civil society. Before proceeding to conclusions, one needs to provide answers for subquestions of the study, based on the analysis.

What does ‘civil society’ as an idea imply and how do its values and principles correlate with the protest of social media users in 2011? What behavioural patterns in their social media activity, regarding the protest, did they demonstrate? What was the connection between discussions around civil society and motivation of social media users to participate in demonstrations?

As it can be briefly summarised from the theoretical part, civil society can exist in an economically developed environment and is shaped by groups and institutions, with efficient and productive communication between them. The key principles of civil society are trust, reciprocity, civic-mindness of its members, law compliance, democratic freedoms (including freedom of media) and collaboration. Civil society is mainly based on the concepts of social capital and social and political trust.

One can conclude, based on many studies provided in the research that civil society in this sense did not exist in Russia in the study period. First of all, because the level of interpersonal trust and trust towards institutions was relatively low in general. At the same time, trust towards the government on the all-Russian scale still remained quite high and stable, and even the frauds were not a matter of a serious concern for the large proportion of the Russian citizens, according to sociological research.

Then, freedom of media in Russia (one of the basic elements of civil society), according to a number of scholars, is a controversial question. This also refers to poor activity of non-governmental organisations which are considered to be one of the civil society fundaments as well.

However, as one can see from the content analysis, a certain proportion of the social media audience was constantly talking about the newborn civil society in Russia and main principles
every citizen had to follow, as well as duties they had to fulfill. Even though civil society per se did not exist on the national scale, one can speak about micro civil society that subsisted mostly virtually and was created by a narrow group of people.

If one takes a look at online rhetoric of members of that civil society, it can be seen that all fundamental values and principles of civil society were proclaimed in social media discussions. Civil society characteristics could also be seen in online activities of the users: they were establishing and managing Internet-based and offline micro-institutions for various protest purposes; voting for opposition leaders online; openly expressing their opinions; building open dialogue and collaboration between representatives of different social strata with diverse political background and views; financially contributing to the organisation of the protest events, etc.

However, there are two main points that have to be taken into consideration. First of all, the civil society oriented rhetoric was of a negative nature and was mostly emphasizing the challenges that the contemporary Russia faced on its way to building a strong and healthy civil society. The civil society concept itself has in opposite a positive and constructive character, and its main mission is collaboration of its members for the ‘good life’ of all citizens.

The second (even more important) point is that when one discusses online behaviour patterns of protesters, one speaks about a very narrow audience. Even the number of social media users in Moscow (where ICT penetration is the highest in the country) is still very low. Then, it was less than 1 per cent of active social media users production (Volkov 2012). If one considers only those individuals who were not only acting online, but also participated in the protests, the proportion of the ‘new civil citizens’ tends to zero.

What was the demographic and socio-cultural portrait of protesters?
As the study result showed, this formulation of the question is not completely correct. One can draw certain conclusions on what features online protesters had, basing on statistics on ICT penetration in Russia in general, and studies on Internet and the protest of 2011 in particular. Some researchers speak about ‘successful spill-over from online communication to offline-activism’ (Litvinenko at CeDEM12 conference, 2012). However, one can not equalise online and offline protesters, because, as it was stated in the previous answer, not every individual who was participating in social media activities and discussions, was actually engaged in offline rallies. Also, a large proportion of the protesters did not even use social media as means of information and communication.
And although there are many common trends in profiles of both online and offline protesters, they do not fully coincide.

Online protesters were represented by well-educated young (23-25 year old) people, mostly connected to media in terms of their professional field, who had sufficient income to travel abroad and was using new media (in a broad sense) as information sources actively. They were too young to clearly remember the events of the 1990’s in Russia and at the same time they were old enough to observe political changes that had been happening in Russia in the past decade. They were open and ready to collaborate with each other, demonstrating high level of interpersonal trust. Finally, they were using social media actively, especially during the discussion of the frauds and arrangement of the protest events.

When it comes to offline activity, the participants of the rallies were more diverse, taking into consideration their age (25-39 years), careers (more diverse range of professional status) and Internet using patterns (significantly less active users of social media).

In terms of the Russian Federation as a state, how considerable was social media penetration by the time the protests were happening?

This question can be answered categorically, based on the ICT penetration analysis, - very low. Even though rapid dynamics of Internet penetration could be seen all over the country, especially in towns and villages, general proportions were not significant. In the most economically developed regions (Central Russia and North-West) the share of Internet users did not even reach 30 per cent. If one speaks about social media users in particular, this proportion would be even lower. And when it comes to active users, it is fair to say that these numbers are insignificant in terms of the whole country, as it was stated above.

Turning to the initial hypothesis of the study presented in the beginning of the paper, one can make the following conclusions:

- Social media was the main source of information (or one of the main ones) first about the frauds and then about protest actions, both occurred and planned
As research shows, the main source of information for those people, who were participating in rallies, was Internet news outlets. For online protesters whose actual participation in the rallies could not be confirmed, social media indeed became the major information source.

- Social media became an efficient and low-cost platform for discussion and cooperation for Internet users and one of the key tools for arrangement of rallies

This statement is absolutely legitimate, however, one has to emphasize again, that the number of individuals who were using social media for those purposes, was low.

- Social media became a public stage for new opinion leaders with which social media users wanted to identify themselves, as well as they wanted to identify themselves with civic society values.

Since the opposition had very limited access to mainstream media, it can be safely stated that social media became the main public stage for them. Certain people, who had been ‘latent political actors’ before the December events, or even those who were unknown before their online activity against the frauds, indeed acquired popularity among social media users. However, it would be wrong to state that their significant influence on people’s protest motivation and willingness of the protesters to identify themselves with those ‘social media celebrities’. First of all, as Levada Center’s research shows, there were just few people who went protesting because of their bond with certain public persons. Secondly, the ‘faces’ of the protests were mainly considered by the social media audience as information providers.

If one looks at online activities of the protesters in general, it can be concluded that they were trying to establish their own, very narrow and segmented, but still – e-democracy, even though it was based on negative rhetoric. It was an online public sphere, autonomic from the state and economic power, with reflexive, sincere participants who shared each other’s views and values and were eager to co-operate online and sometimes even offline. Therefore, there was a phenomenon of micro, online-based, civil society, where social media played roles of information source, event arrangement platform and mediator between various stakeholders of the protest movement. They were engaged to the movement due to homophily effect: social media actors, using political marketing tools, created an attractive picture of the protesters that individuals identified themselves with. The most efficient political marketing strategy that the opposition actors demonstrated was horizontal communication and the engagement of the
‘customers’ (the audience) in creating a ‘product’ of civil society. By the time the protests happened, that narrow audience had been demonstrating strong demand in civil society values, as the sociological reports showed.

However, due to many factors mentioned above, it would be wrong to state that there was some major impact of social media on people’s engagement in the protest events. One should not underestimate a strong potential of impact of the Internet on political life in Russia, but the level of ICT penetration is still too low to play a key role both in politics in general and in protest movements in particular. Also, the fact that entertainment still remains the main purpose for using new media, according to Lance Bennett, ‘undermines’ civil society. Finally, on a national level, the trust towards new media as a source of information is still low, according to the research.
VII. FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several potentially interesting areas for further research in connection to this study.

