THE LOGIC OF PILOTING
AND TRANS-BORDER REGIONALISM:

THE PROJECT-ORIENTED APPROACH IN EU-RUSSIAN COOPERATION

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Contents

Summary

This paper addresses the impact of innovative developments in Russian policy-making discourse during the Putin presidency on the transformation of conflict issues in EU-Russian relations. The increasing recourse of Russian policy-makers in the border regions to the so-called 'project-oriented approach', which has an affinity to the modality of policy-making espoused by the EU programmes in Russia, has important consequences for conflictual dispositions in EU-Russian trans-border relations.

Introduction

This paper addresses the problematic of EU-Russian cooperation and conflict in the border regions from the perspectives of the innovative developments in Russian policy-making discourse during the Putin presidency.

One of the distinct features of the Putinian discourse, frequently defined in terms of the 'death of politics' or depoliticisation, is the abandonment of grand political narratives, whether of 'transition to democracy' or the 'Russian idea' in favour of a more mundane, yet technologically productive narrative which has been variably referred to as 'strategic planning' or 'project thinking'. The 'project-oriented' policy discourse ventures to dispense with the 'ideological' aspect of political discourse as such in favour of a more technological or 'pragmatic' orientation, emphasising the construction of new phenomena in governmental practices. In relation to the EU-Russian relations, this project-oriented approach is actualised in the increased reference to (macro)regionalism as an active project of construction rather than a given reality or a spontaneous process, which is reflected in the increased prioritisation of 'strategic planning' discourses in the Russian Northwest.[1] On a more local level, an example of the successful application of the project oriented approach in EU-Russian cooperation is provided by Euregio Karelia, frequently cited as an exemplary form of regional cooperation between Russia and the EU.[2]

A more specific actualisation of this approach, relevant to conflictual dispositions in EU-Russian relations, is the notion of the 'pilot project', most famously deployed by Russia to designate the status of Kaliningrad Oblast' (KO) in EU-Russian relations. The KO appears to be a good terrain for POA-oriented moves owing, by and large, to two main reasons. The first one is that there is a widely spread feeling that the KO, created as an administrative unit directly governed from the center and destined to stringently play by its top-down rules, was a perfect fit to the Soviet system, but appears to display some features of disfunctionality in a new post-Soviet context. In one of its memos the "KB" Group, a Russian "virtual thin tank", has departed from a premise that "Russia's rights to the KO are not indisputable"[3], a statement that has to be reinterpreted in terms of the concepts of "open future" and "empty

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[1] See Prozorov 2004c.

[2] See Prozorov 2004a for the more detailed discussion of Euregio Karelia.

[3] V uzlakh … 2001, p.2.

frames", i.e. those that problematise the situations of uncertainty. The KO is, therefore, in search for new forms of its trans-regional subjectivity, that ones more compliant with post-industrial era and based on non-state strategies.

The second – and related - reason concerns the assumption that not only the KO itself but the Baltic Sea region as a whole represents an "open frame" that always welcomes new infusions of ideas. Since many of experts promoting the POAs assume that the "old patterns of regionalism" became obsolete, the new ones have to be developed beyond the administrative borders drawn by states and, therefore, are to be imbedded into trans-national contexts.

Among Russian authors one may find some similarities with a theory of marginality developed, in particular, by Noel Parker, in the sense that the chances for a success in implementing the breakthrough projects are deemed to be higher in the territories that face a threat of being pushed towards periphery and that are deeply dissatisfied with their roles[4]. The Northern Dimension, in particular, was comprehended by many as "an imagined empty space"[5] to be filled with concrete projects. This is why the "dimensionalist" mindset implies options and alternatives, signaling that either of them is only one of possible variants/types/models of spatial interaction between numerous actors involved. The dominant approach in the KO's surroundings is "mostly aimed at taking part in the construction of the region; constructing it while aware of its arbitrariness; viewing it as a project, but a project one endorses; a project worth launching although it is guaranteed neither by any secure origin, nor by any known outcome… Nor does it have to succeed. It is a project… a possible trajectory with advantages, costs and unknowns"[6].

In this paper we will start with deconstructing and unpacking the Russian discourses in order to identify inside of them those narratives and conceptual approaches that are pertinent to the "pilot region" idea which, in our view, is closely associated with POA. Then we turn to the eclectic variety of 'project discourses' in the contemporary Russian policy field, focusing in greater detail of deployment of the concept of the 'pilot project' in relation to the European border regions of the Russian Federation. We also attempt a more conceptual interrogation of the logic of 'piloting' in order to identify its relation to conflictuality, on the one hand, and to

[4] Pereslegin 2003.

[5] Cronberg 2003.

[6] Waever 1997, p.294.

depoliticisation, on the other, which as we shall argue is more complex than a simple dualism of technical vs. political.

1. The Variety of Project Languages

Navigating through endless amounts of regionalist literature, one may easily come to conclusion that each of the authors is free to interpret the concept and philosophy of the POA at his/her own liking. What is remarkable is not only an unfortunate tendency of proclaiming almost everything to be a project, but also the ability of the "project discourse" to crosscut the mental borders and accommodate all major segments of politico-ideological spectrum. Russian author Viacheslav Glazychev lumps together as "projects" such evidently dissimilar phenomena as the Crusades, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, the mass-scale transfer of Western educational practices to Russia, and so forth[7]. On a macro-level, Enlightenment could be interpreted as a "social project" to lay foundations for accepting such features of the "project culture" as pragmatism based on the idea of progress and development, cult of rationality and entrepreneurship, universal applicability of success stories and orientation to practical utilization of achieved results[8]. Russian political thinker Alexander Neklessa gives a temporal account of the POA referring to "modernization", "post-modernization" and "de-modernization" as three "most fundamental projects in history"[9]. In the same vein, USSR may be called one of "big projects" of global scale[10]. Denis Dragunskii calls the vague and even utopian set of liberal ideas of Russia's reforming along Western lines "Project-91"[11].

There are a number of Russian think tanks - to include the Strategic Design Center "North West", "KB" Group (an abbreviation that reads "Construction of the Future"), "Russia in the United Europe" Committee - that are heavily concentrated on different aspects of the so called "project phenomenon" as being applicable to the areas of the EU – Russia's interface. However, it does not make any sense to attribute a certain type of POA to a specific think tank or policy research group. Within each and any of these sources of expertise one may

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[7] Glazychev 2002.

[8] Gutner 2002.

[9] Neklessa 1998.

[10] Glazychev 2004.

[11] Dragunskii 1998.

easily discover a variety of project-related discourses. All of them are based on a cognitive reconstruction of regional reality in semantic terms[12], yet the stark differences between them are also observable. For the purpose of further analysis it would be worthwhile to group the multiple interpretations of the nature of the "project phenomenon" into several clusters.

1.1. PROJECT AS A BLUEPRINT: THE LOGIC OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

The first type of POA is premised upon an understanding of a project as an equivalent (a rough draft) of something which seems to be preliminary, uncertain and still immature, something which is either in the making or has never existed beforehand as such. Project is synonymous to an inclination to implement one's vision, a declaration of intentions. At the core of this type of POA is a set of the so called "humanitarian technologies" that envision a sort of itinerary (a road map) and stitch different social practices, thus helping overcome the pitfalls of communication. The value of projects is frequently assessed in terms of their communicative resources: it is precisely through projects than one region may get in touch and interact with another, even a neighbouring one[13].

