

SOCHI 2014: ECOLOGY, SOCHI-ITES 0 – RUSSIAN CIVIL SOCIETY 1?

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Curriculum in Russian and East European Studies.

Chapel Hill
2009

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ABSTRACT

SOCHI 2014: Ecology, Sochi-ites 0 -- Russian Civil Society 1 ?
(Under the direction of Graeme Robertson)

The Olympics are often framed as a catalyst for everything from urban (re)development to the embracing of democratic values. This paper aims to show that in a hybrid regime like Russia's, the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi could be a catalyst for civil society development. In the Russian manifestation of a hybrid, the state is constantly reviving old methods and learning new ones to keep the opposition and civil society in check while trying to maintain the illusion of democracy. In this context, Russian civil society is also learning new methods of dealing with the state and strengthening itself in the process. I argue that thanks to the acute environmental and housing issues Olympic preparations bring to the fore, coupled with the authorities' greater than usual abuse of power due to tight deadlines and international image upkeep, the Sochi Games are already providing increased opportunities for local civil society development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all the staff, faculty, and my friends at UNC-CSEEEES. In particular I wish to thank my adviser Graeme Robertson, who generously allowed me to use his brilliant theoretical framework as the inspiration and basis for this paper. In addition, Dr. Robertson's laissez-faire advising style (with strategic intervention at crucial moments), wry sense of humor, and general encouragement were immensely appreciated. I am also extremely grateful to my readers, Jacqueline Olich and Jonathan Weiler. Dr. Olich's sharp editorial eye and practical advice were invaluable, as were Dr. Weiler's flexibility and ability to play the friendly devil's advocate. My husband, Vladimir Mineev, my parents, Nydia and Luis Fors, and my numerous relatives all get honorable mentions for their patience, support, and belief in me.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Sochi as Training Ground for Civil Society

The Russian Olympic Committee announced Sochi's bid for the 2014 Winter Games on July 14, 2005, which Sochi won on July 4, 2007 at the 119th IOC Session in Guatemala City.¹ Since the bid was announced, but even more so after the win, local civil society, to varying degrees and at different levels, has been in heightened mobilization mode, engaging the authorities in a variety of ways in response to perceived abuses of power regarding environmental and property rights violations in connection with the future hosting of the Games. Hosting a mega-event such as the Olympics always means colossal changes for any host city, but for Sochi, a relatively underdeveloped Black Sea resort city, it has meant and will mean even more changes than for most others. Ecologists immediately recognized the potential threats to precious and vulnerable natural areas located in and around Sochi; certain Sochi residents realized what it could mean for their homes and land, located on territory needed for the construction of Olympic venues and infrastructure. Both groups have been involved in various kinds of contentious interaction, including protests, with the Russian government due to its repeated ignoring and/or changing of environmental legislation, as well as infringing on the property rights of citizens.

On July 4, 2008, exactly one year after the International Olympic Committee announced its decision to award the 2014 Winter Olympics to Sochi, an article appeared in

¹ Bid Archives, "ARCHIVE—2014 Olympic Winter Bid—Sochi," Games Bids, http://www.gamesbids.com/eng/bid_archives.html.

the pro-government newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* titled “Environmentalists win first victory at Sochi Olympics.” The article described a meeting that had taken place the previous day in Sochi between Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and representatives of environmental organizations, including Igor Chestin, director of the Russian branch of the *World Wildlife Fund*, and Ivan Blokov, representative of *Greenpeace Russia*. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the relocation of the bobsled run and the alpine Olympic village from their initial proposed locations on the Grushev Ridge, an area bordering on the unique Northern Caucasus biosphere nature preserve. By the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Putin announced that the facilities would indeed be relocated to another site “to be agreed on with the IOC.” The article concludes with the following statement: “Commenting on Putin’s new plan, Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukov said that environmental organizations have no more complaints about facilities for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.”² The environmentalists left the meeting rejoicing at their seeming ‘victory,’ and Prime Minister Putin came off as understanding and reasonable, willing to listen to and take into account the suggestions of environmental groups.

About three months later, on September 30, 2008, three other Russian environmental organizations—*Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, *International Socio-Ecological Union*, and the *Sochi Branch of the Russian Geographical Society*—issued a written statement to Prime Minister Putin. In it, they stated that “it is extremely surprising that in spite of your July 3rd decision to relocate the bobsled track and alpine Olympic Village, the construction of these Olympic venues, according to the proposed General Plan presented at a

² Naumov, Igor, “Environmentalists win first victory at Sochi Olympics,” *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, No. 27, Vol. 60, July 29, 2008, (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, July 4, 2008, p.4). <http://dlib.eastview.com/sources/article.jsp?id=18829836>.

recent hearing, is still planned for the original locations.”³ In addition, the statement included over a dozen other specific complaints pertaining to the proposed locations for the construction of other Olympic venues and facilities (and this was not the first time these issues had been brought up, either). Time had shown that Putin was merely paying lip-service to environmental groups, making a public show of acquiescence while in practice acting according to his own plan.⁴ And the fact that the initial so-called “victory” was “achieved” by *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, while the later letter was written by other environmental groups, hints at the divisiveness and lack of coordination by groups theoretically on the same side, which is ultimately detrimental to the cause.

As we saw, simultaneously at play are deliberate tactics, such as publicly saying one thing and doing another, used by the Putin (now Medvedev) regime in order to undermine civil society’s efforts, as well as weaknesses on the part of an, at times, ill-coordinated and inexperienced civil society. As they say, however, “practice makes perfect” and “no pain, no gain;” just as the Russian regime is constantly using new techniques and reviving old ones in order to lengthen and strengthen its hold on power, civil society is also learning new and practicing old techniques in order to deal more effectively with the authorities, even if this just means documenting and learning from their mistakes so that they are not repeated.

Returning to our example case, on top of environmental concerns, which, for these particular organizations, are first and foremost on the agenda, the groups’ September 2008

³ Official letter to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin “Ob ekologicheskikh ugrozakh, kotorye neset realizatsiia reshenii, zalozhennykh v general’nom plane g. Sochi, i neobkhodimosti ego dorabotki,” posted on the IKD website as part of the longer article “Obrashchenie ekologov k Putinu: Genplan Sochi sodержit ogromnoe kolichestvo ekologicheskikh nepriemlimykh reshenii,” IKD, <http://www.ikd.ru/node/7338>.

⁴ It seems that Putin made this public announcement at this time specifically in order to prevent the Western Caucasus Preserve from being placed on UNESCO’s list of “World Heritage Under Threat.” From July 2-10, 2008 the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee was meeting in Quebec City, Canada, and this was one of the items up for discussion. For specifics please see “Decisions Adopted at the 32nd Session of the World Heritage Committee (Quebec City, 2008)” at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/32COM/>.

statement mentioned another issue that has arisen with the awarding of the Olympics to Sochi. This issue is that of “the justification and feasibility of the decision to locate the main Olympic venues on Imeritiskii Lowlands, in part due to the fact that construction there goes against the constitutional rights of the local residents.” In a nutshell, this issue concerns the possible eviction of a significant number of Sochi residents from their homes and land without what they see as fair compensation. It is these two issues, the environment and housing rights, around which the action in later chapters will revolve. And the Olympics have the dubious distinction of acting as a catalyst for these environmental and housing problems, which in turn are spurring civil society into action.

As already mentioned, ever since Sochi’s bid to host the Olympics was announced, there has been an ongoing battle, noisier at some times than others, between the government, who wants to implement its grandiose Olympic plans unencumbered and at any cost, and civil society groups, who are trying to defend the environment and the rights of Sochi’s citizens. It is being contested on four fronts simultaneously: protests and demonstrations, public hearings and round tables, the use of laws and the court system, and letters, petitions, and other forms of written statements. While I do not want to suggest that there was no civil society activity in Sochi prior to recent, Olympics-related activity, my main point in this paper is that Russian civil society is constantly gaining experience and practicing new and old methods of operating, and that especially for local civil society, it will continue to do so but at an even more concentrated and faster pace during this period of increased activity. Academic, activist, and Olympic critic Helen Lenskyj writes that “politicians, developers, corporate leaders, and Olympic supporters use the Olympics as a catalyst for urban redevelopment and infrastructure projects;” why should we not see the Olympics as a catalyst

for the development, strengthening, and consolidation of the “under-dog” local civil society, if not so much for objective victories (although these are not out of the question), against the much stronger and well-equipped Russian government?⁵

Significant civic participation, and protests in particular, are a relatively recent phenomenon in post-Soviet Russia. This growth spurt can be traced to the beginning of 2005, when, after years of relative passivity resulting from the Communist legacy, the subsequent political and economic chaos of the 1990s⁶ and the ensuing struggle for survival, and the ‘order’ and ‘stability’ imposed by Putin and his increasingly authoritarian means, ordinary citizens across Russia were spurred into action by the government’s attempt to reform the welfare benefits system. Since then, there has been a notable and documented increase in protest activity and a rise in social activism in general; there have been and are myriad constant issues being contested between civil society and the government.

A glance at the subheadings of various protest campaigns on the website of *Institut “Kollektivnoe Deistvie,”* or the Collective Action Institute (IKD) offers an idea of some of the issue areas. Besides ecological/animal rights and housing/property rights issues, they include extremist nationalism, pensioners’ and elderly rights, political and citizenship rights, social benefits and welfare, labor rights, health care, education and culture, small businesses, army reform, protests against police and government officials’ abuse of power, just to name a

⁵ Lenskyj, Helen Jefferson, *Olympic Industry Resistance: Challenging Olympic Power and Propaganda* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008), 2.

⁶ Robertson writes on the “large wave of strikes, demonstrations, hunger strikes, and blockades,” either unknown to or simply ignored by most scholars, that occurred in Russia in the latter portion of the 1990s (Robertson forthcoming, 54). He attributes this protest activity to workers’ desperation over unpaid wages, reaching a peak of 56 billion rubles in 1998, as well as to the “period of acute elite conflict” from 1997-1999 in the run-up to the 1999 parliamentary and 2000 presidential elections (Robertson forthcoming, 60-61).

few.⁷ Many of these issues are local and/or affect only a small portion of the population, so that either civil society's efforts are safely ignored or repressed by the government. Even when the measures are effective to any extent, the issue and/or activity surrounding it stays localized so that any gains remain unknown to other parts of Russia, let alone to anyone outside of Russia. It is, among other things, this anonymity of actions and their affects that lends itself to the impression of a seemingly inert, impotent, and divided civil society in Russia.

However, certain issues have arisen that *have* had the weight and breadth to gain the attention of the larger Russian population and to unite localized, independent groups into a larger movement, however short-lived this movement may be. One example is the aforementioned pensioners' movement protesting the monetization of benefits that had its peak in 2005 (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2). Within the two areas that concern us here, the environment and housing rights, there have also been a wide range of protests. Environmental groups have, for instance, campaigned extensively for the protection of Lake Baikal and against the importation of nuclear waste and the building of nuclear power plants. Significant among movements having to do with housing are the *dol'shchiki*, those who lost their investments in housing scams and have taken collective action in attempts to get the government to protect their rights. Again, this will be touched upon in more detail in Chapter 2. For now it is sufficient to say that, while some of the particular cases within these issue areas have been more high profile than others, the current political situation in Russia, with the intersection of a hybrid regime (also to be discussed in Chapter 2), a rising civil society, and a high-profile international mega-event like the Olympics,

⁷ IKD website, <http://ikd.ru/>.

promise to make Sochi the next mini-stage for yet another episode in the continuing saga of the growth and development of Russian civil society.

If the Russian government does successfully manage to pull off hosting the XXII Winter Olympics from February 7-23, 2014,⁸ not only will the physical appearance of Sochi have changed drastically, but, quite possibly, the “landscape” of Russian civil society will have further developed in significant ways as well. Despite Olympic organizers’ and past and potential host countries’ repeated statements that the Olympics are ‘not political,’ their very nature renders politics and human interest impossible to avoid. The massive scale of their production and implementation in the host city guarantees tremendous changes in the city’s infrastructure and landscape over a relatively short, pressure-filled period of time. As a consequence, it is almost certain that some groups’ interests will be served over others.’

Lenskyj cites a Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) 2007 study that describes the negative impacts of hosting the Olympics, such as displacement, forced evictions, escalating housing costs, reduced availability of affordable housing, and others, on low-income renters and homeless people in host cities.⁹ Issues like these open the door for conflict and protest on the part of those groups who feel slighted. And despite the “patterns,” noted by Lenskyj and others, of “Olympic industry threats to civil liberties, most notably, to a free press and to freedom of assembly, as well as threats to democratic decision making,”¹⁰ I would argue that in a country like Russia, there are more than the allowable-number-for-

⁸ “The Austrian city of Salzburg, which lost out to Sochi for the right to host the 2014 Winter Games, said in November it was still prepared to do so if the Russian host was unable to complete infrastructure construction on time” (AFP/Is, “Olympics: Russia cuts 2014 Winter Olympics Budget,” *Channel News Asia*, Sports News, February 18, 2009, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_sports/view/409682/1/.html).

⁹ Lenskyj, *Olympic Industry Resistance*, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 73.

your-average-democracy of pre-existing and ongoing threats to and violations of civil liberties and democratic decision making even without the Olympics. So in theory, interaction between government and civil society stemming from Olympics issues would be par for the course, except that the Olympic timetable and the jumbo-sized cans of worms it opens up provide very interesting opportunities for civil society development.

The fact that the Olympics and the preparations for them are a high-profile event watched by millions around the world also creates an interesting dynamic, in that the stakes are higher for all parties involved. Hosts face tremendous pressure to put on a smooth and spectacular event at nearly any cost which, especially for a regime like Russia's, includes breaking and/or changing laws, as well as suppressing and/or repressing those opposed to the event or some aspect of it. However, great care must be taken in how this is done; repression must not be undertaken too blatantly or harshly, because national and international attention will be focused on the area. This works both ways. Those groups that are being suppressed do have some extra leverage because of this attention, especially if they know how and are willing to use it to their advantage; on the other hand, chances are lower that they will get what they want because of the government's large stake in the results.

Indeed, top Russian officials have not tried to tone down their proud rhetoric on the IOC's decision, as well as on what they believe this decision shows to the rest of the world about Russia's status in it. The Russian political magazine *Kommersant's* barely concealed tongue-in-cheek account of portions of Presidents Bush and Putin's final meeting of their respective terms in Sochi on April 5, 2008 neatly captures the Russian government's, as well as the West's, attitudes toward Sochi's hosting of the 2014 Winter Olympics. At one point, shortly after his arrival to Putin's residence in Sochi, Bush is shown 3-D models of future

construction of projected Olympic sites by then-President Putin, the governor of Krasnodarskii krai Aleksandr Tkachev, and the head of the Sochi Organizing Committee, Dmitri Chernyshenko. Bush comments with jocular surprise that the press-center is the largest building in the model, adding that this is as it should be. After Bush asks a few more polite questions to demonstrate his keen interest in all that he is being shown, Aleksandr Tkachev pipes up: “And all of this is possible thanks to the support of our president!” To which Putin ever-cryptically replies, “And now you have the support of two presidents.”¹¹ Presumably, he meant the support of Bush, and not, as could also rightfully be interpreted, the incoming Medvedev.

This anecdote contains much symbolism that illustrates the significance of these Olympics for the Russian government. First, the desire for Bush’s nod of approval shows how the Russians see it as a mark of prestige, acceptance, and approval by the world, especially the West. Second, it shows that the Russians are prepared to milk this approval for all it is worth, symbolized by the size of the press-center. Shortly after the IOC declared Sochi the winner, Putin called the victory “an assessment of our country” and “an acknowledgment of its growing capabilities, first and foremost in the economic and social spheres.” Boris Gryzlov, chairman of the State Duma, echoed Putin by declaring the decision a “confirmation of the fact that the world is not unipolar,” that “there are forces that support Russia,” and that “Russia is once again becoming a world leader.”¹² Numerous sources have noted Putin’s extraordinary support of Sochi’s bid, up to and including the eve

¹¹ Kolesnikov, Andrei, “Prezidenty znali prikul,” *Kommersant* No. 57/P (3874), April 7, 2008, <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=877264>.

¹² Kishkovsky, Sophia, “After Celebrating Winning Bid, Russia Has Work Ahead,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2007, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950CE1D6123EF935A35754C0A9619C8B63>.

of voting in Guatemala, where he actively socialized with every notable IOC functionary, dined with them and their spouses, and topped it off with a speech in English (with final words in French), as one of the main factors in Sochi's being awarded the Games.¹³

Kommersant called the decision an extremely important moment in Putin's political career; a win would be a kind of award, a world-wide acknowledgement of the "rightness" of the course on which Putin has steered Russia during his tenure as president.¹⁴ There has even been speculation that when Medvedev's term ends, there is nothing to stop Putin from becoming president once again, and that Sochi's win, which he put so much of his heart and soul into, would be a perfect excuse.¹⁵ Even the Games' possible effect on democracy in Russia has been speculated (admittedly, and rather dubiously, by those who would not benefit most if this actually were to happen). Dmitri Chernyshenko, president of Sochi's Organizing Committee, was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "The Games will help Russia's transition as a young democracy."¹⁶ In an interview in *Izvestia* he declared: "The very process of preparing for the Olympics will be a real catalyst for the development of civil society. Sochi will be a platform of positive experience for all of Russia."¹⁷

¹³ Idiatullin, Shamil, "Gvatemala ne pokazhetsia," *Vlast* No. 26 (730), July 9, 2007, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=780562>.

¹⁴ Dzhusoiti, Afsati, "Putin pribyl za nagradoi," *Kommersant* No. 115 (3691), July 4, 2007, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=779790>.

¹⁵ "Gvatemala ne pokazhetsia." Please see footnote 13.

¹⁶ AP, "I.O.C. Chooses Russia for 2014 Winter Games," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/05/sports/othersports/05olympics.html?scp=4&sq=&st=nyt>.

¹⁷ Raush, Vladimir i Boris Titov, "Glava zaiavochnogo komiteta 'Sochi-2014' Dmitri Chernyshenko: 'Olimpiada pomozhet sozdat' v Rossii grazhdanskoe obshchestvo,'" *Izvestia*, July 7, 2007, <http://www.izvestia.ru/sport/article3106084/>. Chernyshenko's full response to the question: "Do you think that during the course of preparing to host the Games people's mentality will change much?" was "Absolutely. And until these changes happen, our people won't stop littering, allowing children to drink in apartment entrances and alleys, apathetically passing by drug dealers. The very process of preparing for the Olympics will be a real catalyst for the development of (a) civil society. Sochi will be a platform of positive experience for all of

Words like these, likely uttered as lip-service to the feel-good propaganda of the Olympics, may just prove true, in a way. It is possible that the Olympics, or rather the contentious issues they bring to the fore in a delicate ecosystem of deadlines, international attention, image upkeep, and the anger of local residents and environmentalists in the face of corruption and abuse of power by authorities, have already provided and will continue to provide opportunities for citizens to activate and attempt to mobilize as part of the growth in civic activism since 2005. And if civil society is not yet adept at effectively using a situation and opportunity like this one to their advantage, then there is no time like the present for practice and learning.

In this sense then, the awarding of the XXII Winter Olympics to Sochi has presented, and for the next five years, and perhaps even beyond, will continue to present Russian civil society with both great challenges and great opportunities, within the context of its relatively marginalized position in the hybrid regime that is Russia. In a recent work, Graeme Robertson observes “how the Putin administration has dealt with one of the key challenges it has faced in constructing a new style of political authoritarianism in Russia,” that key challenge being the managing of political opposition.¹⁸ The Putin administration’s response to the changing and increasing nature of protests by both real opposition forces and more innocuous civil society groups has been to revive tried-and-true practices such as Brezhnev-era open coercion and low-level harassment of opposition activists.¹⁹ However, it is not just the Russian government that is using time-honored techniques and learning new ones in

Russia.” So it seems as though he is actually referring to a *civilized* society, rather than to civil society as we will define it in this paper.

¹⁸ Robertson, Graeme, “Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society and Regime in Putin’s Russia,” *Slavic Review* 2009 (forthcoming), pre-publication copy (2008): 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid*: 4.

fighting the opposition and dealing with civil society; civil society groups, in every interaction with both the government and one another, also test old techniques and learn new ones for overcoming the obstacles placed in their path, not only by the government, but also by their own inexperience, disunity, and other factors. Important to keep in mind is that “success” or “effectiveness” for our purposes is not an objective count of who lost or won on a specific issue; rather, effectiveness for civil society should be seen as the increased knowledge and experience based on “training” and “practice” in engaging the Russian government machine.

Certain sectors of Russian civil society, namely environmental NGOs of all stripes, as well as local citizens’ rights groups, have been spurred into action by Olympic-related issues. In light of this, I will argue that the Sochi Olympics could serve civil society as a catalyst for a razor-sharp learning curve; through “practice” in mobilization and activity in the struggle with the Russian government around environmental and housing issues, together with the buffer of heightened international attention, giving civil society some breathing room while slightly limiting the Russian government’s capacity to implement the harsher and more visible forms of repression, the Olympics just may have a positive effect on Russian civil society in the long run, if not for Sochi’s environment and a portion of its citizens in the short run.

Thus, my aim is two-fold. First, I will tell the story of Sochi, specifically how it went from a vacation spot for average Russians to a hotspot of investment, development, and privatization in the name of Olympic glory. Secondly, I wish to show how Sochi-ites and environmental groups are standing up to transgressions, in the name of “Olympic need,” by the Russian authorities. At this stage of these “special” Olympics, at stake are not medals but

international legitimacy and global repositioning, not to mention billions of dollars for the Russian government and private investors, and the fates of both priceless natural World Heritage and Sochi residents for civil society. However, on an arguably more significant level, regardless of past, current, and future outcomes, much more important for civil society development in Russia are the invaluable opportunities for practice, training, and the overall gaining of experience in improving inter-team cooperation and building an ever more effective strategic repertoire of skills and methods for “wrestling” the heavyweight Russian government. As an overarching theme I wish to show how and where this Olympics-related wave of protest fits in with the growth in civic activism since 2005, and what it may mean in the years to come.

