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**IMPACT OF LOCATION ON WEBSITE-BASED ICT MOBILIZATION  
STRATEGIES OF MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY AND ALEXEI NAVALNY  
DURING RUSSIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2016**

MA thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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## **Table of contents**

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Conceptual framework.....	9
2.1.	ICT as a tool of political mobilization and concepts applied to website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny.....	9
2.2.	Location of oppositional movements leadership: Mikhail Khodorkovsky in the exile vs. Alexei Navalny in the country.....	15
3.	Empirical examination and comparative analysis.....	19
3.1.	Methods of identification and collection of data about website-based ICT mobilization strategies.....	19
3.2.	ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny during electoral period 2016.....	26
3.2.1.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies during pre-electoral phase: March 18, 2016 - September 18, 2016.....	26
3.2.1.1.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies common for Khodorkovsky and Navalny during pre-electoral phase.....	26
3.2.1.2.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies unique to Navalny during pre-electoral phase.....	48
3.2.2.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies during post-electoral phase: September 18, 2016 - February 18, 2017.....	55
3.2.2.1.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies common for Khodorkovsky and Navalny during post-electoral phase.....	55
3.2.2.2.	Website-based ICT mobilization strategies unique to Khodorkovsky and Navalny during post-electoral phase.....	59
3.3.	Exile and in-country website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny: testing main hypothesis.....	62
4.	Conclusions.....	68

5.	References.....	71
6.	Appendices.....	80

**List of abbreviations**

ACF - Anti-Corruption Foundation

CRM - Customer or Constituency Management System

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

EP - Electoral Period

URL - Uniform Resource Locator

WBM - Wayback Machine

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Introduction**

With the ongoing strengthening of the authoritarian regime in Russia, oppositional movements actively apply ICT (Information & Communications Technology) as a tool for pursuing their goals. ICT is especially relevant for those movements, which for certain reasons are limited in the usage of more conventional methods of political mobilization, or rely on them by choice. On March 26 2017 a massive anti corruption protest sweep across Russia. The protest was inspired by Alexei Navalny and triggered by investigation conducted by his Anti-corruption foundation. The target of investigation - 'corrupt empire of the prime minister Dmitry Medvedev'. Core mobilization was conducted by ICT. Though this research focuses on earlier period of time, foundation for such conversion of online into offline was laid with emergence of ICT as tool for mobilization in early 2010.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny are two prominent leaders of Russian opposition, who also can be seen as the most progressive in terms of their approach to mobilization via ICT. On the one hand, they are considerably limited in conventional methods of mobilization, because the current Russian political regime constrains oppositional forces in order to minimize their access to the state bodies, as well as the effect of their mobilization efforts. On the other hand, such an active usage of ICTs is often justified by the progressive images of these political actors, the nature of their target groups, and finally by rational choice in favor of this unconventional method of mobilization.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny have a complex approach to ICT as a tool of mobilization with websites and social media as their pillar platforms. With a goal to gain in-depth understanding of one of role of these pillars, this research focuses on websites operated by Khodorkovsky and Navalny. Websites and social media complement each other and it is common practice of well-established political organisations to have both, because with true integration of them highly synergetic effect can be reached.

Cases of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny have certain important features in common, which allows to put them into one research framework. Apart from similarities caused of being part of Russian opposition, two important characteristics should be brought up. In particular, both these actors were involved in politically motivated criminal prosecutions and both of them do not have official political forces (i.e. registered political parties). Though Khodorkovsky and Navalny share these characteristics, their location represents a salient difference, which draws attention for this research. Location in which two political actors operate, following common major goal, may significantly influence their ICT mobilization strategies. While Alexei Navalny operates within Russia, Mikhail Khodorkovsky is forced to pursue his agenda from exile. In a broad understanding, these political actors share the same strategic goal of fundamental political change in Russia, but the profound difference in their location has such a detrimental power, that Khodorkovsky and Navalny tend to differ in their strategies regarding ICT as a tool of mobilization. This research addresses the given statement in the form of the main hypothesis - *if location of oppositional movement leadership is different, their website-based ICT mobilization strategies tend to differ.*

Thus, the outlined puzzle leads to the following research question: **what effect does location of oppositional movements leadership have on their ICT mobilization strategies in authoritarian regimes.**

Meanwhile presence of other factors that might cause difference in website-based ICT mobilization strategies also have to be recognised. Not only because logical reasoning, but because empirical evidence gathered through this research also confirmed relevance of the following factors. Mikhail Khodorkovsky have different financial resources for conducting his political activities, that naturally should have an impact on the respective website-based ICT mobilization strategy. Research indicates that location also influences this strategy in certain manner. Two political actors are involved in different types of activities that result in significant deviations in their website-based mobilization strategies. The more primary question of what other factors cause them to engage in different activities is a subject for a different research, but here it is argued that location is one of important contributing factors. Type of leadership and level of

personalization of their oppositional movements also have to be acknowledged. Empirical examination confirmed that they also influence the given strategies. Meanwhile, it is also worth asking what influences the level of personalization? Can location contribute to it? Research attempted try to answer to the last question.

Nevertheless, this is a factor oriented study which seeks to understand whether location matters in regard of website-based ICT mobilization strategies. Since ICT mobilization strategies are complex and multidimensional, each strategy had to be clearly delineated during analysis, and treated as a subordinate dependant variable. In such a manner it became possible to shed light on impact of location on each of ICT mobilization strategies; assess scope and nature of this impact. Results of research demonstrates that identified website-based ICT mobilization strategies are influenced by location to a different degree and make respective assumptions about presence of the other factors.

The obvious presence of other factors and potential of this research result in need to recognise its limitations. In order to clearly prove that location indeed has such a determinative power that it is a primary factor that causes differences in website-based ICT mobilization strategies, different cases would be necessary. Instead of two cases with two different political leaders, it would be necessary to identify one leader who at one point of time was conducting website-based ICT mobilization strategies from inside of country, and in the other point of time - from exile. Even in such case other factors that could potentially cause difference has to be taken into account.

Apart from the high-scale matters addressed above, website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny not only depend on their location, but also can be influenced by political conditions in Russia at a given period of time. ICT mobilization strategies in general are not hold constant and political actors adjust them based on their current priorities, as well as external political factors. Since both Khodorkovsky and Navalny are pursuing access to the state bodies (either directly or indirectly), they actively use ICT to conduct mobilization during elections. As a result, elections can prompt these political actors to prioritise certain website-based ICT mobilization strategies. Russian Parliamentary Elections 2016 are the latest national elections and they are in the spotlight of the given research. This time factor and

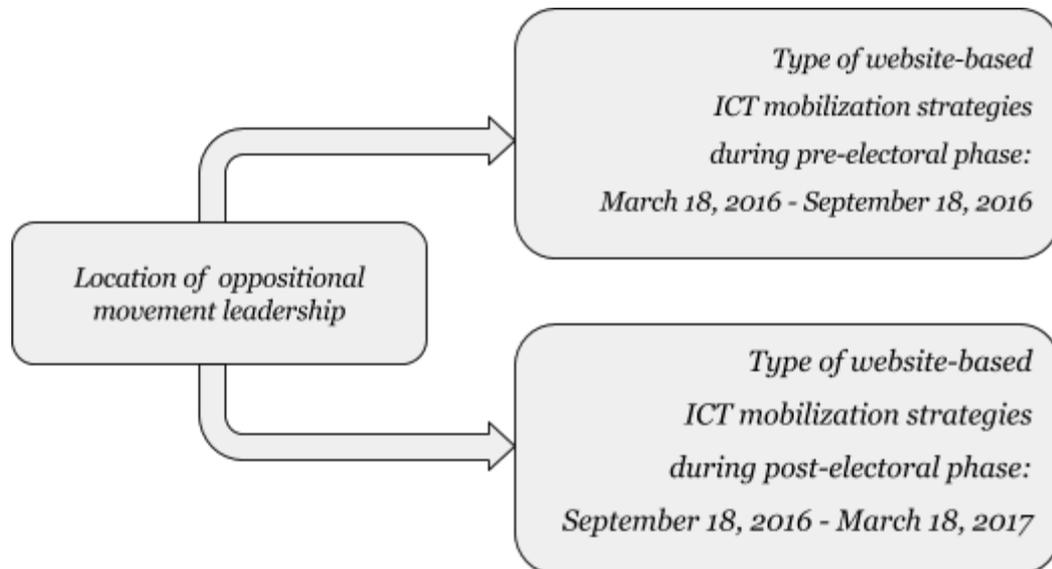
consequent fluid nature of ICT mobilizations strategies results in need to move research further and ask additional research question - **what effect do elections have on the type of ICT mobilization strategies of oppositional movements leadership in authoritarian regimes.**

The notion of elections should be understood here as the period of time, which encompasses pre-electoral and post-electoral phases of elections, divided by the election day. Campaigning is conducted during pre-electoral phase, while reflection on results of elections and follow-up activities are conducted during the post-electoral phase. In terms of mass mobilization, the latter has no less significance than former.

Consequently, the given research is investigating causal relationship between location of two oppositional movements and types of their website-based ICT mobilization strategies in two different points in time. In order to see if phases of electoral period have impact on type of website-based ICT mobilization strategies, the following hypothesis is going to be tested: *during the pre-electoral phase of electoral period, ICT mobilization strategies of oppositional movements leadership, located in different places, tend to converge.* Elections here play the role of a conditional variable, that influences the size of IV impact on DV. In this case, elections are expected to mitigate impact of location of oppositional movements leadership on their ICT mobilization strategies, and ultimately, might cause them to converge.

This hypothesis is based on the following reasons. First, both Khodorkovsky and Navalny compete for public support and votes. Second, target groups of both political actors intersect, because they belong to general supporters of political opposition. As a result, the rationale behind prioritizing certain ICT strategies may be based on what works better during electoral campaigning period. The research is looking at two periods of time that lasted for six month: **March 18, 2016 - September 18, 2016** as a pre-electoral phase, and **September 18, 2016 - March 19, 2017** as a post-electoral phase.

Here are arrow diagrams which demonstrate research puzzle:



From theoretical perspective, this research makes a contribution into combination of several concepts regarding ICT mobilization strategies and putting them into a framework of interrelated elements. While a significant number of researchers conducted in depth inquiries into different ICT mobilization strategies, there is a clear lack of holistic approach to website-based ICT mobilization strategies, predominantly used by political actors in combination of numerous elements.

In empirical terms this research takes a task of comprehensive analysis of website-based ICT mobilization strategies applied by Khodorkovsky and Navalny during one-year period between March 2016 and March 2017. In order to understand which website-based ICT mobilization strategies and to what extent were affected by different location, each of the strategies is addressed separately. For that purpose this research took an ambitious task of in depth analysis and categorisation of all website-based ICT mobilization strategies used by selected political actors. Instead of taking assumptions about which strategies could be more affected by location and focusing on them, a complex endeavour to mapping all of them was undertaken.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Conceptual framework**

#### **Section 2.1**

##### **ICT as a tool of political mobilization**

The politics is renowned for application of ever widening variety of tools for its functioning and pursuing its goals. With a growing significance of ICT in all aspects of daily life, politics had taken a strong grasp on this modern tool. It is a task of social science to understand a vibrantly developing intersection between politics and ICT. Research is able not only to reveal which approaches turn out to be more effective, but also to investigate side effects of often utilitarian application of ICT by political actors. Political mobilization refers to ‘the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate’ (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993: 25) This concise definition coined in early 90s is relevant today because the major point of political mobilization has not changed. ICT refers to the term that ‘...stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers as well as software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, which enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information’ (Baum, 2014:9).

A number of authors recognise the ability of ICT to transcend both physical and traditional boundaries and to allow politics to reach a greater number of individuals. (Breuer and Farooq, 2012; Diamond, 2010). With help of ICT greater number of individuals can be reached for lower cost, which makes this tools even more attractive. Especially for oppositional actors who are limited in financial or operational abilities for campaigning. This point confirmed by research conducted by Krueger, in which he argues ‘that the Internet reduces mobilizing institutions’ communication costs’. (Krueger, 2006: 760)

ICT also enables political actors to transform traditional methods of mobilization. For example, during campaigning political actors distributes printing campaigning material,

while they use ICT to digitalize the same materials and distribute them online among a larger audience. Apart from such mere digitization of traditional mobilization mechanisms, ICT offers a wide range of new tools that allows political actors to bring their efforts on a different qualitative level. Meanwhile according to the Krueger the distinctive characteristics of the Internet suggest that the long-standing patterns of traditional mobilization may not be reproduced online' (Krueger, 2006: 760)'. In particular, the lack of real life interpersonal outreach to members of target audience has to be brought up here. Interpersonal communication remains one of the pillars of political campaigning, and online mobilization strategies are approached by political actors with clear intention of conversion of their impact into offline activities. Despite considerations that online form communication deteriorates face-to-face form, studies confirm that rather former is rather accompanies later (Gil de Zúñiga et al, 2010:46).