According to this methodological approach, the frames and the limits of a project are determined by its authors themselves. Therefore, project is a kind of game that is bound to produce certain images and discourses to be used as transferable templates for changing the reality. These changes are verbalized in such "technical" metaphors as "repairs", "overhaul", "adjustment", "alignment", "approximation", and so forth.

This reading comes in many versions, all of them starting with a vague idea of "a crisis of the future"[14], which probably has to be reinterpreted as a lack of adequate understanding of what the future is to be. What the POA can do is basically "to frame the language of the future and to form a body of concepts" that might relate the available resources with an image of the future[15]. It certainly acknowledges that there might be a fierce resistance to the future-oriented projects from "the forces of the contemporaneity". This variant of POA is a tool for (re)constructing the future(s), and in this capacity it represents an intellectual challenge that invites for a great deal of creativity and innovative thinking. "Project-as-a-blueprint" has to be

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[12] Neklessa 2004.

[13] Perelygin 2002.

[14] Pereslegin, Yutanov 2002.

[15] Schedrovitskii 2002.

treated as a recommendation, a signal that draws one's attention to something important and unusual, "a text full of ideas", and – figuratively speaking - a "language of development"[16].

If taken into consideration, the signals that projects tend to send to the outside world may be instrumental in producing new structures, modes of conduct and/or patterns of social interactions that were non-existent prior to project's commencement. Within the framework of this conceptualization, the project instruments ought to be applicable elsewhere for the sake of greater managerial effectiveness and stimulating competitive advantages of the project's actors/stakeholders.

1.2. POA AS A BUSINESS TALK

Another type of POAs regards project-oriented thinking as a core for a strategy of innovative development. The choice of a project predetermines the selection of available resources: "there are no resources beyond projects"[17]. In this interpretation, POA as a means of crisis management and problem solving is an instrumental and contractual phenomena based on well-thought planning, which leads to emergence of a society which appears to become more ordered and less conflictual. This is a sort of "the project language" spoken by international foundations and grant making institutions concerned about measured managerial efficiency[18]. Nevertheless it has some resonance in Russia as well, underlying such features of the POA as managerial efficacy, "openness to different experiences", the right of choice, and the search for innovations[19].

1.3. POA AS A PART OF A LEADERSHIP GAME

Alternatively to the versions presented earlier, the POA might be read in its most literal/original sense, as a move to extrapolate (*to project*) certain norms/principles/values onto a specific ground, social or territorial one. This understanding of "project-ness" – seen through the prism of a strategy of self-reinforcement - makes it a part of a leadership discourse. This is so because it is a narrow group of world leaders that are capable of projecting/imposing their experiences elsewhere and thus define the developmental vectors for outsiders. Each pattern of leadership is supposedly based on a "Big Project" with its

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[16] Ostrovskii 1999.

[17] Yalov 2002, p.1.

[18] Richter 2004, p.10.

[19] Ryzhkov 2002.

decision making core, budget, and other attributes of power. The "Big Projects" are believed to be mutually inimical and fighting with each other on a global scale. This view, therefore, presupposes a hierarchy of territories and decision-making centers, and a competition for centrality between them. In the realist wording, the "pilot project" may surprisingly have overt military connotation, as exemplified by the awkward expression "pilot projects of intervention"[20].

In this interpretation, "national project" is referred to a long-term process of reviving the Russian identity and geopolitical power[21]. "The Russian project" may sound like a more practical and feasible substitution to the "Russian idea"[22]. For Alexander Dugin, a theorist of Russian geopolitics, the "project language" is a means to give a clearer (though ostensibly illiberal) view of Russia's historical mission ("a merchant lacks a project"[23], he writes with an intention to give a clear spiritual flavour to his conception). Within the framework of this logic, Russia also needs to have its own "national mega-project" unless it wishes the bulk of its regions to turn into a periphery and be forced to play by the rules defined from the outside. "Russia's Project", advocated mainly by the traditionalist community, is treated in a number of different ways – as an ideology of nationalism, as a tool for future leadership, or as an instrument of new Russian isolationism[24].

Coming back to the KO, one may note that this set of views has triggered two opposing - yet similar in their core-centric logic - understandings of the "pilot region" concept. The first one is pertaining to the EU which is in fact interested in the KO as a means of promoting the understanding of its eastward enlargement as a continuation of initial 'peace project'. The second one relates to Russia's strategy and is exemplified by a revealing statement of Sergey Yastrzhembskii, an aide to President Putin on EU-related issues: "What is at stake is not using the territory of the KO for a certain project, but concrete forms of economic cooperation with the EU through Kaliningrad"[25]. This state-centric reading stipulates that Russia might not afford to have a variety of "European projects"; there should be only one directed from and determined by Moscow. It is not rare to read in Russian academic papers that it is mainly the

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[20] Polikanov 2003.

[21] Belkovskii 2003.

[22] Ivanova 1999.

[23] Dugin, Alexander. Velikii Proekt (The Great Project), http://arctogaia.com/public/vtor13.htm

[24] Rossiya v mirovom … 2003.

[25] "www.polit.ru" New Agency, May 24, 2004.

federal center that is capable of finding the way of the Kaliningrad dead-end via communicating with Brussels[26]. Many commentators are convinced that «the Kaliningrad problems will be resolved only via an EU – Russia dialogue»[27].

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It has to be noted that the versions of POAs exposed above are provocative in a sense that they are open for polemics and therefore find themselves under critical fire of their opponent. The sources of criticism are very different. *Firstly*, it is the game-oriented epistemology of a variety of "project discourses" that is harshly lambasted for reductionism (allegedly inherited from the Soviet mentality) and misperception of social reality as being endlessly "plastic" in the hands of the so-called "political technologists" (a brand name of Russian public relations specialists, having a clear negative connotation)[28]. Constructivist-style POA is accused of simplistic interpretations of social reality that, presumably, is treated as always open for correction and upgrade. Promoters of the "project discourse" themselves are represented as being erroneously self-confident in their ability to improve any segment of social reality, should they call it a project[29]. Parenthetically it could be appropriate to note a semantic difference existing in the Russian language that separates '*proyekt*' as a rather neutral and quite conventional word for some kind of social activity, and '*prozhekt*' as a substitute for unrealizable dreams and impractical intentions.

Secondly, the discourse that is "technical" by its epistemological background – i.e. that focuses on the understanding of the specific instruments and mechanisms of governance – is denied for its alleged destruction of holistic worldview that is said to be pertinent to Russian mentality. This worldview is believed to be based on a hierarchy of values that are not susceptible of modeling according to particularistic criteria imposed by a group of intellectuals. In its most radical version, the disagreement with POAs goes as far as to imply that the project-focused discourse was implanted to Russia by the West[30].

[26] Artobolevskii 2003.

[27] Vinokurov 2004.

[28] Kordonskii 1994.

[29] Oleschuk 2002, p.10.

[30] Bialiy 1997.