Following this Chapter 1 introduction, the “game plan” is as follows. In Chapter 2, in order to position the current “microclimate” and activity in Sochi within Russia’s overall protest “climate,” I will offer some background information on civil society in today’s Russia, selective details about civil society development and activity as it pertains to environmental and housing issues, as well as discuss the notion of Russia as a hybrid regime and its effect on civil society. In Chapter 3 we will go on a brief tour of Sochi, including details of its Olympic bid and post-bid developments, in order to understand the issues at hand and the reasons for the current conflict. In Chapter 4 we will witness a few of the more colorful examples of civil society’s activities in response to abuses of power by the government on both the environmental and housing fronts with respect to Sochi. These examples are important both as proof of the Olympics-related activity itself, as well as to show some of the techniques the government and civil society are using in their interactions with one another. In Chapter 5 I will attempt an evaluation of civil society’s

“accomplishments” thus far in Sochi, in order to show the kind of concrete impact civil society’s actions have had so far. Finally, I will conclude the paper in Chapter 6 with a discussion of the implications, predictions, and recommendations for the immediate future in the run-up to the Olympics, as well as the overall impact the Olympics might have on Russian civil society development.

CHAPTER 2:

Civil Society in Post-Communist Russia and Russia as a Hybrid Regime

In order to more clearly understand the significance of civil society's current activity in Sochi, we must first step back and examine the wider context surrounding it. It will be helpful for our purposes to start with a general definition of civil society, to discuss the development and current strength or weakness of Russian civil society, and to discuss the current status of the regime in Russia and its influence on civil society. In this chapter we aim to do just that. It is not the goal of this chapter to provide a wide review of the extensive literature on Russian civil society, but to single out key points most relevant to our study.

Civil Society in Post-Communist Russia

Henry and Sundstrom see civil society in general as “an intermediary between the public and private spheres” and contend that it is a “space of citizen-directed collective action, located between the family and the state, and not directed solely toward private profit.”²⁰ Sundstrom is more specific, stating that it is “a sphere of public activities by citizens...that lies outside of state institutions, ...a realm of collective, publicly oriented activity by nongovernmental actors that is often formally organized, including many less formal networks of public discourse, such as nongovernmental mass media and informal

²⁰ Henry, Laura A. and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, “Introduction,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans, Jr., Alfred B., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 5.

networks among neighbors in a community,” but excludes political parties and private businesses.²¹ These are broad definitions for the general concept of civil society; important for this paper is a slightly narrower definition. Here we are not concerned with groups or organizations that provide a service or fill a need not met by the state, but rather with individuals and/or organizations who are prepared to take some form of collective action in order to stand up to perceived injustice by the state, or to get the state involved in redress if the injustice is committed by another party, for example, an unscrupulous company.

As for the current strength or weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe, including Russia, the title of Marc Howard’s monograph, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, would seem to say it all. But to be specific, he sees post-communist civil society throughout all of Europe, including Russia, as “distinctively weak, characterized by low levels of organizational membership and participation by ordinary citizens.”²² Howard accounts for this weakness with three main individual-level causal factors: first, that most post-communist citizens still strongly mistrust and avoid organizations, second, that many of the private and informal networks that developed under communism exist to this day, making people unwilling to join formal organizations, and third, that many citizens are dissatisfied with the new political and economic system, causing them to shun public involvement even more.²³ In his conclusion, Howard states that aside from very gradual, uncertain generational change, together with a more active role of the state in supporting and working with voluntary organizations, he sees “dramatic changes in

²¹ Sundstrom, Lisa McIntosh, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 6-7.

²² Howard, Marc Morje, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

²³ *Ibid*, 10.

the pattern of non-participation throughout post-communist Europe” as “unlikely.”²⁴

However, his book was published in 2003, too early to see the wave of protest actions that would sweep across Russia beginning in the first half of 2005.

As it pertains specifically to Russia, Evans et al add that during the Soviet Union’s waning “under Gorbachev the extraordinarily rapid proliferation of... ‘informal’ groups dispelled previous impressions of the passivity of Soviet citizens and encouraged the most optimistic observers in the West to predict the imminent appearance of a full-blown civil society in Russia.” However, after the dissolution of the USSR, by the mid-1990s Russian civil society was characterized as weak, and “independent social or non-governmental organizations had been consigned to a marginal status in society and politics.”²⁵ In other words, the apparent boom in Russian civil society as a result of Gorbachev’s glasnost and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR was followed by a slump in the 1990s due to citizens’ continued distrust of independent social or nongovernmental organizations, a critical economic situation, and efforts by political leaders to discourage citizen mobilization and reward insider connections.²⁶

Karine Clement, one of the most active Western sociologists studying Russian social movements today, agrees that the traditional dichotomization of Russian society into “us vs. them”²⁷ is reinforced and even strengthened throughout the 1990s. She states that formally,

²⁴ Ibid, 147.

²⁵ Evans, Jr., Alfred B., “Vladimir Putin’s Design for Civil Society” in ed. Evans, Jr., Alfred B., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 147.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Here Clement cites Rose’s “hourglass” model of Russian society. Crotty’s summary of Rose (1995, 2000) and Mishler and Rose (1997) describes Russian society as an hourglass, with “old elites,” consisting of “company leaders,” “elected officials,” and “state apparatus” at the top, “ordinary citizens,” consisting of

Yeltsin's governmental did meet the criteria for a democratic form of government in that the main democratic institutions were created: free elections, a Constitution, a multi-party system, free press, etc. The problem, she believes, is that these institutions were not created from the ground up, but rather imposed from above. Due to this and to the absence of a tradition or practice of self-organization for cooperative, collective action in defense of rights, visible opposition to those who threaten citizens' rights is weak in Russian society. She cites other reasons as the unfavorable political/institutional context, the low level of trust between people, the preference for informal rules and practices over formal ones, and the weight of the paternalistic orientation of government.²⁸

Indeed, research has shown a very low trust among Russians in formal institutions, including parliament, the government, the police, and courts, as well as in political power in general.²⁹ Russians instead exhibit a preference for dealing in informal practices, relying on interpersonal relations to solve problems. Because this is convenient for those in power, this preference is reinforced by representatives of formal institutions, by the passing of ambiguous laws, as well as by their seemingly arbitrary application. Clement asserts that formal institutions are not capable of truly regulating societal life and meeting the needs and

“family and friendship networks” at the bottom, and between them an “underdeveloped third sector,” a “constricted civil society” characterized by a “lack of trust and limited interaction between citizens and elites.” Again citing Rose and Mishler, Crotty states that this hourglass configuration, with roots in the Soviet Union where the Communist regime actively suppressed the formation of independent advocacy and other third sector groups, has persisted into the transition era (Crotty, Jo, “Reshaping the hourglass? The environmental movement and civil society development in the Russian Federation,” *Organization Studies* 27.9, 1319 (19), September 2006: 2-3, *Academic OneFile*, Gale, UNC Chapel Hill, <http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>).

²⁸ Kleman, Karin, “Pod”em grazhdanskikh protestnykh dvizhenii v zakritoi politicheskoi sisteme: potentsial’nyi vyzov gospodstvuiushchim vlastnym otnosheniiam?” *IKD*, January 18, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/78>.

²⁹ For recent (2007) statistics please see Public Opinion Foundation Database Public Institutions Trust/Mistrust Ratings 10.05.07, http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/policy/services/reitingi_doveriya_nedoveriya_institutam_vlasti/ed071901.

expectations of citizens; rather, they meet the needs and expectations of those in power. As a result, citizens find it easier to avoid dealing with formal institutions altogether and instead take refuge in the informal sphere. This, in turn, is an obstacle for collective action, one of the goals of which is institutional change and legislative reform.³⁰

In spite of all this, Clement and other scholars have noted the “rebirth,” of sorts, of Russian civil society today toward the middle of the current decade.³¹ She traces the “beginning of the rise of Russian social movements” to late 2004 and into the spring of 2005, in spite of—then and to this day—the unfavorable institutional context (more later about this). It is important to note that she uses, and therefore we will also use, a wide but particular definition of the term *social movement*,³² which she builds on from Sztompka (1993) and defines as “a series of collective actions having a definitive length and a minimally organized and weakly coordinated form of realizing social changes,” taking care to make a distinction between this and “simple” collective protest actions.

At the end of 2004, this rise of social movements began with protest against social welfare reforms, specifically the monetization of benefits that affected the socially vulnerable portions of the population, especially pensioners. This protest movement caught on very quickly through mass meetings and demonstrations, including citizens’ occupation of government buildings and the blocking of streets in numerous cities throughout Russia.

³⁰ Ibid footnote 28.

³¹ Most of the relevant points in the subsequent section are drawn from two IKD posts: Kleman, Karen, “Pod”em grazhdanskikh protestnykh dvizhenii v zakritoi politicheskoi sisteme: potentsial’nyi vyzov gospodstvuiushchim vlastnym otnosheniiam?” IKD website, January 18, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/78>, and IKD, “K.Kleman, E.Gontmakher i I.Klimov ob obyvatliakh i aktivistkakh, sotsial’nykh i politicheskikh dvizheniiakh,” IKD website, December 4, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/?q=node/8050>.

³² This definition of social movement differs slightly from, for instance, that of Sidney Tarrow, who reserves this term for “those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents” (Tarrow, Sidney, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2).

Clement notes that later more organized political and civil groups latched on to this movement, which in turn played a role in its coordination and politicization. Most notably, the movement did not die out with the passage of time, even after the partial satisfaction of demands. In many regions, coordinating groups that had been created continued to exist and to re-profile themselves, widening their social base and sphere of activity. In an attempt to organize on a national level, several of them established formal ties with one another and formed networks. The most significant of these networks is the *Soiuz Koordinatsionnikh Sovetov Rossii*—SKS, or Union of Coordinated Councils, formed in April 2005 and still in existence; it unites groups across several regions and coordinates over twenty regional coalitions.

The other major protest movement, in defense of housing rights, also dates to the beginning of 2005 and continues to this day. Clement admits it is rather splintered, and the issues comprising it extremely varied, including protests against high communal tariffs, the issues concerning the management of multi-apartment buildings, so-called “pin-point construction,”³³ and, most relevant to our topic, the fight against unlawful evictions. Samuel Greene writes on both of these last two issues, as well as on the *dol’shchiki*, investors in scam real estate projects who have in various ways demanded help from city and federal authorities in an attempt to receive compensation and hold the unscrupulous developers accountable.³⁴ When discussing the wider housing movement he says that “in theory, it would seem that there is common issue-oriented grounds for the construction of an injustice

³³ Greene, Samuel A., “Our home is Russia: the futility of Russia’s housing-rights movements,” in unpublished dissertation, London School of Economics (2009), 7. Greene describes pinpoint construction as the “placing of new buildings in the yards of older buildings, only meters away from existing structures.”

³⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

frame that would unify the *dol'shchiki* with protesters in places like Butovo and Sokol'niki,³⁵ namely the failure of the state to protect and enforce property rights (and, indeed, the states' frequent complicity in their infringement),” but that “without reasonable expectations of success, such common grounds are insufficient.”³⁶ Greene attributes this in part to the inconsistency of the government in dealing with civil society, making it impossible for those who do and would mobilize in defense of housing rights to make “reasonable predictions about what strategies might prove fruitful, and thus...unable to develop repertoires of civic action and the stable patterns of interaction with the state that social movements need to be successful.”³⁷

In spite of this, Clement is heartened by the foundation of coordinating organs and networks in this broader housing movement; in part, the *SKS* has played a significant role in attracting new groups and in coordinating activities. So in this way, even if “from-below citizens' initiatives,” led mostly by committees of residents trying to solve specific problems, cease to exist after their problems are solved, there is still a clear tendency for the activist networks of the main initiators or leaders to remain. There is also the trend of making contacts with other citizens' initiatives, which gives impulse to the movement in the form of shared advice, experience, and resources. In those regions where the coordinated actions of the coalition is more dynamic, these from-below initiatives find opportunities for cooperation and organizational help, which in turn leads them to be included in each others' activities.

³⁵ Butovo and Sokol'niki are Moscow suburbs where Greene has documented protest activity in connection with forced evictions and pinpoint construction.

³⁶ Ibid footnote 34, 13.

³⁷ Ibid, 1.

In Clement's report "Emergence of Social Movements in Today's Russia: A Substantial Move in the Socio-political Culture of the Country," she identifies a substantial change in the protest scene in 2006-2007 following the initial 2005 spark of protest against the monetization of benefits. This rise in social activism has taken the form of an increase in "citizens' initiatives from below" on a microlevel, and seems to be centered around housing and town-planning issues. Clement cites the relatively short period of observation and the weak horizontal ties between different citizens' initiatives and thematic and regional movements as reasons why it might be more accurate to speak of "constellations" of social initiatives with weak ties to one another, than of a full-blown movement at the moment. However, weak movement is still movement, and all signs indicate that momentum is building.

Thus, "simple" protest actions, notes Clement, have greatly increased to the point that in nearly every city it is possible to count dozens, if not hundreds (depending on the size of the city), of "from-below citizens' initiatives," or groups of citizens organizing themselves and acting in the defense of varied and pragmatic interests. In our case, it is those residents of Sochi who live in buildings and on land that the government needs for its Olympic venture who have come together to fight, if not to stay in their homes, then at least to try to receive what they see as fair compensation. Of course, social movements are born out of initial collective actions like these, but social movements are a step ahead in the sense that they possess organizational structures, capabilities for coordination, wider and more obvious solidarity and collective identity, more general demands concerning public welfare, and wider goals in connection with a set perspective on society and power. That is why at this point it is possible to call Sochi's protesters on the housing front a "from-below citizens'

initiative” with the potential to play a significant role in the current formation of a wider housing movement, while the groups protesting the ecological violations are taking action as part of an already established wider social environmental movement.

Since environmental groups also play a significant role in Sochi-related activity, we should discuss briefly here Russia’s environmental movement—arguably the most well-established, complex sector within Russian civil society. Henry maintains that in spite of the instrumental role of environmental activists in mobilizing citizens during the perestroika era, overall environmental protest has seen a relative decline in recent years despite an increase in the number of environmental organizations.³⁸ She finds that ecologists have a “mixed record of effectiveness in acting as intermediaries between the state and society,” but that they have “developed a substantial organizational base, seemingly as a sign of the movement’s institutionalization and ability to act as a routine player in the political process.”³⁹ However, she believes that environmentalists have struggled in their engagement both with citizens and with the state, and that they “have been most successful at monitoring environmental violations by private actors and chronicling the state’s lack of enforcement of its own environmental laws,” with NGOs taking a leading role as watchdogs.⁴⁰

This has often provoked hostility from the government in the forms of tax audits, security investigations, and registration problems.⁴¹ Despite “some success holding the state

³⁸ Henry, Laura A., “Russian Environmentalists and Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans et al (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 211. While I do not wish to contradict Henry, I would like to point out that a glance at the “Ecology and Animal Rights” page of the IKD website, <http://ikd.ru/taxonomy/term/38>, which documents protest activity, shows no shortage of protests on all kinds of ecology-related issues.

³⁹ Ibid, 212, 213.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 213, 215.

⁴¹ Ibid, 215-216.

accountable to its own laws,” as well as the fact that “most Russian political figures appear to have tacitly accepted the need to engage in ‘green talk,’ ...even if their rhetoric is not accompanied by action,” Henry concludes that “Russia’s environmentalists are not yet very effective intermediaries,” and “activists are left to publicize environmental degradation rather than prevent it.”⁴²

She cites the nuclear waste issue of summer 2000, when the Russian government proposed legislation allowing Russia to import tons of radioactive waste from foreign countries in exchange for monetary compensation, as one of the greatest challenges recently faced by the environmental movement.⁴³ Different groups of environmentalists from fifty-eight regions across Russia united to oppose the plan; despite the fact that they did not successfully meet their goal of forcing a referendum, Henry believes that “their petition drive demonstrated an unprecedented level of public support for an environmental issue in the post-Soviet period and reinvigorated their ties with local communities.”⁴⁴ At the time Russian environmentalists “vowed to pursue the issue” and to this day they continue to fight. As we shall see later in this paper, the Sochi Olympics and the rather serious and significant environmental issues it raises present another great challenge for the environmental movement, providing environmentalists yet another “playing field” on which to practice and improve in the area of preventing environmental transgressions and mobilizing popular awareness of and support for a particular issue.

To summarize mid-chapter, I argue the following. First, that what is occurring now in Sochi with respect to housing would probably have to be labeled a series of “simple”

⁴² Ibid, 216.

⁴³ Ibid, 222.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 223.

protest actions, or a “from-below” citizens’ initiative. However, this initiative has already shown itself to be consolidating into a sustained local movement, which could remain in place to deal with all kinds of housing and property rights issues, even after the Olympics. In doing so, it will add to the momentum of the larger blossoming housing rights movement across Russia. Second, the protests by environmental groups can be categorized as a campaign by institutionalized groups as part of a larger environmental movement. Thus, the Olympics are also presenting environmental groups with a unique set of challenges and opportunities for practice in dealing with the government and engaging the population.

Table 4.1 in Chapter 4, under the heading “Team Civil Society,” shows many of the prominent civil society players in regard to Sochi. Despite the appearance of a strong team composed of numerous players, civil society’s relative lack of development and experience makes it vulnerable not only to the government’s tactics, but to the common downfalls of all large and inexperienced teams—a lack of coordination and disunity. For instance, *WWF Russia*, *Greenpeace Russia*, and *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus* have ostensibly the same goal—to conserve and protect Sochi’s vulnerable natural areas. However, their different positions vis-à-vis the government, along with their different sources of funding, among other issues, often impedes the formation and implementation of a coordinated and united front, which in turn weakens their position and harms the cause.

Russia as a Hybrid Regime

Mention was made earlier of the “unfavorable political and institutional context” for a vibrant Russian civil society. Indeed, Russia under Putin has been called everything from a

“managed” to “virtual” democracy, to “stealth authoritarian” to “monocentric” regime.⁴⁵ Evans states that “Putin’s style is to...use indirect methods of discouraging independent criticism while ostensibly endorsing democracy and the rule of law.”⁴⁶ For the purposes of this paper we shall work under the premise that Russia is a “hybrid regime,” which Robertson describes as one in which both political competition and contentious participation are allowed, but where they are closely controlled or managed.⁴⁷ Robertson further notes that Putin has used a mix of Soviet-era techniques of harassment and preemptive detention of protesters and opposition groups, plus a revamping of the entire system of state-society relations by licensing opposition and creating ersatz social movements to fill up the organizational space and to have ready players for pro-regime mobilization.⁴⁸ Evans corroborates this interpretation, stating that “organizations that are committed to a role of advocacy that often brings them into an adversarial relationship with the government authorities will face more unfavorable conditions” and “are...being subjected to tighter restrictions and...often stigmatized as unpatriotic.”⁴⁹

Numerous scholars have noted changes made during the Putin administration in order to tighten his grip on civil society. These include an increase in formal and bureaucratic barriers to holding demonstrations and strikes; canceling direct elections of governors and

⁴⁵ Evans, Jr., Alfred B., “Putin’s Design for Civil Society,” in ed. Evans, Jr., Alfred B., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment* (New York: M.E.Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 148.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 148.

⁴⁷ Robertson, Graeme, “Managing Society”: 2-3.

⁴⁸ Ibid: 4-5.

⁴⁹ Evans, Jr., Alfred B., “Putin’s Design for Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society*, 154.

mayors; the near impossibility of holding a popular referendum;⁵⁰ canceling direct voting for *odnomandatniki*, or single-mandate deputies, at national parliamentary elections; raising the minimum to get a party into the Duma from 5 to 7 percent of the vote;⁵¹ difficulties in getting a party registered (a minimum of 50,000 members in 45 regions); and the new NGO law.⁵² As a result, “political opportunities” for civil society have become even narrower.

Thus, the institutionalized political system as a whole is well insulated against the appearance of new players, oppositionists, or “from-below” or independent groups.

Completing the picture is the increasing use of repression on opponents and protesters, control over most of the mass media, and the creation of an “official civil society.”⁵³ This last term entails the creation of “civil society” organs chosen and controlled by presidential power, such as the *Obshchestvennaia palata*, or Public Chamber.⁵⁴ It also includes the creation of pro-regime social movements, such as the youth movements *Nashi* (Ours) and

⁵⁰ For an English language summary of the obstacles to holding a popular referendum, please see Volkov, Vladimir, “New law on Russian referendums: crude attack on democratic rights,” *World Socialist Website*, June 8, 2004, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/jun2004/refer-j08.shtml>. There have been amendments to the referendum law since 2004; however, the obstacles relevant to our study remain.

⁵¹ For a summary of these and other governmental reforms under Putin, please see Rutland, Peter, “The State Duma,” <http://prutland.web.wesleyan.edu/Documents/Duma.pdf>.

⁵² The law, which “expands government control over NGOs and considerably restricts the right to association and ...privacy of NGOs and ...[their] members”, was passed in January 2006 and took effect in April 2006. For details see Kamhi, Alison, “The Russian NGO Law: Potential Conflicts with International, National, and Foreign Legislation,” *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, December 2006, http://www.icnl.org/KNOWLEDGE/IJNL/vol9iss1/art_6.htm.

⁵³ Kleman Karen, “Pod”em grazhdanskikh protestnykh dvizhenii v zakrytoi politicheskoi sisteme: potentsial’nyi vyzov gospodstvuiushchim vlastnym otnosheniam?” IKD website, January 18, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/78>.