First of all, the metamorphosis of the protest from 2011 to 2013 and its connection to social media can be investigated from different perspectives. On one hand, the latest research shows that the movement has ‘aged’: the average age of protesters has grown since the first rallies (‘V Rossii klyuchevaya istoria – eto bor’ba protiv sudebnoy i pravoohranitel’noy sistem’, Kommersant, 2013). This sets a question about a changing audience of the online protest as well, also based on general trends of ICT penetration in Russia in 2012-2013.

The same research showed that the main messages of the movement have evolved as well, from demanding fair elections to releasing of political prisoners. Therefore, investigating the way these messages are promoted in social media can be a focus for another research. Here, one can both take a look at new protest rhetoric and at usage of new media channels for that matter.

Turning to further analysis of new media and politics in Russia, one can take a look at the reflection of recent ‘unpopular’ laws in social media: ‘anti-gay propaganda’; ‘Dima Yakovlev’s law’ that forbids the US citizen’s adoption of the Russian orphans; strengthening anti-pirate measures, etc.

Also, further research on the December events can be made from other perspectives. One can take a look at differences in the way the protesters were using Facebook and Twitter (foreign platforms) on one hand – and VK on the other hand, as a domestic network that is familiar for the bigger number of users. Regarding theoretical frameworks, it would also be interesting to analyse the December events from the perspective of agenda-setting theory. A number of scholars who investigated political agenda setting claimed that people who discuss political issues less than the others are more dependent on information from the media (Erbring, Goldenberg, Miller 1980). One of the study conclusions states that a significantly small proportion of new media users were actually participating in the online discussions. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how media content was affecting the passive media users and how it influenced their decision in participation.

Moreover, comparison between mainstream and social media strategy in covering December events can be made. One can even focus on mainstream channels only and observe how their messages were changing with growing of the protest movement.
In general, the topic of contemporary Russian politics and new media has an enormous research potential. The trend of expansion of Internets role in the Russian political life can be observed in the last years. And this development can be seen in many different ways. For example, power representatives use Facebook and Twitter and often provide their opinion on certain events earlier than the official commentaries are provided. Then, political campaigns of certain actors are mainly Internet based (Alexei Navalny’s running for the Moscow governor in July-August 2013) and one can compare their effectiveness compared to those were mainstream media are used as a main promotion tool.
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I. Summary on the Internet penetration in Russia by *Newmedia Trend Watch*

Based on Internet World Stats, eMarketer, comScore and FOM

Available at: [http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/markets-by-country/10-europe/81-russia](http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/markets-by-country/10-europe/81-russia)

**Russia**

Last Updated Monday, 01 July 2013 11:24

**Usage Patterns**

Usage Patterns

Total Online Population (~06070.9's8) 3in 2012:

Percentage of Population n 4O7n.7li%ne in 2012:

**Demographics**

There were 67,982,547 internet users in Russia (representing 47.7% of the population) in mid-year 2012 (June 30, 2012), according to Internet World Stats. (Internet World Stats, October 2012)

There were 62 million internet users in Russia in 2011, representing 45% of the population, according to eMarketer. The number is expected to reach 67.9 million users by 2012 (49.2% of population). (eMarketer, March 2012)

Of Europe's 372 million unique visitors, Russian Federation accounted for 50.0 million unique visitors during August 2011, according to comScore. Users in the Russian Federation spent an average of 21.7 hours online in the past month, consuming 2,332 pages online. (comScore, October 2011)

In August 2011, the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) in Russia found that home internet access grew by 10%, but since household broadband penetration remained flat, they attributed the increase to mobile internet usage.

Internet users in Russia, by age, July-August 2011 (per cent of respondents in each group):

- 12-17: 86%
- 18-24: 84%
- 25-34: 72%
- 35-44: 57%
- 45-54: 34%
- 55+: 10%

---

70 Some parts of the study are excluded, since considered as irrelevant (incl. the usage of the Internet while travelling, Travel applications, etc.)
Russia
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( eMarketer, November 2011)

Social Media and UGC
The dramatic surge in social networking in Russia during the country's 2011 elections led eMarketer to estimate earlier this year that in 2011, the number of social network users in Russia experienced an uptick in growth of 25%. However, based on later research, eMarketer believes that the growth of social network users did not actually rise by 25%, but instead, slowed to 11.6% that year. Between 2011 and 2013, Russia's annual growth will temper to just above 11%, eMarketer estimates.

Russia's slower-than-expected growth for 2011 has caused eMarketer to revise the estimated number of social network users in Russia for 2012 from 57.9 million to 51.8 million, ranking it sixth in the world in number of users.

Social network users and penetration in Russia, 2010-2014:
- 2010: 41.7 million users / 74.2% of internet users / 29.9% of population
- 2011: 46.5 million / 75.0% / 33.5%
- 2012: 51.8 million / 76.2% / 37.5%
- 2013: 57.6 million / 78.0% / 41.9%
- 2014: 62.2 million / 79.0% / 45.5%
( eMarketer, October 2012)

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Russia
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eMarketer expects Russia, with 57.9 million social network users in 2012, to be the fifth-largest socially connected country in the world in 2012.

Top five social networking countries, ranked by users, 2012:
1. China: 307.5 million
2. US: 157.8 million
3. India: 76.1 million
4. Brazil: 75.7 million
5. Russia: 57.9 million

According to a February survey from Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTSIOM), a local survey firm, 82% of internet users in Russia used social networks as of February 2012, an increase of 30 percentage points from when the question was asked in 2010. The percentage of users that didn't use social networks went down by more than half, to 18%.

In a May 2012 update, VTSIOM found that more than half (54%) of mobile internet users in Russia most often used the internet on their phones to access social networks. Mobile social usage was highest, unsurprisingly, among the younger demographics: 73% of users ages 18 to 24 and 50% for those ages 25 to 34.

In 2012, eMarketer forecasts mobile internet users in Russia to hit 32.7 million. If more than half of those individuals access social networks via their mobile device, as suggested by VTSIOM
data, it would account for 17.7 million mobile social users. (eMarketer, June 2012)

78 per cent of respondents to a survey of internet users residing in 12 Former Soviet Union (FSU) Republics (including Russia) used social media post-trip to share their experiences and photos with their friends and/or other travelers, according to a research article by John Fotis, Dimitrios Buhalis and Nicos Rossides "Social Media Impact on Holiday Travel Planning: The Case of the Russian and the FSU Markets".

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Russia

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younger consumers were driving mobile internet uptake; respondents ages 12 to 17 and ages 18 to 24 accessed the mobile web at rates of 51 per cent and 45%, respectively.

Internet users and mobile internet users in Russia, by age, July-August 2011 (per cent of respondents in each group):
- 12-17: 86 per cent of internet users / 51 per cent of mobile internet users
- 18-24: 84 per cent / 45%
- 25-34: 72 per cent / 26%
- 35-44: 57 per cent / 12%
- 45-54: 34 per cent / 5%
- 55+: 10 per cent / 1%

Smartphone penetration rates remain low, estimated at 11 per cent by FOM, but it's only a matter of time before middle-class and younger users demand more engaging mobile content. (eMarketer, November 2011)

2.8 million smartphones were sold in Russia in the first half of 2011, an increase of 118 per cent on the previous year, according to data provided by Svyaznoy, one of Russia's largest mobile phone retailers. This doubled the smartphone volume share in terms of total handsets sold from 9 per cent in the first half of 2010 to 18 per cent in the first half of 2011.