2. Territory as a Project: the Logic of Regionalism

Yet how the approach described above might be extrapolated onto a specific territorial milieu? Of course, some examples of territorially-grounded projects might be given: thus, the formation of medieval cities might be treated as a church-sponsored project[31]. Certain historians depict the evolution of largest cities as a project[32]. However, the fundamental challenge for transferring the project practices to specific regions consists of linear, top-down models of governing the territories that, to a significant extent, are in contradiction with networking nature of the constructivist and business-type POAs. It might be presumed that the geographic horizons of project-oriented thinking are not necessarily confined to administrative boundaries, sometimes arbitrarily mapped. Borders are being understood within this conceptualization as inter-subjective derivatives of a set of socio-cultural actions. It is an "old" practice of administrative management, dating back to the times of modernity and industrialization, that is challenged by those of "project thinkers" who believe that the spirit of the "project behaviour" is incompatible with reliance upon the goodwill of the state or a search for protection from above. In most radical writings of the regionalist scholars, the very principle of state sovereignty is questioned and called for a revision[33], which resonates quite distinctively with a set of ideas aimed at de-bordering.

2.1. POA SEEN FROM THE REGIONAL LENSES

The basic idea at this juncture is that regional development may and has to be designed and constructed on the basis of expert knowledge and different innovative practices coming from both public authorities and private institutions[34]. Regionalism may be seen through project lenses, as a part of the constructivist agenda of region-building. Yet the territorially-based "project discourse" reminds the "Russian doll" ("matrioshka"): the bigger one contains a number of smaller elements. According to Petr Shedrovitsky, the "Russian world" concept – referring to a trans-national space of Russian-speakers) is a practical example of a "geo-

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[31] Yutanov, 2002.

[32] Beliaev 2004.

[33] Kniaginin 2000.

[34] Perelygin 2003.

cultural project" in construction[35]. The "Wider Europe"[36] or CIS may be characterized as territorial projects[37]. The same goes for the Baltic Sea region[38]. The territory of the North West of Russia was called a pilot region by the former presidential representative Valentina Matvienko, who referred to experimenting with new mechanisms for social policy to be put into practice[39]. The region-to-region cooperation, by the same token, could be viewed as a "proto-type of the common European economic project"[40]. Even individual cities (like St.Petersburg) may be discursively reconstructed as "projects"[41].

The discourse of Strategic Design Centre "North West" (SDC NW) is exemplary in its deployment of the project-oriented approach as a discursive innovation in Russian politics, a rehabilitation of the notion of strategic planning that is disassociated from both the planning schemes of the Soviet period and the overpoliticised discourses of the post-Soviet period that lacked a technological policy orientation and hence could not function in the modality of the project, inevitably failing at the stage of local implementation. "The authorities of the subjects of the federation *failed to become the centres of designing regional development.* Manifold programmes of socioeconomic development are not implemented in practice. The old priorities of industrial development are outdated, while *new images of the future, from which new priorities could be derived, have not appeared yet.*"[42] To launch a 'mega-project', whether restricted to Kaliningrad Oblast' or generalised to the entire Northwest Russia is, in the argument of the practitioners of SDC NW, a constitutive act that requires creativity on behalf of a wide range of actors: "It is absurd to hope that we can gather three experts, specialists in the Northwest or old specialists from Gosplan and draw up the new mechanism. The political, economic and cultural environment has changed. There is a *wide range of new subjects that have appeared and influence the economic development* [large corporations, regional elites, municipal entities,

[35] Russkii mir kak obyekt geokulturnogo proektirovania (The Russian World as an object of geo-cultural projecting), "Novosti gumanitarnykh tekhnologiy" web site, www.gtnews.ru/cgi/news/view.cgi?id=7256&cat_id=9&print=1

[36] Smorodinskaya 2004.

[37] Trenin 2004.

[38] Mezhevich 2003, p. 253.

[39] "Pskovskaya Lenta Novostei" News Agency, March 25, 2003, at http://pln-pskov.ru/print.php?id=11444

[40] Yurgens 2003.

[41] Shtepa 2003.

[42] Ibid. Emphasis added.

professional associations, etc.] Let me venture that there is no normal, full-scale dialogue between them. *To create sites for such dialogue is one of the key tasks of today.*"[43]

The project-oriented approach of the SDC is thus characterised by the avowedly constructivist epistemic orientation, which endows it with two key features. Firstly, the project-oriented approach is marked by a radical openness, regarding its object: the 'pilot region' is in the strict sense the outcome rather than the object of the project: "Figuratively speaking, *regional limits are in the eye of the beholder.* Consequently, the Northwest's borders may be stretched to where we perceive them to be."[44] Secondly, this approach must be exercised not in the narrow and preconstituted domain of 'policy' but must rather traverse a wider cultural space to redefine the policy field itself: "Innovations always come in a package that includes both technical and cultural transformations. […] In the Northwest we still remain in the situation, when a lion's share of actual changes lies in sociocultural and governmental dimensions. And only insofar as the latter take place, the demand is formed for technical decisions."[45] Thus, the project-oriented approach is an at first glance paradoxical combination of the depoliticising drive towards recasting political issues as challenges of technical construction and the wider focus on sociocultural change that should establish conditions of possibility for such technical solutions.

In theoretical terms, one may locate 'project thinking' within the domain of governmental rationality (governmentality) in the Foucauldian sense. The Foucauldian approach focuses on the historical constellation of governmental practices, irreducible to, though intertwined with, various trends within political thought.[46] The problematic of governmentality thus operates in a narrow domain between political philosophy and empirical sociology of government, focusing on neither 'thought' nor 'practice' but on the nexus of the two that forms a governmental rationality, a domain of "thought as it seeks to *make itself technical*"[47]. This formulation succinctly encapsulates the drive of the SDC discourse, insofar as it combines sociocultural innovations with the emphasis on the need to embody them in concrete governmental practices.

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[43] Schedrovitsky et al 2001. Emphasis added.

[44] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[45] Schedrovitsky 2003.

[46] See Foucault 1991, 1988, 1990. See also Dean 1999, pp. 48-53.

[47] Rose 1996, p. 23. Emphasis original.

At the same time, the idea of Megaproject "Kaliningrad" authored by the SDC NW contains conceptual uncertainty. Despite advanced wording, the idea seems to be void of any practical content because of the lack of precision and due analytical rigor. The "Megaproject" remains a strange mix of Castellsian networking ideas and Dugin-style[48] theses on the "increased military and strategic importance of coastal and naval outposts"[49].

What is interesting is that the contexts of the "project situations" are repeatedly reformulated and rearticulated. In particular, what matters is the selection of catchwords that would adequately reflect the essence of a project endeavor. Thus, applying the concept of *borderla*nd instead of a more formal and statically fixed notion of *border* gives more room for project-oriented exercises and experimentations, since one starts to deal with an object which did not exist in a strict sense. It is so because its limits are defined by those in charge of formulating the tasks and the goals of the project activity. For the KO this observation is of primordial importance since the niche of this Russia's exclave in the Baltic Sea region (and perhaps beyond it) and the scope of the region's trans-local liaisons are products of perpetual rethinking, contemplating and reflecting. This is exactly what happens with the "pilot region" idea in the KO – it started from scratch, and in this sense is in line with a number of other concepts widely applicable in social sciences, like social learning and cognitive regions.[50]

2.2. REGION AS A PILOT: FIVE MODALITIES OF THE CONCEPT

The previous chapter has identified dissimilar logics of "project-ness" and "pilot-ness" clashing with each other: one would treat a project as a venture with a variety of side-effects and unforeseeable outcomes, while another would perceive it as a business exercise with measurable – in principle – results formulated in practical and generalizable terms. Some of the above mentioned ideas are typically modern ones (based on indivisible sovereignty and bordering), while others try to come up with a hint of post-modern interpretations. Some focus on the state as the main engine of project implementation, while others denote the ability of the governmental sector to think and act in project-related terms. Some are rationalist and pragmatic by their background, while others are closer to constructivist versions of social discourse.