⁵⁴ This institution was created in 2005 and, according to official Kremlin rhetoric, it acts as “a type of collective ombudsman,” allowing representatives of civil society to meet and analyze draft legislation and parliament’s actions, as well as monitor federal and regional administrative bodies, with consultative powers only. The Chamber has 126 2-year term members, with the first third being “widely-respected and recognized personalities who are neither politicians nor business people” selected by Putin, the second third selected by civil society organizations, who in turn select the last third. While ostensibly created to strengthen democracy, it has been criticized as “pointless,” a “smokescreen,” “a Kremlin attempt to bring the nongovernmental sector under direct control,” among other things (Bransten, Jeremy, “Russia: New Public Chamber criticized as ‘smokescreen,’” #5-RW, *Johnson’s Russia List*, February 18, 2005, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/346-5.cfm>).

Molodaia Gvardia (Young Guard), to create a smokescreen of pro-regime sentiment, as well as to make it more difficult for legitimate opposition social movements to maneuver the organizational space.

Putin put these techniques of his hybrid regime most visibly into practice in attempts to quiet the protesters in 2005, but has used them in other instances in which a protest might be seen as a threat either to the regime itself or to a project or program of particular importance to it. This was seen in 2006 in the run-up to and during the course of the G-8 Summit in St. Petersburg, when the regime both preemptively and concurrently arrested protesters.⁵⁵ Later in this paper we will see examples of how the Putin (now Putin-Medvedev) regime and by extension their representatives in local politics have used these techniques against those protesting both environmental violations and eviction of residents in connection with preparations for the Sochi Olympics.

However, before moving on, a glance once again at table 4.1 will allow us to attach the names and faces we will meet in Chapter 4 to the abstract concepts discussed so far of unobservable and observable coercion and channeling, employed by the Russian hybrid regime to manage opposition and civil society while attempting to maintain a semblance of democracy. Repression and coercion include reusing Brezhnev-era techniques, such as preemptive detention and/or arrest of activists, sometimes with the help of arbitrary laws, such as the law on extremism. This tactic is complemented by channeling, or attempts to license, manage, and otherwise tame the opposition and civil society, rendering them harmless but still visible. This is also done through, again, ambiguous laws and their arbitrary interpretations, the NGO law in particular, the Public Chamber, and the direct

⁵⁵ Robertson, "Managing Society," 18.

funding of NGOs or government connections with private investors, such as Vladimir Potanin and Interros, who fund them.

In addition, using “dummy” organizations, such as the *Association of Preserves and National Parks* and *Green Patrol Krasnodar’ia*, when it is necessary for the government to claim the “approval” of civil society, is another common tactic. Finally, ersatz social movements, government-funded pro-Kremlin groups like *Nashi* and *Rossia Molodaia*, compete with independent groups, such as the *National Democratic Youth Union* and *Molodezhnoe Yabloko* for membership, while at the same time acting to discredit them, the former groups disrupting the latter groups’ protest actions, for instance. A tightly controlled media and a corrupt, biased court system round out the picture, acting as direct and indirect instruments for both coercion and channeling.

In the words of sociologist Anton Oleinik, the current regime can also be characterized as one of imposed power—power on the basis of coercion or intimidation, the cooptation of those who show loyalty, or on manipulation. This kind of power is not limited by any outside rules or basis, and is in and of itself the goal. It is not “power to” or “power with” but “power over.”⁵⁶ Clement notes that this is something to which Russian society is accustomed, so that if the authorities are seen as unfair, abusive of power, and corrupt, this does not mean that it is socially unacceptable per se, in the sense that there does not seem to be any alternative. Assuming that change will not come from those in power, this leaves, therefore, only two possibilities for changing or challenging this power: either outside pressure from other countries, or protest from citizens acting from within the system, who are able to unite into a movement to demand more democracy and openness of the system. In

⁵⁶ Cited in Clement, Karine, “New Social Movements in Russia: A Challenge to the Dominant Model of Power Relationships?” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24:1, 2008: 69-70.

my view, the same logic can be applied to those protesting not for a change in government or the system per se, but against certain actions by the government, such as in the case of Sochi. And given the Olympic context, there will necessarily be a certain pressure from without as well, especially as the event looms nearer.

Political scientist Tatiana Vorozheikina also notes the appearance of new forms of social organization starting in 2005, asserting that “those trying to organize today in order to stand up for their rights and interests are not up against the objective, across-the-board economic decay and governmental collapse that reigned twenty years ago; rather the face the abuse of power of concrete bureaucrats, as well as those private interests connected with them.”⁵⁷ In other words, since government representatives often decline to defend citizens’ interests in the face of private interests, citizens are realizing that they must stand up for themselves and are quickly “cured” of paternalism, or the expectation of help from the authorities.

Clement also argues that an increasing lawlessness and corruption among government officials of all stripes has led to a growing awareness among certain citizens of their own rights. She provides a telling quotation from her research: “The authorities themselves have turned us into fighters for justice.”⁵⁸ Vorozheikina argues that citizens’ awakening or realization, prompting them to independently organize to defend their own concrete interests, is the first step in the consolidation of those more general forms of solidarity that in the

⁵⁷ Vorozheikina, Tat’iana, “Samozashchita kak pervyi shag k solidarnosti,” *Pro et Contra*, #2-3, March-June 2008: 17, http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/procontra/ProEtContra_14_6-23.pdf.

⁵⁸ IKD, “K.Kleman, E.Gontmakher i I.Klimov ob obyvatliakh i aktivistkakh, sotsial’nykh i politicheskikh dvizheniiakh,” IKD website, December 4, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/8050>.

future would allow for the creation of horizontal ties and solidarity between groups with different demands and interests.

In addition, Vorozheikina states that most illustrative of this point are those movements in defense of housing rights and the environment, these being the issues most readily affected by the special, personal interests of representatives of a privatizing state.⁵⁹ Thus, these movements can be seen as typical examples of the self-organization of the “offended,” socially disadvantaged, “stigmatized” portions of the population. Participants in these movements often point to the law and demand government enforcement of it which, to Vorozheikina, is an extremely important step in the formation of the ‘culture of rights’ in Russian society. What is occurring in Sochi, with citizens and environmental groups demanding that the government adhere to its own laws in the growing glare of the Olympic spotlight, is a significant “patch” in the quilting of this ‘culture of rights’ in Russian society.

In sum, we see a post-2004/2005 Russia experiencing a rise in protest activity, sparked by the pensioners’ protests, due to citizens’ increasing frustration with the impotence of formal institutions purportedly in place to serve them but in reality serving those in power. This initial growth in protest activity, at the local, grassroots level, has helped to bring about coordinated networks that unite groups across regions, which have given impulse to protests connected with certain common issues across Russia, such as housing. All of this is occurring in the context of Putin’s (now Medvedev’s Putin-driven) hybrid regime, in which continuous experimentation and learning is part of the game for both the government and civil society, especially when it comes to channeling or managing protest (on the

⁵⁹ For instance, oil and gas extraction and transport, weapons production and export, and infrastructure construction, all requiring access by private companies to urban and suburban lands in large cities. Ibid footnote 57: 17.

government's part) and methods for dealing with or side-stepping the government's tactics (on the part of civil society).

Against this backdrop, Sochi, is experiencing its own rise in civil society activity, along the lines of housing—grassroots citizens' initiatives with the potential to consolidate into a sustained local movement and eventually become a part of the wider developing housing rights movement across Russia, and the environment—a campaign of institutionalized groups acting within the larger environmental movement. For this activity in Sochi we have to thank, in part, its 2014 Winter Olympics host-city status, due to the local, regional, and federal government's greater-than-usual disregard for people's property rights and environmental norms, which the preparations for Games has brought about. In the following chapter we will examine the situation on the ground in Sochi in order to provide a better sense of what civil society is so riled up about.

CHAPTER 3

Tour of Sochi

The website “Songs About Sochi”⁶⁰ advises: “When setting out for a rest in Sochi, take some songs for the road...” Of the over twenty-five songs written about Sochi, not one mentions snow-capped mountains, skiing, or cold temperatures. Rather, all in some form or another revolve around sea, sun, sand, seaside resorts, and romances. How then did the Russian government come up with the idea for Sochi to host the Winter Olympic Games? In this chapter we will go on a brief “tour” of Sochi, during which we will get both the Russian government’s and local civil society’s-eye-view of the situation in regards to Olympic planning and preparations and what this means for the environment and Sochi residents.

Sochi is located in Russia’s third largest region, Krasnodarskii Krai. The city lies on the southern slopes of the main Caucasus Mountain chain on the southeastern coast of the Black Sea, just north of Russia’s border with the breakaway Georgian republic of Abkhazia (please see Appendix I: Map of Sochi). Greater Sochi has an area of 3,500 square kilometers but most of the population, estimated at 395,012 in 2006, inhabits the narrow strip along the coast that is the city of Sochi proper.⁶¹ Since its establishment during the Russian empire as a military fortification in 1837, Sochi and its environs have been developed as a health resort due to the presence of curative mineral springs; during the imperial period, the area was

⁶⁰ Website “Pesni o Sochi,” <http://www.sochisongs.narod.ru/>.

⁶¹ Wikipedia contributors, “Sochi,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sochi&oldid=270639751>.

visited by aristocratic Russians. With the 1917 revolution came the nationalization of the entire resort complex of Sochi, and from the early 1920s the Soviet State continued to develop recreation in the region, building numerous sanatoriums for Soviet workers.⁶² Since then Sochi and its surroundings have continued to be a popular vacation spot for ordinary Russians and political and business elites alike. About two million people visit Greater Sochi every summer with a total of over three million people every year. It is home to 579 different health and leisure facilities, including hotels and tourist resorts.

The notion of turning the location of Stalin's favorite dacha into the "Russian Riviera" has come up numerous times over the years. Putin hosted international leaders in Sochi while he was president, and continues to vacation there. The Olympics seem like a perfect opportunity (some think pretext) to turn Sochi into a first class resort, with a nearly \$13 billion Olympic investment program⁶³ to build not only Olympic venues, but all the infrastructure and support it would take to put Sochi on the level of world-class city.⁶⁴ Russian government officials insist that the goal is not only to ready Sochi for the Olympics, but to transform the town into a Mediterranean-style tourist resort as well. According to one local resident, "The government wants to turn Sochi into its own little Monaco."⁶⁵

Sochi has a humid subtropical climate and thus has the aspect of a subtropical resort. However, a scientific article from 1994 states that "winter tourism has not really been

⁶² Rybak, Dr. Elena A., Dr. Oleg O. Rybak, and Dr. Yuri V. Zasedatelev, "Complex Geographical Analysis of the Greater Sochi Region on the Black Sea Coast," *GeoJournal* 34.4, December 1994: 508.

⁶³ This was the initial figure. More recently, Sochi's building budget for the Games was cut by 15 percent due to the heat of the world financial crisis (Loo, Daryl, "Sochi Olympic Budget Cut to \$6.1 bln—Russia DPM," Reuters India, March 11, 2009, <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldOfSport/idINIndia-38442520090310>).

⁶⁴ Slavin, Martin, "2014 Winter Olympics bring on the ruthless redevelopment of tourism around Sochi," *GamesMonitor* October 5, 2008, <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/702>.

⁶⁵ Yaffa, Joshua, "As Olympics Loom, Sochi Hurries to be Ready," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2008, <http://travel.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/travel/16NextStop.html?pagewanted=1>.

developed although the climatic conditions in the middle mountain subregion are best fitted for winter sports during almost all ‘dead season’” (sic), with the ‘dead season’ being from November to April.⁶⁶ Perhaps the thinking was that there would be no better way to develop winter tourism, and the area’s infrastructure and tourism in general, quickly and with help from investors and government funds than by hosting the Winter Olympics. Indeed, Garry Kasparov and other anti-Kremlin activists, as well as ecologists and ordinary citizens, have repeated that the Olympic Games are a gigantic con, a cover in order to develop Sochi as quickly as possible and with the least resistance.⁶⁷ For the record, 2005 was not the first year that Sochi made a bid to host the Winter Games. Its first bid for the 1998 Games was withdrawn due to the economic deterioration during the final few months of the Soviet Union’s existence.⁶⁸ The second attempt was in 1994, when a bid was made for the 2002 Games; however, the city’s almost total lack of facilities made that bid too weak for Sochi to even make the ‘Candidate City’ list.⁶⁹

This time, even the project’s initiators acknowledged the lack of the requisite athletic facilities, hotels, and service infrastructure, identifying this as the main problem for Sochi in its quest for the Olympics, according to civil society groups.⁷⁰ The Sochi 2014 Organizing

⁶⁶ Rybak, Dr. Elena A., Dr. Oleg O. Rybak, and Dr. Yuri V. Zasedatelev, “Complex Geographical Analysis of the Greater Sochi Region on the Black Sea Coast,” *GeoJournal* 34.4, December 1994: 509.

⁶⁷ In a fascinating excerpt from an interview, Garry Kasparov discusses the real reasons, as he sees them, why the Russian government chose Sochi to host the 2014 Winter Olympics, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9swXFN_Ifo.

⁶⁸ Danilova, Maria, “Russia to host 2014 Olympic Games,” *AP, NY Daily News*, July 5, 2007, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/us_world/2007/07/05/2007-07-05_russia_to_host_2014_olympic_games.html.

⁶⁹ Moskalenko, German, “Ochevidnoe—Neveroiatnoe,” *Gazeta 7 Dnei*, http://belta.by/7days_plus.nsf/All/F5C60325698EFD4D422573150045B46D?OpenDocument.

⁷⁰ IKD, “Nepravliaemoe razvitie ‘olimpiiskogo’ Sochi,” IKD website, January 6, 2009, <http://ikd.ru/node/8366>.

Committee then tried to turn in this on its head, claiming this “problem” to be an advantage, because in Sochi the most modern Olympic infrastructure could be built from scratch.⁷¹

Members of the IOC seemed to buy it. What likely convinced them were Putin’s assurances, as well as the Russian government’s pledge to put up over \$12 billion, more than the cost of the last three Winter Olympics combined. However, Irina Pilman, an analyst for Standard & Poor’s in Krasnodarskii Krai, says that “the original figure of \$12 billion could easily double by the end,” due to the fact that the costs of many construction projects were miscalculated because the IOC’s requirements for infrastructure quality were not fully taken into account.⁷² In any case, when justifying this sum to the Russian people, some of whom believe these funds might be better spent on improving health care or on some of the other Federal Target Programs, Putin stressed that “most allocations will be spent on the regional infrastructure’s development, rather than Olympic-facility construction,” so that residents and visitors alike will be able to use that infrastructure year-round.⁷³

However, civil society groups see Sochi’s main problem as the absence of a land-use planning diagram, a General City Plan, town-planning zoning, and regulations on the protection of the seaside resort and the health and alpine health zones. It is these documents on which urban-planning decisions are made and which, for Sochi, seem not to exist. Indeed,

⁷¹ In order to get Sochi ready to host the Games, an enormous amount of infrastructure needs building, including roads, a light rail system, an upgrade to the airport, modern sanitation and energy infrastructure, as well as 11 competition venues and 2 Olympic Villages split between two venue clusters—one coastal (Imeretinski Valley) and one mountain (Krasnaia Poliana) (Cushman & Wakefield, Stiles & Riabokobylo, “Sochi: The Impact of the 2014 Winter Games. Research,” http://www.1rre.ru/analit/analitics_8.pdf.)

⁷² Antonova, Maria, “Olympic Costs and Investment Uncertain,” #22-JRL 2008-215 (from *The Moscow Times*), November 24, 2008, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-215-22.cfm>.

⁷³ Working Day, “Conversation with Vladimir Putin,” Government of the Russian Federation website, December 4, 2008, <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/1338.html>.

the last time Sochi's General Plan⁷⁴ was "updated" was in 1996.⁷⁵ Since 2003, various bodies, ranging from the Sochi city council, to the Accounts Chamber, to *Gosstroï* (State Committee on Matters of Construction and Architecture), to the regional administration, to the governor, have issued various calls and decrees for an up-to-date General Plan for Greater Sochi. On July 7, 2006 when the government issued a decree for the Federal Target Program "Development of Sochi as an Alpine Resort (2006-2014)," the all-important town-planning document was still missing.⁷⁶ Only in May 2007 did the *Gosudarstvennoe Unitarnoe Predpriatie*, or *State Unitary Enterprise* (GUP), "Associate Managerial Board of the Federal Target Program⁷⁷ 'Development of Sochi as an Alpine Resort (2006-2014),' " and not the regional administration, hold a call for proposals for the General Plan of Sochi.

⁷⁴ A General Plan is a territorial planning document that includes the architectural, transport, engineering, social, industrial, and ecological aspects of a city's development. (Definition from website of General Plan of Astrakhan under link "Shto takoe general'nyi plan?" <http://astrakhan.urbanistika.ru/2.shtml>.)

⁷⁵ In 1996, then head of Sochi N. Karpov approved a revision to the General Plan of Greater Sochi. This revision was not seen by the Sochi City Council or the regional administration, it did not go through a compulsory state expert examination, and it was not published (IKD, "Nepravlaemoe razvitie 'olimpiiskogo' Sochi," IKD website, February 6, 2009, <http://ikd.ru/node/8366>).

⁷⁶ In November 2003, an Accounts Chamber report stated that "the General Plans of Sochi and Anapa are outdated, and despite the cities' federal status, they are being developed without the necessary town-planning documents." At the end of 2003 *Gosstroï* adopted "Main trends in the development of urban planning of the Russian Federation from 2004-2010", which provided for the elaboration of general plans of territories of a 'special urban-planning federal status,' which includes Sochi, by January 1, 2006. In March 2004 the Sochi City Council demanded that a proper General Plan, as well as plans of the city limits, and its protection and regulation as a seaside resort of federal status be presented by January 5, 2005. In February 2006 the governor of Krasnodarskii Krai issued a decree "On the integrated development of Sochi," which called for the elaboration and presentation for approval of a plan for the boundaries of the zone of protection for the seaside resort of Sochi (basically admitting that one did not exist) by May of that year. The decree also demanded the elaboration of rules for land-use and development of Sochi by March of that year (despite the fact that it is objectively impossible to come up with such a plan in such a short amount of time, especially in the absence of a General Plan), as well as to begin devising a plan for the city limits and general plan for the city district of Sochi by February of that year (Ibid, <http://ikd.ru/node/8366>).

⁷⁷ Program "Development of Sochi as an Alpine Resort (2006-2014)," one of 47 "Federal Target Programs" (<http://fcp.vpk.ru/cgi-bin/cis/fcp.cgi/Fcp/FcpList/Full/2008/>). The program was announced on June 8, 2006 by government resolution #357.

Yet on July 5, 2007 the IOC selected Sochi, *a city still lacking a General Plan or regulations on development* (emphasis added), as the host of the 2014 Winter Olympics. Then on November 16, 2007 came Federal “Olympic” Law No. 310, which introduced “changes in separate legal acts of the Russian Federation in relation to the organization and implementation of the XXII Winter Olympic Games and IX Paralympic Winter Games of 2014 in Sochi.” The law established a so-called “simplified procedure,” according to which private property can be taken by the government based on loosely-defined “state need,” with compensation to the expropriated person to be decided upon by the government.⁷⁸ According to local civil society representative Valerii Suchkov, the law effectively supercedes the laws regulating urban planning, stating that the “preparation and approval of documents on the planning of the territory for the distribution of Olympic venues, the decision-making on allocation of lands, the seizure of private property for government or municipal need, the transfer of private property from one category to another, among other things, is all allowed to occur in the absence of the corresponding territorial planning documents.” In combination with another law that regulates the activities of government corporations, the law could allow the government corporation, *Olimpstroi*, to take private property for the use of the corporation itself.⁷⁹

How does the aforementioned play out against the backdrop of local civil society and politics? According to one consulting firm, Krasnodarskii Krai is “regularly cited as a model of Russian ‘managed democracy’ occurring on the regional level. Aleksandr Tkachev, the

⁷⁸ Lebedeva, Anna, “Strana v Olimpiiskom reserve,” *Novaya Gazeta*, September 24 2007, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/73/19.html>.

⁷⁹ *Olimpstroi* is a government corporation created to direct all activities connected with the planning, construction, infrastructure and use of Olympic facilities in Sochi (Wikipedia contributors, “Olimpstroi,” Wikipedia, svobodnaia entsiklopedia, <http://ru.wikipedia.org/?oldid=12686954>).

Krai's governor, is held in high regard by the federal authorities and frequently referred to as a 'mini-Putin.'"⁸⁰ Another observer notes that, following the staunchly Communist governor Nikolai Kondratenko, Tkachev has governed the region "assertively" since 2000, prior to which, since entering public life in 1994, he was active in the regional legislature and later the Duma.

Despite his own Communist past, Tkachev is considered a "United Russia party stalwart," United Russia having become, as a consequence, the dominant force in the Krai under Tkachev's tenure. As a "loyal advocate of Putin's policy line," he enjoys much support from the federal center. According to Paul Abelsky, "there has been a steady concentration of power [in the region] that rankles...local businessmen and observers" and "officials at the regional administration admitted to a growing concern within the governor's inner circle over excessive restraints on press freedoms and similar drawbacks of the current policies."⁸¹ With all that is riding on the successful implementation of the 2014 Games, not least of which is his political career, Tkachev is not about to let some protesting residents create a problem. He has declared: "Preparation for the Olympiad—this is a question of state importance, and therefore to any attempts to get in the way we are going to react hard, but strictly within the framework of current legislation."⁸²

⁸⁰ Public Affairs & Public Relations Consultants, "Continuity in the Russian Regions: How Key Russian Regions Adapt to the New Federal Balance of Power and the Implications for International Investors," *Mmd Bulletin: Krasnodar Krai, Eurasia Strategies Group, Mmd Corporate*, May-June 2008: 3, <http://www.mmdcee.com/content/rus/Krasnodar.pdf>.