The other group of researchers highlights one more important feature of the internet, which should be considered as '...a contested terrain, used by left, right, and center of both dominant cultures and subcultures to promote their own agendas and interests.' (Kahn and Kellner, 2006: 720). At first glance, in authoritarian regimes, the internet is contested by ruling and oppositional forces. Meanwhile in case of Russia, certain oppositional groups may also compete for attention of overlapping target audiences, because that what will define under whose banners online users would come to the streets. Finally, a number of authors escape cyber utopian belief in democratizing power of the Internet and consequently ICT (Heeks and Seo-Zindy, 2013; Morozov, 2011; Diamond, 2010; Salter, 2003). It is a question for a different inquiry, to what extent Russian oppositional leaders recognise limitations and dangers of online mobilization in authoritarian regime, and adapt to respective conditions.

Larry Diamond also highlights that 'in sharp contrast to radio and television, the news ICTs are two-way and even multiway forms of communication' (Diamond, 2010: 70). Such unique feature along with rapid transfer allowed by modern quality of internet allows political actors to reach immediate mobilization. This researcher also recognises a high potential of ICT mobilization tools in 'widening public sphere, creating a more pluralistic and autonomous arena of news, commentary, and information' (Diamond,

2010: 71). In addition he points out that ‘the new ICTs are also a powerful instruments for transparency and accountability, documenting and deterring abuses of human rights and democratic procedures’ (Diamond, 2010: 71).

This research seeks to produce holistic knowledge about website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny oppositional movements. These strategies consist of multiple elements, which for each oppositional movement are present in a different forms and to a certain degree. While scholars have been looking at a differential elements of ICT mobilization strategies, there is lack of research that would look at complex of them in a comprehensive manner. Consequently, an appropriate instrument for analysis of was created in the framework of this research. The chapter on empirical examination demonstrates to what extent political actors under investigation engage in the these activities. This research is driven by empirical data and the following categories were created in the process of empirical examination. For this purposes structural information of all websites operated by Khodorkovsky and Navalny during the electoral period was extracted. Each element was assigned to one or several categories of ICT mobilization strategies. In principle, the following question was asked regarding each element of each website - What purpose this element serves from the perspective of mobilization? On the initial stage of analysis, depending on the answer to this question a respective category was created. In the course of this process some categories were merged, while others had to clearly delineated though the looked similar in the beginning. Categorical delineation was based on the their distinctive delineation on the websites themselves.

Here is the list of website-based ICT mobilization strategies, endogenously created during the work with empirical data. It corresponds to categories presented in the extended version of Table 1 in Appendix 2.

1. Countering hegemonic discourse
  - a. content prepared by political actors (ordered by websites administration)
  - b. content prepared by users (approved by websites administration)
2. Fostering deliberation online
  - a. one way interaction

- b. two way interaction
- 3. Shaping idea of a political personality
- 4. Exposing perpetrations
- 5. Exposing and addressing issues with population well- being
  - a. Collection of complaints from population
  - b. Demonstration of impact of solving problems
- 6. News and media activities
- 7. Informing about non-project events
  - a. about future events
  - b. about past events
- 8. Recruiting
  - a. Activists
  - b. Volunteers
- 9. Fundraising
- 10. Collecting users personal data
  - a. Registration of user accounts for online activities on a website
  - b. Providing of data for participation in offline activities
- 11. Conducting legal projects
  - a. Legal projects
  - b. Legislative initiatives
- 12. Conducting electoral projects
  - a. Candidates application for support
  - b. Channel for users to provide support to candidates
  - c. other forms of engagement in elections

Based on empirical examination with dichotomous level of precision, nine out of twelve strategies can be considered as common for both Khodorkovsky and Navalny. Meanwhile, with introduction of higher level of precision, more complex picture can be drawn and this picture is in detailed revealed in the chapter on empirical examination. For the purposes of the given chapter, which addresses theoretical framework of the

research, it is reasonable to operate within the dichotomous approach to ICT mobilization strategies. It essentially answers the question, whether a certain strategy is used by a certain political actor or not.

If a political leader wants to deliver a message by means of a website, he or she needs to use content. Content is represented by any information published on a website in multiple forms: textual, visual, video or audio.

Political actors under investigation also use content, which serves multiple purposes. Since both Khodorkovsky and Navalny operate in an authoritarian regime, one of the key purposes of information delivered in the form of content is countering hegemonic discourse. In the framework of this research, countering hegemonic discourse is identified as a first ICT mobilization strategy applied by both actors.

Before elaborating on this strategy it is necessary to return to a classical explanation of the concept of discourse. It is particularly coined by those who are at the origin of discursive theory. Laclau and Mouffe (in Howarth, 2010: 311) argued that, 'a discursive structure is not a merely "cognitive" or "contemplative" entity; it is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations'. Howarth himself sums up that 'discourse refers to particular systems of meaningful or articulatory practice' (Howarth, 2010: 313). This understanding is as relevant in terms of websites as it is relevant for other forms of discourse channeling. Moreover, websites as a platform for mobilization via ICT, possess an advanced quality of two-way interaction and support ongoing contribution to the discourse. Websites with supported two-way interaction serve as a good example of a platform, on which both cognitive and articulatory practice can be observed.

In the nexus of countering hegemonic discourse, the term hegemony also shall be addressed. The article published by Howarth in 2010 covers interrelated concepts of discourse and hegemony. He argues that 'hegemony can be seen as a form of rule that can elucidate the way in which a regime, practice or policy holds sway over a set of subjects by winning their consent or securing their compliance' (Howarth, 2010: 317). In an authoritarian regime like Russia, information space is an actively used area where hegemony can be both practiced and strengthened (Alexander, 2003). Back in the early 2000s Alexander stated that 'the emergence of Russian pro-government online news

media capable of overpowering independent voices...’ (Alexander, 2003). Today this capability only strengthened and Russian authorities took a strong grip on media space in Russia, including the online information space. (Oates, 2014). As Oates also argues, in conditions where television turned out to be the main channel for hegemonic discourse, the internet became the main terrain where this hegemony is challenged. (Oates, 2014). In such conditions it is natural for Russian oppositional leaders to stake on website-based ICT as tool for countering hegemonic discourse.

Both actors provide venues for users deliberation online about variety of raised issues both on the website and connected social media. According, to Price (2009), deliberating theory has ‘functional utility of online “discussion” for political deliberation’. While, evidence suggests that both Khodorkovsky and Navalny use their platforms for fundraising via a fundraising platforms (‘donate button’), Navalny relies on donations much more, which in result makes his strategies more creative. In particular, micro-donations play significant role in fundraising efforts of Alexei Navalny. According to Garret, small actions may lead to a greater sense of obligation (2006), that might explain a more dedicated supporters backing Navalny’s activities.

Anti-Corruption Foundation put a great effort into coverage of the corruption cases and communicating their findings to the larger audience. Conceptually this approach can be explained from the perspective of the witnessing at distance. According to this approach, the sight of perpetrations conducted by ‘political or institutional agents and the possibility of widely reproducing and distributing related information represent effective means of controlling abuses of the powerful’ (Ribeiro, 1996). It is also related to the mobilization of shame, ‘where the behaviour of target actors is held up to the bright light’ of public scrutiny’ (Keck, Sikkink, 1999).

## Section 2.2

### **Location of oppositional movements leadership: Mikhail Khodorkovsky in the exile vs. Alexei Navalny in the country**

Location of oppositional movement leadership affects multiple aspects of their operation. Ability to be present inside of the country, on population of which political leaders are targeting their mobilization efforts vs. inability to be physically present there, triggers a chain of implications starting of the nature of communication with supporters and ending with logistical and legal aspects of the operation.

From the perspective of social science, location of Mikhail Khodorkovsky represents the most difference because exile is an abnormality in regard of political mobilization. Mikhail Khodorkovsky appeared to be in exile after ten years of imprisonment due to prosecution on the number of politically motivated cases. (Olcott, 2004). Currently he is residing in London and in particular works on his umbrella project 'Open Russia'. Open Russia used to be a traditional non governmental organisation with its regional branches around Russia, but after its assets were arrested following prosecution of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the activities of the foundation were put on hold. Shortly after his release and moving to exile, Khodorkovsky announced relaunch of the project.

Exile of Mikhail Khodorkovsky started on December 20, 2013, when he arrived to Berlin. Khodorkovsky applied for pardon due to the prolonged sickness of his mother, and this reason was stated by Vladimir Putin when he announced about his intention to release Mikhail Khodorkovsky on his traditional press-conference held one day prior to release. Meanwhile, on the day of release all members of Mikhail Khodorkovsky's family was in Moscow and he never had a chance to see his mother before her death later in 2014. By this time Khodorkovsky was unable to come to Russia again due to the threat of new arrest and prosecution (khodorkovsky.ru).

The first public speech was pronounced by the oppositional leader already in 2013 during protest demonstrations on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev, Ukraine. That was a start of critique from exile of Mikhail Khodorkovsky vis-a-vis current political regime in Russia and its actions.

In September 2014 Khodorkovsky relaunched the Open Russia project, that initially was planned as an information platform. Creation of alternative information field in the Russian society was announced as a paramount purpose of the project.

During first year in exile Khodorkovsky was try to understand that socio-political situation in russia and researched public opinion. When he understood that there is no perspective for fast change of political regime he decided that he will need a media platform that will allow he to communicate with society. At that point personal website Khodorkovsky.ru, was the only website he had, but was clear that a platform of a different kind will be needed.

After residing in several places around Europe (in particularly Zurich) Mikhail Khodorkovsky settled in London in june 2015, where currently Open Russia headquarters and the debate club are located (Жигулев, 2016). Open Russia was designed to take this role and initially it was branded as Khodorkovsky project. On the first stage Open Russia was very dynamic, a lot of projects and approaches were tested. In particular, project University was considered as a success. At the same time, The chief editor of the Open Russia website Veronica Kutsylo complained that the project was gaining increasingly more vertical structure of management (Жигулев, 2016). After poor performance of the Parnas party in elections to regional parliaments 2015, the idea to make an electoral project came to Khodorkovsky, which meant explicit involvement into political activities, though after the release he stated that is going to conduct only civic activities. It was decided that candidates for new project Open Elections also should be recruited via website. Though many thought that no candidate would want to announced that he or she were supported by Khodorkovsky, around 500 people applied to the project. The project required significant financial contribution from Khodorkovsky. It was reported that on all candidates it was planned to spend around 3 million dollars. Meanwhile, in 2016 Khodorkovsky for the firs again appeared in the list of the wealthiest people in Russia (Жигулев, 2016). According the high-ranking representative of Khodorkovsky team, who gave interview in the framework of this research, the movement Open Russian emerged because the basis of energy of 23 candidates supported during the first round of the project 2016. After this

elections, the project was redesigned for Regional Elections 2017 and started with 'Moscow School of Candidates - a large educational project with targeted at 400 of participants. The candidates who will successfully graduate from the school will be provided with respective support from Mikhail Khodorkovsky ([ov.openrussia.org](http://ov.openrussia.org)).

Being in exile, Khodorkovsky is under interrelation of different forces and in certain sense he is exposed to influence of international forces. Russian pro-governmental media often advances the idea that he is funded by the USA ([ren.tv](http://ren.tv)). Specifically, according to research conducted by Sznajder and Roniger, 'exile is four-tiered structure: shaped around the interplay between the expelling states, the exiles and the hosting countries and international public sphere as a fourth tier, which started to modulate the ways in which other tiers interact' (2009). In the case Khodorkovsky, Russia is a expelling state, with regime that recognises ambitions of Khodorkovsky and tries to deteriorate his activities. Though he resides in the United Kingdom, European Union on the whole should be considered as hosting state. That was especially relevant before the Brexit. And the final tier is a public sphere, which here can be basically derived to Russia and the rest of the world.

The case of Alexei Navalny is more conventional because he resides in Russia and though both political leaders target their mobilization efforts on Russian society, Navalny is a subject to different environment. The last attack on the politician that resulted in a serious injury of his eye confirms this ([Meduza.io](http://Meduza.io), 2017). In order to do an operation on his injured eye, Alexei Navalny first in a five years was able to leave the country in May 2017 ([Meduza.io](http://Meduza.io), 2017). Curiously, location and status that it implies put significant restriction on both political actors, While Mikhail Khodorkovsky is shut outside of Russia, Alexei Navalny was shut inside for five years. Since the launch of criminal proceedings against him. After his considerable success in Moscow Mayoral Elections 2013, the political career and ambitions of the politician were escalating. Presidential campaign 2018 became the pinnacle of his activities. In 2012 Popescu characterised Alexei Navalny, as 'an anti corruption crusader and Russia's most popular blogger, is an emerging star of the Russian opposition and widely seen as the

anti-Putinism' best hope' (2012). This characteristic still can be applied to this politician.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Empirical Examination**

#### **Section 3.1**

##### **Methods used for identification, collection and analysis of data**

This section explains what methods were used for identification and collection of data regarding ICT mobilization strategies for both selected cases, as well as methods for analysis of respective empirical data.