The sales of traditional mobile phones (non-smartphones) decreased in the first half of 2011 by 6 per cent year on year, in terms of volume. (PMR - IT and telecommunications sector in Central and Eastern Europe, August 2011)

Broadband Access

Russia's broadband market has seen solid growth in the past few years. The number of fixed broadband households reached 11.9 million in 2011, and is expected to increase 8.6 per cent to 12.9 million in 2012, according to eMarketer. By the end of 2012, a quarter of all Russian households will be wired with broadband, including cable modem, digital subscriber line (DSL), fiber and wireless/satellite technologies.

eMarketer estimates that growth rates will begin to level off to the single digits this year, however, and total fixed broadband households will reach 15.7 million in 2016 for a penetration of just over 30%. Subscription growth will also level off, increasing from 13.6 million in 2011 to 18.7 million in 2016.
II. Levada Center survey on Sakharov Avenue (2011-12-24), direct translation from Russian conducted by Daria Dmitrieva

Available at: <http://www.levada.ru/26-12-2011/opros-na-prospekte-sakharova-24-dekabrya>

The survey was taken by Levada Center on request of organizational committee of the movement “For Fair Elections” on the 24th of December on the Sakharov Avenue, with 791 respondents. A margin of error is not more than 4.8%.

SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-54</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and older</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>secondary basic/incomplete</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary complete (11 school years)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic vocational (technical)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediate vocational (training school)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher incomplete (at least three years of university/institute)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher (university/institution alumni)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have two degrees/in the process of getting second degree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION? IF YOU ARE NOT WORKING RIGHT NOW, WHAT WAS YOUR OCCUPATION ON YOUR LAST JOB?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>running own business</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manager (more than 10 subordinates)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manager (up to 10 subordinates)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office worker</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in sales/services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have never worked - student</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COULD YOU PLEASE SAY PEOPLE OF WHICH POLITICAL VIEWS ARE THE CLOSEST TO YOU REGARDING THEIR IDEAS? (possible to choose several options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anarchists</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;antifa&quot; [antifascists]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;new left&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communists</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socialists/social democrats</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;green&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democrats</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberals</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the right</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national-patriots</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of them</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard to say</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DURING THE LAST THREE MONTHS, HAVE YOU BEEN DISCUSSING CURRENT RUSSIAN DUMA ELECTIONS AND EVENTS CONNECTED TO THEM?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>regularly</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from time to time</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DID YOU VOTE ON THE ELECTIONS OF DEPUTIES IN THE STATE DUMA OF RUSSIA ON THE 4ST OF DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR, AND IF YES, WHICH PARTY DID YOU VOTE FOR – OR DID YOU JUST COME TO THE ELECTION AND TOOK A BALLOT WITH YOU/ DAMAGED IT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Fair Russia” Party</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal-Democrat Party of Russia (LDPR)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Patriots of Russia&quot; party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist party (CPRF)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yabloko” party</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“United Russia” party</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Right Cause” party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>took/damaged my bulletin</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did not vote</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t remember/ don’t want to answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN A PROTEST MOVEMENT AGAINST FALSIFICATION FRAUDS DURING THE ELECTIONS ON THE 4th OF DECEMBER? (it is possible to choose several options):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participated in the action on the 5th of December on Chistye Prudy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated in the action on the 10th of December on Bolotnaya Square</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated in the other actions after the 4th of December</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didn’t participate in any of them</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot say</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE CURRENT DEMONSTRATION “FOR FAIR ELECTIONS” (it is possible to choose several options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspapers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magazines</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends/ relatives/ neighbours</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet outlets</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other Internet sources</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard to say</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT MADE YOU ATTEND THIS EVENT? (it is possible to choose several options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Attending Event</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intention to express my indignation about electoral fraud</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accumulated discontent about the situation in the country/ politics of the government</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disappointment in promised modernization politics/ in Medvedev</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discontent about the fact that the government does not reckon with people like me/ that the main decisions in the country are being taken without our participation</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solidarity with the position of the parties that participate in this event</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good feeling towards the event organizers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rallies are interesting and it’s a trend of this time</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my friends came here, and I followed them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DO YOU SUPPORT OR DO YOU NOT SUPPORT THE DEMANDS TO CANCEL THE DUMA ELECTIONS’ RESULTS AND HOLD NEW ELECTIONS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DO YOU SUPPORT OR DO YOU NOT SUPPORT THE DEMAND TO DESIGNATE THE HEAD OF CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISION VLADIMIR CHUROV, TO DISSOLVE ELECTION COMMISIONS AND SHAPE NEW ONES?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DO YOU SUPPORT OR DO YOU NOT SUPPORT THE DEMAND TO PUNISH EVERYONE WHO IS ACCESSORIAL TO THE ELECTORAL FRAUD?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DO YOU SUPPORT OR DO YOU NOT SUPPORT THE DEMAND TO TAKE A NEW DEMOCRATIC LAW ABOUT PARTIES AND ELECTIONS?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DO YOU SUPPORT THE DEMAND TO SET FREE ALL THE POLITICAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING KHODORKOVSKY AND LEBEDEV?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot answer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF ALL THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS GOT THE POSSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE DUMA ELECTIONS, WHICH OF THEM WOULD YOU CHOOSE – OR WOULD YOU HAVE COME TO THE ELECTION AND TOOK THE BALLOT WITH YOU/ DAMAGED IT?
**WHOM DO YOU TRUST MOST OF ALL AMONG THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC ACTIVISTS/OPPOSITION LEADERS? (it is possible to choose several options)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boris Akunin</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandr Belov</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gennadiy Gudkov</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Kasyanov</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexei Kudrin</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Mironov</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Mitrokhin</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexei Navalny</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris Nemtsov</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonid Parfenov</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilya Ponomarev</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Prokhorov</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Ryzhkov</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Udaltsov</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Tor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia Chirikova</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuriy Shevchuk</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grigoriy Yavlinskiy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilya Yashin</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of them</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot say</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHOM WOULD YOU BE READY TO SUPPORT DURING THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AMONG THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC ACTIVISTS/OPPOSITION LEADERS? it is possible to choose several options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boris Akunin</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandr Belov</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gennadiy Gudkov</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Kasyanov</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexei Kudrin</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Mironov</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexei Navalny</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris Nemtsov</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonid Parfenov</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Prokhorov</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Ryzhkov</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Udaltsov</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Tor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia Chirikova</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuriy Shevchuk</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grigoriy Yavlinskiy</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot say</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ARE YOU GOING TO VOTE DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ON THE 4TH OF MARCH NEXT YEAR, AND IF YES – WHICH CANDIDATE FROM THE LIST ARE YOU READY TO VOTE FOR, OR ARE YOU GOING TO COME TO THE ELECTIONS AND TAKE THE BALLOT WITH YOU/DAMAGE THE BALLOT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Zhirinovsky</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gennadiy Zyuganov</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Mironov</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Prokhorov</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grigoriy Yavlinsky</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to come and take the ballot with me/damage the ballot</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to vote, but I do not know for whom</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not going to vote on the elections on the 4th of March 2012</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know if I will participate in the elections on the 4th of March 2012 or not</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IF ON THE 4TH OF MARCH NONE OF THE CANDIDATES GET 50% OF THE VOTES, AND THERE WILL BE VLADIMIR PUTIN AND GENNADIY ZYUGANOV OR SERGEY MIRONOV IN THE SECOND ROUND, ARE YOU GOING TO VOTE IN THE SECOND ROUND, AND IF YES – FOR WHOM?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for Putin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Zyuganov/ Mironov</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to come and take the ballot with me/ damage it</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to vote, but do not know for who,</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not planning on voting in the second round</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know whether I am going to vote in the second round</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IN CONNECTION TO THE COMING ELECTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA, DO YOU SUPPORT THE SLOGAN ‘NO SINGLE VOICE FOR VLADIMIR PUTIN!’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard to say</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ARE YOU PLANNING TO BE AN OBSERVER DURING THE ELECTIONS ON THE 4TH OF MARCH 2012?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard to say</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ARE YOU PLANNING TO ATTEND A NEW PROTEST EVENT IN CASE OF A FRAUD ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respond</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely yes</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly yes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitely no</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard to say</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DO YOU LIVE IN MOSCOW, IN MOSCOW SUBURBS OR OUTSIDE MOSCOW SUBURBS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in Moscow</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Moscow suburbs</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside Moscow suburbs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHICH OF THE_following social groups could you identify yourself with?
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We do not even have enough money for food</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have enough money for food, but not for clothes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have money for food and clothes, but buying more expensive things like TV set or refrigerator is problematic for us</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can buy some expensive things like refrigerator or TV, but we cannot afford to buy a car</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can buy a car, but we cannot say that we are not financially limited</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do ourselves well</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*in some questions sums of the answers can be insignificantly more or less than 100 per cent because of round error
### III. Levada Center survey (2012-03-20) (direct translation from Russian conducted by Daria Dmitrieva)