[48] Alexander Dugin is a leading geopolitical theorist in contemporary Russia.

[49] Doktrina razvitia Severo-Zapada Rossii (The Doctrine of the Development of Russia's North West), at www.future-designing.ru/index.cfm?id=6&material=464

[50] Krupnov 2002.

Yet apart from articulations and narratives, the "pilot region" approach might be a foreign policy tool since it easily translates into different policy areas. Therefore, studying the KO as a pilot region may be viewed as a good case to demonstrate how the regional issue influences the policies of major powers, and how contrasting are the visions of the pilot region prospects. Premised on an assumption that we are living in a world of projects, one may expect that the unpacking of the KO discourse opens up a picture that appears to be more variegated that it could have been imagined from the first glance.

Multiple uncertainties that surround the POA have given a start to the appearance of quite different interpretations of the nature of pilot region. There are definitely some interpretive problems with the whole range of pilot-related issues in the Russian regionalist discourse. Five versions seem to be plausible for further analysis.

Testing liberal reforms

The *first* approach to the pilot region is of liberal reformist background, presuming that the KO – due to the need of speedy economic development - might become a "pilot" for the sake of *testing* the feasibility of radical liberal reforms in economy (the so called "breakthrough technologies"). The functional/technical reading of piloting presumes that the entire idea is about applying special economic instruments to pre-selected group of industrial enterprises that meet certain criteria[51]. This approach is promoted mainly by a group of the so called "market rationalizers" (mainly associated with the East-West Institute, the Institute of Economy in Transition, the Financial Academy at the Russian government, and some other think tanks) who are supportive of the assumptions of neo-liberal economics, including the elimination of privileges to individual regions and a centralized and uniform fiscal system. Within the context of this analysis it implies that the strategy of fostering the (neo)liberal reforms is in conflict with the particularist strategy of promoting the local interests to be discussed later, which consists of granting special favours to a number of territories and tax exemptions[52].

In this sense, the notion of "pilot" gets semantically closer to the "model" and encompasses the "litmus test case" experiment and the "laboratory" metaphors. The "pilot" format may be read as a testing ground for specific *innovative/non-traditional* approaches[53]. A kind of pilot

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[51] Stepanov 2003.

[52] Easter 2004, p.13.

[53] Smorodinskaya 2003, p.199.

approach has been used in the case of Kaliningrad in the form of the Economic Free Zone, then Special Economic Zone (SEZ) formula, and in contrast to many other similar ideas launched at the beginning of the 1990s this one has so far survived. By being SEZ, Kaliningrad has already been singled out and given a recognized special character.

The KO as a "pilot region" is describes as a territory of experimental venture and, concomitantly, risk testing opportunities. In particular, the so called "Shuvalov's group" - named after the deputy head of the presidential administration - has included the KO in the top list of five most urgent national priorities. The group drafted specific recommendations concerning the new version of the Special Economic Zone, simplified customs regulations, science and research development, etc.[54].

The project-oriented logic assumes that the identification of policy clients is a must for its success[55]. However, the circle of potential consumers of the "pilot experience" is one of most debatable issues. One option points to other regions of Russia as a fertile audience for extrapolating the best of the KO's record of achievements onto other Russian territories, basically those located in the North West. According to a wider interpretation, the whole Russia is the main beneficiary of the "pilot" innovations[56]. Sergey Kortunov, using the project-type rhetoric, ascribes to the KO a much exaggerated role of the "model of country's new assembly"[57]. There are lots of other overstatements presenting KO as a "model for post-Soviet societal development".

The first set of problem with either of these interpretations is that the deeply rooted understanding of the KO's *uniqueness* (sometimes referred to as "atypical liminal zone"[58]) requires "tailor-made projects"[59] and therefore may conceptually clash with expectations to duplicate them elsewhere. In this light "Kaliningrad, which is an exceptional case, is not fit for the pilot status by definition"[60]. Very close to this opinion are doubts about the chances of Kaliningrad to perform the functions of a pioneer, due to the amount of local problems, in

[54] President Putin's web site, at www.vvp.ru/docs/group/kaliningrad/3905.html

[55] Struyk 2002, p.193.

[56] The KO as a possible pilot region … 2001, p.4.

[57] Kortunov 2003.

[58] Holtom 2002, p.26.

[59] Songal 2003, p.112.

[60] Prozorov 2004c, p.17.

the Baltic Sea region[61]. Moreover, many specific steps fostering de-bureaucratisation, de-regulation and small and medium business development have been already launched – with some success - in many other regions.

The second type of doubts focuses on the *implementation* side. Experts from the Institute for Complex Strategic Studies claimed that the main instrument of the state policy towards the KO, namely the Federal Task Program, is likely to reproduce the shortcomings of more than one hundred other Programs of this type – obsolete technical and economic justifications, archaic management, weak coordination with other federal programs, irrational budgetary financing, uncertain rules and criteria of implementation[62]. In its current state, the Program is but an amalgamation of different lobbyist strategies promoted by major financial actors, and thus lacks conceptual precision and coherence.

A complicating factor is the obviously weak level of commitment of the federal centre to the KO development. According to the Russian Accounting Chamber, only 21.4 per cent of the expenditures pertaining to much advertised Federal Targeted Program on KO was funded by the central government[63]. These figures have much to do with the way the federal policies are perceived in KO. The dominating mood may be formulated as follows: KO gets nothing from Moscow except troubles. In a surprising confession, the deputy representative of the president in the North West Federal District Andrey Stepanov has mentioned that the federal centre lacks a clear vision of the KO's future[64]. Additional uncertainty has been provided by President Putin himself, reported to have remarked that "Russia does not need pilot regions, but equal regions"[65], i.e. homogeneity rather than diversity in the form of experimenting with something new.

Promoting local interests

The *second* reading would argue that the "pilot region" metaphor is but a tool to get additional privileges for the KO from both the federal centre (in terms of securing budgetary funding

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[61] Joenniemi 2001, p.57.

[62] Yu.Simachov, A.A.Sokolov, M.Yu.Gorst. Federal'nie tselevye programmy kak instrument realizatsii promyshlennoi politiki (Federal Targeted Programs as a Tool of Industrial Policy Implementation), at www.icss.ac.ru

[63] Yantarnii krai: trudniy put' v ekonomicheskiy rai (The Amberland: Thorny road to the economic paradise), *Finansoviy kontrol'*, N 1 (26), 2004, at www.fincontrol.ru

[64] Rosbalt News Agency, May 12, 2003.

[65] See: Ignatiev 2003, p.123.

and keeping the exceptional regulations for the "special economic zone") and the EU (in terms of proposed but later rejected idea of "associated member status"). In stark contrast to the first interpretation given above, the second one presumes that region's *specificity* is a valuable asset. To be a "pilot region" within this discursive framework means having a "priority status" both domestically and internationally, largely due to the region's "unique location", i.e. being at a distance from motherland Russia and representing geographic discontinuity. This geographically determined reasoning may have behind it quite pragmatic interests: for example, there are voices in the local expert community calling for "developing a joint project with the EU on the KO [to allow] the replacement of the regional administration on a number of economic and foreign political issues by the project administration"[66]. In worst possible case, the project-based cooperation is treated merely as "external money working for the sake of our region"[67].