⁸¹ Abelsky, Paul, "The Candidate of Last Resort," *Expat.ru, Analysis and Opinion*, December 9, 2007, <http://www.expat.ru/analytics.php?item=266>.

⁸² Pasko, Grigory, "Standoff in Sochi has Begun," posted in *Robert Amsterdam Blog*, July 30, 2008, http://www.robertamsterdam.com/2008/07/grigory_pasko_the_sochi_stando.htm.

Locally, Sochi's new status as an Olympic host city, directly or indirectly, has caused numerous changes in the makeup of the Sochi Organizing Committee, Olimpstroï, and the local city administration. For example, Vladimir Afanasenkov was mayor of Sochi until October 30, 2008, when he suddenly resigned citing health problems. However, according to *Novaia Gazeta*, experts and local residents believe that the real reasons are directly linked to the Olympics.⁸³ Recently, opposition leader and Sochi native Boris Nemtsov announced his candidacy for the post of Sochi mayor in the April 26, 2009 elections. Nemtsov declared that he would post a cash deposit with the city election commission to register his candidacy, rather than collect signatures, in order to avoid rejection of his candidacy on the basis of accusations of falsified signatures, a common technique used by the authorities to keep opposition candidates from running in elections. This announcement is significant because "the next Sochi mayor will have a strong say over how the government will spend billions of dollars to build infrastructure for the Olympics."⁸⁴ If elected, some speculate that Nemtsov would propose that only the opening and closing ceremonies take place in Sochi, while

⁸³ First secretary of the Sochi City Committee of the Communist Party Iurii Dzaganiiia cites three reasons for Afanasenkov's resignation: first, that the construction of Olympic venues was off-schedule due to the difficulty of coming to an agreement with local residents on their resettlement and compensation; second, that authorities expected Afanasenkov to take stricter measures than he had been against the local population; and third, Afanasenkov had recently declared that 20 to 25 percent of "unlawfully constructed" residential buildings would be razed, which was excessively presumptuous, according to Dzaganiiia. The likely overriding reason, according to the article, was Russian deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Kozak's displeasure with Afanasenkov's work regarding Olympic preparations. Earlier, Afanasenkov had apparently written a letter to Kozak in which the mayor assured him that Olympic construction was on schedule, and that the residents of Imeritinskii Bay had agreed to be resettled, and had agreed to the construction of the Second Cargo Port.⁸³ However, it soon became clear that this was not the case, thanks in large part to the visible and noisy activism of local residents (Titov, Ievgenii, "Sochi. Prichinoi otstavki mera stalo nedovol'stvo vitse-prem'era Dmitriia Kozaka," *Novaia Gazeta*, October 30, 2008, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/345134.html>).

⁸⁴ Abdullaev, Nabi, "Nemtsov in Bid to be Next Mayor of Sochi," *The Moscow Times*, March 13, 2009, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/600/42/375273.htm>.

locating actual athletic venues in other parts of Russia.⁸⁵ In any case, this is an extremely interesting political development that merits close attention in the weeks to come.

Regarding local civil society, resident activist Valerii Suchkov states that Sochi's population is disunited in part due to its spread-out settlement along the coast.⁸⁶ In addition, he calls the municipal authorities "authoritarian," public institutions "underdeveloped," and declares that there is "no civil society to speak of." He says that in the absence of civil societal control over the 'local bureaucratic corps,' the latter's abuse of the system, of which Sochi is victim today, is unavoidable. Supporting my argument that the Olympics could represent a turning point for civil society formation in Sochi, he notes that "the start of systematic work on Sochi's town-planning documents is excellent motivation for the activization of Sochi's society, for getting them involved in the discussion of their families' future in the context of their city's future."

Since Olympic plans were announced, Sochi residents have begun to abandon their passivity, even protesting at times, both in sanctioned, planned protests, as well as with acts of civil disobedience, such as barricading themselves in their homes, when the authorities have tried to enter them unlawfully. Over time, activity and protest have increased in frequency, with residents voicing their opinions and concerns about everything from the lack of fair compensation, to the proposed construction of various unwanted (for being ecologically harmful and/or intrusive) objects in the area, the aforementioned absence of a General Plan, the lack of a "civilized procedure for negotiating the confiscation of property for Olympic need," the "long-reigning informational vacuum concerning the planned

⁸⁵ Comment by user Felix to the editorial "See Boris Run," *La Russophobe* Blog, March 14, 2009, <http://larussophobe.wordpress.com/2009/03/14/editorial-see-boris-run/#comment-30492>.

⁸⁶ Suchkov, Valerii, "Genplan obeshchait k maiu: nekotorye predlozhenia v razrabotku kontseptsii razvitiia Sochi," *Delovoi Sochi*, No. 023, December 17, 2007, <http://www.bs-sochi.ru/node/309>.

evictions,” and the “plain deception on the part of Krasnodarskii governor and Sochi’s mayor that nobody’s property would be demolished.”⁸⁷

The above was an overview of how the Russian government is manipulating the system in order to ‘legally’ locate both Olympic and non-Olympic venues and infrastructure on the property of thousands of local residents. However, it is not only local residents who are being trampled over; Olympic (and non-) development has already begun on the most valuable and vulnerable territories in the region, such as Sochi National Park and the buffer zone of the Caucasus Biosphere Preserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The forward-looking Russian government has been accused by environmental groups of both violating existing legislation, as well as making changes to certain laws and passing new ones in order to make future construction of Olympic venues in and around Sochi as easy and hassle-free as possible for themselves. Among the laws that have been changed preemptively or violated are: the law “on protection of the environment,” the law “on wildlife (animal kingdom),” the law “on specially protected natural areas,” the land code, the “law on environmental impact assessment,” the forest code, and others.⁸⁸ In response, local and regional environmental groups have also been protesting and in other ways crying foul with increasing frequency since 2006.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ The Institute of Collective Action (IKD) website has kept a detailed record of all the instances of Olympic (and otherwise) protest in and in relation to Sochi since early 2007 (and other protests since 2005); they can be found under the rubric “News according to region: Krasnodarskii Krai,” <http://ikd.ru/taxonomy/term/92>.

⁸⁸ Much of the information in this section, unless otherwise indicated, is from the “Anti-bid Book” published in 2007 by civil society groups (<http://www.seu.ru/projects/caucasus/antikniga.htm>) in an attempt to balance the one-sided presentation of Sochi’s bid to the IOC by Sochi’s Olympic Organizing Committee in their official bid book.

⁸⁹ Please see the IKD website under the rubric “Ekologia i prava zhivotnykh” for a full account <http://ikd.ru/taxonomy/term/38>.

At the rate things are going in Sochi, all those songs about Sochi may well describe and memorialize a place that no longer exists as such. Of course, new songs about Sochi have appeared, and these can be roughly divided into two categories: “official” Olympic propaganda songs by pop stars promoting Sochi as Olympic host, such as the “Sochi 2014 Hymn,”⁹⁰ and those which are parodies of the official songs, such as “Your Little Piece of Sochi.”⁹¹ In the next chapter, we shall see examples of exactly how civil society is fighting to keep its “little piece of Sochi.”

⁹⁰ “Gimn Sochi-2014,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXCAL-vG3E>.

⁹¹ Song, “Tvoi Kusocek Sochi,” YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Esl_kgyUAI&feature=related.

CHAPTER 4

Civil Society in Training: Protest Activity

As we saw in the previous chapter, the two major issues surrounding the Sochi Olympics that concern civil society are the potential environmental damage to protected natural areas, such as the Caucasus State Nature and Biosphere Reserve and Sochi National Park, as well as infringement on the rights of Sochi residents. What makes our Olympics-related protests distinct from other protests occurring elsewhere in Russia is the specter of the Olympics, which has already proven to be a catalyst for civil society activity, because of the issues that accompany it, the existing problems between the state and society that it exacerbates, as well as the potential it brings for international attention.

This chapter is devoted to examples of activism, coordination, and development of various civil society actors and the Russian regime's tactics in dealing with civil society. Table 4.1 on the following page shows, specific to our Sochi Olympic drama, the most prominent actors, their roles, and tactics and tools used in respective actions and acts of protest aimed at accomplishing their goals. The regime's responses range from visible and unobservable coercion, such as repression of activists and arbitrary use of laws and court system, to channeling by licensing civil society and filling up the organizational space with ersatz social movements and dummy organizations. Complicating matters is the fact that groups that are ostensibly on the same side—such as the regional NGO *EWNC* and international NGOs *WWF* and *Greenpeace*—do not always coordinate a united front. This, ultimately, works to undermine their cause just as much as anything the authorities might do.

Table 4.1 Civil Society and Russian Government Players and their Tactics

	TEAM CIVIL SOCIETY;	TEAM RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT;
Youth movements	Tactics: Persistence, coordination, evaluation NDSM (National Democratic Youth Union); Molodezhnoe Yabloko	Tactics: Channeling & Coercion Filling organizational space with ersatz social movements→Nashi, Rossiia Molodaia
International NGOs	WWF—Igor Chestin; Greenpeace—Ivan Blokov	←partially funds them or is close with private investors who fund them (i.e. Interros, Potanin)
All-Russian NGOs	Druzhina Okhranyi Prirody; Prozrachnyi Mir; Russian Geographic Society; SEU—Valerii Brinikh; Green Patrol	Dummy organization “Association of Preserves and National Parks”
Regional NGOs	Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus—Andrei Rudomakha	Dummy organization “Green Patrol Krasnodar’ia”—Ivan Tsoi
Local NGOs	Sochi Civil Society Institute; Union of Imeretinki Residents, Homeowners’ Association “Our Home”—Valerii Suchkov; Sochi Anti-Corruption Committee; Center for the Defense of Citizens’ Rights and Freedoms; Public Ecological Council of Sochi; Town Planning Council of Sochi; Sochi Branch of Russian Geographic Society—Liudmila Shestak	Openly observable and covert preventative coercion: Arresting/harassing activists pre- & post-protest on this and other levels
Public Chamber	Here.....(opposition licensing).....And there	
Media	Internet, IKD; postings on organizations’ individual websites	Control of all forms of mass media; planting stories
	NON-CIVIL SOCIETY “PLAYERS”	
Courts	Corrupt, biased in government’s favor; vehicle for channeling/coercion	
Laws	Vague, enforced arbitrarily; vehicle for channeling protest (i.e., law on “extremism”, unreasonable restrictions on protest permits, etc.)	

Physical Protests and Demonstrations

We begin with physical protests and demonstrations because they are the most visually striking. They also represent the most intense types of government-civil society

interaction, wherein within the limits of both sides' information about the other during a given protest, what will actually occur during a protest is quite unpredictable. We will look at some Moscow protests first even though my main claim is that the Olympics are having an effect first and foremost on local civil society development.

I bring up examples of protests in Moscow for several reasons. The first reason is to show that the issues related to the Sochi Olympics have caught the attention of segments of civil society across Russia, not only Sochi. Second, the Moscow protests illustrate the extent of outright repression, arbitrary interpretation and enforcement of laws, arbitrary use of the court system, the undermining of legitimate protests by legitimate organizations with actions by ersatz social movements and pseudo or nonexistent organizations, and others.

Most importantly, I wish to draw attention to the differences between protests that have occurred in Moscow and those in Sochi. Although there have been sanctioned, peaceful protests in Sochi as well, the fact that we have also seen some desperate, unsanctioned forms of protest there while none have occurred in Moscow shows both the acuteness of the situation “on the ground” in Sochi as opposed to Moscow, as well as a difference in level of development of the respective cities' civil societies. If Sochi's civil society were as developed as Moscow's, it is possible that we might see fewer instances of the kind of desperate, unsanctioned protest that ended with harsh repression by militia that we will see in Sochi in a later example. In addition, it shows the difference between protests on environmental issues as opposed to protests of people being evicted from their homes, an issue with a direct effect on people's survival, hence the often desperate nature of the protests. Also, there is a difference in the location of the protests over time—it seems as though there were more protests in Moscow before and right around the time when Sochi

was awarded the Games, and then these began to diminish, while in Sochi protest activity seemed to begin in earnest and to increase after Sochi won the bid. This is arguably due to the national attention the bid was receiving as a potential “victory” for Russia (hence the Moscow protests), whereas once Russia won the right to host the Games, they quickly became Sochi’s “problem.” We will now examine accounts of selected physical protest action.

If Sochi wins, the people lose, or “Putin” should have known better...

On July 3, 2007, the day before the International Olympic Committee was to make its decision in Guatemala, fifteen to twenty protesters gathered on Triumfal’naia Square in Moscow. According to its organizer, the peaceful protest was sanctioned, the group having received prior permission from city authorities. Nonetheless, the protest was cut short by militia on the grounds that the protesters were in violation of Federal Law 54 “On gatherings, meetings, demonstrations, marches, and pickets.” However, when we see exactly how the protesters were “performing” the picket (please see Appendix II), the real reason for its abrupt dispersal becomes clear.⁹²

As the protest’s organizer, Dmitri Kokorev, explains, “the demonstration was interrupted during the performance,” when some participants arrived “skiing” on the asphalt to illustrate the “insanity” of the choice of the subtropical resort of Sochi to host the Winter Olympics.⁹³ One of the skiers wore a mask of Putin’s face. Kokorev announced to the crowd the arrival of “Putin,” accompanied by “bodyguards,” explaining that “Putin” would now be asked some “tough questions.” It was at this point that both “Putin” and Kokorev

⁹² Video, “Anti-Olympic Sochi 2014 Action in Moscow on 3 of July 2007,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/user/DmitryK0k0rev>.

⁹³ Novosti, “V Moskve razognan piket protiv provedenia Olimpiady v Sochi,” IA REGNUM, July 3, 2007, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/851553.html>.

were confronted by a law enforcement officer, who promptly unmasked the former amidst cries from onlookers of “Hands off Putin!” and “Let’s follow the law!” When Kokorev asked several times on what grounds the protest was being prematurely ended, the officer repeated that the protesters were violating the proper procedure for holding a protest. Kokorev and another participant were arrested and charged with violating statute 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Rights.⁹⁴

The video then cuts to a government official, who declares an end to the event “until the proper procedures are followed.” In effect, the protesters were shut down for doing something that had not been explicitly stated in the request for permission to hold the demonstration, specifically, for not having written down in their request: “We will have a skier with a mask of Putin’s face ski onto Triumfal’naia Square and do a faux press conference.” This reading and enforcing of laws as strictly as it suits them is a classic example of the authorities’ use of unobservable coercion. It is interesting to ponder exactly what “lesson” the protesters took away from the incident. Next time, would they write down in their request for permission exactly what they planned to do at the risk that they would be denied permission from the very start? Or would they modify their form of protest, trying to come up with something equally attention-getting but that would not be subject to an immediate crackdown by authorities?

⁹⁴ Statute 20.2. Violation of the prescribed order of an organization or procedure for conducting a meeting, protest, demonstration, picket or march. In edition of Federal Law from June 22, 2007 N 116-FZ, http://www.consultant.ru/popular/koap/13_21.html.

This protest ain't big enough for the two of us...

According to *IKD*,⁹⁵ on October 26, 2007 on Teatral'naia Square the *Narodno-demokraticeskii soiuz molodezhi*, or People's Democratic Youth Union,⁹⁶ organized a protest against the Olympic law still being considered at the time in the Duma. In this case, as *NDSM* activists were protesting, members of the groups *Nashi* (Ours) and *Rossia Molodaia* (Young Russia)⁹⁷ arrived and, in an attempt to provoke the protesters, threw cups of flour at them, unfurled their own banner, and handed out leaflets. *IKD*'s account states that after the protest was over, some militia officers requested that its organizer and two other activists from *NDSM* go with them to the station and act as witnesses against the pro-Kremlin agitators. However, once they arrived at the station, the *NDSM* protesters were told that *they* were the ones who had broken the law and that they were at the station not as witnesses but as suspects. Among other things, they were accused of displaying *NDSM* flags and setting off fireworks.

Rossia molodaia's account differs substantially from *IKD*'s. First of all, *RM*'s account, under the headline "*NDSM* Pointlessly (*Tupo*) Causes Panic," attempts to trivialize and delegitimize *NDSM*'s protest by saying that it consisted only of "about ten people holding three signs and yelling 'Hands off Sochi!'" It goes on to say that after a while about thirty activists from *RM* arrived holding a banner that read "Misinformation is provocation!"

⁹⁵ *IKD*, "V Moskve proshla aktsia protiv iz'iatia zhil'ia i zemel'nykh uchastkov," *IKD* website, September 27, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/3922>.

⁹⁶ Narodno-Demokraticeskii Soiuz Molodezhi (*NDSM*). A self-described social movement, it is the youth affiliate of the People's Democratic Union, a social movement founded in 2006 that is also an unregistered liberal opposition political party (<http://www.ndsm.ru/?id=10>, <http://nardemsoyuz.ru/about/>).

⁹⁷ Both *Nashi* and *Rossia Molodaia* are pro-Kremlin, government funded youth social movements.

and scattered leaflets accusing *NDSM* activists of being panic-mongers.⁹⁸ In a separate short “summary” cynically titled “*NDSM* forgot to bring flags,” the author wrote that “not only did *NDSM*-ers themselves not know why there were there, but they didn’t even have any flags, just a few measly posters.” Most puzzling of all is that *RM* claims that two of *their* activists were taken to the police station.⁹⁹

The discrepancy between the two accounts is suggestive of the extent to which the facts are being manipulated for the purposes of propaganda and agitation by pro-Kremlin groups. In addition, this is an excellent example of Robertson’s point about ersatz social movements working to hamper, inhibit, and otherwise undermine the actions of real social movements, characteristic of the Russian hybrid regime. The following account also demonstrates this point, as does the use of stunts by a “decoy” or dummy group for the purposes of distraction and drawing attention away from the real aim of the protest, as well as to cause confusion among the public. At this point it is not clear what tactics civil society is using to fight back, other than posting on their websites.

More “He said, she said...”

Even before the IOC made its decision, the protests had already begun, along with the intrigue among what, at first glance, would appear to be like-minded groups. Two protests in Moscow on the same day, October 26, 2006, illustrate the puzzling dynamic. The first protest, organized by *Molodezhnoe Yabloko (MY)*, *Zelenaia Rossia (ZR)*, the *International*

⁹⁸ News, “‘Rossia molodaia:’ *NDSM* tupo razvodit paniku,” Rossiia Molodaia website, <http://rumol.ru/news/2805.html>. A short video of the protest spliced with commentary by *RM* can also be viewed here. I was unable to find *Nashi*’s version of what occurred on their website.

⁹⁹ News, “*NDSM* zabyli vziat’ na aktsiu flagi,” Rossiia Molodaia website, <http://rumol.ru/news/2806.html>.

Socio-Ecological Union (SEU), and *Druzhina okhrany prirody (DOP)*,¹⁰⁰ took place on Triumphal'naia Square near the statue of Maiakovskii. The organizers demonstrated in defense of Sochi National Park, trying to make the point that they were not against the Olympics themselves, just the destruction of the park.¹⁰¹ At one point the protest took on a performance aspect, with protesters symbolically “selling” pieces of Sochi National Park for the rock-bottom price of five rubles. We shall return to this protest a bit later.

Meanwhile, in front of the Economic Development and Trade Ministry building, there was another “protest” going on. Activists from the so-called group *Green Patrol Krasnodar'ia* were holding signs reading, “Seoul-yes, Sochi-no!” and “Let Korea be left without trees!” *Green Patrol Krasnodar'ia* seems to be a made-up group for the purpose of causing confusion among the public and discrediting legitimate protesters.¹⁰² The group's purported leader, Ivan Tsoi, gave the following rather bizarre statement to the press:

“Russia is always trying to adopt foreign habits and hobbies...More appropriate for Russia are traditional amusements, like making snowmen and having snowball fights,

¹⁰⁰ “Youth Yabloko” is one of the more well known independent political youth movements in Russia, existing as a faction of the liberal *Russian United Democratic Party* “Yabloko.” It first appeared in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1995, but only in 2005 as a nationwide movement (<http://www.youthyabloko.ru/english.php>). “Green Russia” or the “Union of Greens,” is a Russian green political party founded in 2005. While not being a very powerful group themselves, they have the support of a major political force, the liberal “Yabloko” Party (<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9170-14.cfm>). According to Henry, the *Socio-Ecological Union* is “an umbrella group of environmental NGOs based in Moscow, claim[ing] more than 250 organizations in Russia as members” (Henry, Laura A., “Russian Environmentalists and Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans et al (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 212). The *Druzhina okhrany prirody* is a self-described “non-profit youth organization which unites Druzhinas (Students’ non-profit organizations) for Nature Protection from the countries of the former Soviet Union...In appeared in the 60s as a students’ movement for nature protection” (sic) (<http://dop.environment.ru/eng.html>).

¹⁰¹ Their most prominent sign was a six-foot long banner reading, “We’re not against the Olympics in Russia, we’re against the destruction of the national park.” Presumably the protesters did not want to be labeled as unpatriotic, as they might if it seemed as though they were against the Olympics.

¹⁰² This “group” does not have a website that I could find, and I could not find anything about Ivan Tsoi other than mention of him in news items that mention *Zelenyi Patrul’ Krasnodar'ia*. On several other groups’ websites, *ZPK* is described as ‘nonexistent’ or ‘unknown to anyone.’

but alpine skiing is an intellectual kind of sport that won't take root on Russian soil anytime soon. That's why we think it's better for Seoul to host the Olympics.”¹⁰³

Then, according to a REGNUM report, *Green Patrol Krasnodar'ia* protesters were joined by protesters from *Yabloko* (emphasis added). A separate REGNUM news report from later in the day reported on how the protest ended: “Activists from *Greenpeace* and *Yabloko* did not properly agree beforehand. Apparently, *Yabloko* representatives complained to the police about those picketers who were demanding that the Olympics be moved to Seoul. The police ended up arresting several people who claimed to be from *Greenpeace*.”¹⁰⁴ This REGNUM news item in effect merged the two protests into one, and made it seem as though it was *Yabloko* who had crashed the dummy group *GPK*'s protest.