The survey was conducted on the 24-27 of February 2012 via representative sampling from urban and rural population among 1600 people of the age 18 and older from 130 localities in 45 regions of the country. Distribution of the answers is presented in percentage from the number of respondents together with data from the previous surveys. Margin of error is not higher than 3.4%.

**DO YOU USE INTERNET? IF YES, FOR WHICH PURPOSES?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For watching the latest news</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to find out what is happening in the country and abroad</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For finding information I need</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For finding/reading some books</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For finding/watching some films</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For finding/listening to some music</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For finding/Buying some goods</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For entertainment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For communication</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not use Internet</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DO YOU BELIEVE THE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE COUNTRY, PROVIDED BY MAIN TV-CHANNELS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>February 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly yes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly no</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely no</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot answer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DO YOU BELIEVE THE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE COUNTRY, PROVIDED BY INTERNET?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>February 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly yes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly no</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely no</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot answer</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Online survey “Participation in the protest actions in December 2011”

Conducted by Daria Dmitrieva from 2012-03-01 to 2012-03-05 via SurveyMonkey.com.

Number of started surveys: 57
Number of finished surveys: 57

1). Your age:

1. 25
   5.3.2012 14:35

2. 25
   5.3.2012 14:07

3. 23
   5.3.1.

4. 24
   18:04

5. 24
   4.3.2012 2:24

6. 27
   4.3.2012 1:11

7. 24
   3.3.2012 23:21

8. 24
   3.3.2012 21:56

9. 23
   3.3.2012 20:52

10. 24
    3.3.2012 20:46

11. 24
    3.3.2012 20:20
12. 25
3.3.2012 19:50

13. 28
3.3.2012 19:31

14. 25
3.3.2012 19:28

15. 24
3.3.2012 19:20

16. 29
3.3.2012 18:51

17. 27
3.3.2012 18:39

18. 34
3.3.2012 18:35

19. 27
3.3.2012 18:18

20. 30
3.3.2012 18:09

21. 24
3.3.2012 17:57

22. 25
3.3.2012 17:56

23. 30
3.3.2012 17:54

24. 30
3.3.2012 17:47

25. 23
3.3.2012 17:36

26. 25
3.3.2012 15:26

27. 24
3.3.2012 15:17
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.3.2012 11:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.3.2012 0:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.3.2012 21:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>2.3.2012 21:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.3.2012 20:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.3.2012 20:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.3.2012 15:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.3.2012 15:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.3.2012 15:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.3.2012 15:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.3.2012 13:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.3.2012 22:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.3.2012 20:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.3.2012 19:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.3.2012 17:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0

2). Which social media do you have accounts in? (it is possible to choose several options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Percent of answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>98,20%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>59,60%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vkontakte</td>
<td>84,20%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odnoklassniki</td>
<td>49,10%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveinternet</td>
<td>3,50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livejournal</td>
<td>59,60%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other answers: 5

Show other answers:

last.fm
5.3.2012 14:07
Linkedin
3.3.2012 20:20
FashionBank
1.3.2012 12:24
Foresquire [Foursquare], LinkedIn, My Space etc
1.3.2012 11:42
www.avtoturistu.ru
1.3.2012 10:14

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0
3). Did you vote during on Duma elections in 2007 and 2011? (it is possible to choose several options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2007</td>
<td>54,40%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2011</td>
<td>66,70%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>26,30%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0

Did you participate in protest movements before December, 2011?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21,10%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>78,90%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0
4). Did you participate in protest events in December 2011? If yes, please, specify which one? (it is possible to choose several variants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percent of the answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} of December on Chistye Prudy</td>
<td>10,5%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} of December on Triumfal’naya square</td>
<td>14,0%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10\textsuperscript{th} of December on Bolotnaya square</td>
<td>38,6%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24\textsuperscript{th} of December on Sakharova prospect</td>
<td>36,8%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other city or other country (please, specify in comments)</td>
<td>5,3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to participate in protests, but was not able to</td>
<td>17,5%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not participate in the events cause I did not consider it necessary</td>
<td>28,1%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cities/countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0

5). How did you know about the coming demonstrations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percent answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>82,50%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>21,10%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vkontakte</td>
<td>24,60%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livejournal</td>
<td>17,50%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/Radio/Printed media</td>
<td>19,30%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From friends and/or relatives</td>
<td>49,10%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other: news agency websites

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0
6). How much time did you know about the first demonstration before it started?

About the demonstration on the 10\textsuperscript{th} of December, around a week before
About the demonstration on the 24\textsuperscript{th} of December – 3 weeks before
5.3.2012 14:35

A week, maybe more
5.3.2012 14:07

Two weeks
5.3.2012 12:37

One day before
4.3.2012 18:04

Couple days
4.3.2012 2:24

Couple days
4.3.2012 1:11

One week
3.3.2012 23:21

One week
3.3.2012 21:56

Couple weeks
3.3.2012 20:52

Around one week before
3.3.2012 20:46

Seven days
3.3.2012 20:20

Couple weeks
3.3.2012 19:50

One week
3.3.2012 19:31

One week
3.3.2012 19:28
Couple weeks
3.3.2012 19:20

1-3 days
3.3.2012 18:51

Around 7 days
3.3.2012 18:39

Two weeks
3.3.2012 18:35

One week
3.3.2012 18:18

2-3 days
3.3.2012 18:09

7 days
3.3.2012 17:57

One week
3.3.2012 17:56

Two weeks
3.3.2012 17:54

Couple days
3.3.2012 17:47

One week
3.3.2012 17:36

One week
3.3.2012 15:26

5
3.3.2012 15:17

2 weeks
3.3.2012 11:52

One-two weeks
3.3.2012 0:50

One week
2.3.2012 21:58
Less than 24 hours
2.3.2012 21:05

3 hours before
2.3.2012 20:50

4-5 days
2.3.2012 20:02

From 2 days s to 2 weeks
2.3.2012 15:23

Triumfal'naya – 2 days before, Bolotnaya - +/- 4 days, Sakharova - +/- 1.5 weeks.
2.3.2012 15:18