This research is looking at the front-end ICT mobilization practices in order to understand ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny as a part of observable behaviour. On the back stage, these political actors may use such back-end ICT mobilization practices as databases - CRM (Constituency or Customer Relationship Management Systems). Investigation of back-end practices is not a part of this research, unless elements of these practices become a part of observable behaviour. For example, collection of data is often done by means of publicly available platforms (e.g. creation of account on Open Russia website).

Primary data that demonstrates ICT mobilization strategies was collected from front ends of respective ICT platforms - Khodorkovsky and Navalny websites. Social media pages are analysed as sources supplementary to websites. Meanwhile, attention certainly has to be paid to social media, because it amplifies affect of websites, and actors under investigation are well aware of it. Khodorkovsky and Navalny are able to reach their goals, because they are directly and fundamentally connected to social media.

Since the research is looking at two periods of time in the past, it is necessary to collect data about archived versions of respective websites and activity on social media during these periods of time.

The main Internet Archive Wayback Machine (WBM), is used as a main source for data collection (Eltgrowth, 2009). The Internet Archive allows to see what previous versions of websites used to look like. Web archives are focused on preservation of main pages of archived versions of website and they sometimes do not archive specific web pages.

In order to support this major source of data, HTML codes of insufficiently archived webpages were analyzed and compared to codes of up-to-date webpages in order to find the evidence. In addition, cached versions of certain web pages and official previous versions of certain websites were employed for data collection. Search engines like Yahoo are good sources of cached web pages, because unlike Google, this engine conducts caching less often, which results in out-dated cache versions of websites. For purposes of post-hoc analysis of websites this disadvantage turns into an advantage.

Cached versions of websites on indicated services are provided with dates - services inform a user that a given snapshot reflects how a web page appeared on a certain date. The main Russian search engine Yandex also provides cached web pages, but unfortunately it does not indicate when a snapshot was taken. From the perspective of this research it is important to have this information, thus usage of Yandex cache has to be omitted.

Post-hoc analysis of the website connected to significant difficulties in regard of data collection. Work with archived versions of the website is similar to work with historical artifacts. It possesses certain difficulties that prevent research from achieving a complete picture. The WBM contains a limited number of archived versions of Khodorkovsky and Navalny websites.

Collection of data about [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org) was the most challenging. WBM saved [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org) 49 times between March 18, 2016 and March 18, 2017. Meanwhile, here the website was archived with certain discrepancy. During the pre-electoral phase, WBM saved [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org) only 15 times. For the rest 34 times the website was saved during the second period of time. In addition, many archived pages are not available on the WBM - after attempt to access it service gives '403 Forbidden' message. It can be related to server issues or web crawling permissions.

Web archives and caching are designed mostly to preserve content of websites, rather than their structure. Archived versions sometimes distort website structure, especially when it comes to such elements as dropdown menus and popup windows. Information about such elements is reflected in webpage HTML code, and it was used as a supportive source of data where it was applicable. Consequently, the given research methods

present a certain level of error. In the given research, level of error is reduced by usage of alternative sources of data: official old versions of websites (for example, old.openrussia.org) and cached versions of webpages from the search engine Yahoo.

For increased quality of post-hoc analysis of websites, data has to be collected during the identified period of time, which requires highly proactive approach. In the given case, data collection would have to start in March 18, 2016.

In order to test result of data collection and analysis, in-depth interview with high-ranking representative of Mikhail Khodorkovsky was conducted after observable empirical data was already collected. This additional method of gathering empirical data was selected, because interviews are semi-structured, flexible and continuous. This method also allows capturing more of relevant data, because the researcher has only a general plan of inquiry without a rigid set of questions. Respondent's answers to the initial questions are intended to shape the subsequent questions. Questionnaire used for this interview is provided in the Appendix 1.

The interview insisted that she stays anonymous. Due to employment in the National Democratic Institute (NDI), thesis author had to refrain from interviewing Alexei Navalny representatives. Alexei Navalny specifically stated that he does not want to have any relationship with NDI. Thus even mere outreach for interviewing purposes could cast a shadow on Navalny because of employment issue. The Institute is included to the list of Undesirable Organisations since March 17 2016.

Apart from publicly available data, archived versions of the websites may be stored by ICT teams of Khodorkovsky and Navalny themselves. During the negotiations for interviewing, thus data was requested along with access to strategic documents that determine ICT practices of actors under investigation, meanwhile due to sensitive nature of this data no access was provided.

Factual information about ICT practices also can be useful for analysis of ICT practices. In particular, website metrics is collected from Alexa Internet, an openly available analytical tool. This tool provides data about websites traffic and global rankings. Such factual data as global rankings is needed not to compare success of websites of Khodorkovsky and Navalny, but to compare metrics of websites that belong to projects

of the same actor. Low ranking of one website and much higher ranking of the other website give basis to imply that the level of investment committed to certain projects differs. High metrics would tell that certain websites have more strategic priority level. The next step after collecting the data is its analyzing. Due to their complexity and variety, analysis of the websites requires a complex approach. Considerable amount of research is done in the area of user perception of websites. Meanwhile, this research is looking at the idea of websites of people who administered their creation. These people may include Khodorkovsky and Navalny themselves, members of their ICT teams, and finally developers. Analysis of the website comprises both structural and factual information. 'Structural information may help understanding the organization of the pages in the site', which in its turn helped to understand strategy behind its structure (Ricca and Tonella: 2000).

Significant attention has been paid towards factors of success of corporate websites, in particularly from perspective of advertisement. Though websites of political leaders do not exist in sake of direct profit, they also exist in order to 'sell' ideas, political personality of a leader, as well as urge users for action - 'purchase' can here be substituted by 'voting' or 'self-recruitment' of activists. Many other parallels can be drawn between politics and commerce. Study conducted by McMillan, Hwang and Lee (2003) suggests that 'the effect of structural variables, such as features and message strategy, and perceived variables, such as involvements and perceived interactivity, have strong impact on users attitudes towards a website' (2003). Though this research does not look at the users perception of the websites under scrutiny, it is worthwhile to suggest that if Khodorkovsky and Navalny are aware of positive effect of certain structural features on users of their websites, they would opt for implementing them. Nexus of users and website creators is marked by constant bilateral influence of counterparts.

In the framework of this research, collection and analysis of data about websites is done based on the reverse engineering approach. In the broad understanding, 'reverse engineering is the process of extracting the knowledge or design blue-prints from anything man-made.' (Eilam, 2011: 3). Since websites are also human-made, this

method can be as successfully applied to their analysis, as to analysis of physical objects. 'Reverse engineering is usually conducted to obtain missing knowledge, ideas, and design philosophy when such information is unavailable.' (Eilam, 2011: 3)

In the terrain of World Wide Web, reverse engineering is often applied for analysis of a website's technical component, i.e. its code. Meanwhile, apart from actual programming of a website, the fundamental idea of its purpose can also be analyzed by means of reverse engineering. Eilam states that 'every time we access a website, we may invoke or interact with dozens of programs and code segments that are necessary to give us the intended look, feel, and behavior'. Based on this statement a website can be virtually broken down into two main components: technical - 'programs and code segments' and substantial - its 'intended look, feel and behaviour'. While, traditionally reverse engineering would look at the technical component of a website, in the given case, this method is adopted to understand what rationale lies behind structural components of specific websites, which are created to serve political objectives of Khodorkovsky and Navalny. In the process of such reverse engineering, structural information about the websites is collected and analyzed. This information includes the organisation of the pages, modules, elements and website functionality on the whole (Ricca and Tonella: 2000). In result, this method helps to explain why certain functions and elements are present on the websites and what deeper political objectives lie behind them.

This research seeks to produce holistic knowledge about website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny oppositional movements. These strategies consist of multiple elements, which for each oppositional movement were present in a different forms and to a certain degree. While scholars have been looking at a differential elements of ICT mobilization strategies, there is lack of research that would look at complex of them in a comprehensive manner. Consequently, an appropriate instrument for analysis of empirical data was created in the framework of this research. The Table 2, which follows below, was designed in order to capture ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny in two selected periods of time. The table has two main axes - 'Activities (strategies)' and political actors - Khodorkovsky (Kh.) and Navalny (N.). The axes dedicated to political

actors is further processed into two periods of time for each actor. For each period of time it is indicated whether a respective strategy was used by a respective political actor. If ‘Yes’ in the cell is marked in a bold font it indicates that the given strategy was well developed on websites of Khodorkovsky and Navalny.

Twelve categories are listed under the axis ‘Strategies’. These categories were created inductively by applying reverse engineering method. Each website was deconstructed on key functional indicators defined through the process of operationalization. These indicators were in result grouped under one category. Twelve categories of website-based ICT mobilization strategies have been created based on analysis of each of the websites.

For the creation of Table 2, websites were examined in the following order: websites of core projects (Open Russia and Anti-Corruption Foundation respectively), websites of sub projects, personal websites of political leader, and websites of projects in which actors were significantly involved. Elements of the websites, which correspond to each indicator of each category, are addressed in the traditional order - from up to down, and from left to right, or in the order suggested by logic.

**Table 1.** Website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny during electoral period: March 18, 2016 - March 18, 2017

ICT ACTIVITIES (STRATEGIES)	PRE-ELECTORAL PHASE		POST-ELECTORAL PHASE	
	Kh.	N.	Kh.	N.
1. Countering hegemonic discourse	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
2. Fostering deliberation online	yes	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes
3. Shaping idea of a political personality	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
4. Perpetrations exposure	no	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>
5. Exposing and addressing issues with population well- being	no	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>

6. News and media activities	yes	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes
7. Informing about non-project events	no	no	<b>yes</b>	no
8. Recruiting	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
9. Fundraising	no	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>
10. Collecting users personal data	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
11. Conducting legal projects	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes	<b>yes</b>
12. Conducting electoral projects	<b>yes</b>	yes	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>

## Section 3.2

### **ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny during selected time framework**

#### Section 3.2.1

##### **ICT mobilization strategies during pre-electoral phase: March 18, 2016 - September 18, 2016**

###### Section 3.2.1.1

##### **ICT mobilization strategies common for Khodorkovsky and Navalny during pre-electoral phase**

In order to see degree to which different ICT mobilization strategies were used on website of both political actors, it is necessary to be able to assess them in relation to all websites active during the pre-EP (pre-electoral period). They are listed in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Websites of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny used during March 18, 2016 - March 18, 2017, captured by the Wayback Machine

\* Alexa rank as of May 2017

\*\* subdomain

Khodorkovsky		
Name	URL	Alexa traffic rank in RU
Open Russia	openrussia.org	<u>2,217</u>
Open Elections**	vybory.openrussia.org ov.openrussia.org	
Legal Protection	pravo.openrussia.org	
Open Russia Team	or.team	<u>345,041</u>
Khodorkovsky	khodorkovsky.ru	<u>42,497</u>

Open University	openuni.io	<u>41,837</u>
Instead of Pution	vmestoputina.ru	<u>73,591</u>
Navalny		
Name	URL	Alexa traffic rank in RU
Anti-Corruption Foundation	fbk.info	<u>4,086</u>
Letter to Chaika	prokuror.fbk.info	
Municipal Clan	petrograd.fbk.info	
Sochi - Map of Expenses	petrograd.fbk.info	
Astronomic Salaries of State Officials	money.fbk.info	
Against Withdrawal of Pension Assets	pension.fbk.info	
People's Deputy	deputat.fbk.info	
Navalny	navalny.com	
Navalny 2018**	2018.navalny.com	
Illicit Enrichment	20.navalny.com	
Black Notebook	blackbook.wiki	<u>99,244</u>
RosYama	rosyama.ru	<u>30,679</u>
Rosvybory	rosvybory.org	<u>179,389</u>
RosZhKH	roszkh.ru	<u>29,542</u>

As it is indicated in the Table 1, During the pre-EP the following website-based ICT mobilization strategies were identified as common for two political leaders:

- Countering hegemonic discourse

- Fostering deliberation online
- Shaping idea of a political personality
- News and media activities
- Collecting users personal data
- Recruiting
- Conducting legal projects
- Conducting electoral projects

Contribution to the counter hegemonic discourse was a conspicuous element of main websites administered by Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Especially, website of his key project Open Russia - [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org), and his personal website - [khodorkovsky.ru](http://khodorkovsky.ru). Websites of his side projects also were marked by this strategy, but to a different degree.

Khodorkovsky websites were rich for the content on various aspects that fall into the agenda of this political actor and his projects. On the one hand, structural elements of websites served as channels for the discourse and as platforms used for its ongoing development. During the interview Representative of Khodorkovsky stated that for Open Russia website is a tool for delivering information to the masses and thus countering hegemonic discourse. Websites are also good for depositing information that allows users to find old materials easily. Though primary goal of Open Russia is offline activities, she confirmed that online allows organisation to reach higher scale in regard or audience. She also noted, that when the project was relaunched in 2014 it was at the beginning intended only as information portal, but gradually it grew into the movement. In order to systematise delivered discourse and mark its signs, website elements had specific names, for example listed under tags. In principle, all website elements that contain any type of texts or discursive signs represented by other means can be considered as discursive.