Of course, the depth and the tempo of the region's "pilot-ness" are strained by the policy of "power vertical" conducted by federal authorities. Nevertheless, there are many spheres belonging to the regional sphere of competence in which the locally-grounded project-oriented thinking may develop quite fruitfully. These spheres include the regulation of standards for produced merchandise, state-sponsored purchases, granting subsidies, obtaining the construction permits, maintaining centralized information pool for land ownership and realty sector, and so forth.

In the meantime, it would be erroneous to equate the KO's "pilot" strategy of promoting the local interests with the perspectives comfortable for the EU. As a matter of fact, the local attitudes towards the EU's enlargement are not necessarily positive. It is the local voices that are most critical of the new and apparently more complicated and time consuming customs procedures, grown fees for cargo transportation, and other irritating complexities. One of neglected paradoxes of enlargement consists in the fact that having faced a new set of insurmountable problems, the local business operators and political figures have become even more inclined to relate their hopes with the federal center authorities. The assumption that the KO does not enjoy the whole spectrum of federal guarantees is increasingly lamented as the biggest disadvantage for the region, and Moscow is called for an action.

[66] Karabeshkin 2003, p.92.

[67] Laptev, Vadim. Chto delaiut den'gi Evropy v Pskovskoi oblasti (What the European Money Does in Pskov region), www.tourism.pskov.ru/smi/6/

Among other major problems with this approach is that it is prone to trigger negative reaction from some other Russian regions that see the KO as their competitor and from Moscow, the latter being wary of "regional separatism"[68]. Another big issue is that the promoting local interests as a strategy in fact is controlled by the KO administrative elite that does not even hide its intentions to remain the dominating actor to define the status and operational frameworks of private financial and industrial actors[69]. Yet perhaps the most important point is that the self-assertion of the local actors is threatened by both globalisation forces (WTO regulations are inimical to any kind of special economic conditions for exceptional territories) and the federal-level actors that are increasingly eager to encroach upon the region's position both politically and economically. In Elena Krom's assessment, influential people in Moscow's Kremlin are steadily losing interest in supporting governor Yegorov who is seen as an "unnecessary link" in managing the growing financial resources circulating in the KO – both budgetary funds and private means. As a reaction to this "soft offensive", the local political and economic elite gradually becomes more and more isolationist and protectionist[70], which is apparently incompatible and inconsistent with any effective strategy of plugging into the European integration plans and the functioning of Kaliningrad as a bridge to the EU and its policies and practices.

Strengthening Russia's Negotiating Positions

The *third* interpretation has strong connotation with positions of power and Russia's demands for subjectivity in European affairs, which makes the whole "pilot" concept part of the EU – Russia great-power dynamic. The KO is seen in Moscow as a pilot case in terms of an indicator "to determine whether and to what extent the EU takes Russia's strategic interests into account"[71]. In Pertti Joenniemi's interpretation, Kaliningrad may be viewed as a "bargaining card for Russia in its aspiration for centrality"[72]. According to this reading, what has to be tested in the case of the KO is the EU intention to deal with Russia on the basis of strategic partnership, which, in Russian comprehension, has to mean EU's concessions in visa and transportation matters, greater sensitivity to Russian interests in the Baltic Sea area in general, and non-interference in Russian domestic politics.

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[68] Holtom 2002, pp.247-269.

[69] For one of the most illustrative statements see the interview of Boris Tregubov, deputy head of the Committee on Economic Development and Trade of the KO regional administration, www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=393

[70] Krom 2003.

[71] Report of Seminar… 2003, p.5.

[72] Joenniemi 2001, p.331.

The problem with this interpretation is that there are some Russian analysts that deem appropriate to discontinue all kind of special treatment of the KO by Moscow[73] for the sake of Russia's overall interests. Moreover, there are strong suspicions that Moscow deliberately debilitates the KO, because, it is assumed, the poorer the region, the less chances there are that it gets to conduct the policy of its own[74]. It seems likely that the efforts to de-individualize the KO may signal the decreasing interest of Moscow. A confirmation of this trend may be found in the new Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's suggestion that all North-West territories of Russia are in a position to perform the "pilot functions" in the Russian – EU relations[75].

Framing EU's Grand Strategy

The *fourth* interpretive variant – mostly pertaining to the EU discourse - would assume that the region's pilotness has to be understood in terms of showing the benefits that enlargement might bring to "outsiders", yet without any special agreement with Russia on KO. This reading is premised on the region's Europeanisation as a means for bringing it "to the same socio-economic level with its surroundings"[76]. In the mean time, European policy makers view the KO as a "criterion of Russia's readiness to convert the political sloganeering into the real deeds"[77] and a litmus paper conducive to knowing Russia's intentions in its foreign policy[78].

The EU standpoint is based upon solid institutional foundation yet still faces several challenges. The most important one is that, unlike other examples of border conflicts at Europe's margins – like Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Turkey/Greece and Israel/Palestine[79] - the Kaliningrad puzzle directly involves the EU as one of conflict parties, which imposes substantial limitations on the mediator role explored by the EU elsewhere. A direct clash of views between the EU and Russia as two poles of power gravitation makes the whole configuration of the KO conflict very different from most of other examples. Consequently, the abilities of the EU (as well as Russia) to become a driving force in the sphere of conflict transformation are strained. Unlike in many other border conflicts, in the KO the EU

[73] Kazin 2003.

[74] Krom 2001.

[75] http://www.inosmi.ru/translation/209081.html

[76] Vesa 2003, p.277.

[77] Ginzburg 2004.

[78] Gricius 1998, p.175.

[79] Pace 2004.

occupies a rather stringent and intransigent platform, while the EU accession countries (and sometimes Russia) opt for milder and more conciliatory policies.

Another problem is that the EU not only lacks a coherent policy towards the KO, preferring to solve it within the framework of POA, but still is in search of a comprehensive strategy vis-à-vis Russia itself. In particular, in February 2004 the EU Council of Ministers acknowledged that the European Union failed to elaborate a consistent way of dealing with Russia in uniform manner.

Finally, sometimes the EU position is surprisingly self-defeating. For instance, in 2002 the Commission confessed that "the *acquis* is continually under development, and there is as yet no specific *acquis* on transit of persons through EU territory from a third country to the same third country"[80]. This statement seems to demonstrate how vulnerable and unprepared Brussels might be in its attempts to prevent Russia from obtaining its own domain within the EU and the implementation of the Schengen rules in that context.

Trans-national "piloting"

The *fifth* – and perhaps the most adequate - reading is that of placing the KO in a trans-national environment, on the basis of advanced engagement with the European neighbours and relatively smooth adaptation to EU's standards. In the mildest terms this interpretation equates the "pilotness" with mere "cooperation". In particular, some analysts see the "pilot exercise" as conducive to the EU – Russian free trade area. One of peculiar approaches is an idea of joint EU – Russia's project tentatively called "the Baltic Dimension"[81]. Another proposal is aimed at transforming the KO into a "city-region based on post-industrial "Noopolitik" that has to substitute Realpolitik as the main determinant of region-building.