About the first one (on Chistye) – half an hour before, about the others – much longer, weeks before.
2.3.2012 15:07

One week
2.3.2012 15:05

5 days
2.3.2012 13:23

7 days
1.3.2012 22:05

n/a
1.3.2012 20:28

3 days
1.3.2012 19:06

Couple days, astound 2-3
1.3.2012 17:09

One month
1.3.2012 17:00

Straight away
1.3.2012 16:43

10 days
1.3.2012 16:43

7 days
1.3.2012 16:43

1 day
1.3.2012 16:38

Long time in advance
1.3.2012 16:38

One week before
1.3.2012 16:35

One week before
1.3.2012 14:07

36 hours before
1.3.2012 13:30

7 дней
1.3.2012 12:50

4 days before the 10\textsuperscript{th} of December, later ones – more than a week before.
1.3.2012 12:24

About the 10\textsuperscript{th} of December - за 4-5 days before, about the 24\textsuperscript{th} of December - за 10-14 days before
1.3.2012 11:58

One week before
1.3.2012 11:42

2 weeks
1.3.2012 10:14

10 days
1.3.2012 10:11

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57

Number of respondents who missed the question: 0
7). Did you post text information, photos or videos, relevant to the elections, on your social media accounts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent answers</th>
<th>Number of answers</th>
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<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.40%</td>
<td>23</td>
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</table>

Number of respondents who answered the question: 57
Number of respondents who missed the question: 0

8). How would you formulate the reason for your participation in protests?

I want to express my civil position and demand FAIR elections.
5.3.2012 14:35

I have been participating in rallies from my teen ages and I am used to that. Speaking about the December events, the motivation was to change the government if it was possible. All the further actions I attended just not to soft-pedal the whole thing…
5.3.2012 14:07

Injustices, lies
5.3.2012 12:37

Stagnancy is death
4.3.2012 18:04

An attempt to change something
4.3.2012 2:24

Hypnosis
4.3.2012 1:11

I got fed up
3.3.2012 23:21

I got fed up by what we’ve had. The government has ventured too far.
3.3.2012 21:56

Ability to influence the situation, to become a part of the history.
3.3.2012 20:52
Total outrage and impudence from the side of the ruling party regarding the frauds, general problems in the country that are not being solved.
3.3.2012 20:46

I was frightened and resented by the fact that in the country which claims to have a status of a democratic country, the government is still controlling media, which never even covered the topic of unauthorized demonstrations in the beginning of December, and also showed total arbitrariness the side of the police.
3.3.2012 20:20

It’s needed
3.3.2012 19:31

Stagnation in the country and the threat of its deterioration in the next 12 years
3.3.2012 19:28

Belief that something is going to change
3.3.2012 18:51

The current regime crossed all the possible borders
3.3.2012 18:35

I just cannot stand this anymore
3.3.2012 18:18

I am fed up with being treated like a fool!
3.3.2012 18:09

Putin, who gave you a permission to rob my country??
3.3.2012 17:57

I am for fair elections
3.3.2012 17:56

Tired of arbitrariness
3.3.2012 17:47

Thieves
3.3.2012 15:17

Indignation with obvious facts of the election frauds
3.3.2012 11:52

Indignation with open breaking the law and with provocative attitude towards independent observers.
3.3.2012 0:50

No
2.3.2012 21:58

Love and friendship, respect and cooperation
2.3.2012 21:05

Dream to live in a free, economically and socially healthy state.
2.3.2012 20:50

Feel sorry for the country
2.3.2012 20:02

Impunity of the government
2.3.2012 15:23

Disrespect of the government towards its people has reached unbelievable scale! I am tired to be despised in my own country and not be considered as a thinking unit that has rights and possibilities to control the government. Fair elections are the cause, but the first reason is respect to people.
2.3.2012 15:18

I am fucked off with Putin. A lot.
2.3.2012 15:07

n/a
1.3.2012 20:28

I want to have fair elections
1.3.2012 19:06

Did not participate
1.3.2012 17:09

I feel ashamed for the government and sorry for people, who are being cheated and deprived with the right to choose.
1.3.2012 17:00

I think that demonstrations are e provocations
1.3.2012 16:43

Civil position
1.3.2012 16:43

Intolerance towards the government
1.3.2012 16:43

The feeling of instability and disrespect that exist today.
1.3.2012 16:38
I didn’t participate
1.3.2012 14:07

Intolerance towards lies
1.3.2012 12:24

The lies of the government to the electorate became too obvious and impudent. It is impossible to be at a standstill any longer.
1.3.2012 11:58

I felt like with help of that revolted “crowd”, there is at least some chance to change something. And I decided to become a part of this crowd.
1.3.2012 11:42

Lies of the government and that they see us as “white trash”. Frauds of the election results and thus inability to make my choice according the Russian Constitution.
1.3.2012 10:11
V. Interviews conducted by Daria Dmitrieva on the 13th of May, 2012 during protest event “Walk with writers”

Respondent #1: Man, 16

Interview length: 3:26

You, obviously, couldn’t participate in the Parliamentary election this year, could you? [asked straight after the age of the respondent was known, as the Russian citizen can only vote at the age of 18]

No, not in the elections, but in the protests rallies I did.

Could you please remember how you started to participate in the December rallies? What was your motivation then?

I started watching broadcast of the rallies on the first of December and saw what was happening there. And well, after the election results were announced, I was quite sad.

Could you please remember where did you first see those video broadcast you mentioned? Maybe, someone sent you the link?

It was my mother who told me first.

Do you know if your mother also got it from someone or did she just stumbled upon that information?

No, she is really interested in the situation, so she reads a lot of news herself.

Can you remember the exact source where you got it first?

I think, it was Ridus’ newsfeed.

After you started following these messages in the Internet, was there a certain person among bloggers and Facebook/Twitter users that, as you personally liked and whose ideas you were supporting?

71 News agency mentioned in the chapter “Study background”
No, I cannot come up with a certain name now…
Respondent #2: Man, 21

Interview length: 4:10

Did you participate in December rallies?

Yes.

Can you remember the reason for getting involved in these movements?

Yes, of course. People’s indignation and the fact that the government wants to take it all.

Maybe you could remember the exact moment when you felt that indignation too?

[answers straight away] Yes, yes, for example, there was that video when Putin was riding his motorcade of 100 cars. I feel a lot of anger that so much money is wasted… Or, for example, this Parade: millions and billions of dollars are spent on the celebration of the Victory day], and quite a lot of this money is going to our deputies. And veterans get nothing. When I look at the videos of those veterans, in their shabby apartments, with leaky walls, it gives me the creeps. And the authorities are in clover, go on vacations, go out. I don’t like it, it makes me irritated. I want it to be more fair, and I want the people to rule over the country, I mean over the government, and not the other way round. In my opinion, it would be right.

Do you like certain activists that arrange these kinds of protests – writers, politicians, opposition representatives?

Of course, and not necessarily someone from the opposition. Now I came here alone, just by myself, to express my discontent.

Do your friends participate in these movements?

[Answers straight away] No.

Then, how did you first got to know about the events that were happening around the elections?


Which ones?
Twitter and VK. Twitter more.