During the pre-EP, Open Russia website had a design different from the one that came in November 2016. The main page of the website contained summary boxes of the latest articles published in all sections. Such approach is designed to follow the natural flow of content. Traditionally, all summary boxes on this website consisted of cover images

and titles. Both of them are needed to deliver the message and invoke user's interest. Tags indicated under which topic a specific article was grouped.

As it is stated in the List 1 (page 8), there is three different types of content, that served for different aspects of counting hegemonic discourse:

- a) content prepared by political actors (ordered by websites administration)
- b) content prepared by users (approved by websites administration)
- c) content from other sources

Two of three types of content were present on openrussia.org during pre-EP. Section titled 'Life' consisted of materials prepared under administration of the website - it had articles prepared by variety of authors (journalists, analysts, etc) for the Open Russia. Meanwhile, neighbouring section called 'Community' consisted of blogs of the registered users. Summary boxes in this section, in addition to standard elements, showed several lines of the respective texts. Curiously, for some articles it showed one first sentence, and for some - up to three first sentences. Thus some texts conveyed a message so important, that a user should have been able to read it without clicking on the link. In the lower area of the page a wide distinctive button inviting users 'To create an entry to blog' was located. Blogging on the website was presented as an easy activity - that user was only one step from making contribution to the counter hegemonic discourse.

Website of project Instead of Putin, that was launched on September 12, 2016 shortly before the Election Day, included short biographies of nominated experts and candidates, with number of 'pluses' given to a certain candidate indicated in the summary box of each entry.

Elements of countering hegemonic discourse have also been identified in long term projects of Open Russia: Open University, Open Elections, Legal Protection; as well as some short term projects, like Open Lectures, Open Remark (2015), Letter to Prisoners (2014). Though these short term projects were active during past years, materials related to them were still available on the website and performed respective function.

Educational project Open University changed its appearance once during pre-EP. WBM captured new design on June 26. Meanwhile, change in design have not given website

new functionality. Hegemonic discourse was countered there by means of civic education (khodorkovsky.ru, 2016). Above the fold area of the website started with project description - 'Video-lectures about modern Russia'. Video and textual materials were available on website without registration. The other long-term project, where content module played a significant part is 'Legal Protection'. Website of this project told stories of political prisoners. Since they received help from Open Russia, these stories became part of general Open Russia narrative, which counters hegemonic discourse from multiple angles. In this case, by telling different stories of political prisoners, who represented in Russian hegemonic information space at least as controversial figures (ren.tv, 2017).

The core purpose of Khodorkovsky.ru - the personal website of Mikhail Khodorkovsky is covering his position on variety of issues, related to current political regime and developments in Russia, as well as Russia's relationship with outside world. Slider module MBKh vs. VVP (initials of Mikhail K and Vladimir Putin) is a good demonstration of activities targeted at countering hegemonic discourse. Usage of full surnames would sound to radical, but such a manner still sends a clear message. Naturally, this slider collected articles dedicated to K's direct criticism against the president Putin. Algorithm put articles from any of the sections which contained root word 'Putin' to this slider. Conclusions about the special role, given to this slider can also be made by looking at more detailed structure of articles summary boxes. As any small summary box on this website, it consisted not only of cover image and a title, but also of a concise description of the article type (e.g. interview, lecture, etc). Moreover, slider 'MBKh vs. VVP' had the most prominent image with K and Putin sitting vis-a-vis during some meeting. The image purposefully made degraded and colored in black and white to create certain subconscious impact on users. Contraposition of K to Putin can be seen not only from the website content, but also through such structural elements as the given slider.

Further looking at the content of materials that were published on the website can reveal details of respective discourse, meanwhile it is a task for different research.

Websites administered by Alexei Navalny also were abundant with content during pre-EP, which should be considered in the framework of countering hegemonic discourse. The main website of Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF) had a lot of materials on various aspects of Foundation activities. Though in the first half of the pre-EP, content from other sources was present on the main page of the website, starting from June 2016, the main page contained only summary boxes of original content of the website. With development of the project such usage of side sources was ceased. At the same time, content from other sources directly connected it to a broader oppositional narrative in Russia.

Each section of the website was dedicated to different aspects of the Foundation activities, which had impact on structural organisation of the sections. Section 'Investigations' consisted of textual and video content. Materials were presented under three types of summary boxes. One type was twice larger than the other two and consequently served a purpose of highlighting certain investigations and should lead users to click on them first. Section 'Public campaigns' had very similar design. It was dedicated to long term campaigns conducted by the Foundation.

Section 'Surveys' ('Sociology') consisted of surveys conducted by Foundation itself. By April 21, ACF conducted only 7 surveys. Summary boxes of each survey were plain - they contained only the title in large font and a short description. Absence of images or any other emotional markers tells about intention to present surveys data in impartial manner. Section 'Draft laws', dedicated to the draft laws against corruption developed by lawyers of the Foundation was designed in similar manner.

Section 'Foundation' presented brief information about the foundation, its core activities and staff members. It had a slider bar with photos of demonstrating daily working process of the Foundation. The section had three sub-sections: About Foundation, Reports, and Navalny. Section was designed to demonstrate transparency for which the Foundation advocates. It contained reports for each year of the Foundation's work. They are located under respective subdomains and represent a chronological timeline of activities and achievements, supported by statistical data and visual aid. In addition,

short description of the Foundation (with its message and mission) in the right corner of the default footer.

In the lower area of the main page and Investigations page one important element was located – a tag bar. It started with a hashtag sign and ten tags were highlighted in this bar. It contained not only names of website sections, but also topics the most relevant on the website agenda at a given point in time. From perspective of discourse theory, they can be identified as signs, or even nodal points, for example ‘corruption’ (Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002). During the pre-EP, up to ten topics were highlighted by this means, and 9 of them stayed the same during this time. In general, tagging on this website was developed. Each article could have more than one tag (sign), which helped users to navigate in this discourse.

Elements of counter-hegemonic discourse were identified in all websites of Foundation projects: 'Illicit Enrichment' (20.navalny.com), Black notebook (blackbook.wiki), Sochi: Encyclopedia of Expenses (sochi.fbk.info), Campaign against withdrawal of pension assets (pension.fbk.info) and Municipal clan (petrograd.fbk.info). Nature of websites structure varied through these projects and was affected by their purposes. The main page of the website 'Illicit Enrichment' (20.navalny.com) stated the mission of the campaign. It advocated for ratification of the Article 20 of United Nations Convention against Corruption. Through it was not visible on the archived version of the website, evidence of presence of interactive module of State Duma Seats was identified in the HTML code of the Deputies section (class="seatingChartSection"). This module in interactive manner demonstrates correlation between deputies who expressed their positive opinion about the ‘Article 20’ and those who refrained from comments regarding the ratification of Article 20 seats in the Duma. Here counter hegemonic discourse was delivered rather in a visual form than in textual one. Other websites also were marked by creative usage of visual elements, which have stronger impact on users (Isenberg et al, 2013). Two more websites had visual as a primary form of countering hegemonic discourse. Website sochi.fbk.info provided a comprehensive report on true expanses and evidence of non-targeted usage of budget funds (fbk.info, 2017). Though it is not visible on archived versions, HTML code of an up to date website corresponds

to the code of archived one. Website [petrograd.fbk.info](http://petrograd.fbk.info) 'Municipal clan' demonstrated results of detailed investigation about the nepotism and corruption in Saint-Petersburg municipality. As well as interactive module of State Duma Seats from the project Illicit Enrichment, layout of Saint-Petersburg Municipality served as starting point, that allowed website to demonstrate in a visual form interconnections between different municipal deputies.

Meanwhile, countering hegemonic discourse was conducted within the public campaign against withdrawal of pension assets ([pension.fbk.info](http://pension.fbk.info)) in a textual form. A website offered users an option to send email to deputies that voted for the criticized law. A letter had five templates, which reflected the level of users irritation. Such practice of offering users ready text that attempt to reflect their opinions was used in other projects of Alexei Navalny, which are addressed later.

Blog of Alexei Navalny consisted of posts on wide range of issues that invoke interest of the political actor, or related to his activities. Default header had links to three featured posts. Sidebar had text links to up to ten of them of articles displayed in chronological order. For further navigation through posts, the side bar had a calendar. Facilitated navigation through the blog also means easier navigation through the discourse.

The website of the Party of Progress had a traditional structure and contained elements of this strategy predominantly through the content. Main page had description of parties mission and target audience and a module with latest news about party activities and developments. Summary boxes in the news module were marked with discrepancy in representation of different articles. For some articles, it displayed one first sentence, and for other - three. Such approach was previously noted for websites of Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

In order to expand audience that would be engaged in the discourse produced by websites of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny, two important dissemination tools - email and social media - were also applied.

Meanwhile, modules to subscription via email were scarcely present through the projects of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. In particular, it was present on [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org),

pravo.openrussia.org, openuni.io and vmestoputina.ru. Usually, email subscription module was located in the default footer area (default footer is a unified footer present in all webpages of a website). Website of main project Open Russia had a subscription module in the middle of above the fold area of the main page. Above the fold is a 'newspaper term appropriated for online use, with the 'fold' being where the paper gets folded in half. Thus 'above the fold' indicates the information that is immediately displayed within the browser window' when a user loads a website (Frank, 2003: 3). Frank suggest that 'the most important links and content' should be placed in the above the fold area and this statement is conventionally accepted in the web development. According to Alexa rank, openrussia.org has the highest rank among Open Russia websites and it is logical that subscription module is given such attention in the main website of the political actor (see Table 2).

Regarding Alexei Navalny, email subscription was present on website of Anti-Corruption Foundation and its projects to a much higher degree. Website of Anti-Corruption Foundation had a wide module with a subscribe message, field for email and a red button 'Subscribe'. This module was located on webpage of every section of the website and on Public campaigns and projects: 'Illicit Enrichment', 'Sochi - Expenses map', 'Against illegal advertisement in entrances', Rosvybory (on the landing page subscription to general updates from the foundation.) Such attention to subscription could be explained by understanding from Alexei Navalny team that users may not visit website on a regular basis, but if the subscribe - they will receive carefully selected portion of information. Whether user tend to read such messages is a further question to ask. On the blog, subscribe button with a message could be found in the right side bar and in the section 'About Navalny'. One remarkable feature of email subscription on Navalny's project is the fact that 'Subscribe' buttons were often supported by a message that motivated users for respective action.

Spreading of counter hegemonic discourse was supported via other, even more powerful channel – social media. Though this strategy is implemented on social media under different terms, it was connected to the website. In general, websites serve as a gravitation point for all the ICT mobilization activities and their target audiences.

Social media buttons send users to respective social media pages, where users can opt to 'follow' or 'like' a page. They also were identified on Khodorkovsky and Navalny websites. While, on [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org) they were located in the footer area, on [khodorkovsky.ru](http://khodorkovsky.ru) - in the right corner of default header (default header is a unified header present in all webpages of a website). On Open Russia website, social media buttons were supported by Facebook and Vkontakte widgets in the footer area of every section. Widgets show number of subscribers and thus can give more incentive to users to 'like' respective pages (Fisher, 2009). The interviewee stated that currently Khodorkovsky's organisation puts increasingly more emphasis on social media as a tool of mobilization.

Regarding Navalny's platforms, social media buttons (Twitter and Facebook) were included to the default footer. At the same time, the main page of [fbk.info](http://fbk.info), had buttons to Vkontakte, Facebook, Twitter and Odnoklasniki in its lower area. The main page is a first frontier in website-user interaction and stimuli put on this page have a strong impact on users (Deng and Poole, 2010).

Social media buttons on the blog of Alexei Navalny were located in the right corner of default header: Facebook, Vkontakte, Odnoklasniki, Twitter and Instagram. In addition, it had special text link 'Navalny in Twitter' under all elements of the sidebar and in the section 'About Navalny'. This tells about importance of Twitter as a channel for conveying message to users and engaging them into the discussion. This attention given to Twitter was common for both political leader. Meanwhile, Navalny had one unique feature that falls under simplifying potential of the website in reaching audience - a button to switch on push notifications for the browser.

Strategy of countering hegemonic discourse is intrinsically related to the next strategy - deliberation of users online. As was noted in the theoretical section, discourse is an articulatory practice. The purpose of political leaders who take deliberation online seriously is not only to convey discourse, but also to foster its constant development by means of users communication.

During pre-EP Mikhail Khodorkovsky paid due attention to this matter. According to the interviewee, the value of websites and social media to the organisation is in their

power of two-way interaction. Naturally commenting section were provided under materials published on websites. Openrussia.org and Khodorkovsky.ru had a commenting section under every published material; Instead of Putin had it under every nominated 'candidate' page. In order to reflect on activity of discussion, a number of comments was indicated on articles summary boxes, presented in respective sections of the website. Further research could look if logical assumption that users are more inclined to visit materials with higher numbers of comments is true.