Yet there are good reasons to relate the discussions on the "pilot region" to the deeper and more ambitious concepts of "trans-boundary multi-level governance" which is expected to "evolve as a flexible pattern of cooperative arrangements and political pressure groups"[82]. This interpretation is very close to the soft governance model advocated by some policy experts[83].

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[80] Communication from ...2002.

[81] Kobrinskaya 2004.

[82] Scott 2000, p.165.

[83] Friis and Murphy 1998, p.17.

In particular, issues like visa-free rail transit or "Baltic Schengen" could form a concrete project basis for the rhetoric of the "pilot region" in wider trans-national discursive milieu[84].

How does a model of de-bordered and embedded in trans-national milieu the KO hypothetically look like? Arguably, an ideal variant would be to design its future strategy by skipping the zones of exclusion and, vice versa, taking maximum advantage of inclusion-based policies. This strategy may contain a number of arrangements that by and large match the ideas of "trans-boundary networking communities" and the "islands of ex-territoriality"[85]. Firstly, this would then imply deeper involvement of European business in regional economy, including proliferation of trade marks, commercial brands, banks, insurance companies, consulting firms. There are good reasons to support the incentives allowing the foreign financial and economic actors to operate in the KO skipping the procedures of opening their branches or affiliated structures, and Euro to circulate in KO's cash-free operations[86]. Secondly, it is advisable to develop joint trans-border programs aimed at creating new jobs in order to compensate the lost of revenues in the so called "informal"/"shadow" sector of cross-border trade. Thirdly, media "spill over" might play its communicative role, i.e. trans-border circulation of regional media outlets and TV/radio programs. The KO may offer the information and entertainment product that could find its readers/viewers/listeners in both Lithuania and Poland. Fourthly, fostering cross-border educational exchanges is important. For example, it might be useful to introduce the practice of spending at least one semester abroad (in either of neighbouring countries) for graduate students, especially those mastering in such disciplines as law, economics, political science, international relations, sociology, environment. This idea fits perfectly into the Bologna process. Fifthly, supporting human exchanges has to be a priority, especially in regard to those families that include relatives living on the other side of the border. In particular, the KO may consider coming up with a project of hosting on a regular basis major sport tournament to bring together athletes from all Baltic Sea countries (a sort of "Baltic Olympiad").

Drawing a parallel with the Euroregions, it would be fair to suggest that "a large number of consultancy agencies and professional lobbyists are currently advising on … the development of EU border regions… thereby 'selling' cross-border cooperative strategies and targets as

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[84] Holton 2002, p.306.

[85] Shinkunas 2003.

[86] Usanov 2003.

marketing instruments"[87]. Pilot regions are therefore crucial chains in policy transfer networks where communicative strategies are at the core of success. This is perhaps what is meant by the prospects of "liberation from the constraints of a territorial logic" advocated by Pertti Joenniemi and Jan Prawitz[88]. Under this scenario, the KO may become a meaningful element of the spatial networking relations crosscutting the borders, in a sense that space, unlike territory, has no finite limits and can't be claimed and/or appropriated by a single actor[89]. This perspective, in the long run, leads the KO from territorial to spatial affiliations.

3. What is missing in Kaliningrad's pilotness?

In the European context, the project is an attractive organizing concept to emerge at the intersection of institutions, networking, policies and programmes. "Participants in project-oriented initiatives … represent many levels of government as well as scientific and academic communities, various interest groups and independent organizations […] (that) operate in a trans-national space of negotiations and evolving policy-making alliances"[90].

Apart from the KO, in Russia's North West there are many examples of other pilot regions with their missions and structures. To give a few illustrations, Arkhangel'sk oblast is the pilot region for implementing the Kyoto protocol requirements, Leningrad oblast performs as the pilot region for establishing the industrial zones sponsored by the Italian business, Karelia is the pilot region for secondary schools informatisation project, etc. In Russian non-border regions there were many examples of "pilot"-like undertakings, too: for example, the projects dealing with housing, educational or social welfare reform are normally tested in a number of selected regions that perform the role of "laboratories", signalling the advantages to be used and risks to be avoided. In case of failure, experiments might be discontinued to prevent the negative experience from spreading and duplicating elsewhere.

Comparing the "pilot" model related to the KO with other examples of "pilot regions" all across Russia, a number of pivotal elements may be detected that unfortunately are absent in Kaliningrad. This entails that usually the pilot projects are aimed at achieving rather palpable

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[87] van Hortum 2000, p.66.

[88] Joenniemi and Prawitz 1998, p.238.

[89] Lanko 2003, p.260.

[90] Scott 2003, pp. 143-148.

changes in well determined areas. So far there is no sufficient clarity as to what are the ultimate objectives of the KO "pilotness", and what kind of reforms are to be implemented and monitored.

The regional "pilots" frequently are supposed to adapt some organizational models that already exist somewhere in the world. In the KO, the experimentation drive and the spirit of "starting from scratch" seem to dominate the pilot discourse.

Demonstration effects of the pilot project are indispensable, but the question of who are the target groups in the KO to watch the outcomes and learn the lessons is still open. As far as procedure is concerned, the pilot practice requires the (pre)selection stage, with clear criteria of choosing the regions and contractors. The selection process is an important part of the whole enterprise since it fosters competition between the regions and rewards those most willing to commit themselves to the project and able to present technical, political and legal guarantees for the project success. Most of the Russian regions having pilot projects take them as good chances to incite further development, and very rarely as a burden. At any rate, the principle of voluntary participation and grass-roots support is a must.

In most cases, the pilot scenario is drafted with significant role played by experts that are in charge of strategic planning. Time frame is obviously an indispensable component of any project exercise, to prevent it from dragging infinitely. The pilot experiment presupposes the network effect to facilitate the dissemination of the most positive results. The pilot regions should represent different regional environments, which perfectly makes sense in order to compare results.

Many of these items are missing in case of the KO. The region itself - prior to being assigned as a pilot – has never explicitly expressed its longing to become a testing ground of EU – Russia relations. It is not free to opt out. It is unclear how the KO as a pilot region might contribute to extension of the results to other subjects of federation. One can say that, contrary to the logic of project management, the choice of a region preceded the selection of the projects themselves. Yet, by its very nature as a case where the EU-Russian border is quite vague, Kaliningrad is at any rate an experimental case.

4. Conceptual Interrogation of the Logic of Pilotness

Although the five articulations of the concept of the pilot in the project-oriented discourse appear thoroughly different, if not mutually incompatible, it appears possible to identify a conceptual logic that characterises the overall space of dispersion of the project discourse. In all the senses described above, the concept of the pilot proceeds from the valorisation of specifically local, bottom-up experience as the 'grounding' of policy proposals. Both the notion of the pilot region as a 'testing' ground of liberal reforms and the more ambitious constructions of Kaliningrad as a pilot project for EU-Russian relations or a 'mega-project' for developing transnational networks at the level of a concrete region share the logic of policy design, whereby a policy must be grounded in 'local experience' that should endow it with a degree of 'authenticity' allegedly lacking in top-down policy designs. In this sense the 'pilot project-oriented approach' is strongly connected with the EU policy discourses, particularly in the dimension of external relations, concretely exemplified by technical assistance projects.[1] This discourse is arguably constituted by a central ambiguity, which is replicated in the Russian adoption of 'pilot thinking'. One the one hand, local agents in the pilot territory are to be entrusted with *policy generation*, i.e. the policy strategies, e.g. the new format of EU-Russian relations, are to be the *outcome* of local experimentation. On the other hand, the logic of piloting, e.g. in the cases of the 'testing ground for liberal reforms' presents the role of pilot experiments in terms of *testing* an already-defined strategy. Let us now discuss these two logics of piloting in turn, posing the question of how exactly does a policy get grounded in practical experience.