**What is civil society for you?**

Civil society? I can say what I stand for, and I can say how in my view the power should function, the president should act. For example, we’ve chosen the president that we like, but we don’t like how he rules, so we choose another. We don’t have this. This is what I stand for. What is happening right now reminds me the Tsarist epoch more: the government said “this way”, and then it will be this way. If you don’t agree, then, I am sorry, you are a goner⁷². I don’t like it, it irritates me. We kind of live in a free country, so we have to act freely, too. When we go on such movements, OMON beats women. Of course, sometimes OMON is being provoked to, but they are OMON, they have to be taught to be self-restrained. And what do we have? We have it the other way round! They are not qualified at all. I hope today it is going to be fine.

Yes, today it looks very peaceful; hope it’s going to be fine too. Could you please tell me, whom exactly are you subscribed to on Twitter?

Everyone – from Medvedev to Navalny.

**Did you know about the protests from their [Navalny and Medvedev] tweets?**

Well, who’s usually posting on that? Sobchak⁷³, Navalny. Well, Navalny is not able to post anything right now [by the moment the interview took place, Alexei Navalny was under arrest].

About today’s movement, for example, I knew from news – Mail.ru⁷⁴, Yandex⁷⁵.

**Do you yourself post information on your social network accounts?**

[pause] No.

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⁷² Rus: «Вам крышка»

⁷³ Ksenia Sobchak, Russian TV- and radio host, popular Facebook and Twitter user.

⁷⁴ Popular Russian e-mail hosting that is also an online medium with 28,5 daily users

⁷⁵ The largest search engine in Russia that also provides news aggregator
Respondent #3: Man 34

Interview length: 4:52

Did you participate in the December rallies?

Yes.

Was it the first time you participated in such events?

No, I also participated in protest actions “Strategy 31”\textsuperscript{76}, was arrested many times. So, no, it’s not my first action.

Can you please say what is your main motivation for participating in protest events?

How should I say… I guess we should have some other life except for our family life, professional life – some kind of political activity. Some shaping of civil society from below should be happening. This is basically motivation. And this it follows thence some other things: freedom for political prisoners, fair elections, call for resignation and further persecution of the current government.

You mentioned civil society. Could you please define what civil society is for you?

It’s when people who are not connected by professional relations or fellowship can consolidate in order to reach certain goals that they are interested in. To begin with, their house and yard, and to this kind of a large –scale community that is called the Russian Federation. So, it’s when they can co-operate informally and achieve their objectives. This is happening exactly now.

Did you participate in all December actions?

It’s hard to calculate how many of them there were. I did not participate only in the one on the 25\textsuperscript{th}, and all the others that happened straight after the elections, I joined.

Then, you were on the very first action, right after the elections. How did you learn about it?

\textsuperscript{76} Mentioned in the chapter “Study background”
You know, it seems that no one knew anything. Everything happened very spontaneously. People just came outside. And they went to different places. There was no certain place where everything happened. And then everything continued like an avalanche, also during the next protests. More or less same things were happening after the Presidential elections. So, I used no mainstream media or social networks.

**It means that you just went outside and…**

Absolutely, I just came to Triumfalnaya square, stood there for 10 minutes and that was it.

**What was your reason to go exactly there?**

I don’t know. I really don’t. Maybe because I came there before. I listened to a speech of Dmitry Bykov on Echo Moskvi and I understood that it is a next step, next action. Of course, I never thought there will be so many people here.

**How did you know about today then?**

I listened to a speech of Dmitry Bykov on Echo Moskvi and I understood that it is a next step, next action. Of course, I never thought there will be so many people here.

**Do you think that if there would be no big campaign in social networks, with all the groups and events, it would be possible to engage so many people?**

Look, I am pretty sure that the majority of people that are walking beside us right now are not subscribers of those groups, not bloggers; they might not even be registered in social networks. I guess many of them listen to Echo Moskvi. It’s important, but it’s not really the main thing. The main thing is, I don’t know [laughs], and I guess people already know what they should do.

**Among those public persons who deliver these messages to people, is there someone that you sympathize to?**

You know, in our common cause I am ready to hold out a hand to everyone: to Udaltsov, Nemtsov, Navalny, and all those who are ready to follow us. There is no person I would not hold out a hand to.

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77 “Strategy 31” actions usually happen on Triumfal’naya square every 31st day of every month which has than number of days

78 The Russian writer
Respondent # 4: Woman, 30

Interview length: 5:08

How did you know about those first December protest actions?

On the 5th of December I came there on my own, alone [emphasizes this point]! Left my family behind and thought “I cannot help but go there!” For the first time! I had never in my life participated in something like this. Came there – and there were so many people… I heard about that on Echo Moskvi.

What about social networks – Facebook, Twitter…?

[interrupting] No, no, no, I am too busy for sitting in the Internet.

What was your motivation to come there for the first time?

I see, hear things, read a lot. I just don’t like the way we live. I love travelling. We must be living much better. I was not born in Moscow, I am from Omsk. I see how people live there – way worse than in Moscow. It’s much more boring, fewer possibilities, less bright… I am a very emotional person myself. I need the truth of life. And I don’t want to be told how I should live. And also, I am a quiet and calm protester, as you can see.

Today it looks like everyone is really peaceful.

Today – yes, they are. But then, in December, there were many of those who were, so to say, ‘on the edge’. Today I like it more.

These people that became more popular thanks to protests – writers, journalists, etc., - both via Internet and TV, - do you sympathize to certain of them?

You know, some time ago I became very fond of Boris Akunin79. I took him right away, with his “Pelagia”. I fell in love [with him]. Sometimes I get bored and take the same book – and read it the 10th time! Someone reads “Robinson”, and I read Akunin sometimes. I like his language and style. And look at his strong political position! I was so happy to see it. Finally, I got my standby! But I would definitely come even without him.

79 The Russian writer
On the 10th [of December], I was standing on the demonstration, and it was so cold! I was on this kind of heels [shows the height]. I got to know all the men around me, and they lifted me on a parapet. So, I was standing there and knew that there were some celebrities talking. “Why one cannot hear anything? I don’t hear anything!” I was saying. And one man who was standing next to me said “I didn’t come here to listen. I didn’t come here to listen. I just came here”. And I realized that he was right. Why do we always need someone to listen to? I came there and I was shocked [smiling], I was just shocked that there were so many of us. In Moscow – I had never seen anything that gather mass in Moscow! I didn’t see the beginning of 90’s⁸⁰. I never thought that there is such mass of people… I think we got the strongest immunity possible now, the strongest. We are just tired of Putin. There is some point of no return. And I was thinking about the 6th of May – to go or not to go? “Why should I?”, I thought. – Maybe would be better just rest on weekend? No. If I don’t go, I will break something inside myself”. This is the next revolutionary step. Could I really miss it? I was so nervous like I was going to an exam. Because those rally – they are some sort of “truth of life”. And also, everyone is afraid of revolution. But there’s revolution, and then there’s revolution! They can be calm and quiet. So, look and learn. I am sure it’s going to work out.

But I also know a lot of my peers who are totally indifferent. They don’t support either these or those. They just don’t know, don’t watch… They even say “I don’t want to know! Let’s not talk about that”. I don’t understand that.

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⁸⁰ Soviet coup d'état attempt (August Putch) was happening in 1993 that got a lot of people in the streets as well
Respondent #5: man, 21

Interview length: 5:46

Could you please say what were the reasons for you to participate in the event today?