In majority of cases authors do not engage in users discussion that unfolds in commenting section and this statement applies to websites addressed above. Meanwhile, evidence indicated that on the website vmestoputina.ru some experts that nominated candidates were involved in discussion in the commenting section.

Deliberation online is possible not only via commenting. Open Russia had a special plug-in called 'Ask a question'. Here a user could post a question and other users could give answers to them. Discussion in such format is more focused and formalized.

Though this research predominantly addresses presence of certain strategies on websites, sometime absence of such strategies can invoke useful assumptions. While website of Open University was marked by countering hegemonic discourse, it had no function of deliberation online. It can be interpreted as intention to keep conveyed information pure from admixtures and follow a classical format of educational lectures with one-way type of interaction. This is also true about website of the project Legal Protection, where no evidence of commenting feature was identified.

Deliberation online was also scarcely presented on website of Alexei Navalny. Only his blog Navalny.com had a commenting section under every post. Meanwhile, deliberation online is possible not only on websites, but also on social media. Moreover, social media is naturally more auspicious platform for this strategy (Halpern, Gibbs, 2013). Presence of 'Share' social media buttons is a gateway to deliberation online, which is conducted on the different platform, but invoked by website content. Such 'Share' buttons were identified on websites of public campaigns of the Anti-Corruption Foundation: in all except for RosYama and Sochi - Expenses Encyclopedia (here no evidence could be identified); Navalny.com and partyprogress.org (Party of Progress).

Websites give political leaders an advantage of control over the content and flow of information, while on social media, posted content quickly gets new interpretations with help of ongoing discussions, and moderation is often not a simple solution. It was already demonstrated how two political leaders used their websites for countering hegemonic discourse. A strategy of shaping idea of political personality can be also considered as a discursive activity. From perspectives of a political leader, shaping idea of him or her as political personalities should be a pillar element of counter hegemonic discursive structure (Howarth, 2010: 311). Though ultimate political objectives of political leaders might not be that obvious at the first glance, complex of their ICT mobilization strategies serves this purpose. Connection between mobilization strategies and political objective is more clear in case of personalized oppositional movement. Leaders of such personalized oppositional movements are inclined to pursue state bodies directly. The movement lead by Alexei Navalny is a good example. Meanwhile Mikhail Khodorkovsky increasingly aims at depersonalization of Open Russia and perseus Russian politics indirectly.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky has a personal website khodorkovsky.ru. During pre-EP it had sections All materials, MBKh, Daily, Statements, Media, Events, Biography, Yukos case. They were dedicated to covering selected aspects of his political personality. Summary boxes of majority of materials published in the website were generously supported by images of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The main page had a large box with a featured article. The same article could stay featured for many days. For example, article 'Putin's regime is not eternal' was featured for at least 31 day according to the archived version from the WBM. During the pre-EP two statements and one event were featured in this manner. When a content element stays static for such a significant amount of time virtually it comes close to crossing the line of becoming an element of website structure.

Above the fold area also had a large plug-in with latest messages from Twitter account of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. According the web page HTML code, a standard Twitter widget was used for this website. With first loading such plug-in allows user to scroll through latest 20 tweets and then suggests to load more tweets without leaving the

website. In this case, social media is used for two way generation of content. On the one hand, social media buttons allow users to post content from the website on their social media account. While on the other hand, posts from social media are added to the website in the form a fully fledged content. Former instance is much more common in the framework of website - social media interrelation.

Website had another important element used for shaping idea of the political personality - slider modules (a special modules, also referred as carousel that allow users to scroll through selected content horizontally). They are designed to provide additional coverage for certain content. With help of this instrument, Khodorkovsky informed users on core framework of his position. While Goffman focuses on the role of frames in social perception of situations or phenomena, this term can be applied to the process of deliberate creation of an imprecision among users (Goffman, 1974). The message that Khodorkovsky is in contraption to Putin is this king of frame. Within slider modules position of Mikhail Khodorkovsky was presented via four slider modules, that focus on different means by which this political actor delivers his message: Program articles, MBKh vs. VVP (initials of Mikhail K and Vladimir Putin), Key speeches and Significant Interviews.

Module 'Biography of Khodorkovsky' came in the lower area of the webpage. Respective webpage had nine buttons, which corresponded to 'chapters' of the biography. This section gave a 'humane face' to the political personality. Final module of the main page was called 'Around YUKOS case'. Apparently, this chapter of the biography had high significance that it required such attention. Thus, users would familiarise with the case even without making a decision to read through Khodorkovsky's biography.

Alexei Navalny's blog [navalny.com](http://navalny.com) performed the function of being his personal website. It also had a section that provided a biography of the oppositional leader. It was called 'About Navalny - Biography, family, activities'. Webpage contained a short default message that Alexei Navalny is a 'head of Party of Progress, founder of Anti-Corruption Foundation, son, husband, father.' A large photo of Navalny with his family was followed by links to his biography, interviews and statements from various

sources. Meanwhile, how biography was presented distinguishes [navalny.com](http://navalny.com) from [khodorkovsky.ru](http://khodorkovsky.ru). While later had an article covering his biography, former used links to other sources that had information about him. In this manner Navalny let users to judge about his personality based on what was told about him or by him outside of his personal website.

Following depersonalization tendency, website of Open Russia did not have a special section dedicated to Khodorkovsky, meanwhile according to advanced google search, Khodorkovsky was mentioned on the website in 92 webpages during the pre-EP. At the same time, evidence of the personalization of Alexei Navalny movement was confirmed during analysis of other websites apart for his blog. Website of Party of progress also had short biography of the political actor in the 'About party' section. It highlighted key points in his life and career relevant from perspective of the party). At the same time, website of Anti-Corruption Foundation had a section 'Foundation' and in the module dedicated to staff, had a button with photo of Alexei Navalny and indication of his position - 'Founder of the Foundation'. According to URL (Uniform Resource Locator), a button lead to search result on 'Alexei Navalny', which in its turn showed website content where he was mentioned. Thus, on the given three major platforms, shaping idea of Alexei Navalny came in a multifacet form, which should have had a complex impact on users. In addition, Navalny's name was included in the footer of every ACF project or public campaign. It demonstrated fundamental link between him and activities of foundation. As well as, made websites of his projects to show in search engines after search request for 'Navalny'.

Oppositional political leaders operate in broad information space. Respective coverage of their activities and activities in their projects is as important as introduction of information from outside world into the websites. Websites of both Khodorkovsky and Navalny were involved in coverage of developments in the form of news or more general news-oriented content. Though this strategy logically should undergo to the strategy of countering hegemonic discourse, it was delineated into separate for two reasons. First, separate sections dedicated to the given strategy were identified on websites of Khodorkovsky and Navalny. Second, their approach to this strategy differed

significantly at some point of time and this difference is important in terms of impact of location.

Websites elements that fall under strategy 'News and media activities' can be grouped under two subcategories: a) news specifically about projects and b) general news about socio-political developments.

During pre-EP, Khodorkovsky's openrussia.org had a section News that contained materials about developments in Open Russia projects. According to the interviewee, this section was needed because users prefer to read about relevant and up to date developments.

For Navalny's fbk.info, project developments were covered in the section 'Investigations', since it was the major activity of the Foundation that can be covered on daily basis. Apart from original content, news in this section also included selected feedback or additional information from other sources. The same is true about news section on the Party of progress.

Meanwhile, the section 'Life' on the openrussia.org had topical subsections oriented on general socio-political developments. They were listed in the lower area of the section. In particular, 'About Russia' was dedicated to presentation of publications in foreign media about Russia; subsections 'Persecution' and 'Process' - to politically motivated or unlawful cases of persecution and ongoing legal processes; club 'Open Russia' - covered discussions conducted in the club; 'Direct speech' - direct statements of both oppositional and governmental political actors. According to old version of the 'Open Elections', it had news section with two subsections: 'We did' and 'Candidates did'. First one was focused on the achievements of the project itself, and second one - on achievement of candidates supported in framework of the project. Personal website of Khodorkovsky also had news oriented topical sections: MBKh Daily, Media, Events, Statements, about Yukos. In addition, it had a slider module 'Latest news'.

Website of Navalny's public campaign Illicit enrichment had a module dedicated to 'News' in the above fold area of the main page. Highlighted news were related to developments of the campaign, in the foundation (related to the campaign) and people, targeted by the campaign. Nature of the ACF campaign Black Notebook required

coverage of news that transcend developments in Navalny's project. For a selected personality included to the 'Notebook', each unlawful episode was presented as a piece of news. Each entry consisted of date; substance of episode and source of information (e.g media). Episodes were added on a rolling basis. Though blog of Alexei Navalny did not have a specific section dedicated to news, by its means political actor covered a wide range of issues, which included both general socio-political developments as well as developments in his multiple projects. The blog serviced as a point of attraction for all the activities of Alexei Navalny. It is actively used both as an information dissemination tool and as instrument of mobilization. Success of his blog was already noted in 2013 (Bode and Makarychev, 2013).

Though both political actor were involved in coverage or introduction of news beyond their projects, projects of Alexei Navalny were involved in this more loosely. As well as Khodorkovsky, he was seeking to connect his activities and agenda to selected aspects of broader information space, but direct link to other sources was not considered inappropriate.

Recruiting is one of the traditional mobilization strategies, which took more structured form with the help of ICT. Both political actors were actively recruiting during pre-EP, but they were targeting their efforts on two different categories of supporters. In majority cases, Mikhail Khodorkovsky would recruit activists, while Alexei Navalny was recruiting volunteers.

Since Mikhail Khodorkovsky recruitment was targeted at activists, it was conducted on specifically tailored platforms. According to interview conducted with the representative of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, in framework of his ICT mobilization strategies, websites do a better job in recruiting than social media (which in this case rather serves a promotion tool). She said that websites help Khodorkovsky to recruit members of the movement, trainings participants, content contributors, etc.

The most high profile recruiting was done via website *Instead of Putin*. This project is aimed at creating alternatives to Vladimir Putin for the next presidential elections in 2018 (Open Russia, 2016). Website '*Instead of Putin*' contained a registration form, which indicated that by registering users can propose themselves as candidates. During

pre-EP the other electoral project Open Elections allowed candidates to apply for support for their campaigns during Parliamentary Elections 2016. In addition, this project also was seeking volunteers. It had a 'Join' module with two buttons: 'Become a candidate' and 'Become a volunteer'. Though humanitarian project Legal Protection was not presented as political one, application of activists for legal support can be considered as a form of recruiting. Such support had a potential to create stronger bond between defendants supported by Khodorkovsky organisation, which in its turn could give higher level of loyalty assuming positive outcome of received support.

Operating inside the country Alexei Navalny conducted very active recruiting of volunteers during the pre-EP. Default footer of the Anti-Corruption Foundation website had a button 'Volunteers', clicking on it lead to a separate webpage section. This section had a tailored message and a detailed registration form for each of three categories: Design, Survey and Content. Though the form was tailored for each category, it the following default fields: name and surname, phone number and email. In such a manner, category Design had additional fields: portfolio and about yourself; category Surveys - city, and several fields that asked users about their preferences for conducting surveys; category Content - links to social media, 'what you are proud of', and about yourself. By this means users would provide very detailed information about themselves that would help the team of political actor to profile them properly and identify a respective approach to these people. Here diversification and tailoring of volunteering activities was done already on the initial stage of recruiting. Recruiting on the website of the campaign Illicit Enrichment was done on the same manner. Main page had a button 'Become a volunteer' in lower right corner of the main page. Following practice of the main website of the foundation, clicking on the button also lead to a separate webpage, which started with a message 'Help the campaign, become a volunteer!' and a short description of what volunteers could do for the campaign. Then followed three different buttons with a short description of nature of tasks: 'I want to help online', 'Professional help, and 'I want to help offline'. Clicking on the button 'Professional help' lead to 'email to' module. This module prompted users to write campaign an email and tell what kind of professional help they were interested in. Clicking on the other two

buttons lead to popup windows contents of which were not visible in archived versions. Then followed a module on a contrast background - 'Become a volunteer in your city'. The message under title stated 'Give your contact details and we will contact you to tell how you can help the campaign'. After filling in the form a user would have to press a large red button stating 'I enroll'. The rest of the page dedicated to the matter, contained multiple photos that demonstrated work of volunteers for the campaign. Hovering over each picture revealed a text that explained the kind of activity and its participants. This evidence demonstrates well developed recruiting mechanism with carefully tailored messages and names given to modules. In particular, the fact that 'volunteer' buttons were named from the first person. Finally, though Party of Progress has a significant connection to Alexei Navalny, recruiting of volunteers on its website during pre-EP was much less developed. The website had a section 'Help party' with a link to a separate webpage. This page did not have motivational messages and respective button instead of saying 'I volunteer' stated 'Submit'.

Collection of users personal data is a fundamental ICT strategy for political actors. It is connected to recruiting, because for successful recruiting leaders also have to collect data. Collecting of user personal data can be done for wide range of reasons that transcend recruiting.