The first, 'policy-generative' sense of grounding has been a target of critical discourses that seek to deconstruct the 'participatory' and 'empowerment'-oriented governmental rationalities, actualised both in Western neoliberal governance and contemporary development regimes.[2] Prozorov's (2004b, chapter 2) study of the implementation of pilot projects in the Tacis programme demonstrates the following paradoxes of the policy-generative paradigm: the combination of the injunction of local agents to participate in pilot projects with the

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[1] See Prozorov 2004b, chapter 2 for the extensive discussion of the logic of piloting in the discourse of the EU Tacis programme.

[2] See Cooke and Kothari 2001, Bryant 2002, Goldman 2002, Prozorov 2004b, chapter 2, 3.

requirement of their *training* in the doctrines and practices that are supposed to be piloted, the exclusion of those local practices or approaches that fail to reactualise the doctrinal content in their discourse, and the restriction of the enunciative modality of 'local expert' to the practitioners antecedently indoctrinated into the piloted policy. Since the local knowledge solicited and gained in the pilot projects is thereby reducible to the reactualisation of the original project design, it is impossible to present local experience gained through piloting and participation as a *basis for reform strategies*. Local knowledge is either an effect of *repetition* of the project strategies by the local counterpart or a euphemism for the collection by the local counterparts of data required to fill the strategic scheme. Our argument for the secondary and supportive function of local knowledge should not, however, be equated with the criticism of the pilot project approach for its failure to properly utilise local knowledge or its discrimination by 'external facilitation'.

Within a broadly constructivist or poststructuralist research orientation, the assumption of pure, extradiscursive experience is evidently problematic. From this perspective, a policy 'generated through local piloting' appears impossible in principle, since there can be no 'pure' or 'unmediated' experience that could provide guidance as to the way of proceeding about reform, if only because the very need for reform only emerges within a particular governmental rationality. *There are literally no problems* to be addressed in pilot projects *prior to the constitution of a certain form of problematisation*, evaluating a state of affairs in terms of a certain governmental ethos, e.g. liberal reformism or transnationalism. It is thus only obvious that the 'bottom-up' pilot projects are conditioned by a prior 'top-down' postulation of reform strategies. In the absence of this 'strategic conceptualisation' no policy orientation would be able to arise in the first place.

What does it mean then to 'create a model from the implementation of the pilot projects', if the model is not *based* on local knowledge? Another function of local piloting is the *testing* of anterior reform strategies by local experiments. At first glance, the notion of testing is less problematic than the strong claim for 'pure empiricism' and more adequately descriptive of the actual procedure deployed in the design of pilot projects. For example, the local piloting of liberal reform strategies in Kaliningrad may be claimed to 'prove' their worthiness and provide 'concrete evidence' about their effectiveness in the form of 'working models'. It thus effects a qualitative transformation of a 'strategic line' into a practical and workable solution, turning a political doctrine into a policy model. Let us refer to this effect of piloting as *authentication* of reform strategies in the sense of providing proof, confirmation and validation. We must then pose the question of what exactly is *proven* through pilot experiments.

In the case of liberal reforms, it is arguably the economic efficiency of the proposed solutions. The construction of pilot models of e.g. the liberalised taxation regime, a deregulated business environment or semi-privatised social services on the level of an oblast' may demonstrate the comparative efficiency of these arrangements. Yet, this demonstration does not thereby validate the policy itself, since the criterion of efficiency is internal to the liberal reform strategy in question and not an external standard against which a variety of strategies may be tested. In other words, the 'worthiness' of the strategy is not 'proven by local experience', since the terms of discourse cannot be validated by the positive value a discursive practice acquires in those terms. The very distinction between 'strategy' and 'experience', which is reminiscent of the 'theory/empirical basis' distinction problematised in philosophy of science3, is dubious since it ignores the intrinsic relation of the 'evaluation indicator' to the strategy at hand. The capacity of a reform model to solve problems depends on the mode of problematisation in which this model is articulated, which sets what counts as a problem, what counts as a solution and how the success of the solution is to be demonstrated. The relation between the 'theoretical' model and practical experience may then be reversed: it is the piloted model which sets the conditions under which its particular applications may be held true or false, successful or unsuccessful, practical or impractical. The model itself, however, is neither true nor false and can neither be verified nor refuted. This argument, brought forth in various ways in Michel Foucault's conception of discourse as a 'regime of truth', Thomas Kuhn's notion of a paradigm as immune to experimental refutations and Ian Hacking's idea of a 'self-authenticating' style of reasoning[4], emphasises the difference between the positivity of a practice and the discursive conditions that grant it positivity. The former may be a candidate for truth or falsity judgments, but only by virtue of being conditioned by the latter, which may not be such a candidate.

> Propositions of the sort that necessarily require reasoning to be substantiated
> have a positivity, a being-true-or-false only in consequence of a style of
> reasoning in which they occur. […] The propositions that are objectively found
> to be true are determined as true by styles of reasoning *for which in principle there
> can be no external justification.* A justification would be an independent way of

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[3] See Lakatos 1970 pp. 93-98, 103-105.

[4] See Foucault 1989, Kuhn 1970, Hacking 2002.

showing that the style gets at the truth, but there is no characterisation of the truth over and above what is reached by the style of reasoning itself.[5]

For our purposes, this argument leads to the impossibility of the verification of the reform model by its local piloting and to the possibility, in contrast, to assess local practices in terms of the reform model. In the latter sense, local experience is retained as the epistemic ground of the piloted strategy, though no longer in the sense of strategy-generation or strategy-testing. The link between a 'theoretical' strategy and a 'practical' pilot experiment does not concern establishing the 'proof' or 'worthiness' of the strategy, but rather its 'workability', 'concreteness', 'practicality', 'on-the ground' presence that can be 'pointed to' by the reform advocates. All that is 'proven' by piloting the model locally is its existence in practice.

Despite the evident tautology, this is indeed an important achievement demonstrates the *phenomeno-technical* capacity[6] of the piloted policy, its power to bring into being the new objects it has conjured epistemically. In other words, the success criterion of a policy, inferred from its local piloting, concerns the ability of a *doctrine* to function as a *project*. Thus, the very *existence* of liberal policy models in the Oblast' (1) or its very *functioning* as a subject in the transnational macro-regional environment (5) are in themselves desirable effects of piloting. Similarly, within the EU strategy on relations with Russia (4), a successful pilot project would consist less in *proving* to the sceptical Russia the benefits of EU enlargement, than in constructing a series of practical arrangements, from transit to trade, that demonstrate the *viability* of the Oblast as an EU enclave. With regard to the deployment of Kaliningrad as Russia's bargaining card in EU-Russian relations, (3) it is precisely the demand to demonstrate such a phenomeno-technical capacity that has animated the assertive Russian stance on the region in 2002-2003: the EU is, as it were, challenged to demonstrate its capacity to design and practically implement policies that go beyond the application of the uniform Schengen principles. In the discourse on pilotness, practiced by regional authorities for the purposes of promoting the Oblast's interests on the grounds of its uniqueness (2), the pilot principle is paradoxically deprived of its inherent component: the general policy or strategy that is to be piloted with a view to the replication of the results of local experimentation. At the same time, taking seriously the argument about the exceptional status of Kaliningrad as an 'internal outside' of the EU permits to discern the operation of this principle at a more fundamental level. In the absence of any meaningful possibility to generalise the solutions devised for

[5] Hacking 2002, p. 175. Emphasis added. See also ibid., pp. 190-194.
[6] Osborne and Rose 1997, 1999.