Molodezhnoe Yabloko's report helps to clear things up somewhat. According to them, it was *their* protest (the one on Triumphal'naia Square), during the performance, that was approached by a group of young people *claiming* to be from *Greenpeace* (emphasis added). However, the latecomers had to come up with another story when it turned out that there were some *actual Greenpeace* activists at the scene. The report goes on to say that, “subsequent mass media reports issued after the protest was over, about a protest against the Sochi Games by the nonexistent organization *Zelenyi patrol' Krasnodar'ia*, whose representatives were dressed in T-shirts with a logo of an X-ed out Olympic teddy bear, and calling for the Olympics to be held in Seoul, are not true.” They end their report by declaring that “the nonexistent group *Green Patrol Krasnodar'ia* has no connection to or affiliation with *Molodezhnoe Yabloko*, *Zelenaia Rossia*, or the *Druzhina Okhrany prirody* of the

¹⁰³ News, “V Moskve prokhodit piket protiv provedenia Olimpiady-2014 v Sochi,” IA REGNUM, October 26, 2006, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/728576.html>. The mention of Seoul makes the statement even more bizarre since Sochi's two other bid competitors were Salzburg, Austria and Pyeongchang (not Seoul), South Korea.

¹⁰⁴ News, “Po zavershenii piketa protiv provedenia Olimpiady-2014 v Sochi byli zaderzhany aktivisty ‘Grinpis’ (Moskva),” IA REGNUM, October 26, 2006, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/728717.html>.

biology department of Moscow State University. *We believe this to have been a provocation of one of the pro-Kremlin youth movements*” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁵

Kommersant’s report provides another piece of the puzzle, and it basically matches *Yabloko*’s account (except that *Yabloko*’s account says that the other protest never even took place). It says that while the *Yabloko* et al protesters were in the middle of their “performance,” a group of young people walked by crying “Seoul! Seoul!” According to *Kommersant*, this group was returning from a totally unrelated anti-Olympic protest that had taken place outside the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade building on Tverskaia-Iamskaia Street. The report also cites the aforementioned comments made by supposed leader Ivan Tsoi of so-called *Green Patrol Krasnodar’ia* about alpine skiing being an alien sport for Russia, and the report mentions that those protesting with him, many of whom wore T-shirts with an X-ed out Olympic bear, shouted “Seoul—yes! Sochi—no!”¹⁰⁶ A report on the website of *Tsentr Okhrany Dikoi Prirody* (basically the *Socio-Ecological Union*’s report) corroborates *Kommersant*’s.

The goal of creating mayhem was accomplished beautifully. What likely occurred was that the groups *Molodezhnoe Yabloko*, *Zelenaia Rossiia*, and *Druzhina Okhrany Prirody* were conducting a legitimate protest. Unknown agents, claiming to be from the nonexistent group *Green Patrol Krasnodar’ia* (not to be confused with the real Russian government NGO *Zelenyi patrol*’—*Green Patrol*), may or may not have been having a protest, but in any case their aim was to crash and undermine the legitimate protest. They attempted to do this by giving negative publicity to the environmental opposition by pretending to be on the side

¹⁰⁵ News, “Ofitsial’naia informatsia: Zashitniki prirody ne antipatrioty,” *Molodezhnoe Yabloko* website, October 26, 2006, <http://www.youthyabloko.ru/modules/news/article.php?storyid=243>.

¹⁰⁶ Buranov, Ivan, “Olimpiiskogo mishka goniati iz parka,” *Kommersant*, No. 202 (3533), October 27, 2006, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=716899&print=true>.

of said environmental opposition and then saying ridiculous and nonsensical things like the comment about snowmen, and making the environmental opposition look unpatriotic by saying things like give the Olympics to Seoul. They claimed at one point to be from *Greenpeace* in order to get as much attention as possible by using a name that everyone knows, thus compromising as many people as possible in one fell swoop.

This episode illustrates the manipulation not only of the facts by pro-Kremlin agents for propaganda purposes on their own websites, but also their manipulation of the mass media as a whole. Again, it seems as though civil society lacks strategies as well as preemptive tactics for dealing with these kinds of actions. In addition, their lack of access to the mainstream media puts them at a decided disadvantage.

“B’yut, znachit lubyat...”¹⁰⁷

Although there have been plenty of sanctioned protests in Sochi as well as in Moscow, one of the most blatant instances of outright repression by the authorities was their response to the unsanctioned protest on April 23, 2008 by Sochi residents in an attempt to get the attention of the visiting IOC. According to a posting on the *Indimediayug* website, anywhere from ten to fifteen people were said to have been injured, including a pregnant woman and several elderly, at the hands of militia as they attempted to silence the protesters, who tried to unfurl an SOS banner.¹⁰⁸ In the kind of low-profile repression typical of hybrid regimes, since the incident residents have had to deal with police patrols seeking

¹⁰⁷ This is an altered version of the folk Russian take on domestic violence in the form of the saying “b’et, znachit l’ubit,” which translates as “if he beats you, it means he loves you.” The altered version translates as “if they beat you, it means they love you.”

¹⁰⁸ Liberator, “Videozapis’ stolknovenia zhitelei Imeretinki i militsii vo vremia vizita MOK,” *Indimedia Kuban’*, <http://kuban.indymedia.ru/ru/node/148>; There are also reports on *IKD*’s website, as well as in the mainstream media. Video, “Militsia beats residents of Imeretinski lowlands,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCIfrrDPyUM&feature=related>.

out organizers and “instigators” and in general increased harassment. In the immediate aftermath, the public prosecutor’s office of Adler district refused to accept the pregnant woman’s allegations, and in an Adler court four people were each charged with resisting the authorities and fined. In response residents planned a sanctioned protest for May 4th. That protest, in which about 400 people participated, some carrying signs reading “We don’t want to be homeless” and “Sochi for Sochi-ites,” was calm; it helped that all access points to the protest were carefully guarded by *DPS* officers, and the territory of the protest was completely surrounded by militia.¹⁰⁹ This is one in the vast repertoire of “dissent-management” techniques employed by hybrids.

Those are helped who help themselves...

In Sochi on October 25, 2008, local civil society took a decidedly proactive stance, with a protest meeting called “In defense of Sochi victims of lawlessness, abuse of power, and corruption of city officials, courts and employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs” took place as part of the “All-Russian Day of Social Anger.”¹¹⁰ Actual numbers were modest with only about 200 people; however, according to the account of local activist Valerii Suchkov, the important thing was that “people did not want to wait any longer for help that would likely never come, so they decided to unite and create the ‘Union of Imeretinki Residents.’” Consisting of about 150 families whose homes and land are under threat of

¹⁰⁹ IKD, “Zhiteli Imeretinki prodolzhaiut bor’bu protiv snosa svoikh domov,” IKD website, <http://ikd.ru/node/6075>. *DPS* stands for *Dorozhno-Patruľnaia Sluzhba*, which is the traffic police or highway patrol.

¹¹⁰ The “All-Russian Day of Social Anger,” which took place on October 25, 2008 with the slogan “Power under citizens’ control!” was organized by the SKS (Union of Coordinated Councils) as a day for citizens throughout Russia (over 32 cities and towns) to express their dissatisfaction and anger with the authorities. IKD, “25th of October—All-Russian Day of Anger: Report from the regions,” IKD website, August 11, 2008, <http://www.ikd.ru/?q=node/6895>. See also Clement, Karine, “Russia’s Social Mobilisation Day,” International Alliance of Inhabitants, November 4, 2008, http://eng.habitants.org/zero_evictions_campaign/world_zero_evictions_day_2008/news/russia_s_social_mobilisation_day.

seizure, their expressed goal from that point on was to work together to come up with conditions for fair compensation for the taking of their property. In their written statement “Resolution of the Meeting of the Sochi Community,” among other things, they said “no to monetary compensation” and instead demanded “new plots of land in the same area, in exchange for the seized ones,” as well as for “new housing to be built in exchange for the confiscated housing.” The resolution was signed by Suchkov, representing Sochi *TSZh*¹¹¹ “Our Home,” U.G. Saraev of the “Sochi Council Against Corruption,” D.V. Guslyakov of the “Union of Imeretinki Residents,” and G.P. Uchkurov of the “Center for the Defense of Citizens’ Constitutional Rights and Freedoms.”¹¹² This was an excellent example of learning and strategizing on the part of local civil society groups, in that they coordinated their protest on a local issue with a larger, nationwide protest action. It shows coordination among different local civil society groups and a tangible end result in the form of a resolution.

In sum, it seems as though the learning curve has been quite sharp for local Sochi civil society. We saw two extremes—an unsanctioned, desperate protest meant to attract the attention of the visiting IOC, potentially quite embarrassing for the government, which ended in repression by militia and no real lasting effects except bruises and an even deeper cynicism towards the authorities for the local population. However, participants did not lose faith in their own constructive ability to act within the system and still have something positive come of it, as shown by the latter protest.

¹¹¹ *Tovarishchestvo Sobstvennikov Zhil'ia*, or Homeowners’ Association (TSZh), is a group of apartment owners in the same building who cooperate in the management of the building in order to properly maintain and run it. Legally it is considered a non-profit organization. Practically speaking it is a very useful organization from the members’ point of view in that it allows them to address and solve ongoing issues and problems as they come up, not only when it is convenient for the *Zhilishchno-eksploatatsionnoe upravlenie*, or Housing Facilities Management (ZhEU) (http://chtotakoe.info/articles/tszh_667.html).

¹¹² Suchkov, Valerii, “V Sochi v resultate ‘Dnia Protesta Protiv Bezakoniia,’ byl sozdan ‘Soiuz zHITElei Imeretinki,’” IKD website, October 25, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/7626>.

Moscow protests saw action by pro-Kremlin and independent youth movements, as well as nonexistent “dummy” organizations. These protests are more difficult to assess in terms of lessons learned by civil society. Other than posting their versions of events and disclaimers about with whom they are and are not associated to their websites and in general being mentally prepared for what to expect from impostors and militia, they do not seem to be doing anything different or innovative. To be fair, however, there may not be much more they can do than that.

Public Hearings, Round Tables, and Meetings of Various Kinds

In this category we witness the most cooperation and coordination (or lack thereof) between various civil society groups. In regards to these kinds of events, most telling of all is who organizes them, which determines who gets invited or excluded, as well as what the various groups have to say afterwards about what occurred. In my opinion, it is in this area that civil society groups have the most to learn in order to make their coordinated efforts more effective. As we will see later, especially in Chapter 5, a united position among civil society groups on a particular issue can be crucial to the success or failure of an initiative, and it seems that, at least in regard to the environmental issue, some groups have learned this lesson the hard way. Besides that, in contrast to physical protests, which are more unpredictable, preparing for these types of meetings provides excellent opportunities for planning, strategizing, and cooperation. Such opportunities will likely increase in the run-up to the Games. Hopefully, civil society will be able to take full advantage of these opportunities.

A public hearing doesn't necessarily mean the public gets heard...

In the *Sochi Olympic Committee Candidature File*¹¹³ in the chapter “Environment and Meteorology”¹¹⁴ under the heading “Efforts to Protect and Enhance Significant Features of the Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage Before, During and After the Olympic Winter Games” are “Public Hearings and Support for Transparency in the Regional Planning Process for Sochi” and “Public Hearings for the General Lay-out and Regional Planning of the High-mountain Resort Area of Krasnaya Polyana.” The fact that public hearings have been held is true; however, the “support for transparency” aspect seems to have been stretched a bit. For instance, a public hearing on the general lay-out and regional planning of the mountain resort area of Krasnaia Poliana was held on April 27, 2005 in Sochi. According to REGNUM, over 100 people attended the public hearing, including members of government and the general public, project designers, scientists, and journalists.¹¹⁵

After the long-winded presentations by government officials and project designers glowingly touting only the project's positive aspects, those wishing to bring up the drawbacks took their turn. Among those actually allowed to present were former Sochi mayor Vyacheslav Voronkov, representative of one of the groups of project designers Vladimir Sharafutdinov, deputy of the legislative body of Krasnodarskii krai Mikhail Milenin, and coordinator of *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus (EWNC)* Andrei Rudomakha. However, other members of the community and general public wishing

¹¹³ Otherwise known as a bid book, it is a country's Olympic Organizing Committee's plan from start to finish, covering all details, for hosting the Olympics Games. Of course, it is in largely an advertisement for their bid, since they are trying to “sell” their city to the IOC (http://sochi2014.com/sch_questionnaire).

¹¹⁴ Sochi Olympic Committee, *Sochi Olympic Committee Candidature File*, (2006), 77, http://sochi2014.com/sochidwld/bid_book/Book%201/Theme%205/Theme%205%20sprds.pdf.

¹¹⁵ News, “Obschsestvennost' ne priniala polozhenia genplana razvitiia Krasnoi Poliany,” IA REGNUM, April 30, 2005, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/447909.html>.

to present were not given the floor. When, at the end of the hearing, the general director of the National Urban-Planning Institute Aleksandr Krivov read the concluding remarks which, incidentally, had been prepared in advance, his words did not reflect many of the main opinions expressed. The gist of what he read was that, as a result of the public hearing, the project was approved and that the next step would be to send it for approval to the governmental environmental assessment. However, this did not reflect reality in that the project likely would not have been approved by those present had a vote been taken.

When the representatives of the Sochi branch of the *Russian Geographical Society* and *EWNC* decided to try to take the floor after the concluding remarks, they were prevented from doing so, and were advised to express their opinions in written form at a later date. The news item even went so far as to say that to call the hearing “public” was a huge stretch, as well as to report that, if said project were to be approved, it would show, in effect, a false reflection of the true attitude of the public towards the project, and that *the public hearing clearly demonstrated the political intentions of the government agencies and investors with respect to the development of Krasnaia Poliana—to get over the existing restrictions on the intensive appropriation of the territory of Sochi National Park* (emphasis added). After all, the law on specially protected natural territories, as it read at the time of the hearing, strictly prohibited most of the activity discussed in the general plan.

Here we see a skillful use of the media on the part of civil society groups, who did not let the government get away, at least not without some reproach, with making a mockery of a public hearing. This is especially surprising given that, according to its website, Regnum (the source of this report) is a “Russian federal news agency.”¹¹⁶ However, the fact that it is an online wire service means that its readership is restricted to those internet users who rely

¹¹⁶ Regnum, About, <http://www.regnum.ru/english/information/about/>.

on this particular agency for information, so it is unknown how many people would have read this news item.

Us vs.... Us?

The round table “Ecological Problems in the Construction of Olympic Venues in Sochi,” which took place on January 23, 2008, and its subsequent evaluation by environmental groups, is only one example of the intrigue occurring within this sector of civil society. An article by Suren Gazarian of the *Ecological Watch of the Northern Caucasus (EWNC)* and posted on the *IKD* website on January 30,¹¹⁷ alleges that the report of the *Green Patrol (GP)*, an all-Russian non-governmental organization, distorts the facts of what actually took place. According to Gazarian, the organizer of the round table was the *GP* itself; the list of invitees was extremely limited, and the only groups extended an official invitation were *Greenpeace*, *WWF*, the *Socio-Ecological Union (SEU)*, and *Transparent World (Prozrachnyi Mir)*. Regional organizations were not even told about the hearing; representatives from Gazarian’s organization, *EWNC*, managed to attend only because they were told about it by *SEU*, and being subsequently supported by *Greenpeace* in their request to attend. Only a letter to *Green Patrol* from *EWNC* in turn made it possible for representatives of local civil society organizations to attend, such as the *Public Ecological Council of Sochi*, the *Town-Planning Council of Sochi*, the Sochi branch of the *Russian Geographical Society*, and one female resident of Krasnaia Poliana. The organizers told the press “not to bother,” and journalists who did show up were forcefully turned away.

Gazarian writes that the *Green Patrol*, likely having come to a prior agreement with the Sochi-2014 Organizing Committee, attempted to speak for all of the civil society groups

¹¹⁷ IKD, “Ekologicheskaiia obschestvennost’ oprovergnet zaiavlenie ‘Zelenogo patrol’ia,” IKD website, January 30, 2008, <http://www.ikd.ru/node/5067>.

and stressed that the environmental groups are not really dead set against the bobsled track,¹¹⁸ and that several of them would be willing to compromise, offering their cooperation in exchange for other problematic venues. However, after the very negative comments against construction on Grushev Ridge by no less than representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources, which were surprisingly very similar to the criticisms by other environmental groups, it was clear that no one other than the Sochi-2014 Organizing Committee and *Green Patrol* supported the idea of building Olympic venues around the borders of the Caucasus Preserve.

According to Gazarian, *Green Patrol* declared the meeting over a full half-hour before its scheduled end, and that within a few hours of the round table *Green Patrol* came out with a press-release full of false information, such as that “everyone reached the conclusion that the buffer zone of the Caucasus Preserve would tolerate environmentally-sound recreational activities,” and that there would be “compensatory measures” taken to soften the impact and make up for harm done to the area. In reality, there was no “general conclusion reached by all” on this matter and there could not have been, because it was stated several times that no amount of compensatory measures could make up for the harm that would be done to the World Heritage Site and to the rare species of wild animals that live there.

After that description, comments about the round table made in a 29 January “letter”¹¹⁹ to the public posted on *Green Patrol*’s website by Valerii Brinikh,¹²⁰ co-chairman

¹¹⁸ The planned luge-bobsled track is one of the most controversial venues as it is set to be built along the Pslushonok River in the area of Grushev Ridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. News, “Bobsleisty khotiat’ stroit’ v Sochi trassu i ne slushaiut ekologov,” *Rosbalt*, April 13, 2008, <http://ecoportal.ru/news.php?id=29405>.

¹¹⁹ Brinikh, Valerii, “Ia uveren, shto posle analiza materialov kruglogo stola konstruktivnyi dialog budet prodolzhen...”, *Zelenyi patrol*, *Novosti*, January 29, 2008, <http://www.greenpatrol.ru/news/singlenews/?id=16805>.

of the *SEU*, are quite curious. He states that the stance of *SEU*, as well as his own, from the very beginning (2006) was “distinct in principle” from that of *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, that stance being that he is against holding the Olympics on the territory of Sochi National Park and calls the idea “reckless” and a “mistake.” He goes on to say that “we never, unlike *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, made the hosting of the Games conditional upon agreement not to build one or two venues on some section of the park, ignoring other venues and the legitimacy of their placement on a specially protected natural territory.” He writes that *WWF* declared the “Roza-Khutor” project ecologically sound in spite of the opinions of experts that the harm to nature from the skiing complex on the Aigba mountainside would be much worse than from the bobsled track on Grushev Ridge. He further states that his speech was distinct in principle from those of Ivan Blokov of *Greenpeace* and Oleg Tsaruk of *WWF*, due to the fact that neither *Greenpeace* nor *WWF* discussed their position with other NGOs, including *SEU*, and that *this is a long-standing practice of the alignment of Greenpeace and WWF to the detriment of other NGOs* (emphasis added).

In addition, Brinikh says that *WWF* and *Greenpeace* did not announce the planned meeting and that his participation in the round table was made possible thanks only to information from the director of *Green Patrol*, Roman Pukalov, and that in turn *EWNC*'s participation, as well as that of local residents, was possible due to the fact that Brinikh himself informed Andrei Rudomakha about it. He adds that his presentation, unlike those of many other participants (read *Greenpeace* and *WWF*), stood out for its deep knowledge of the subject matter and analysis of the situation. He emphasized he was more inclined to trust

¹²⁰ Valerii Brinikh is a very interesting character: he is co-chairman of the *SEU* and is not shy about voicing his disapproval of *Greenpeace* and *WWF* for their, as he sees it, compromising stance. We will hear more from him in Chapter 6.

well-known specialists like Anatolii Nikoaeovich Kudaktin, Doctor of Biology and employee of the Caucasus Preserve, than representatives of *Greenpeace* and *WWF*.

Again we see major discrepancies between different groups' accounts of the same meeting, and these are groups that are supposed to be on the same side. There is the interesting dynamic of *WWF* and *Greenpeace* on one side, and more grassroots, "native" NGOs on the other. As Brinikh indicated, there seems to be a feeling of resentment toward these professionalized, "foreign" NGOs, something that ultimately undermines the cause. This point will be examined further in the following chapter, when we discuss the conclusion of a self-evaluation by a professionalized but regional NGO, *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, that the difference between the positions of *WWF* and *Greenpeace* on one side, and *EWNC* and other groups on the other, was detrimental to the overall cause. Overall, we see a gross lack of coordination and "getting their story straight" on the part of environmental groups.

"Your invitation must've gotten lost in the mail..."

On February 22, 2007 in Sochi the IOC met with the Sochi Organizing Committee and representatives of, on the surface, seven civil society organizations: *Greenpeace Russia*, *WWF Russia*, the *World Heritage Protection Fund*, the *Socio-Ecological Union*, the *Environmental Watch on the North Caucasus*, *Association of Preserves and National Parks of the North Caucasus*, and the Sochi Branch of *VOOP* (*Vserossiiskoe obshchestvo okhrany prirody*, or *All-Russia Society for the Conservation of Nature*). In reality, the IOC met with five legitimate civil society groups; the latter two are actually a nonexistent group and a pro-government mouthpiece, respectively. The following example will show the interaction between these groups and the destructiveness of the presence of the latter kinds of groups.