It is really hard to formulate it… About today, let me quote Boris Akunin who said that this is some kind of a check on whether we can enjoy walking in our own city

Did you participate in December protests?

Yes.

Was in the first time for you to participate in rallies, demonstrations, and protest movements?

Well, yes.

Did you participate in the very first action straight after the election results were announced?

Yes, on the 5th of December.

How did you know about that action?

From the Internet.

Could you please remember the exact outlet – news website, blog, social media profile, etc. – where you knew about it?

I guess it was Navalny’s blog.

Do you mean his blog on LiveJournal?

Yes.

Did you come to the first rally alone?

I was an election observer on the 4th of December, and yes, I decided that that rally was worth to participate in to express my position. That action was for fair election, so it was really on the topic.
Did you yourself publish some information in your social network profiles (Vkontakte, Facebook, Twitter)?

No, I use those not that much. Just the feedback.

Where did you get information about the protests in general?

I would say Internet in general and not just social networks. I use Internet quite actively; I read a lot, so I don’t have any problems in getting information about these kinds of actions. I support them and welcome them in many ways.

Whom do you read most often – regardless for website where they publish their post? You mentioned Navalny – is there someone else interesting for you?

Hard to say...[pause]. Well, I am a very active user of MSU\textsuperscript{81} forum, because I am its alumnus. And there are many people that finished MSU many years ago and now continue being in touch with students. It's a very big community, I don’t know, maybe around 20 000 people who communicate with each other there constantly. It’s interesting for me, and there is a lot of news I got from there.

From those public figures who came here today, who were giving speeches during December rallies – could you name someone you like most?

Well, no, if I get some news about them, I usually get it somewhere aside, and if it is something interesting for me, I might visit their LJ\textsuperscript{82} or Twitter account and learn more details.

And the last question would be – what is civil society for you? Does it have something with your presence here today and on December protests?

Absolutely, yes, it’s a sort of possibility to show my position, express my opinion, persist in my opinion if it is important for people, to show that... Society must show what it needs, it should not be dispersed, people should demonstrate things that are important for them and stand for them.

Do you think that there is a civil society in Russia now? Or would you define it more as rudiments of civil society?

\textsuperscript{81} Moscow State Social University

\textsuperscript{82} Livejournal
[before the respondent answers, a man that was standing beside the interviewer and the respondent interfered]

**The man:** The is civil society, but it’s overblown

**Respondent #5:** Yeah, it is…

**The man:** Too much bluster, but every more or less sober-minded person understands that in the 21st century autocracy can only be of decorative and declarative character – like the Queen of Britain. But it’s not a British Queen, it’s Fuhrer #2 or #3. We have just passed the “Munich” pub – as if it wasn’t enough with Beer Hall Putch! We already had explosions, and it’s a very dark story. And those explosions were very on time.

**Thank you! And what would you answer to the question about civil society [addressing to the respondent]?**

**Respondent #5:** It exists, it’s just deeply hidden. These actions help to express it all outside. People of course discuss it between each other anyways, but they do it not openly, they act discretely. These actions help to stick together and give people a chance to see that they are not alone who think that way.
Respondent #6: Man, 25

Interview length: 30:10

Did you participate in protest actions before December, 2011?

No. Those were December events that really touched me.

What do you think is the reason for that?

Before that, the most known protest action had been “Strategy 31” that is taking place on Triumfal'naya square. Before the situation with the elections of 2011 I was pretty distant from the political life of our country. When all those Dumas elections happened, it became obvious that not everything is that clean and clear there, and smoothly, as it would be nice to be in the civilized European country. So, I decided to go there on my Birthday, on the 10th of December.

Was the rally on the 10th the first one for you?

Yes, on the 5th of December, I didn’t go. But we started monitoring press³³ actively – let’s say, fair ones, - and arranged a Facebook community for informing people about those events. It’s name is “5/12 (what happened on the 5th of December?)”³⁴. There were two groups, actually. The first one all of a sudden stopped being functional, so we created another one.

Does it work now?

After the inauguration [of Vladimir Putin on the 7th of May] it was activated again. But then [in December] we were monitoring foreign press, more or less independent press, blogs – something that participants of the events were posting.

So, and you [group moderators] were monitoring and then posting it?

Yes.

Do you have a lot of subscribers?

The first group that I established “hotfoot” had quite many, something around 600 people.

Was the subscription spontaneous – I mean, you got all those subscribers in a short time?

³³ In everyday Russian the word ‘press’ can mean ‘media’, and not only printed outlets.

³⁴ Rus: “5/12 (а что произошло 5-го декабря?)”, link https://www.facebook.com/groups/5.12.news/
Yes. In two days. But by the 10th the group stopped working for some reason. The second group have now twice as fewer subscribers.

**Did you get some explanations [from technical support] on why [the group] was closed?**

It was not really close – it just became impossible to administrate it. Some posts started disappearing constantly.

**That is strange. Didn’t you address to a technical support?**

I don’t know… Maybe my friend did. I mean, someone saw those posts, and then they disappeared, and they appeared again. So it was very weird work. And it became impossible to change the name of the group, to edit the description…

**Is your friend a journalist too?**

No, he is a lawyer.

**What were the goals for you and your friend to establish those groups?**

The goals… I guess to survive information blockade by the central TV channels. To know and to inform about what was really happening. Ok, maybe not “really”, but to show not only a point of view of the central channels, which, in my opinion just cannot be not shill. Also, [to show] what participants of the events were writing, how foreign press was reacting. I, for example, was reading and watching attentively what BBC, CNN, Time was saying.

**And what outlet, in your opinion, was covering the events most objectively? Your opinion as person who actually was here, in Moscow, then.**

You know, I think even being in Moscow it was hard to judge upon what was happening here. It’s hard to give one once over everything. Then, it’s hard to understand genuine motivation of some persons. In politics, it’s not that simple. It’s not that they necessarily do things for the slogans they advance. Political activity is separate, and the person also does things for self-PR.

**As a person who was administrating that group and could see how users were joining it and who those users were – how did they know about the group?**

First, those were our friends and acquaintances, and then it was spreading via ‘jungle telegraph’. As I could notice, the most active users were those with rather good education and quite adult ones.
How would you define ‘adult’?

25 years and older. My friend and co-administrator of the group, and also several less active administrators – they are older than 30.

Did all the group subscribers had a possibility to make post or did just administrators have it?

Everyone could post, not only administrators. But we were watching so no political calls or agitation could appear there. These kinds of messages were deleting.

Was it a big proportion of subscribers who were actually posting something?

Like in every [online] community of this kind there is always a layer which posts more often. The other just read.

How would you estimate this layer in figures?

Around 15-20 people, who was constantly publishing something. Also there was a number of people – and it’s hard to say the exact number – who was publishing 1, 2, 3 posts, who were commenting something. There were more commentators, let’s say.

And if I address you not as a group moderator, but to just a person who participated in protest – where did you find out that people were gathering to protest?

It’s hard to remember now; it all emerged very spontaneously and from throughout. Something on VK, something on Facebook… I guess mostly from these too social networks as I am not that much on LJ, and neither on Twitter. I was on that moment subscribed for two people only – [Karl] Lagerfeld and my friend, and both a very apolitical in this regard. And I am not using Twitter that much.

Did your friends participate in those protests?