Kaliningrad for the rest of Russia, what is to be piloted in the policies that squarely affirm the irreducible specificity of the Oblast' is the very capacity of both Russia and the EU to deal with the exception in the phenomeno-technical modality of the project. In other words, such a strategy *depoliticises* the exception without *disavowing* it. The *political* assertion of exceptionality is literally deconstructive, i.e. it destabilises the very identity of the Russian Federation as a single political and socioeconomic entity, throwing into doubt the assumptions of unity and indivisibility of Russia as a singular sovereign subject. The same can be said about the EU, whose uniform political space is punctured by the presence of Kaliningrad as an internal outside. In contrast, the approach that denies any exceptionality to Kaliningrad (evident in both Russian and particularly EU policy discourses that stress the applicability of uniform rules and norms to this case) disavows the exception without ever actually *effacing* it, which merely serves to enhance the problems of the region that owe specifically to its exceptional status. Indeed, the approach to Kaliningrad as merely a 'testing ground' for the more generally applicable policy designs would constitute a serious policy failure on the part of Russia, since, entirely irrespectively of the models piloted, it would retain, if not widen, the *gap between the Oblast' and the rest of the country*. In contrast, the approach that pilots precisely the exceptionality of the Oblast' responds to the political challenge of the exception in the *active* modality of the project, developing an appropriate governmental technology for its management and hence depoliticising it constructively through the establishment of a new *regularity* at the locus of the exception. Thus, in the phenomeno-technical sense the concept of a pilot project combines both *the political dimension of a constitutive act of decision* and the *depoliticising dimension of a governmental technology*: it is precisely the passage from the former to the latter than constitutes the specificity of the 'project-oriented approach', making it more complex than a mere relocation of an issue from a political domain to a technical one. Since the political dimension is necessarily traversed in the act of depoliticisation, one may paraphrase Heidegger to claim that the essence of the piloting technology is in itself nothing technological.[7]

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[7] Cf. Heidegger cited in Ziarek 1998, p. 12: "the essence of technology is nothing technological."

Conclusions

The concept of the pilot region belongs to the group of differently interpreted and thus discursively contested and repeatedly re-discovered terms. After being introduced in the official paper of the Russian government, it became a matter of sharp debates, divergent appraisals and creative imagination, having moved far away from the initial proposal. The pilot region idea has acquired a life of its own, yet its still remaining excessive uncertainty may be misleading and can devalue the very term, depriving it of clear content.

The very notion of "pilot region" has to be viewed, on the one hand, as a part of constructivist paradigm in social sciences that "assert the possibilities of political actors to decide for themselves in terms of what to be inside and what to be outside of a region" thus contributing to defining and developing regional entities. Seen from this angle, regions are not given entities but "cognitive outcomes of deliberate political intentions"[8]. On the other hand, the "pilot region" notion has strong connotations with the vocabulary used in the context of a corporate management lexicon and thus is one of the elements of the emerging culture of regional planning, gaining prominence in Russia. Strategic thinking, spatial development and other "stylish" lexicon belong to this discursive culture. In particular, there were quite a number of attempts to address the issues of the KO in the so called *project language* which presumably can be interpreted as one of most powerful albeit controversial elements of the strategy of desecuritisation. It may be assumed that the "pilot project" language is a tool for bridging the gap between the Russian highly *politicised* discourse on the KO and the European one, much more *technical* in its background.

However, the "pilot region" discourse still lacks due clarity and precision. The idea as such is usually taken for granted, skipping due analytical and explanatory framing. Nonetheless, the very emergence of the project-oriented approach in Russian policy-making, of which the discourse on pilot projects is most relevant to EU-Russian relations, raises the question of the impact of this discursive innovation on the conflictual and cooperative dispositions in EU-Russian relations. While the EU policy discourse on Russia possesses a relatively established (albeit still developing) institutional grounding and is not marked by significant variations, the spread of self-consciously technical project-oriented discourses stands in a clear contrast to the more political Russian discourses of 'strategic partnership', which located all major issues

[8] Honneland 1995, p.32.

in EU-Russian relations in the domain of interstate, frequently bilateral, dialogue on the level of political leadership. Of particular interest is the potential of the project-oriented discourse to effect a 'desecuritising' transformation of political points of contention into joint technical solutions. At the same time, as our argument below will demonstrate, the technical policy discourse may also serve to enhance conflictual dispositions (on the episodic and issue stages of conflict development) that are effaced by the vacuous rhetoric of 'strategic partnership'.

Generally speaking, the POA is on the rise in Russia, yet whether it is a reliable tool for promotion of a de-politicized vision of regions' future(s), is still a question. The political ingredients embedded in different versions of POA are very strong, being fueled by actors coming from different sites of policy spectrum. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that one of most perspective roads to de-politicization of the Kaliningrad discourse lays through diversification of the circle of actors involved. The argument can be made that state-to-state (Moscow – Brussels) pattern of conflict resolution is most likely to be conducive to hyper-politicization of contested issues, while a strategy of giving more room for non-central (like the regional authorities) and non-state (like business and NGOs) actors may be regarded as a way towards better articulated POAs.

The first conclusion which comes out of this paper is that purely technical discourse is unlikely within the framework of either of different POAs discussed in this paper. One of weakest points of a technical discourse is a temptation to perceive the social world as an elastic entity susceptible to all possible kind of interventions and transgressions. It is doubtful that having a certain amount of technical skills one may, in accordance to pre-defined plans, compose any construction out of small pieces loosely connected to each other[9].

Another obstacle is that a de-politicization has to start with erasing the differences between the "self" and the "other", which seems to be unfeasible for a variety of reasons. If we stick to an understanding of the political as the articulation or the enactment of identities, the perspectives of de-politicization would seem to be rather murky. By the same token, one has to concede with Zizek that the exclusion of something from the political is the political gesture par excellence[10]. It might also be hypothesized that as soon as the technical discourse proves its success, it either starts displaying its political ambitions (a strategy of promoting

[9] Kaganskii 1997b.
[10] Wenman 2003, p.60.

local interests under the guise of the "pilot region" concept) or faces political reaction from those whose interests are deemed to be harmed.

As for the second conclusion, the discursive landscapes of "pilot" practices appear to be inhabited by a variety of alternative meanings and contents. The fact that the "pilot project" idea is differently interpreted might, on the one hand, embarrass due to its seeming uncertainty. It may be easily perceived as a convenient metaphor to be used "technologically", that is to say – at one's own liking and discretion. In the worst case, this multiplicity of interpretations might lead to de-valorization of the pilot region idea as such.

Yet on the other hand, this situation opens new discursive opportunities for all parties involved in the social construction of the KO, since the playing with divergent meanings constitutes a good terrain for communication between all actors involved. The multiplicity of interpretations reflects and simultaneously exacerbates the variety of perspectives available for the KO and to be explored more forcefully.

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