At first the IOC was only supposed to meet with *Greenpeace*, but *WWF* “somehow” got in; regional and local organizations were not invited to the meeting. So, on the initiative of *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, a letter was sent to the IOC on behalf of eight regional organizations asking for a meeting with them as well. The IOC declared their willingness to meet them and “naively” put the Sochi Olympic Organizing Committee in charge of organizing that meeting. Needless to say, the *EWNC* did not receive the promised phone call that would inform them of the date and place of the meeting. Then they discovered that *Greenpeace* and *WWF* had already been invited to the meeting scheduled for February 22. *EWNC* sent the IOC a harsh letter, and the *SEU* sent a letter to both the IOC and the Sochi Organizing Committee informing them that Andrei Rudomakha of *EWNC* would be their de facto representative at meeting. As a result, on February 21 the Sochi Organizing Committee called *EWNC* to invite them, but also to say that other organizations could not come.

At the same time, it came out that in Sochi there had been a search of sorts going on for groups “loyal” to the Olympics, and to invite only those particular groups to the meeting. Apparently they had been found, for after *WWF* and *Greenpeace*’s coordinated presentation, the presentation by the representative from the *Association of Preserves and National Parks of the Northern Caucasus* was essentially an advertisement for the organization and a defense of plans to hold the Olympics in Sochi, claiming that they could be held without harming the environment. The representative from Sochi *VOOP* said the same. Then came the presentation by Andrei Rudomakha of *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus* (here representing both *EWNC* and *SEU*), who had to begin by pointing out to the IOC that the previous two presentations were misleading and that *Association of Preserves and National*

Parks is not a legitimate civil society organization,¹²¹ and that Sochi *VOOP* does not in fact express the opinion of the general population of Sochi. He expressed his surprise that representative from local citizens' groups were not present and gave the IOC a letter from these groups.

Worth noting is that when Rudomakha began discussing possible solutions to the ecological and social problems with Sochi's bid, there were several differences between his position and that of *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, especially with regards to Krasnaia Poliana. In addition, he was adamant about not even considering the possibility of evicting residents of Imeretinskaia Lowlands. This last point highlights the difference between the international and regional environmental NGOs' treatments of the two issues, with the international NGOs focusing strictly on the technical, environmental aspects of the Sochi Games, while the regional NGO *EWNC* seems to view the issues more holistically, and is more inclined to include the local population's grievances on their agenda as part of the overall health of the "environment," both physical and psychological, of the region.

According to *EWNC*'s post-meeting press release, the SOC's manipulation of events and use of pseudo-NGOs did not have its intended goal, and the meeting was fruitful in that at a subsequent press-conference IOC vice-president Chiharu Igaya declared that one of the two biggest issues with Sochi's bid is the ecological problems associated with it (the other issue being the possibility of there not being enough time for Sochi to build all the necessary

¹²¹ A post on the website of *EWNC* explains that "this 'association,' portrayed as some kind of independent NGO, is actually just a blanket term for all the national parks and reserves, invented by representatives of Sochi National Park. One of its intended purposes is to play the role of an environmental civil society 'dummy' in those instances when it is necessary to depict this civil society in order to achieve an unseemly, from an ecological point of view, goal in regards to a specially-protected territory of the Northern Caucasus. Sochi National Park does not even try to hide the falseness of this 'organization.' The director of Sochi National Park Nikolai Pen'kovskii is also the 'president' of this 'association,' it is 'located' on Sochi National Park territory, and its 'employees' are those of Sochi National Park." (*EWNC* informational posting, "Sud'ia tsentral'nogo suda Sochi priznal zakonnymi deistvia Sochinskogo Natsional'nogo Parka po fal'sifikatsii ucheta obshchestvennogo mnenia," *Ekologicheskaja Vakhta po Severnomu Kavkazu*, <http://ewnc.org/?q=node/332>.)

infrastructure and venues¹²²).¹²³ However, another mainstream media news item commented that it had, until recently, seemed as though this ecological issue could not be resolved, but after the IOC's visit, there seems to no longer be a conflict. The same news item reports that Chiharu Igaya told the press before leaving that he personally met with environmentalists and that they had nothing negative to say about the possibility of Sochi hosting the Olympics; on the contrary, they were happy about the new prospects and opportunities for the city.¹²⁴ In this case we can see how the pseudo groups had their intended affect, allowing the IOC to be able to declare quasi-truthfully that Sochi is good to go for the Games.

Protesting with the enemy?

The mainstream media “helpfully” points out that at an earlier February 2007 press-conference titled “Society Against Olympic Opportunism in Sochi: Unknown Facts About the 2014 Olympics,” held at the Independent Press Center in Moscow, “journalists present noted two things: first, the glaring absence at this ‘environmental’ event of any representatives of *WWF* or *Greenpeace*, and second, the presence, on the other hand, of Valerii Brinikh who, *according to rumors* (emphasis added), was said to have been fired from his post as director of the Caucasus Preserve (1999-2001) for too eagerly handing out protected lands for use by kiosks and summer cafes.”¹²⁵ They also give significant attention to action by the previously mentioned Ivan Tsoi and his mysterious *Zelenyi Patrol*

¹²² News, “Strong Support is Sochi 2014 Bid’s Key Asset,” *Sportbusiness International*, February 26, 2007, <http://www.sportbusiness.com/news/161475/strong-support-is-sochi-2014-bids-key-asset>.

¹²³ News, “Zelenye vstretilis s otsenочноi komissiei MOK.” *Southru.info*, 24 February 2007, http://southru.info/2007/02/24/zelenye_vstretilis_s_ocenочноj_komissiej_mok.html.

¹²⁴ Kalinina, Tamara, “Gory Sochi porazili MOK do glubiny dushi,” *Utro.ru*, February 24, 2007, <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2007/02/24/627700.shtml>.

¹²⁵ Verevkina, Valeria, “Poklonniki kapisch protestuiut protiv Olimpiady v Sochi,” *Utro.ru*, February 13, 2007, <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2007/02/13/624689.shtml>.

Krasnodar'ia (please see “More “*He said, she said...*” in this chapter), who were “supporting” the press conference from outside the media center. According to the mainstream media article, “judging from the slogans on signs held by protesters and a statement to the press by Tsoi, participants in the conference were especially worried about the ecology of the town and the fate of religious rites which, after the Olympics, will not be able to be performed in the shrines of Sochi National Park.” As an alternative they suggested Korea, which explains why *Green Patrol of Krasnodar'ia* signs called for support not only of Sochi forests and freedom of religion, but also of the Korean bid, as well as support of ‘national’ sports.

IKD's account paints an entirely different picture, saying that the event was not without provocateurs from *Green Patrol of Krasnodar'ia* and the nonexistent group *Union of Non-traditional Confessions of the Caucasus*. These provocateurs “loitered outside the press-center holding signs in support of the Korean bid.” There are many other interesting details but to make a long story short, *IKD*'s press release ended with the statement that “participants of the press-conference...declare that they have no connection to the above-mentioned organizations and do not support the Olympics in Korea, or athletic competitions in general.”¹²⁶ Once again we see the infiltration of real civil society by “enemy agents,” a clear example of unobservable coercion on the part of the authorities.

The Public Chamber: Riding the Fence?

Expressing his outrage in response to a local instance of abuse of the court system, which we shall see in the following section, Sochi activist Valerii Suchkov writes indignantly:

¹²⁶ *IKD*, “*Ekologi i sotsial'nie aktivisty prizyvaiut spasti Sochi ot Olimpiady*,” *IKD* website, February 13, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/2259>.

“The authorities have turned out to be incapable of holding a dialogue with people—they are capable only of giving orders and using force!...What Olympics can there possibly be on the territory of, for all practical purposes, a secure police state? The use of force on Imeretinki residents gives us every right to speak in these terms. Why does the IOC turn a blind eye to the wild conduct of officials in the preparations for hosting the Olympics, and why does it not react to the lawlessness of the authorities and the mass violations of citizens’ rights? Where is the Public Chamber, the public prosecutor’s special group? Where are all those who declared themselves guardians of citizens’ rights in the preparations for the Sochi Olympics?”

On that note, we shall briefly turn to this excellent question: where *is* the *Obshchestvennaia Palata*, or Public Chamber, one of whose supposed functions is to play intermediary between government and civil society? It seems that the Public Chamber of Sochi does much meeting, planning, and getting itself quoted in the mass media, but it is difficult to find any concrete results that would actually serve Sochi’s citizens. For instance, in a *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* article from October 11, 2007, the chairperson of Sochi’s Public Chamber Nadezhda Kozlova was cited as saying that research conducted by independent experts found a lack of information among the local population; however, no mention was made about what was being done to address this issue.¹²⁷ One thing the *OP* has noted, which incidentally supports our argument, is an increase in the “activeness” of Sochi’s citizens, who have sent their local Public Chamber “an enormous amount of complaints and petitions concerning the safeguarding of citizens’ rights and following the law when it comes to new construction, as well as concerning the evictions of citizens” and that “a large number of Sochi residents send [them] letters expressing their deep concern about the “Olympic law.”¹²⁸ I do not wish to depict the Public Chamber in a completely negative light, as there have been some positive

¹²⁷ Kovalevskaia, Ekaterina, “Potensial v reserve,” *Rossiiskaia Gazeta – Kuban’-Kavkaz*, No. 4489, October 11, 2007, <http://www.rg.ru/2007/10/11/reg-kuban/obshchestvennost.html>.

¹²⁸ Istochnik BN.ru, “Obshchestvennaia Palata prosledit za sobludeniem prav grazhdan Sochi,” *BNgazeta.ru*, October 23, 2007, <http://bn.ru/news/2007/10/23/20702.html>.

results of its existence and activity. Rather, I wish to show that in our case, this example of “licensed” civil society seems to be a mere bystander.

(Ab)Use of the Court System and Laws

It seems that this sphere is civil society’s weakest spot, and conversely the government’s strongest. This is undoubtedly due to the high costs and overwhelming cases of biased courts and judges, as well as to the ambiguity of laws that officials interpret as loosely or strictly as they see fit.

“Darlin’, I don’t know why I go to extremes...”¹²⁹”

On February 23, 2008, *IKD* posted to their website a news item with the headline “Sochi’s city government accuses residents of Imeretinki, who are fighting against the confiscation of their land, of ‘extremism’.”¹³⁰ A February 29 article in *Novaya Gazeta* discusses the very same issue.¹³¹ It seems that the Adler District Court ruled that leaflets allegedly distributed by Sochi residents at an October 28, 2007 protest are extremist in nature. The leaflets, which Sochi residents deny having any knowledge of, let alone distributing, were titled, “You voted—you judge,” and proposed holding a nationwide referendum to enact a law that would hold the President accountable, to the point of capital punishment, for making citizens’ lives worse. The so-called “extremist” nature of the leaflets was confirmed twice (notably without the benefit of an expert linguistic evaluation), first on February 22 at a local hearing, then on February 26 at a regional hearing. According to local

¹²⁹ This is a line from the song “I Go to Extremes” by Billy Joel from his 1989 album *Storm Front*.

¹³⁰ IKD, “Administratsia Sochi obviniaet zhitelei ‘Imeretinki,’ boriuschikhsia protiv iz’iatia zemel’, v ‘ekstremisme,’” IKD website, February 23, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/5359>.

¹³¹ Titov, Evgenii, “Sochi. Sud priznal, shto na mitinge v zaschitu prav sobstvennikov rasprostranialis’ ekstremitkie materialy,” *Novaya Gazeta*, February 29, 2008, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/229775.html>.

rights activist Valerii Suchkov, not only were there never any such leaflets, but all this was being orchestrated by city officials in order to make Sochi residents afraid to protest. The *IKD* post highlights the fact that city officials “found out” about the leaflets four whole months after the protest at which they were allegedly distributed, and that if there actually had been any leaflets, the city administration would have (and should have, according to the stipulation in the law that officials must take “immediate measures” to stop any violations), brought charges to bear at that time.

In a related item, *Novaia Gazeta* reported that on February 23, 2008, about 30 to 40 residents of Nizhneimeretinskaya Bay were awaiting a visit from Garry Kasparov.¹³² Despite police officials’ repeated orders to disperse, an example of attempted unobservable coercion, the citizens stood their ground and waited. When Kasparov finally arrived, apologizing for his lateness (he had been stopped by traffic police after they ‘mistook’ his vehicle for one on the stolen list—again, coercion), he did not exit the vehicle while speaking to residents. He explained that he “had been warned by the chief of Adler city police that [this] meeting... could be called a wildcat meeting which could cause the leader of the United Civil Front to be arrested.” Among the items discussed during the brief and rather awkward meeting was the recent news that the Sochi Prosecutor’s Office was trying to sue the activist of a local initiative group, Nina Ryndina, along with three other residents, on the grounds of extremism for “distributing leaflets allegedly appealing to ‘kindling the social hostilities or discord’” in October 2007. In fact all they had done was applied to carry out a protest meeting against passage of the Olympic law. Their meeting with Kasparov ended with residents wondering whether they would be “persecuted for the wildcat meeting” with him.

¹³² Lebedeva, Anna, “One Step to Extremism: Will Sochi residents be persecuted for wildcat meeting with Kasparov?” *Novaya Gazeta*, February 26, 2008, <http://en.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/13/02.html>.

If you can't beat 'em, walk out...

On November 14, 2007 in Maikop, capital of the Republic of Adygea,¹³³ there was a judicial hearing of *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus*'s suit against several government agencies and organizations for conducting unlawful Olympic construction. However, the plaintiff ended up walking out of the proceedings because of the court's obvious bias against him. For example, the court "forgot" to do certain things, such as to consider the motion to stop construction while the proceedings were ongoing, as well as in general keeping the plaintiff from being able to file motions. Thus having "muted" the plaintiff with these and other tactics, the plaintiff decided to file a motion to request another judge to hear the case, which of course was denied. Seeing the pointlessness of fighting further at this time with this particular judge, the plaintiff in effect abandoned the case, filing a motion to continue in the absence of the plaintiff. This motion of course was happily granted; the plaintiff of course lost the suit.¹³⁴

But sometimes it pays just to show up...

In response to the finding that representatives of Sochi National Park falsified the procedure for conducting public hearings, which by law must take place before an environmental assessment is conducted, Valerii Brinikh filed two lawsuits, one on behalf of *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus* contesting the legality of the public hearings on changes in the zoning of Sochi National Park, and the other, on his own behalf, contesting the legality of the conducting and results of a government environmental assessment on which changes to the zoning of SNP were made. On November 1, 2006,

¹³³ The Republic of Adygea is a federal subject of Russia (a republic) located inside Krasnodarskii Krai.

¹³⁴ IKD, "'Zelenyie' pokinuli sudebnoe zasedanie v svyazi s predvzyatym otnosheniem sud'i," IKD website, November 16, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/4414>.

EWNC lost its case in a local court; a regional court refused to hear an appeal. However, a year later the second case was heard and was won by Valerii Brinikh; granted, it probably helped that this time, for unknown reasons, not one of the defendants had shown up.¹³⁵

The latter two extreme cases show that, for civil society, it does not hurt to try. The lack of predictability of the process or outcome of a lawsuit might on the one hand serve to discourage civil society in their attempts to use these channels of redress; on the other hand, it could reinforce the attitude that since anything is possible, it is worthwhile, within reason and the means and resources available, to continue to pursue these avenues of “justice.” In this case (and applicable to other cases as well), innovation and learning for civil society might mean something as simple as realizing there is no reason to give up.

The Russian courts: a step ahead

The account of Valerii Suchkov, member of the *Obshchestvennij Gradostroitelniy Soviet*, or Public Urban-Planning Council of Sochi, shows how the authorities have used both forceful means and manipulation of the court system in order to begin confiscating property for Olympic need in Sochi.¹³⁶ The first decree by Krasnodarskii Krai’s governor Aleksandr Tkachev declaring the confiscation of two plots of land from residents of Imeretinskaia Bay was published on July 11, 2008. A mere six days later on July 17 government authorities attempted to enter one of the residences in order to conduct an assessment of its value, despite the fact that the property had recently been assessed and placed on the tax register; the resident resisted their entrance. On July 21 the Krasnodarskii Krai Department of

¹³⁵ IKD, “Ekologi zashchitili sochinskii natsional’nyi park v sude,” IKD website, October 23, 2007, <http://ikd.ru/node/4168>.

¹³⁶ Suchkov, Valerii, “Kak izymaiutsia zemelnye uchastki dlia nuzhd Olimpiady Sochi,” *Agenstvo Politicheskikh Novostei*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.apn.ru/opinions/comments20492.htm#comments>.

Authority Implementation in Preparation for Olympic Games (*Departament Krasnodarskogo Kraia po realizatsii polnomochii pri podgotovke Olimpiiskikh igr*) took legal action against four property owners in the building. They demanded that the court “force [the defendants] not to make obstacles for *FGUP* ‘Goszemkadastr’s'emka’¹³⁷ in conducting its assessment work,” and that if they did, force would be used.

Thus, in a single day, “in an unprecedented show of efficiency” marvels Suchkov, the Adler County Court managed to receive a petition for legal action, examine it, write an executive order, announce a decision based on this order, and demand immediate cooperation from residents. The very next day they came to the conclusion that residents, *who had not been informed about this court order* (emphasis added), were not cooperating, and then forcibly broke into their homes. As a result, two young men were arrested for having taken part in the ensuing standoff between militia, armed with pepper spray, and over two hundred of the residents’ friends and neighbors, armed with clubs and gas cans, when the court marshals tried to enter the apartments.¹³⁸ Then during the night the authorities arrested another resident, the leader of the local group of Old Believers who had previously spoken out against the forced evictions Dmitri Drofichev,¹³⁹ and sentenced him to fifteen days in prison. They were all accused of resisting the authorities.

Suchkov asserts that it is the Sochi and Krasnodarskii authorities themselves who have created the conditions for sharp social conflict and confrontation on the grounds of

¹³⁷ *FGUP* stands for *Federal’noe gosudarstvennoe unitarnoe predpriiatie* or Federal State Unitary Enterprise; Goszemkadastr’s'emka in English (according to their website) is “Project Research Institute of Land Cadastre Survey”—basically a governmental land survey agency (<http://en.vishagi.com/fgup.aspx>).

¹³⁸ Grossekathefer, Maik, “Putin’s Big Plans for Sochi 2014,” *Der Spiegel*, February 26, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,610096-2,00.html>.

¹³⁹ It is possible that Drofichev and his family were singled out to be among the first to be evicted as he was one of those arrested at the earlier unsanctioned demonstration on April 23, 2008 (<http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/296605.html>).

Olympic preparations. In the words of Suchkov, “On the surface, it looks as though things were done according to the law. But at the heart it is the court system’s usual mockery of the law and citizens’ rights!” To further quote Suchkov:

“an impression is created that the authorities purposely create conflict, provoking residents to resist, in order to implement a procedure of forced confiscation prepared long in advance. And in order to make this use of force seem legitimate, the authorities must make citizens look like cavemen, incapable of following the law.”

Again, such a blatant and extreme case of abuse of the court system on the part of the authorities could cause citizens to throw up their arms in despair and assume a “why bother?” attitude. However, they could also serve the purpose of angering citizens and inspiring the kind of outrage expressed by Suchkov. In other words, they could serve as rallying events for civil society to recall with rage and around which to mobilize and act against, whether through this same avenue (courts), or in another way, such as protest actions or round tables.

Letters, petitions, declarations and other forms of written protest

This arena is one of those in which groups have been most active because of the obvious reasons of cost-effectiveness and the high frequency with which these kinds of actions can be undertaken. According to a 2007 self-evaluation by *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, altogether over 100 official letters on behalf of this organization alone were directed to state bodies as well as companies in reference to legal violations and damage to the environment when locating Olympic facilities on the territory of the Sochi National Park and in the buffer zone of the Caucasus Reserve, and also on the question of public participation in the process of environmental impact assessment.¹⁴⁰ In addition, there

¹⁴⁰ “CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report,” December 2007, http://www.cepf.net/ImageCache/cepf/content/pdfs/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion_2epdf/v1/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion.pdf.

have been numerous letters written to various foreign and international organizations, including several letters to the International Olympic Committee, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, the UNESCO World Heritage Center, and UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

An example of how these kinds protest can get a reaction, if nothing else, from the regime, if no one else, is *Newsweek*'s account of how Mikhail Krendlin, *Greenpeace*'s local representative in Sochi "ran afoul of the authorities" when he filed a report to the IOC in November 2007 reiterating the negative impact of Olympic sites on the environment. According to the article, "within days, [then] Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukov...sent a letter...to the FSB and Interior and Foreign Ministries asking them to gather information on possible violations by Greenpeace in Sochi."¹⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, Sergei Tsyplov, executive director of *Greenpeace Russia*, received phone calls from the Federal Registration Chamber threatening to close his NGO, which led to months of inspections and bureaucratic issues. In a February 2008 meeting with representatives from *Greenpeace Russia*, Zhukov explained that the NGO had "misunderstood the situation" in Sochi. Clearly, NGOs recognize this kind of coercion as an occupational hazard and do not seem overly discouraged by it, in the sense that it does not seem to have had a negative influence on the volume of their letter-writing and other forms of written protest.