Personal data is a powerful tool in hands of political leaders. Diverse and comprehensive data allows them to optimize targeting of their mobilization efforts. Collected personal data is usually processed by back-end ICT mobilization tools, like CRM (customer or constituency management systems). On the front-end websites serve as platforms where users provide their personal data for conducting online or offline activities. During pre-EP collection of users personal data on Khodorkovsky websites was done predominantly for online activities, while in the case of Navalny it was the other way round.

The primary form of collection users personal data is their registration that performs role of the gate to a website and a first step before conducting online activity. In order to start a blog and for commenting on Open Russia, a user had to register an account or sign in via social media. On the website Instead of Putin, registration was required for

conducting any kind of online activity: vote, comment, nominate someone or yourself as a candidate. Nomination and self-nomination as candidate gave Mikhail Khodorkovsky data about highly profiled supporters or potential partners, which would require respective approach on offline level. On Khodorkovsky.ru if a user wanted to engage in online discussion he or she had to sign in via a social media account. On Open University registration allowed users to track their study progress.

Since deliberation online was underdeveloped strategy on website of Alexei Navalny, registration was required only on his blog. Though archived versions of the website do not have evidence that it required registration for commenting, it can be logically concluded because posts published during pre-EP contain comments provided at respective time. The other forms of registration for online activities were identified on websites that were designed for collection of complaints from population. On the website of the RosYama project, in order to add a pothole to the system a user had to sign in via social media or to an account on the website. Though archived version does not display website structure, analysis of a webpage HTML codes provided evidence that the same code segment corresponds to the button 'add a pothole' on the up to date website. On the RosZhKH website, if a user already submitted complaint via this service, it was possible to sign in to avoid repeated entry of data.

Regarding registration for offline activities Khodorkovsky websites had little instances. On Open Elections website registration was necessary if a user wanted to become a volunteer or a candidate; on website of Legal Protection no registration was required, but users had to provide their email address if they wanted to apply for help. At the same time abundant evidence of registration for offline activities was identified on websites of Alexei Navalny. Forms on most of the websites required filling in the following fields: name and surname, phone and email.

First of all, Navalny was actively recruiting volunteers, which in more detailed was addressed earlier. Fbk.info had a detailed form for registration for volunteering, which had standard fields mentioned above. The form had sections for different activities for which a user could volunteer: design, surveys and content. In addition to standard fields section also had a field 'City'. Website of Party of Progress had a section 'Help party',

which provided a link to the form where a user could sign up as a volunteer for the Democratic coalition. It is not clear whether Navalny had access to provided data, since Democratic Coalition website was not administered by him.

The website of campaign 'Illicit enrichment' had a special webpage 'Become a volunteer'. It also was diversified based on the type of activity. Module 'Become a volunteer in your city' also had an additional field 'city'. Due to nature of this campaign, its website also had a webpage 'Declarations', which in its turn had a button 'I want to send this letter'. Clicking on it revealed a popup form with standard field. In the other campaign 'Letter to Chaika' users could also send a letter. Due to the fact that a letter would be sent via regular mail service, a user had to provide more detailed data: name, patronymic and surname; email, country, mail index and address of residence. Website of the campaign RosZhKH also required filling in as detailed form if a user wanted to submit complaint on utility service. Such a detailed personal data is especially useful for political actors and it can be argued that this strategy was one of reasons for conducting these campaigns. At the same time, users also could give a tangible gain for giving up such personal data. On the website of 'People's deputy' if a user wanted to put a signature under the draft law it was necessary to fill in a form with standard fields.

As we can see, collection of users personal data ranged from fast sign in via social media for the most simple activities to providing a very detailed data for engaging in more complex activities. Details of Khodorkovsky and especially Navalny ICT mobilization strategy of collecting users personal data, revealed that users can provide their data for a variety of online and offline activities. Not only the data provided by users gives valuable information to political actors but also specific activity that induced them to provide it (e.g., submitting a complaint or applying for support as an electoral candidate). The data gives political actors power to understand the pool of their supporters, and who has to be targeted to become a potential supporter.

In general, collecting users personal data reminds a transaction in which each side exchanges something valuable: user provides personal data and agrees on its processing in exchange to conduct a desirable online or offline activity.

Both Khodorkovsky share criticism of the legal system in Russia and attempt to improve it or tackle its disadvantages in certain way. During pre-EP Mikhail Khodorkovsky legal activities were concentrated in the Open Russian project Legal Protection. Digital form of this program had a clear and simple structure. Apart from countering hegemonic discourse conducted via the module with cases included into the program, website also had an application module which allowed users to apply for legal help from the project.

At the same time, Alexei Navalny was involved in diversified legal activities, which also included legislative initiatives. Website of Anti Corruption Foundation had a Section 'Draft laws' dedicated to the draft laws against corruption prepared by lawyers of the Foundation. By April 21, 2016 7 draft laws were published on the website. Foundation's public campaign 'Illicit Enrichment' was advocating for ratification of the Article 20 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and introduction of criminal responsibility for corruption. A website which relied on power of visualization was called 'Astronomic Salaries of State Officials'. It was demonstrating how much money one of the richest oligarchs in the country made while 'a user was sitting on this website'. It had a button 'How to end this', which lead to a pop up window. The window contained a referral to the draft law 'Illicit enrichment'. At the same time, website 'People's deputy' had a box on main page with a referral to the draft law 'Regulation of tariffs for utility services'. The goal of campaign was to collect signatures to obtain the right of legislative initiative. In this manner legislative initiatives were supported by public campaigns that delivered meaning of addressed issues in understandable form. In order to amplify effect, this ICT mobilization strategy was promoted via the blog of Alexei Navalny.

Since both political actors were participating in the Parliamentary Elections in one or another way, they both had electoral projects with respective websites. Electoral projects is a complex activity. For both political actors it comprised multiple website-based ICT mobilization strategies addressed earlier in the text. Regarding Mikhail Khodorkovsky project, in addition to other strategies, Open Russia website had

a button 'Support a candidate' in the footer area of the main page. It lead to a donate landing page of the project Open Elections.

Alexei Navalny also had some election-oriented projects. It is logical to assume that the project Rosvybory would be as active during Parliamentary Elections 2016, as it was during Navalny's Mayoral campaign 2013. Meanwhile, during the pre-EP website had only one page, stating 'that there are no elections yet, and that is why it is suspended'. In fact, from April 2014 the website had only a landing page. Such state of affairs indicates that the project was designed only for elections in which Alexei Navalny participates directly. As it can be seen in the Table 1 electoral projects can have other incarnations, apart from those, which involve support to candidates (Table 1, page 23). Section 'Sociology' on the website of Anti Corruption foundation can be interpreted in such a manner. Though there are no archived versions available for the period between April and November, materials published on the website during this time can be identified on the current version of the website. Foundation published results of three pre-electoral surveys on the website. Electoral campaigning requires holistic approach and political actors need to be resourceful if they want to win potential electorate. Needless to say, that Alexei Navalny used his blog in order to advance his agenda regarding Parliamentary elections 2016.

As analysis presented in the given section demonstrated, website-based ICT mobilization strategies identified as common for Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny were applied by these actors to a different degree and in a different forms. Significant divergence was observed in regard of the rest of strategies - three out of eleven (one strategy was not used by any actor during pre-EP) were identified unique for Alexei Navalny. At the same time, no evidence was identified that Mikhail Khodorkovsky also was involved in certain additional website-based ICT mobilization strategies during pre-EP.

### **Section 3.2.1.2**

#### **ICT mobilization strategies unique to Navalny during pre-electoral phase**

In his multidimensional crusade against corruption, Alexei Navalny paid attention to multiple aspects of tackling this issue and demonstrated a complex approach. Though website-based ICT mobilization strategies addressed above are indeed important in the framework of Navalny's anti-corruption activities, three unique strategies were pillar to his pursuit in this matter.

In order to convince people that corruption is not an abstract entity, Navalny put an effort to demonstrate that it has tangible consequences to the society and the country. It was done with help of two interrelated strategies. On the one hand, he was exposing perpetrations and on the other hand - exposing and addressing issues related population well-being (and caused by corruption). The following examination demonstrates that application of these two tools of exposure has potential to lead to synergetic effect.

Investigation of the instances of corruption is the main activity of Anti Corruption Foundation. In order to influence opinion of potential supporters, results of these investigations have to be presented in a respective manner. In other words - corruption had to be exposed in its most notorious form. The following examination demonstrates that Navalny relied significantly on the power of visualization in this process. During pre-EP, results of investigation of corruption were published on the website in section 'Investigations'. Often extensive textual materials were supported with images and videos, which represented evidences gathered during investigative process. Though no archived versions of specific investigations webpages are available on WMB, this conclusion can be made based on analysis of articles published on the website during pre-EP and available via up to date website. In the process of exposure Alexei Navalny's Youtube channel served as platform for publishing videos with results of investigations. It became intrinsic element of his activities that transcended issue of corruption. As a matter of a fact, Navalny's channel is a platform for all video materials published within his activities.

Examination of other websites of Alexei Navalny demonstrates that perpetrations exposure can have variety of other forms. Each of the projects below had its own manner of perpetrations exposure. It was defined by nature of projects and aspects of perpetrations targeted by them.

The platform Black Notebook - had a website that represented database of state officials involved in unlawful actions. Database looked like a list of individuals in an alphabetical order. Module of each deputy had his or her photo, name and position. It also had a red button, which indicated a number of episodes of unlawful actions. Clicking on a button revealed a list of episodes. For each episode it had fields: date; substance of episode; source of information (e.g media); person who can confirm the fact of episode; material (links to other sources) and tags.

Website of the campaign Municipal Clan had a single webpage that was dedicated to results of detailed investigation about the nepotism and corruption in ST.Petersburg municipality. The main module had a list of all members of St.Petersburg Legislative assembly. By gradual scrolling it revealed nepotism, corrupt connections and unlawful actions of members of the assembly. Around half of names were presented as text links, clicking on which revealed a popup window with details of perpetuations conducted by a specific individual.

The website 'Sochi - encyclopedia of expenses' was designed in order to visually demonstrate 'comprehensive report on true expanses and evidence of non-targeted usage of budget funds' during preparation of Sochi Olympics 2014. It represented a map. It had each relevant object of the sport complex involved in perpetration. Clicking on the button of an object revealed a popup window with details of a specific objects, as well as people involved in perpetuations related to them. Though it is not visible on archived versions, HTML code of the up to date website corresponds to the code of archived one. The campaign Astronomic Salaries of State Officials also represented the single webpage designed to demonstrate how much money the following state officials made: Igor Sechin, Igor Kostin, Vladimir Yakunin. It had boxes with information about their yearly salaries and a counter under each name. A message states ' this is how much money they made, while you are sitting on this website'.

Website of the campaign Against withdrawal of pension assets had a header which stated that a specific deputy voted for the law on withdrawal of pension assets for 2014 (Государственная Дума, 2013). The module with information about certain deputy had a text field with details about this deputy, a photo, and a drop down menu, which allowed a user to choose deputies from different cities. Then come a calculator, which demonstrated ration between personal income inserted by user and amount of money, lost due to the law. Moreover, the lost amount was visualised with help of image of some item (e.g. iPhones, lipsticks, roses). Individually targeted exposure of perpetrators became an intrinsic feature of Navalny activities.

Evidence found on the websites Illicit Enrichment and RosYama fall under two interrelated mobilization strategies: exposing perpetrations on the one hand, and exposing and addressing issues with population well-being on the other.

Website of the campaign Illicit enrichment had a section 'Declarations'. It showed which deputies of regional legislative organs concealed their declarations. A module had a name and photo of a selected deputy and button with years from 2012 to 2014. If text link was in red color it meant that deputy had not published his or her declaration. By these means perpetrations exposure was conducted. Meanwhile website allowed user to address this issue in the following way. The section also had a tool which allowed users to request a specific deputy to publish the declaration. Respective module had a name 'Request publication of a declaration'. Than followed a box with text of official request and a red button 'I want to send this letter'. This tool not only showed deputies, who allegedly had something to hide, but also let users to pressure them by means of ICT.

This website had another section designed for exposure. It was called 'Map of country houses' and represented a 'public encyclopedia of estate that belongs to Russian state officials' (20.navalny.com on WMB, 2016). Apart from estates added by foundation itself, users also could add new entries. Some entries contained photos of specific country houses. Especially the most luxurious ones. The section showed which state official had real estate that they could not afford unless involved in corruption, and allowed users to address this issue.

Evidence from the the website of the ACF's project RosYama (Russian pothole) can also be interpreted in the framework of both website-based mobilization strategies. The website contained photos of potholes, submitted by users. Though archived version does not display website structure, analysis of a webpages HTML codes provided evidence that the same code segment corresponds to the module 'Recent victories' on the up to date website. In addition, summary box of the project on the main ACF website stated how many potholes were fixed since launch of the project. In such a manner Foundation demonstrated the impact of their efforts. Here potholes symbolize negative consequences for the people caused by corruption, and they play well in contrast with 'positive' consequence that corrupt officials enjoy.

Navalny website also had element design predominantly for exposing and addressing issues with population well-being. In principle, this strategy looks on the other side of corruption. According to Navalny's position, corruption is a core cause of issues related to population wellbeing.