Yes, I would say quite many. Several people [among the friends] were definitely attending those actions. They were not only those who were working there as journalists85, but those who just went there as participants, I mean. Some of them I met right there, at the place [were protests were happening], we were arranging ourselves for that, and I saw many familiar faces, as well as I did today.

85 The interviewee is a journalist himself and has many friends among his colleagues
Did you arrange to meet someone there before every event you attended or did you go alone sometimes?

On the 10th of December, I was planning to go regardless for having a chance to meet someone there or not. I was not bored. I called some friends that had no relation to our Facebook group; those are friends of mine from completely different side. I spread the word “Who’s going?” and met these guys. So we went. We met on Mayakovskaya66, got to Tverskaya and from there we went to Ploschad’ Revolutsii. Were standing there for a little while, taking pictures, talking a bit, and after that we orderly trooped to Bolotnaya. I left Bolotnaya earlier than the crowd thinned of, maybe two minutes before they started firing missiles. As far as I know, there were very few of those and it was stopped straight away. I just needed to go to work. And, well, celebrate my Birthday too.

Coming back to that Facebook group – whom did you see as you audience? Whom did you provide that other angle of coverage to?

Well, for everyone. I didn’t have any target audience in my mind. I was adding almost all my Facebook friends to that group, except for maybe those I didn’t know personally, casual acquaintances, or those who could think my invitation was weird. So, I invited maybe 95 percent of my friends. Those who were not interested deleted themselves from our group straight away.

Did you yourself post something in your personal account?

I did only once. I am not a big fan of reporting on each and every step I make, so I just wrote a long post from myself. There I wrote some thought I had about what was happening.

Were you somehow irritated by those, who, in opposite, were posting a lot of information on the topic – videos, photos?

Well, it happens all the time, not only regarding those events in December.

But when a lot of people post a lot on the same topic – it’s a bit different situation.

Well, those demotivators, jokes, strips, memes on the same topic –it still happens quite often. And of course, it’s irritating. But one thing is when these are just silly jokes, and the other thing is when you see some active civil position among mass of people, who are your friends. It feels much better than to see the same ‘trololo’-faces.

66 Rus: Маяковская, a metro station in the center of Moscow
How many friends do you have on Facebook?

Around 250.

And was it many of them who were actively posting on topic when everything started happening?

Yes, rather many. I have really diverse friends and acquaintances. For example, I am professionally connected to, let’s say, photo models\textsuperscript{87}, stylists makeup artists, designers, and at the same time to university professors\textsuperscript{88}. And both, let’s say groups, were active.

And even those who were totally apolitical before?

Yes. I think this situation in general touched many people.

You announced your motivation for establishing a group, for participating in protests. So I would like to ask what the critical point was for you that gave you that motivation.

[pause] If we speak not about just me, but about people in general…

If it is possible, I would like to focus on you.

Why did I start to demonstrate political activity?

Roughly speaking, yes. There was information out there about election frauds in Russia long time ago, before December. But what made you personally go and protest only then?

I have to confess that I am not really attached to those political slogans and ideas of all the demonstrations. I think it was more important for me to watch that whole wave. So, not really to express my own discontent and go outside with a billboard, but more to see and capture it [on camera]. I am not really that kind of person who likes to be ‘harnessed to a cart’ and follow the rest. I think I am an individualist. Therefore, no one of the [opposition] leaders attracts me.

What about, for example, writers, who don’t place themselves in one row with the opposition? They proclaim themselves against…

Outrage.

\textsuperscript{87} The interviewee worked as a fashion photographer

\textsuperscript{88} The interviewee was taking PhD at the moment when the interview was conducted
Yes. So, they don’t take ultra-left stance or extremist stance. But thanks to these events the country discovered new ‘heroes’. Wrong thing might be to say about the whole country scale, but there was a layer of people who got some new opinion leaders. Some of them were unknown before, and some had way more limited audiences. So, even those – TV-hosts, writers, - you didn’t sympathize to?

Well, I was actually saying more about factual opposition. But yes, I liked today’s impulsion of several writers to take a stand in favor of civil law-based society, regardless for modern political conjuncture in the country – “Putin has to go”/ “Putin doesn’t have to go”, should there be new elections or not. [The writers came here] just to question why those people who just walk with white ribbons are getting arrested, those who just express their opinion; about the fact that some kind of police state is shaping right now. This is something I share. And to go and listen to Navalny, applaud him and catch every word he says – I definitely don’t want put it as my personal motto. Yes, I understand that the current government is not something one wants to see. The ways this government became the government are not completely fair either.

**What is your idea about civil society?**

For me, its most important element is prevailing of law and order above everything else. A person has their rights as citizens of their country. Our writes are fixed in the constitution and federal laws that are based on the constitution and according to juridical hierarchy are placed below it. Civil society for me is a society where human rights are the highest value, rights and freedoms of citizens. But one should not forget that where rights of one person end, the rights of another one begin.

**Rights? Or freedoms?**


**How do you think, why it was more people from big cities who were protesting than those from smaller towns?**

Because when that wave reached [the smaller towns] it seemed weak. So they did not realize the scale of the protest and didn’t see necessity to support it. They didn’t see it as something serious. But in general locals are oriented on the center in some way. So, they hear that something

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89 The interviewee is using a famous phrase “One persons freedom ends where another persons freedom begins”, but used “rights” instead of freedom.
happens in Moscow. The city is in a toss, but nothing serious is really happening. So, ‘if they [in Moscow] cannot do anything, what are we able to do?'”. This is also eternal problem - “What can I do?”, “What can we do here in Tyumen oblsat’ when they are not serious in the center? There are just designers, lawyers and photographers in the streets”.

So, let’s then imagine, if you didn’t see all those discussions on Facebook, would you still go? Yes, you could probably hear about that from your friends, but you wouldn’t know the scale…

[interrupting] I didn’t know about the scale anyways when I went there on the 10th.

I mean not the number of people in the streets, but the scale of online discussion.

But those discussions were not that large-scale. There were protests on the 4th and on the 5th, and there were even arrests. They wrote about the tanks in the streets. That day, I guess it as the 6th, I went on Pushkinskaya to get my processed film and I cannot say I saw something really scary.

I am talking more about online activities. You mentioned that your friends – even those who had been apolitical before – started actively discussing that entire situation around the elections online. Would you still go if it was not such a hot topic in social media?

I think I would. I did not orient that much on political activity of my Facebook friends. I saw that some event – “For fair election” – was organized. I realized that I shared that. I did not believe that those elections were fair. I believe the majority of YouTube videos I saw. Among them, for example, was a video from the election voting station near my building, at the Communications Institute. I understood that it was impossible to make some fake video there. I look and see that panel picture with Lenin that I recognize – it wouldn’t fit any apartment. I realized it was not that clean and smoothly. I wasn’t really looking on political activity of my friends. I didn’t think like “Oh, I will go if Petya, Vasya and Masha go too”. I will go for myself. I consider it right.

Secondly, I was just interested how it would look like. I was not planning to go with billboards or fight the police. I took a walk to Pushkinskaya ploschad’ and I saw arrests. I saw how many governmental forces were there. From crossroads of Tverskaya and Bul’varnoe ring to “Moskva” book shop and the monument of Yuri Dolgoruki, on both sides there were dense rows of OMON.

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91 Reference to the opinion of the officials that all videos with fraud were made in safehouses (apartments) in Moscow, and not on voting stations.
internal military forces, with shields and helmets – completely ready. Then they showed some reportages on TV.