Left hook: Anti-bid book

Civil society delivered a one-two punch at the previously described February 2007 press conference (please see *Protesting with the enemy?*) called "Unknown Facts About the 2014 Olympics in Sochi," during which they presented to the public their *Anti-bid Book of*

¹⁴¹ Matthews, Owen and Anna Nemtsova, "When Gray Looks Green," *Newsweek* July 7-14, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/143695>.

the Winter Olympic Games Sochi 2014. This book is civil society's answer to Russia's official bid book sent to the IOC in January 2007. The "book"¹⁴² is the product of a collective effort by the groups *Avtonomnoe deistvie (Autonomous Action)*, *Druzhina okhrany prirody MGU (Nature Conservation Brigade of Moscow State University)*, *Institut "Kollektivnoe deistvie," (Collective Action Institute)* and *Maikopskoe otdelenie Vserossiskogo Obshchestva Okhranoi Prirody (Maikop Branch of the All-Russian Nature Conservation Society)*. The stated goal of the book is to refute the multitude "mistakes" and intentional manipulation of facts in the *Official Bid Book of Sochi as Candidate City*. The publishers use materials from international NGOs *Greenpeace Russia*, *WWF*, *Socio-Ecological Union*, regional NGO *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, the government of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Russian Olympic Committee, the International Olympic Committee, the 2014-Sochi Bid Committee, the Administrations of Krasnodarskii krai and the city of Sochi, mass media sources, and others.

The idea for the book, its publication, and its presentation to the public demonstrate the kind of positive collective effort that is absent in much of the previous acts of protest. Also, an anti-bid book is a common tactic used by civil society groups in all parts of the world to express disapproval of their city's Olympic bid or some aspect of it. This shows that in our case, civil society groups are learning not just from their own experiences, but from the shared experience of those groups who already been through this "Olympic" process.

¹⁴² There seem to be a couple of versions. The version I downloaded (please see footnote 86 for the link) and printed out is 32 pages single-spaced. At <http://oopt.info/news/090507.html> there are parts of it interspersed with author commentary and excerpts from mass-media and press-releases.

“Povtorenie—mat’ ucheniia”¹⁴³

To sum up, protests by citizens and environmental groups have been occurring since late 2005, when Sochi’s bid was announced. Since then, the frequency and intensity of the protests has been increasing in Sochi. In Moscow, on the other hand, protest activity has waned. It is impossible to document all instances of protest here; *IKD* has kept an excellent record, as have the environmental groups such as *Greenpeace* and *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus*. The previous events were chosen to provide examples of the hybrid Russian regime’s tactics in dealing with civil society and the increasing activity of civil society in connection with “Olympic” issues. As we saw, the authorities’ tactics, in conjunction with the mass media, have included outright repression, arbitrary interpretation and enforcement of laws, abuse of the court system, the undermining of legitimate protests with actions by ersatz social movements and pseudo or nonexistent organizations, and others. Civil society, for their part, is exploring and experimenting with new levels of coordination and cooperation, as well as learning that there is no reason to give up.

¹⁴³ Russian proverb meaning “repetition is the mother of learning.”

CHAPTER 5

“Effectiveness” of Civil Society’s Actions in Sochi

In the previous chapter, we saw examples of civil society’s actions in defense of the rights of Sochi’s citizens and the area’s ecological treasures, as well as the Russian regime’s tactics in dealing with them. We also saw some cases in which the authorities did not have to do much at all; the weaknesses in certain aspects of civil societies’ activity, from their disunity to their inexperience, were enough of a handicap.

Regarding tactics and methods used by civil society, some mention should be made of how their “effectiveness” can be evaluated. First I wish to draw attention to how organizations may rate their own effectiveness. In this case I am referring to the more professionalized environmental groups, since for now they are the only ones developed enough to have reached the point where they rate themselves, either for their own personal development or because they receive grants or funds from outside sources that require a self-evaluation. In my research I came upon a final project evaluation report¹⁴⁴ in which *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus* answered a narrative questionnaire required by the *Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund*,¹⁴⁵ from whom they had received a small grant

¹⁴⁴ “CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report,” December 2007, http://www.cepf.net/ImageCache/cepf/content/pdfs/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion_2epdf/v1/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ “The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a global program that provides grants to nongovernmental and private sector organizations to protect vital ecosystems” (http://www.cepf.net/xp/cepf/about_cepf/index.xml). EWNC completed the report in December 2007; the project dates as stated in the grant agreement were May 1, 2006 to October 31, 2006, while the “actual” dates were June 15, 2006 to July 10, 2007.

for a project called “Public Campaign for Western Greater Caucasus Biodiversity Protection from Planning of Olympic Games in Sochi Region/Russia.”

First, a few words about *Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus*: this NGO was founded in 1997; until then the group of activists who founded it were active in the Krasnodarskii and Adygeiskii branches of the *Socio-Ecological Union*. However, operating more or less independently of the *SEU*, the *EWNC* operated in *SEU*'s name until 2004. Based on my research and observation of the activities of this organization in regards to Sochi, I would classify it as a “professionalized” organization, according to Henry’s classification of Russian environmental organizations into three groups (the other two being “grassroots organizations” and “government affiliates”).¹⁴⁶ This is significant because of the tendency for environmentalists from professionalized organizations “to have an ambivalent attitude toward the state,” often opposing state policies and criticizing its environmental protection efforts, “but their skepticism coexists with a desire to work with and through the state.”¹⁴⁷ This may help to explain the difficulty they have in how to proceed, both with respect to the government as well as to other groups.

Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus had numerous implementation partners for this project, including *SEU*, *Greenpeace Russia*, *WWF Russia*, as well as other governmental and non-civil society groups, including the Public Chamber of Sochi.¹⁴⁸ The

¹⁴⁶ Henry, Laura A., “Russian Environmentalists and Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Evans et al (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 217.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 220-221.

¹⁴⁸ According the report, the following is the full list of implementation partners: International Socio-Ecological Union, Greenpeace Russia, NABU, Druzhinas for Nature Preservation Movement, WWF Russia, Center of Environmental Policy of Russia, Sochi Branch of Russian Geographical Society, NGO "Our Sochi", Krasnodar Regional Branch of All-Russia Public Association "United Civil Green Alternative" (GROZA) (NGO "ETnICA"), Maikop City Organization of VOOP, Environmental group "For Life!", Center for the protection of

evaluation report states that the project took longer than expected due to the fact that they had no means other than the grant for implementing the activities involved in supporting active public participation in the process of decision-making relative to the location of the 2014 Olympic Games. The report indicates that the initial objective of the project—“the prevention of Olympic Games 2014 realization on the especially protected areas of Western Caucasus and within boundaries of World Heritage Site and also averting of negative and irreplaceable effect to its biodiversity (sic)”—was not achieved, since in July 2007, Sochi was in fact chosen to host the 2014 Olympic Games and eight major Olympic venues were still set to be located within Sochi National Park, three of which would be placed in the protected zone of the World Heritage Site.¹⁴⁹

The report further discusses the following subgoals: 1) monitoring of information on issues connected to the organization of the Olympics, 2) establishing a working partnership with local, Russian, and international NGOs, and the scientific public, 3) informing the Russian and international public of danger to biodiversity of the Caucasus from the realization of the Olympics in Sochi, 4) organizing public environmental monitoring of Olympics-related construction, 5) informing relevant international institutions and Russian state bodies on the illegality of locating Olympic facilities on the territory of Sochi National Park and Caucasus Reserve, 6) establishing a dialogue among all stakeholders, 7) submitting appeals from scientists of the Northern Caucasus to international institutions and Russian state bodies on environmental treaties and the illegality of holding the Olympics in Sochi, 8)

constitutional rights and liberties of people, Public Environmental Council of Sochi, Public Council of Sochi, Public Chamber of Sochi, Committee of Sochi's Rescue, Design Laboratory "Ar-Ko", "Eco-Expert" Ltd, etc.

¹⁴⁹ “CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report,” December 2007: 1, http://www.cepf.net/ImageCache/cepf/content/pdfs/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion_2epdf/v1/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion.pdf.

publishing and distributing the booklet “How the Winter Olympic Games Threaten Sochi” among the local population and other stakeholders, and 9) making archives available of materials and documents on themes of the campaign.¹⁵⁰ According to the self-evaluation, all points were accomplished “successfully” or “very successfully” except points 6, 7, and 8, which we shall now briefly examine.

The evaluation states that point six was “not carried out in the (sic) full...despite tremendous efforts on the part of the public,” due to the fact that “state bodies of Russia turned out to be incapable to (sic) honest and equitable dialogue with the environmental public...Out of all state bodies the constructive dialogue was supported only with the management of three especially protected natural territories, whose natural complexes would suffer as a realization of Olympics—the Sochi National Park, the Caucasus Reserve and the Sochi State Wildlife Preserve (sic).”¹⁵¹ As for point 7, the evaluation reported that “the statement was not signed and dispatched” due to the fact that “many scientists of Sochi were attracted to various projects connected with the plans of Olympic Games realization, and it was difficult for them to sign this statement.” As for point 8, the booklet “was not prepared and distributed because the cost of its preparation and multiplication (sic) turned out to be much higher than was planned at beginning of the project.”¹⁵²

Judging from the response given to the question asking whether *EWNC*’s team experienced any disappointments or failures during implementation, the lack of a united front on the part of the various groups illustrated in Chapter 4’s examples was painfully obvious to all involved. The report deems the greatest disappointment the fact that “environmental

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: 2-6.

¹⁵¹ Ibid: 5-6.

¹⁵² Ibid: 6.

NGOs did not have a single whole position on the separate key stages in respect of the Olympic Games project realization.” The report states that at some stages, some NGOs took the position that hosting the Games would be possible without damaging the environment (which is objectively impossible), and that if all groups had united in declaring that the Olympic Games in principle are not possible in Sochi National Park, the IOC’s decision would surely have been different.

While in my opinion they are a bit too self-critical in blaming themselves single-handedly for allowing the Olympics to be awarded to Sochi by citing their divisiveness as *the* main factor that allowed the IOC to approve Sochi as the host city, their assessment of the negative consequences of this divisiveness is warranted. Additionally, the report cites the ineffectiveness, senselessness, and misguided nature of civil society’s willingness to compromise (including *EWNC*’s own expressed willingness to compromise at one point during an initial IOC visit to Sochi), in the face of Russian officials’ complete *unwillingness* to compromise (emphasis added).¹⁵³ Indeed, this aspect of the evaluation is supported by the comments of Valerii Brinikh (if we recall he is the representative of the *SEU* who was accused of a soft position at the round table in Krasnaia Poliana in January 2008—please see *Us vs....Us?* in Chapter 4). In evaluating the results of the so-called “victory” by ecologists—Putin’s public declaration that two venues would be relocated, while appearing to proceed according to the pre-declaration plan three months later—with which we opened this paper and to which we now return, Brinikh also cites the internal intrigue among different environmental NGOs as the main reason why that so-called victory was just that, so-called.

¹⁵³ Ibid: 6.

In two internet postings, one written July 5th,¹⁵⁴ the day after the supposed victory (Brinikh was skeptical of Putin's promise from the start), and another written in November commenting on the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology's official response to *EWNC*'s September letter (see Chapter 1), in which the MNRE gave civil society a clear answer that the Russian government does not plan to halt plans for construction of the biathlon complex on Grushev Ridge,¹⁵⁵ Brinikh says that the worst possible scenario in regards to Grushev Ridge will be played out. He says that *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, from whom a principled position was not to be expected anyway,¹⁵⁶ allowed themselves to be manipulated and used by the authorities by "publicly speaking out against the location of the bobsled run on Grushev Ridge while keeping silent or mentioning only in passing the other two athletic venues and the entire 'city' of hotels, tourist camps, and recreational centers" set to be located there. Brinikh, on the other hand, was harshly criticized by those groups after the January 23rd roundtable, where he publicly declared that he did not see anything wrong with locating the bobsled run on Grushev Ridge *on the condition that all other objects planned for the area be removed, and that all the area around the bobsled run be reassigned its former status as a protected area of a national park* (emphasis added), which would have been a much better scenario. He laments that their "partisanship at the expense of good sense and the interests of the wider civil society campaign...has led to the fact that this group of

¹⁵⁴ Arkhiv ekologicheskoi rassylki ENWL, ECO-HR, July 26, 2008.
<http://www.bellona.ru/enwl/Archive/2008/1217063494.01>.

¹⁵⁵ Arkhiv ekologicheskoi rassylki ENWL, <http://enwl.bellona.ru/pipermail/enwl-inf/2008-November/000884.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Brinikh does not spell out exactly why a principled position was not to be expected from *WWF* and *Greenpeace*, but we can infer that this is due to their dependence on Russian private investment companies (many of which have interests in Sochi Olympic venue and/or infrastructure construction) for funding.

nonprofit organizations, whose opinion was important to UNESCO, UNEP and MSOP, was made to act according the authorities' plan.”

He writes that for *WWF* it was important not to get in the way of the interests of Vladimir Potanin, a well-known Russian oligarch, who has a stake in a significant portion of the future recreation sites, and with whom *WWF* has a close relationship. Moreover, in exchange for their loyalty, Interros (the conglomerate owned by Potanin) compensated them generously. As for *Greenpeace*, Brinikh writes that after a string of failures, they wanted anything that would bring them relatively positive and widespread publicity, as their funding directly depends on this. Brinikh quotes E. Usov, press-secretary of *Greenpeace*, in an interview: “For us everything depends on the end result. We must achieve results or all our actions and activity are meaningless.” Brinikh writes, “Of course it is hard to argue with that, although sometimes the process is better than the kind of result we saw on July 3rd.” His conclusion: in the end environmental groups allowed Putin to win the overall battle in locating the biathlon complex and all accompanying infrastructure on Grushev Ridge, in exchange for the measly sacrifice of the bobsled run. Besides all that, he also accuses *WWF* and *Greenpeace* of excluding him from meetings at which their unified position was discussed, as well as of sabotaging *SEU*'s participation in all serious meetings by keeping silent and/or deliberately ignoring them.

Returning to the self-evaluation of *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus*, the final “lesson” that we will discuss here is the existence of “pseudo-NGOs” and the harm they do to the cause. *EWNC*'s report specifically points a finger at the *Association of Reserves and National Parks of North Caucasus*,¹⁵⁷ which allegedly organized “pseudo-public

¹⁵⁷ As already mentioned in Chapter 4 (see footnote 121), this is a blanket term for all the national parks and reserves in Russia, invented by representatives of Sochi National Park, in order to act as an environmental civil

hearings” on Sochi National Park zoning changes in which the public supposedly “approved” the project, allowing the possibility of concentrated development of 10 thousand hectares in the reserved and specially protected zone of the Sochi National Park. The report also cites the meeting discussed earlier of Russian environmental NGOs with the IOC Evaluation Commission, wherein *ARNP* representatives declared that the Olympics would not only *not* cause environmental damage, but actually be a boon for preservation. The report ominously warns that, “Evidently, this was neither first, nor last appearance of this pseudo-NGO, and evidently, position of this NGO was presented to the Russian authorities as the opinion of environmental public (sic).”¹⁵⁸

By way of summing up the broader role for environmental organizations in connection with the Sochi Olympics, I bring up a recent email from Andrei Rudomakha, coordinator of regional environmental NGO *Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus* (the evaluation of whose project we just read). He writes that ecological organizations have a large role to play in this situation because they are in the position to create a wide public resonance, without which ordinary citizens often do not come out into the public sphere and as a result have only a small impact. This supports my point from Chapter 2, based on Henry’s idea, that the significant environmental issues raised by the Sochi Olympics presents a new challenge for the environmental movement, providing environmentalists with another opportunity to practice mobilizing popular awareness and support for a particular issue. In regards to the more general question of whether or not the Sochi Olympics have served and

society ‘dummy’ when needed to achieve an underhanded goal in regards to a specially-protected territory of the Northern Caucasus. EWNC informational posting, “Sud’ia tsentral’nogo suda Sochi priznal zakonnyimi deistvia Sochinskogo Natsional’nogo Parka po fal’sifikatsii ucheta obshchestvennogo mnenia,” *Ekologicheskaiia Vakhta po Severnomu Kavkazu*, <http://ewnc.org/?q=node/332>.

¹⁵⁸ “CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report,” December 2007: 7, http://www.cepf.net/ImageCache/cepf/content/pdfs/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion_2epdf/v1/final_5fenvironmentalwatch_5fsochiregion.pdf.

will continue to serve as a catalyst for the activation of civil society in Sochi, Rudomakha writes: “Yes, absolutely. Activization has definitely occurred; however, its growth and scale are still trying to reach the level where they would match the size and scale of the problems so that they could have a real effect on them.”

That said, returning to actions at the local level by citizens in Sochi and to an earlier point made about “effectiveness” not being measured in objective “wins” or “losses” but in experience gained by civil society, there are developments we can point to as “proof” that civil society is blossoming, at least locally, with the Olympics serving as catalyst. Local civil society representatives point out that it is largely the active participation of local residents that forced the Federal Council, on December 29, 2008, to approve changes in Federal Law No. 310 “on the organization and hosting of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi,” which, in part, will now require *Olimpstroi* to provide owners of land taken for Olympic construction with alternative housing instead of monetary compensation, the planning for which has supposedly already begun.

In addition, local activists have founded various groups, such as the *Sochi Institute of Civil Society*, *Sochi Anti-Corruption Coalition*, *Union of Imereti Valley Residents*, and the *Public Urban-Planning Council of Sochi*, and through their high level of activity, have thus far successfully managed to postpone the announced razing of their homes and confiscation of their plots of land, obtain provisional conditions for their involuntary resettlement, create a fund for the exchange of plots, and force the administration to begin construction of new residential buildings.¹⁵⁹ In a recent article titled “It’s Time to Join Forces” in the local newspaper *Nash Dom—Sochi*, Iurii Marian, chairman of the *Coordinated Council of the*

¹⁵⁹ News, “NPO Sochi predlagaiut lishit’ gorod prava na Olimpiadu-2014,” *Kavkazskii uzel*, January 6, 2009, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/147544>.

Sochi Anti-Corruption Coalition, notes that: “In 2008 Sochi saw the appearance and activization of a whole slew of civil society organizations—nonprofit organizations with a clear anti-corruption position...the appearance of councils, committees, commissions with the expressed goal of counteracting corruption.” In his opinion, this is in large part due to the fact that in Sochi “corruption is palpable in many spheres of the daily activities and lives of citizens, and the number of direct or indirect victims of corruption is growing every day. Under these conditions, the fight against corruption has begun...as a citizens’ initiative.”¹⁶⁰ In addition to being noticed by local journalists and activists, the formation of these new groups has been noted by those following the larger housing movement. For example, the creation of the group *Union of Imeretinki Residents* was mentioned in an article summarizing the development of the housing movement in 2008 on *IKD*’s website under the rubric *SKS (Soiuz Koordinatsionnykh Sovetov, or Union of Coordinated Councils)*.¹⁶¹ As times goes on and Olympic deadlines approach, we can only expect civil society’s activity to increase.

As far as the more local-level, grassroots initiatives in Sochi in defense of citizens’ rights, we will now reiterate a few key factors that comprise the first steps in social activization, worth mentioning because to a greater or lesser degree they are all present in Sochi. First, there is the sense that one’s individual or family’s material well-being is threatened; in our case, it is residents of Imeretinskii Lowlands who stand to lose much if the government confiscates their land without providing them a concrete equivalent. The second and third steps go hand in hand. These are the acknowledgement that the problem is impossible to solve on an individual level but seems possible to solve collectively, prompting

¹⁶⁰ Mar’ian, Iurii, “Pora ob”edinit’ usiliia,” *Nash dom—Sochi*, No. 2 (312), January 22, 2009, <http://nds-sochi.ru/article.php?id=31208>.

¹⁶¹ Lekhtman, Aleksandr i Karin Klement, “Zhilizhnoe dvizhenie v 2008 godu,” *IKD* website, January 2, 2009. <http://ikd.ru/node/8356>.

a pressure or action group to spring up around this problem, followed by an appeal to the authorities, usually starting with informal relationships, letters, petitions, and lobbying, and ending with court cases and street protests when group members become convinced of the fruitlessness of their previous formal and informal measures. Sochi residents seem to be under the impression that if they continue fighting, something will come of it, since they have seen some results and show no signs of giving up thus far. The final factor that Clement cites, and one that has not been a focus of this study, is the importance of the role of leaders; without leaders, even if all other factors are present, the protest initiative is almost guaranteed to remain passive. One suggestion for further study would be to identify potential and actual leaders in Sochi, such as Valerii Suchkov, to see what, if anything, they have in common with leaders of other initiatives in other parts of Russia, as well as to learn their vision for the continued development of local civil society in Sochi.

The significance of leaders was illustrated recently on *The Other Russia*'s website in an article noting "arrests and intimidation"¹⁶² before the "Day of Dissent" marches that took place on January 31, 2009 across Russia, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Voronezh, Orel, Tomsk, Penza, Omsk, and other cities.¹⁶³ In addition to noting the arrests of opposition activists in Moscow, Tiumen, and Novosibirsk, the article states that on January 28th in Sochi, Liudmila Shestak, an activist and member of the local branch of the *Russian Geographical Society* "who has taken an active role in defending land-owner rights and other issues surrounding the 2014 Winter Olympics," was attacked outside her home. Shestak,

¹⁶² News, "Arrests and intimidation before Russian opposition protests," *The Other Russia* website, January 30, 2009, <http://www.theotherussia.org/2009/01/30/arrests-and-intimidation-before-russian-opposition-protests/>.

¹⁶³ The "Day of Dissent" protests and other "Marches of Objectors" have been relatively frequent events in Russia since 2006 and have always involved preemptive arrests and other repressive tactics on the part of the authorities.

who was physically injured but not robbed, linked the attack to an upcoming protest meeting set for January 31st.¹⁶⁴ This instance is important to note because it highlights the importance of leaders not only for their groups, but also in the eyes of the authorities and others who would oppose them. It also serves as an example of yet another instance of repression by the authorities (or those on their side).