Website of the campaign Letter to Chaika represented a platform that let users to demand accountability from the Prosecutor General Juri Chaika regarding perpetuations exposed via investigation conducted by the Foundation. The module with field for personal data had boxes, by ticking which users could indicate where the letter should be sent: to the president, to Channel One Russia, or to Investigative Committee. Each box had a short description of the obligations that each institution had in relation to the perpetrations exposed by means of this investigation.

Campaign Against Illegal Advertisement in Entrances had a website that served as a platform, where users could submit a claim about illegal advertisement in entrance of specific houses. Complaint form contained the following fields: address; place with advertisement; name of advertising company; name of a managing company. Wide interactive module depicted entrance covered with untidy advertisements. Hovering over a large red button 'Get rid of' made them disappear and entrance wound became clean. Visual demonstration of how easy it is to get rid of illegal advertisements - a user just needs to follow instructions on the website.

Website of the campaign Against Withdrawal of Pension Assets apart from modules for perpetrations exposure had a module 'Send a letter to the deputy'. Short description stated that a letter will be sent via State Duma website and will require official reply. It had five drafts of letters, which reflected level of users indignation. Then followed a button 'I want to send this letter'.

Website of the ACF project RosZhKH was designed for users to submit complaints on utility services. A user had to choose type of a utility service issue and then fill in a detailed form. In order to demonstrate impact of the campaign, summary box of the project link on the main ACF website stated how many bulbs were replaced in 2014.

The third strategy that was identified as unique to projects of Alexei Navalny in pre-EP is fundraising. Fundraising is an important strategy for all political actors and it is imperative for those who are limited in financial resources. Meanwhile, even political leaders who do not have problems with funding still have to engage in raising microdonations from population, because the greatest value of them lays beyond financial gain. With donation individuals not only share their money, they also 'buy in' the cause of a political actor and are more inclined to dedicate their support to him or her (Kelly Garrett, 2006). Meanwhile, fundraising was underdeveloped on the websites of Mikhail Khodorkovsky to such extent that it can be considered marginal and thus fundraising is addressed here as a website-based ICT mobilization strategy in which only Alexei Navalny was involved to a considerable degree. During the interview representative of Khodorkovsky's team confirmed that fundraising was seriously underdeveloped on respective website during all selected periods of time and have not improved significantly since then. She named three reasons for this state of affairs. First, image of Khodorkovsky implies that he should not not ask for money because he has them. Second, collection of donations presents logistical challenges because authorities interfere in this process. Finally, fundraising for Khodorkovsky's projects puts those people who donate in a possible danger, since all private information is collected on RuNet.

The main website of Anti-Corruption Foundation had many instances of fundraising activities during pre-EP. It had a wide donation module in the footer area of the main

page. The module gave wide range of options for donating. Users could choose one of five means of donation; choose if payment would be recurring or if it would be a one time donation; and choose donation amount. 500 rubbles and monthly payment were chosen by default. Three buttons replicated three options from the dropdown menu mentioned above, as well as supported by a button 'Another amount'. The module was present on webpages of sections 'Investigations', 'Surveys', 'Draft laws', and 'Foundation' (and its subsections). In addition, website had a red button 'Support the foundation' in the right corner of a default footer. Near to it - a dropdown menu with amount of money to be donated. Clicking to the button 'Support the foundation' lead to the dropdown module, identical to the one that was provided in the footer area of the main page. Finally, default footer also had a text link in the 'How to help'. Clicking on it lead to a separate webpage with the main donation module.

Website of the campaign Illicit enrichment had a button 'Support ACF' with a message in the lower part of the webpage. Presented on webpages of sections 'Declarations', 'Deputies about the article 20', 'Map of country houses'. Red 'Donate' button on the website Municipal Clan was supported with a message and logos of three out of five methods of donation. Button lead to a separate webpage with the main donation module. 'Sochi - map of expanses' had a 'Donate' button in the right corner of default header. Though it is not visible on archived versions, HTML code of an up to date website corresponds to the code of archived one. The webpage had a section 'Report' in a form of a popup module. The right lower corner of the module was dedicated to donation. Traditionally for websites of the foundation, it had button with three sums of money. Unlike with modules in other webpages, it suggests larger amounts - 500, 1000 and 3000 rubles. Project RosZhKH had a button 'Support the project in the right upper corner of the webpage. It lead to the drop down module, with the same functionality as main donation webpage.

Apart from these deviations the following projects had similar master donation button in the footer area or footer of respective websites: Anticorruption Foundation, Illicit Enrichment, Black Notebook, Against Illegal Advertisement in Entrances. Blog of Alexei Navalny also had a red button 'Support projects' in the right sidebar.

Donation buttons usually lead to a unified donation webpage of the foundation. Sometimes they also were supported with messages. For example in case of the campaign Against Illegal Advertisement in Entrances the message stated 'If you like this project - support us.'

Instead of support buttons, some projects had wide module in the lower area of the page: Against Illegal Advertisement in Entrances, Campaign Against Withdrawal of Pension Assets, RosYama (based on the analysis of HTML code) and Rosvynbory.

Finally, in the case of Party of progress, its website had a wide module 'Support' with a message that explained why donating to the party was not possible at a given point of time. It followed with a suggestion to support 'other interesting projects - in particular Anti Corruption Foundation' and a button 'Make a donation'.

Several important conclusions can be made based on this detailed examination.

Anti Corruption foundation was an ultimate destination for all fundraising activities of Alexei Navalny during pre-EP. Most of the donation buttons were coloured in red - the brand color of the Foundation. This color was also used for other action buttons, like 'Volunteer'. The fundraising efforts are developed, diverse and adopted to users' needs. Such attention to this matter says about significance of the microdonations form of public fundraising for activities of the given political actor.

### **Section 3.2.2**

#### **ICT mobilization strategies during post-electoral phase: September 18, 2016 - February 18, 2017**

Websites of many of the projects of both political actors have not undergone any structural changes during the post-EP. This section focuses on changes that took place and thus addresses only respective strategies and projects. If no changes occurred during this period of time, the project was omitted in this section.

### **Section 3.2.2.1**

#### **ICT mobilization strategies common for Khodorkovsky and Navalny during post-electoral phase**

During the post-EP a number of curious developments took place on the websites of Khodorkovsky and Navalny. During this period of time most of strategies stayed common for both actors, but certain considerable deviations were observed as well.

Launch of the rebranded design of Open Russia in November 2016 was the most significant change in regard of website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. During the interview, representative of his team stated that rebranding was needed in order to bring all the activity of Open Russia under one brand and thus show that they all serve to one cause.

The following important changes that serve a strategy of countering hegemonic discourse were introduced to the new design. All the main space of above the fold area (apart from default features), on all sections of the website was taken by a featured article. Such article could come from any of the sections of the website. In such a manner Khodorkovsky could promote materials that corresponded to his agenda at a given point in time. A user had to pay due attention to a featured article, because above the fold area did not have any other content. Section 'Life' became transformed into the section 'Media'. It is still contained articles written by variety of authors (journalists, analysts, etc) for Open Russia or republished from other media platforms. Materials in this section had a number of views indicated in each material summary box. Analysis of

the HTML code proved that on archived website, number of comments and shares were indicated on each material page.

Former section 'Community' was renamed into 'Blogs'. As previously, it was dedicated to materials published by registered users, who were involved in blogging. In new design this section started to look more professional and stylistically followed design of the 'Media' section. Any user could start a blog on open Russia. Up to date website suggests that this process was simplified. Section 'Events' consisted of articles that provided substantial coverage of past events.

Materials in all sections 'Media' and 'Blogs' were labeled under the following categories: News, Society, Politics, Economy, History, Open Russia. In addition summary boxes of all materials on the website had indicator of number of views. In this manner the website demonstrated users, which materials received more attention.

Email subscription as a tool for information dissemination remained on the website. Email subscription field called 'Subscribe to news' was moved to the right corner of the default footer on the main website openrussia.org and websites of other projects - Instead of Putin and Open University.

Meanwhile integration with social media was taken on a new level in the new design. Social media 'Subscribe' button was located in the footer area of the main website with indication of total number of subscribers. In addition to it, a button had a drop down menu with indication of each social media service. Similar buttons were identified in the footer area of websites of other projects: Instead of Putin, Legal Protection and Open Elections - (a single share button in the middle of footer area, and social media buttons in the side menu bar). Finally, Open Russia website curiously enough changed the main color from white to black.

These examination demonstrates that two important features were introduced to the website in the post-EP. Certain aspects received quantifiable indication of their 'quality' - number of subscribers, shares, comments. This approach indicates that Khodorkovsky was aiming at hitting appropriate numbers on the website and wanted to introduce some mechanism for measuring and showing quality of the content.

Website of the project Open University also underwent redesign. New design also appeared in November 2016. Main features came perform old functions in the new design. Email field called 'Subscribe to news' was moved to the right corner of the default footer, and still no social media buttons were introduced to the website.

During post-EP on website administered by Mikhail Khodorkovsky more attention was given to the strategy of fostering deliberation online. According to the interviewee, the organisation understood that there is still a large audience that prefers to deliberate on the website and thus more attention was paid to this matter during rebranding. On Open Russia in addition to commenting section under every material, a number of comments was indicated on a material page in the header area. Though it is not visible on archived versions, HTML code of up to date website corresponds to the code of archived one. The commenting section itself was enhanced and conducted via a plugin Disqus. Website of this service states that 'Disqus helps publishers increase engagement and build loyal audiences' (Disqus.com).

Website of Open Elections was also redesigned in January 2017. Despite of significant structural changes, still no evidence of commenting feature was identified on any of sections and material pages of the website. Up to date version of the website confirms it. The fact that commenting was not enabled for two websites of the project after their redesign in post-EP indicates that administrators still deliberately wanted to keep them clean from admixtures of public opinion.

In regard of the strategy of shaping idea of the political personality only one curious new aspect was identified during the post-EP. The link to [openrussia.org](http://openrussia.org) that was earlier present in the right corner of the default footer on the the website earlier was removed. This confirm general trend of depersonalization of Open Russia as project that is increasingly presented as one that transcends political objectives of Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Открытая Россия, 2017).

Moving to the other strategy that was identified common for both political actors it is necessary to highlight that on Open Russia website news and media activities were taking on a new level. A special module was added to the left area of every section on the website (Main page, Media, Blogs, Events). Module consisted of the latest news in a

chronological order. Near to a news title was located indication of time when it appeared on the website (e.g. 15 hours ago). All materials in this section were originally published on the website. On the one hand, it indicates that Open Russia was given a new function of the news outlet.

With a new design, section Media (former 'Life') stayed news oriented. In combination with a news section 'Events', it provided coverage of Open Russia projects and socio-political developments that Open Russia was concerned about. News Section also appeared on the website Instead of Putin. It was captured by the WBM in february 2017. By this time project was already six month old and it was logical to introduce a section that would reflect its development.

Regarding the strategy of collecting users personal data only a few changes were introduced. On the website of the Open Elections they occurred due to changes of the projects and design. The new information request section 'Ask the Question' (via email) was added to the webpage. Webpage consisted of the fields Email, Name and Question. It is natural that users would have a lot of questions dew to the changes in the project.

During the post-EP website and nature of the electoral project Open Elections changed significantly. According to the archived version as of January 2017 that was captured by the WBM, project was transformed into the Moscow School of Candidates. The platform represented a landing page which described the idea of the school, it's program and conditions. The page also contained the buttons 'Join', which lead to the detailed registration form. During pre-EP the project was aimed at Parliamentary elections 2016 and had a format of providing support to selected candidates. While, during post-EP it already was targeting at Regional elections 2017. The project took more formalized and diversified educational format and significantly extended the pool of beneficiaries. In addition, interviewee indicated that the project Open Russia Team developed because candidates supported by Open Russia during Parliamentary Elections 'showed energy that they want to do more'. This energy lead to start of the Open Russia movement.

### **Section 3.2.2.2**

#### **ICT mobilization strategies unique to Khodorkovsky and Navalny during post-electoral phase**

Though projects of Mikhail Khodorkovsky were marked only with one unique ICT-mobilization strategy, it was quite significant in terms of conversion of online mobilization into offline. In addition to section 'Media' and 'Blogs', a new section called 'Events' was added to the website. Though the name might suggest coverage of developments in Open Russia and other projects, this section transcended this area and was also dedicated to specific non-project events that. It provided structured information about lectures, campaigns, protest actions, debates, meetings etc. Page of each event contained name, address, time, and contact details of its organisers. It also have buttons 'I will go' and 'Add to calendar'. 'I will go button' allowed users to mark that they will participate in a specific event.

Traditionally to the new design, the featured upcoming event was highlighted in above the fold area. Summary boxes with links to the selected events were provided in chronological order. Section was focused on upcoming events, but also provided coverage of conducted ones. With help of this section Mikhail Khodorkovsky prompted users to participate in offline events that conformed with agenda of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Wide range and detailed classification of events suggests that events in their turn also had different purposes. Including educational that can qualify as a strategy of countering hegemonic discourse.