The number of civil society-government interactions of all four kinds is already overwhelming, and there are new developments almost daily. It will be interesting to see what transpires, especially with regards to how civil society groups will approach new challenges armed with the practice and experience obtained recently. In January of this year, Sochi NGOs, led by Valerii Suchkov, director of the *Sochi Institute of Civil Society*, and Grigorii Uchkurov, chairman of the *Center for the Defense of Constitutional Rights and Freedoms of Citizens*, began gathering signatures for a petition to get the IOC to revoke Sochi's status as host city for the 2014 Games. In an open letter to the IOC, Sochi's civil society representatives asked whether Sochi can really get ready to host the Olympics if it cannot solve its own development problems. Most strikingly in the article, however, is the authors' emphasis that even though the letter is addressed to an international organization, the Russian authorities still have the chance to listen to the demands of residents and environmentalists and not allow the Olympics to "drown" under the wave of mass protests by residents.¹⁶⁵

In sport the cliché goes that it is not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game. In the current "game" between the Russian government and civil society in the run-up

¹⁶⁴ The article did not explicitly state whether or not the Sochi protest was part of the larger "Day of Dissent" protests, but I am assuming that it was.

¹⁶⁵ IKD, "Neupravliaemoe razvitie 'olimpiiskogo' Sochi," IKD website, January 6, 2009, <http://www.ikd.ru/node/8366>.

to the Olympics, the cliché also applies, but with a different shade of meaning. The “how you play the game” part refers in this case not to the importance of upholding the ideals of fairness and good sportsmanlike conduct, but rather to lessons learned, to techniques and methods used and continually adapted and refined to be more effective. What matters here is not that civil society “failed” to keep the Games out of Sochi, may “fail” to stop construction on protected areas, or may “fail” to keep Sochi residents from being evicted from their land.

What matters for Russian civil society is that the Sochi Olympics are proving to be a catalyst for engagement and interaction, in working both with and against the government, as well as with fellow groups and against “decoy” groups in their midst. We can identify two elements thus far: the growth of local civil society groups around housing and property rights, and conflict within the environmental campaign against Olympic construction among regional and international NGOs. As for the latter, hopefully these groups are learning from their mistakes and in future would either coordinate a unified front, or “agree to disagree” from the start so that those groups with a principled, categorical position could begin pushing their agenda from the beginning without the wind being taken out of their sails by other groups.

As for the former, in the article mentioned earlier on *IKD*’s website summarizing the achievements in the housing movement during 2008, Sochi’s protest acts were noted several times as being part of the “quickening pace of the ‘quiet cultural revolution.’”¹⁶⁶ This is civil society’s first “Olympics” in multiple senses of the word; it is relatively young, inexperienced, lacking in “sponsorship” and inter-team unity, especially compared to its seasoned veteran of an opponent. But these “Olympics” do not last a mere two weeks—they

¹⁶⁶ Lekhtman, Aleksandr i Karin Klement, “Zhilishnoe dvizhenie v 2008 godu,” *IKD* website, January 2, 2009, <http://ikd.ru/node/8356>.

will be ongoing for at least the next five years. I believe that during this time civil society will continue its fast pace of activity, constantly learning new lessons and methods for interacting ever more effectively and efficiently both with the government and with one another.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: Ifs, Ands, Buts, and Blips

As we have seen, Sochi's civil society activity in connection with issues raised by the Sochi Olympics represents a definitive blipping¹⁶⁷ on the radar screen of Russian civil society activity. In this paper we have attempted to examine, first and foremost, the reasons for this blipping—citizens' and NGOs' standing up for their rights in the face of the hybrid Russian regime's abuse of power with respect to ecological and property rights issues due to the Olympics. Then we looked at what comprises this blipping—examples of the kinds of civil society activity in response to the regime's actions, and in turn the regime's counter-measures. Finally, we have tried to position this blipping among all the other blipping on the “radar display” of Russian civil society—rising protests and citizens' initiatives since 2005. One thing is certain—this blipping is not a figment of anyone's imagination; it is a readily identifiable and documentable phenomenon, offering further evidence that Russian civil society is alive and kicking after its “reappearance” on the radar screen in 2005, in spite of those who would say that it is barely breathing and dragging its feet.

I would argue that the mere existence of citizens and groups where there were none before, no matter how small and localized, willing to resist the authorities to stand up for their rights, represents a challenge to the current power structure more broadly, as well as a

¹⁶⁷ A *blip* is “a movie term for a *return*—never used by professionals;” a *return* is “the appearance of a target on a radar display, the signal returning from the target” (<http://www.radarpages.co.uk/glossary/glossary.htm>).

threat, no matter how small and localized, to a very important pet project of the regime, the 2014 Winter Olympics. In any case, considering all that is at stake, activity by civil society in Sochi cannot be safely ignored, nor can it be harshly and blatantly repressed; it is this necessity for engagement by the regime that is currently civil society's greatest advantage.

Along with Tatiana Vorozheikina and Karine Clement, Ivan Klimov has also raised the point about the authorities' possibly "helpful" role in mobilizing civil society: that it should be seen not only as an obstacle but as a contributory, instrumental element. As an example he cites Imeretinskaya Bay, where he believes the authorities are not prepared to solve the problem with force—presumably because of the Olympic spotlight—and instead are looking for "representatives" of civil society with whom they can hold negotiations.¹⁶⁸

Owing to its authoritarian aspects, a hybrid regime is vulnerable to surprises that are potentially threatening to its hold on power because it lacks sufficient, reliable information on the population's preferences and therefore future actions;¹⁶⁹ thus, the authorities, especially on the federal level, have an interest in trying to reach out to NGOs, at least for the purpose of gathering information about them. Consultants advising foreign companies seeking to cash in on Olympic development in Sochi also note this:

"Local relations with the community and NGO's will be a key component... Communities in areas earmarked for Olympic development are beginning to voice visible opposition to the SOC's proposed plans, claiming that thousands of long-time residents will be displaced with minimal compensation, and that ecologically unique habitats will be destroyed. These concerns have received the attention of the IOC, and some Sochi residents threatened to be displaced are said to have filed claims in the European Court for Human Rights. The ROC and the SOC have quickly learned

¹⁶⁸ IKD, "K. Clement, E. Gontmakher, & I. Klimov ob obyvateliakh i aktivistkakh, sotsial'nykh i politicheskikh dvizheniakh," IKD website, December 4, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/8050>.

¹⁶⁹ Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes*, 283-284.

that community relations will be an integral part of successful Olympic development and keeping to a tight schedule.¹⁷⁰

Thus activism in Sochi must be and is being engaged by the authorities, which will prove fruitful to local civil society development in the long run. And civil society development on the local level, as pointed out by Clement, is key to the development of Russian civil society in general, since one of the factors that may strengthen it is the development of networks of groups across regions. If we add to this the Olympic spotlight, which will only get brighter as the Games approach, then Sochi is indeed an interesting place for both current and future study of Russian civil society.

Civil society activity in Sochi will likely continue to increase in the run-up to the Olympics. As the Games loom nearer, it is likely that increasing national and international media attention will be given not only to the status of the preparations, but to the behavior of the host country as a whole. For example, in an *Echo of Moscow* interview,¹⁷¹ when asked about what was occurring in Sochi in regards to the seizure local residents' property, Igor Chestin of *WWF Russia* stated that he was "absolutely sure that there would be many lawsuits by citizens" claiming that the Olympic law is unconstitutional, and that some lawsuits could reach the level of the European Court of Human Rights. It would take several years for the process to get that far, bringing us closer to the time of the actual hosting of the Games; thus, the Olympic Games could go on against the backdrop of citizens winning lawsuits in the European Human Rights Court. This in itself, if nothing else, could be seen as a sort of victory for civil society in that it would simultaneously draw more international

¹⁷⁰ Eurasia Strategies Group, Mmd Corporate, Public Affairs & Public Relations Consultants, "Continuity in the Russian Regions: How Key Russian Regions Adapt to the New Federal Balance of Power and the Implications for International Investors," *Mmd Bulletin: Krasnodar Krai*, May-June 2008: 18, <http://www.mmdcee.com/content/rus/Krasnodar.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ Ekho Moskvyy interview with Igor Chestin on program *Bol'shoi Dozor*, December 5, 2007, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/dozor/56880/>.

attention to Russia's disregard for human rights, as well as provide precedents and examples for further actions by civil society.

Other than that, in this concluding chapter I would like to identify a few significant variables with a possible impact on local civil society. First is whether and to what extent certain groups or networks will solidify with the help of leaders, and get together to put up a united front. For instance, whether or not the new local groups in defense of residents' housing rights, such as the homeowners' association "Our Home" and the group of residents who stand to be evicted "Union of Imeretinki Residents," will continue to exist after their particular issue is no longer relevant, and if so, whether or not they will try to form networks, both with each other, as well as other regional groups with similar issues. Hopefully this will not be the case, but it is entirely possible that Sochi's local activists, especially with regards to housing rights, will turn out to have been engaged in the kind of activism characterized by Yevgeniy Gontmakher as "everyday/grassroots," focused around a concrete problem. In this kind of activism, when this problem is solved, activists 'disappear' and a stable nucleus of activity does not appear.¹⁷² It may be that Sochi's citizen activists, many of them forced into action for the first time, are concerned with solving this immediate problem and have no intention of turning this into a wider campaign for people's housing rights.

Not only that, but if we recall from Chapter 2 Samuel Greene's pessimism about the "futility of Russia's housing-rights movement," the picture does not look heartening. However, Greene concedes that despite the detrimental effect of the state's inconsistent response to citizens' demands and protests on mobilization within the wider housing movement, he says that there have been instances, for example the protests against evictions

¹⁷² IKD, "K. Clement, E. Gontmakher, & I. Klimov ob obyvateliakh i aktivistkakh, sotsial'nykh i politicheskikh dvizheniakh," IKD website, December 4, 2008, <http://ikd.ru/node/8050>.

in South Butovo,¹⁷³ when the state does try to negotiate a solution under certain conditions. In that case, he was unable to pinpoint the exact reasons why the authorities negotiated a solution with protesters, except to say that this conflict “was widely covered in the media,” that local city officials, including Mayor Luzhkov came in for sharp criticism, and that “whatever the reason, this created a very different environment and a political opportunity structure that made it possible for the protesters to gain leverage.”¹⁷⁴

Arguably, something similar can be said about what is occurring in and around Sochi. The regime’s tactics of repression here, “compromise” there, and abuse of laws and courts, and filling the organizational space in between, make it extremely difficult for civil society to know how best to proceed, which could lead to discouragement and giving up. However, in our case, the specter of the Olympics and all the baggage that comes with it preside as a unique variable with the power to influence both civil society’s and the government’s actions. Not only is it a catalyst for major changes in local and regional life, which makes government-civil society interaction more acute, increasing the chances for engagement/practice for both sides, but it gives civil society some leverage in terms of international attention and the involvement and/or observation of international actors and organizations. Of course, all that is riding on the Olympics for the government in terms of international prestige and image also makes the government that much more determined to do things their way at nearly any cost. While still too early to tell what will happen, in my

¹⁷³ South Butovo is Moscow neighborhood where, since 2006, city officials have repeatedly attempted to evict owners of single-family homes and apartments in order to tear them down to make way for new high-rises (Greene 2).

¹⁷⁴ Greene, Samuel A., “Our home is Russia: the futility of Russia’s housing-rights movements,” in unpublished dissertation, London School of Economics (2009): 12.

view, Sochi-ites are in a position to gain leverage, and one small step for Sochi will mean one small step for the housing movement, just as the Butovo case was.

Besides local civil society development, the civil society activity surrounding the Sochi Games could eventually play an indirect role on current and future political developments. Important here is the current and future behavior of elites and whether or not there is an eventual split between Putin and Medvedev. If the status quo remains into the future, that is, if the ruling elites remain unified, Russian civil society will have fewer chances for “help” from the opposition, whether from within the elite or outside of it. However, if there does turn out to be an eventual rift or split among the elites, this may eventually be a boon for civil society, in that the opposition could try to use certain sectors of civil society to further their own cause. In addition, the current economic crisis and the devaluing ruble are already being blamed on the administration by the opposition, and with at least one prominent sociologist discussing the possibility of Novochoerkassk-style mass riots,¹⁷⁵ the Russian public may be more easily mobilized by the opposition in light of things like excessive government spending on unnecessary mega-events.¹⁷⁶

Indeed, opposition forces, led by Garry Kasparov, leader of *The Other Russia* opposition coalition, are following Olympic developments closely. It is one of the recurring topics on the *Other Russia*'s website and recent commentary in the *Games Monitor* notes instances of anti-Kremlin activists, including Kasparov, speaking out against issues in

¹⁷⁵ Gontmakher, Evgenii, “Scenario: Novochoerkassk 2009,” Institute of Contemporary Development, <http://www.insor-russia.ru/en/news/analytics/3236> (first published in *Vedomosti* on November 6, 2008).

¹⁷⁶ For a harsh indictment of the federal and local municipal government of Sochi in regards to the Olympics and in general please see <http://www.sochi-olimpic.narod.ru/>.

connection with the Games. In a *WSJ* editorial¹⁷⁷ from April 26, 2008 titled “Russia’s Pre-Olympic Nightmare,” Kasparov asks whether Russians will “have to wait until 2014 to see support for our own struggle for human rights.” He comments on the international community’s just “concern about China’s [then] crackdown in Tibet in the run-up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing,” but asks whether “some attention could be spared [now] for the suffering of Russians ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympics.” In other words, not content with the sharp learning curve that Russian civil society may experience on its road to the Olympics, he wishes to draw the West’s attention to the issue *now* (emphasis added) in the hopes that this attention will actually help civil society groups accomplish concrete goals.

Returning to the *Games Monitor*’s commentary, after giving a summary of all of the Kremlin’s Olympic headaches,¹⁷⁸ the author notes that the “apparent decision of Russia’s opposition forces to target the Kremlin’s weakness on Sochi is a formidable one,” citing it as “clearly an area where they have the potential to gain serious traction if they play their cards well.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, in Chapter 3 we saw mention of the recent development of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov’s bid for Sochi mayor. Local Sochi political activity is one sphere that warrants close attention in the weeks and months to come. In addition, weighing in heavily on all of this, once again, is the all-important economy, dictated first and foremost by the price of oil.

¹⁷⁷ Kasparov, Garry, “Russia’s Pre-Olympic Nightmare,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2008, Opinion, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120916663619146211.html>.

¹⁷⁸ These include the forced evictions, the environmental concerns, the recent onset of the world economic crisis coupled with the increasing Olympics-related expenditures, and security concerns due to Sochi’s proximity to the recent conflict zone of Abkhazia, as well as to Chechnya.

¹⁷⁹ Slavin, Martin, “2014 Winter Olympics bring on the ruthless redevelopment of tourism around Sochi,” *GamesMonitor*, October 5, 2008, <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/702>.

To be sure, protests in and related to Sochi and the Olympics thus far have not had as significant an impact on the overall protest scene, at least not in terms of a reaction from the federal government, as have, say, recent street protests in the Far East against the raising of tariffs against imported Japanese used cars, one of which involved the dispatching of riot police to Vladivostok all the way from Moscow. Clifford Levy of the *New York Times* writes that what seems to really be worrying the Kremlin about these protests is their occurrence in a region so far from Moscow, the large numbers of participation in them (in direct proportion to the number of people immediately affected by these tariffs), and concern “that resentment over the tariffs will continue to spread from the car dealers to the general population—and turn into a bigger backlash over the government’s handling of the financial crisis.” One local auto dealer was quoted as saying that “the tariff is simply a catalyst” for the local population’s expression of frustration at the deterioration of the region’s industrial base and fishing fleet in recent years, and for whom the car industry had become an alternative source of jobs.

In my view, the decision and subsequent preparations to host the 2014 Olympics in Sochi can be seen as a similar catalyst, a mechanism for the bringing to a boil, in one place and over the course of a relatively short time, of several contentious issues. The potentially potent mix of Russia’s relatively recent housing reforms and the new Olympic law administered and implemented in an arbitrary fashion by corrupt local officials and courts, plus the ecological problems and issues in the region, all of which officials at all levels are prepared to ignore in order to meet IOC deadlines, just might be the recipe for an explosive situation in the near future. Even if the pot does not boil over in spectacular and messy fashion, the heat in any case is on, and the ingredients are simmering; they are interacting

with each other, and when the heat is eventually lowered, what is left to cool in that pot will be very different from what was in it at the beginning.

That is why activity in and in connection with Sochi has been and will continue to be fascinating to follow, both for observers of the hybrid Russian regime, as well as for scholars of Russian civil society. Not only that, but if we take into account that the Olympics are still five years away, then it is possible to see this not only as a phenomenon for current study, but as a focal point of research and study well into the next decade. Perhaps this is a stretch, but the fact that the Olympics is a *future* event with *past, current, and future* consequences could possibly serve as impetus for civil society to act and organize *proactively and offensively*, especially if both research and activist “veterans” of Russian civil society, such as Karine Clement, were to get involved and make this a kind of special project.

That said, in closing, however, I would like to add a disclaimer and emphasize that in no way should this research be construed as adding another “positive” point to the “‘Olympics catalyst’ argument,” familiar to Olympic critics in its use by Olympic supporters “to justify the ‘inconveniences’ that disadvantaged residents of Olympic host cities have to tolerate ‘for the greater good.’”¹⁸⁰ To put it another way, I do not wish to state that the Olympics should be awarded specifically to cities in countries in which civil society is weak in order give civil society increased opportunities for practice and development. My perspective is purely pragmatic in the sense that if the Olympics or other mega-event has already been awarded to a city in a country with X type of civil society and Y type of regime, then quite possibly this presents novel and unique opportunities for civil society to activate

¹⁸⁰ Lenskyj, Helen Jefferson, *Olympic Industry Resistance: Challenging Olympic Power and Propaganda* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008), 18. To quote Lenskyj, the main point of the “Olympics catalyst argument” (one of five “rationales” she cites that are used to justify ‘inconveniences’ to disadvantaged residents of Olympic host cities) is that “the construction of new market-value housing (e.g., athletes’ and media villages) will generate a ‘trickle-down’ effect in terms of affordable housing.”

and mobilize in ways and numbers it did not before. In this game between the Russian government and civil society the final score remains to be seen, but the fact remains that experience gained through the act of playing will prove invaluable for all involved players.

Appendix I:

Map of Sochi



http://encarta.msn.com/map_701590140/sochi-adler_airport.html

Appendix II:

Transcript of Moscow Protest Action “If Sochi Wins, the People Lose”

Сочи победит—люди проиграют. <http://www.youtube.com/user/DmitryKokOrev>

Дмитрий Кокорев: -- К нам едет Владимир Владимирович Путин...с охраной! Вот. Прошу обратить внимание в ту сторону. Сейчас мы будем с ним общаться, спрашивать его...неудобные вопросы задавать ему...

ДК: -- ...у нас есть одобрение, можем показать...Что вы делаете?

(Руки прочь от Путина!)

ДК: -- На каком основании вы делаете это? У нас есть одобрение из префектуры, вы нарушаете закон.

(Давайте по закону делать! Давайте по закону!)

Милиционер: За нарушение порядка проведения. Значит, в данный момент, если вы не проследуете в отдел, значит вы будете оформлены как неповиновение к сотруднику милиции...

ДК: -- Я готов проследовать в отдел но скажите пожалуйста, на каком основании вы меня задерживаете.

М: -- Я уже сказал, за нарушение порядка проведения.

(Простите, вы не могли бы...вы не могли бы сказать почему...)

М: -- Значит, я прекращу вас. Я вас прекращу.

(А можете дать причину?)

М: -- На основании закона N-54¹⁸¹ я прекращаю данный пикет ваш, который проводился с нарушениями.

(С какими нарушениями?)

(А медальку-то возьмите? Вот, вот).

...

Представитель власти: -- Мы представляем акт о прекращении вашего мероприятия до наведения порядка.

(Какой-то беспорядок?)

П.в.: -- Очень просто, значит, в вашем уведомлении, да, о проведении мероприятия, вы нарушили порядок. Проявив реализованного действия/[((?))За театрализованное действие], которого не было указано в цели вашего мероприятия...Кто будет свидетелем?

(Вы много уже получили таких вот?...Это первый раз я слушаю, что театральное действие...заранее заготовленное...)

П.в.: -- Конечно, конечно. Это вопрос без комментариев.

¹⁸¹ Federal'nyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 19 iulia 2004. N54-FZ O sobraniakh, mitingakh, demonstratsiakh, shestviakh i piketirovaniakh. <http://www.garant.ru/main/12025267-020.htm#202>.

If Sochi wins, the people lose.

Dmitri Kokorev: “President Vladimir Putin is coming with his bodyguards! Please turn your attention over there. We’ll talk to him now, we’ll ask him some tough questions...”

DK: “...we have permission, we can show you. What are you doing?”

(“Take your hands off Putin!”)

DK: “On what grounds are you doing this? We have permission from the prefecture, you’re breaking the law.”

(“Let’s do things according to the law! Let’s abide by the law!”)

Police officer: “For violating the proper procedure. So, right now, if you don’t come with me to the station, you will be charged with disobeying a law enforcement officer.”

DK: “I’m prepared to go to the station, but please just tell me, on what grounds are you arresting me?”

Cop: “I already told you, for a violation of proper procedure.”

(“Could you please just say why?”)

Cop: “Ok, I’m shutting you down. I’m shutting down your picket.”

(“Could you give a reason?”)

Cop: “In accordance with law N 54¹⁸² I am shutting down your picket for violating the proper procedure.”

(“What violations?”)

(“Here, have a medal.”)

...

Government representative: “We present this act on the stoppage of your picket until you follow the proper procedure.”

(“What procedure?”)

G.r.: “It’s very simple, you see, in your declaration you violated the proper procedure by doing something that you didn’t say you were going to do in your document...Who wants to be a witness?”

(“Has this happened a lot?...First time I’ve heard that a theatrical performance (has to be) spelled out ahead of time...”)

G.r.: “Of course, of course. No need for comments.”

¹⁸² Federal Law of the Russian Federation (19 June 2004) N 54-FZ on gatherings, meetings, demonstrations, marches, and picketing.

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