During post-EP the same four strategies were identified as unique to projects of Alexei Navalny, and they were marked with important new developments. Though the given changes are not structural, they are relevant from the perspective of elections. By February 2017, results of five more surveys were published in the section 'Surveys' on the Anti-Corruption Foundation Website. All of them were dedicated to Parliamentary Elections. By this means the Foundation reflected on the results of the elections. In addition, a new social media button was added to the website of Anti-Corruption. It was a button of social media V Kontakte - the most popular social network in the country. It was added to the other social media buttons

located in the default footer area in February 2017. Though Vkontakte has a bad reputation and is controlled by state authorities, a significant portion of Navalny's potential supporters can be reached by this means.

In October 2016, Anti-Corruption Foundation launched 'its own media', as it was stated on the blog of Alexei Navalny (Navalny.com, 2016). New section called 'Leviathan' was added to the website of the foundation. Though archived version does not show design of the page, according to the HTML codes it had the same structure as an up-to-date website. The project represented a newswire, which collected 'absurd and weird and insane news about Russia and Russians' (Navalny.com, 2016). News on the website were presented in chronological order. A wide module was dedicated to each piece of news. The module contained one-sentence description of the piece of news, link to news source and a share button to Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki. News were taken from external media sources, while content was curated. Section 'Calendar' allowed users to navigate through news grouped for each day. Section 'Random piece of news' shuffled news. Section 'Suggest news' allowed users to submit a piece of news by filling in the respective form. The media is designed to bring 'the dark side' of the modern Russia to the spotlight (different shades of black is a deliberate choice for website's background, as well as reference to the Biblical sea monster in name of the project).

Email subscription on the website could be done if a user submitted a piece of news. The form had a box, ticked by default. In addition, website had social media buttons to Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki. They were located in the middle of lower area of the webpage and were duplicated in the middle of the default footer. Curiously, website contained a link to Alexei Navalny video blog on Youtube, which confirmed significance of this platform that was growing during post-EP.

Certain changes that fall under strategy of countering hegemonic discourse also were introduced to the website of Alexei Navalny's blog. In October 2017 Telegram and Youtube were added to the social media buttons module. In addition separate text link 'Navalny in Twitter' appeared under all elements of the sidebar and in the section 'About navalny'.

Regarding strategy of shaping the idea of a political personality, subsections 'Answers to the questions' was added to the section 'About Navalny' on his blog. It accompanied previously the only subsections 'Biography, family, activities'. The section was dedicated to a wide variety of questions related to position of the politician and issues related to it. Three people were listed as authors of the material: Alexei Navalny, Leonid Volkov and Vladimir Ashurkov. Here all three of them are indicated as representatives of the Party of Progress. This point sent a message that there is not only a team behind Alexei Navalny, but also a political party - two elements needed for his ideas to be implemented.

During post-EP a new key website was added to the matrix of websites of Alexei Navalny. It was dedicated to his presidential campaign 2018 and was given a respective name - 2018.navalny.com. It became his core electoral project.

Above the fold area had a wide banner with his photo and a slogan of campaign 'Alexei Navalny - Time to Choose'. The banner was supported by a long message and a link to video with Navalny's appeal. Next came a module that highlighted achievements of the politician. Three summary boxes consisted of image and name of a respective achievement. Hovering over boxes revealed a description of achievement. To the right of this module the following text links were provided: 'Alexei Navalny: truth against Kremlin propaganda' and 'Why Alexei Navalny should participate in elections'. The middle of the main page had a long text with messages from the actor. It was followed by a slider module with key points of his program. The slider module had six units. Each unit consisted of a message and description of the program point. Social media buttons to Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte and Odnoklasniki were located in the default footer area of the webpage. In addition, the website served a strategy of collection of personal data. Above the fold area had long message that was followed by a subscription module with a field for email. Subscribe button was named 'Join'. The module was replicated in the middle of the webpage.

The important strategy of fundraising was developed during post-EP on several platform. Curiously enough it meant reducing the number of fundraising modules. The detailed donation module in the footer area of the Anti-Corruption Foundation was

removed from the footer area of sections 'Investigations', 'Surveys', 'Draft laws' and 'Foundation'.

The website Navalny 2018 had a wide fundraising module that located in the lower area of the page. It had a detailed message justifying need for donating. Then followed buttons to four different means of donation: Yandex Money, Bank card, Paypal and Bitcoin.

During post-EP website of the ACF project RosZhKH was redesigned. Meanwhile, despite significant changes in design, no structural changes that should have been taken into account were introduced.

### **Section 3.3**

#### **ICT mobilizations strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny during pre-electoral phase and role of location: comparative analysis**

Zooming out from comparative analysis of specific aspects of website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny, now it is necessary to look at them from the perspective of the independent variable. Here more attention is paid to what these actors have been doing differently in order to understand whether differences were caused by location.

As it was stated earlier, though both actors were involved in countering hegemonic discourse, the manner oh how they have been doing it differed to a significant extent.

During pre-EP Mikhail Khodorkovsky already paid due attention to the contribution to counter-hegemonic discourse made by users. The oppositional movement lead by Khodorkovsky is targeted at creation of the strong network of supporters, who can have various relation to Open Russia. The movement that emerged in a crystallized form after the Parliamentary elections 2016 is branded as open network movement. Contribution to the counter-hegemonic discourse advanced by Khodorkovsky is a form of belonging to the movement.

Khodorkovsky representative stated in the interview that ultimate goal of Mikhail Khodorkovsky is to convince a critical mass of about 30% of Russians that current

political regime is flawed and needs to be changed, which should lead country to peaceful democratic opening. After that first truly democratic elections are to be held. What comes to the political ambition of Mikhail Khodorkovsky himself, interviewee told that he is willing to take the role of ‘crisis manager’ who would lead the country through democratic opening and to the elections. Now, looking at this information from the perspective of the research puzzle, it is reasonable to assume that exile is beneficial for Khodorkovsky. The image of him as a political personality is at least controversial in Russia, and branding of Open Russia as Khodorkovsky organisation can have negative effect on its position. Being in exile Khodorkovsky does not have to be in the spotlight of the media attention and is able to operate from shadows. The fact that he recently officially resigned from the position of head of Open Russia, confirms logic of this argument (Открытая Россия, 2017). Curiously enough, during the conference, when Khodorkovsky stated about his decision to leave the position he said the following ‘We are going to set an example to society that it is possible to build the future by ourselves, without leaders’ (Открытая Россия, 2017). The clear tendency for depersonalization can be observed here and location is a contributing factor to this tendency. The nature of Khodorkovsky’s exile and its causes make it unreasonable to personalize his oppositional movement. In addition, Khodorkovsky representative told that Russian pro-governmental media actively uses that narrative that since Khodorkovsky left the country he lost connection with its people and thus should not have anything to say regarding what future of Russia should look like.

The project *Instead of Putin* also was going in conformity with this agenda, but instead of average users, people with higher profile were introduced to the respective discourse by mere nomination on the website. If Khodorkovsky would indeed personalize his oppositional movement he would need conditions under which operated Alexei Navalny.

Countering hegemonic discourse through websites of Alexei Navalny was largely concentrated around its primary activities. On the one hand these activities had an offline nature (anti-corruption investigations), while on the other hand – the activities were focused on providing population with tools of tackling negative consequences of

corruption. Projects of Alexei Navalny were working for strengthening positions of political personality. Since had high political ambitions, which eventually lead him starting the presidential campaign in late 2016, Alexei Navalny had to demonstrate to potential supporters that he not only can reveal perpetrations conducted by current political regime, but also can offer way to improve well-being of the potential supporters. Such improvement was offered in form of basic solving issues with utility services to proposing draft laws against corruption. Because Navalny was operating inside of Russia he could aspire for the highest position in the country. Exile creates serious obstacles for such intentions. In particular through estrangement from the people, lack of legitimacy, resistance from government and practical constraints of conducting legitimate elections.

Deliberation online is a website-based ICT mobilization strategy that was indirectly affected by location of Khodorkovsky and Navalny. Nature of activities of these oppositional leaders had more direct impact on their strategies regarding deliberation online. As it was elaborated earlier, the major goal of Mikhail Khodorkovsky is creation of a grassroot cluster of supporters that would increase chances of regime change in Russia. For that reason deliberation online fostered on the websites of this actor to such a high degree, especially during post-EP with launch of the new design of Open Russia website. It is evident that development and spreading of ideas that would contribute to the process of democratisation was a major goal of deliberation online. At the same time, deliberation online was much less present on websites of Alexei Navalny. Websites of his activities targeted at combating corruption were kept pure from feedback from public. Such approach provides political leaders with high control over the image created by means of these platforms. Such websites perform role of campaigning tools not only during electoral cycle. Commercial projects have similar approach with one-way interaction with their target groups. The only Navalny's platform where users were welcomed to deliberate online was his blog. On the one hand, it is likely that faithful audience of likeminded supporters involved in discussions on the blog will support his ideas, while on the other hand moderation of online discussion on the website allows to keep it in desired direction.

The website-based ICT mobilization strategy of shaping idea of a political personality is also only indirectly influenced by location. Nature of this strategy depends on activities of political leaders and their political objectives. Meanwhile impact of location also could be observed. The idea of political personality of Mikhail Khodorkovsky was predominantly shaped via his website Khodorkovsky.ru. Here oppositional leader often appears as a member of international dialog. Due to his exile status and critique towards Putin's regime he is presented as an oppositional leader who is accepted and supported by the West. In this sense location of Khodorkovsky has significant impact on the respective website-based ICT mobilization strategy.

Certain aspects of the other strategy labeled under 'News and media activities' were influenced by location. Section about Russia on the Open Russia website was dedicated to publications about Russia in foreign media. It served a purpose to introduce opinion about current political regime and developments in Russia that was present in the discourse of foreign countries. As it was stated earlier, Khodorkovsky was marketing himself as an oppositional political actor accepted by the West. Foreign opinion translated into Russian and presented on his key website comes in conformity with that. Being in exile Khodorkovsky had to recognise influence of one of four tires - the hosting Western community (Sznajder and Roniger, 2009). At the same time Alexei Navalny stayed ignorant about attention and courtesies done towards him from the side of foreign Western countries. For those who pursue regime change in Russia, collaboration with Navalny could be considered as a promising approach. Meanwhile, for him it could hurt aspirations for legitimacy. Russian hegemonic discourse presents those who are against Putin's regime as agents of the West, that tries to deteriorate the statehood of Russian Federation (Amnesty International).

Recruiting is one of website-based ICT mobilization strategies significantly affected by location for both oppositional actors. At the same time presence of other factors has also to be recognised. As it was in detailed elaborated in the section on empirical examination, Mikhail Khodorkovsky was using his websites predominantly for recruiting activists. This approach comes in conformity with his intention to build grassroots cluster of supporters. Being in exile Khodorkovsky needed a group of trusted

activists who could become field managers of the oppositional movements. At the same time Alexei Navalny was recruiting volunteers with similar intention - creation of cluster of faithful supporters who would become basis for perspectives to get the presidential position. Recruiting activists could result in nurturing potential competitors while making emphasis on volunteers would bring potential voters. Contribution of personal time becomes even stronger guarantee for commitments than contribution of money. Moreover, approach to recruiting volunteers was significantly personalized. Each applicant should have experience the feeling that Navalny and his organisations are particularly interested in what makes distinguished him or her from other; that they value unique personal contribution that each applicant could make to the cause. In this manner physical proximity between Alexei Navalny and his supporters resulted from his location inside Russia was enhanced further. At the same time, depersonalisation and delineation of Mikhail Khodorkovsky from his target audience was enhanced by means of the buffer formed from loyal activists.

Legislative activities of Alexei Navalny were highly related to his activities on combating corruption. On the one hand he sent a message that problem of corruption has to be addressed on the legislative level and he has a capacity to propose respective legislative initiatives. On the other hand, Navalny demonstrated that he recognises issues with population well-being that in his opinion are a symptoms of corruption, and that he can help people to address these issues. These two approach were needed to enhance his ambitious political aspirations and demonstrate that he is a right person to become a president. This overall strategy would be highly improbable and insufficient to be conducted from exile.

Exposure of perpetrations and exposure of issues related to populations well-being (as well as addressing them) were developed to such a degree that they were identified as two unique website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Alexei Navalny.

Nature of Electoral project was dictated by goals of Khodorkovsky and Navalny and whether they were going to participate in elections directly or indirectly. Due to his exile Mikhail Khodorkovsky could participate in elections only indirectly. Thus nature of his electoral projects was revolving around providing support to those activists who

could participate in elections directly. At the same time, being inside of Russia Navalny had all reasons to participate in elections directly, but since his political party - Party of Progress - was derived from official registration ironically he appeared in similar situation. Meanwhile, Alexey Navalny had no reason to provide significant support to other oppositional political forces. Instead he was carefully engaged with the Democratic Coalition - fragile alliance of oppositional forces that planned to unite for Parliamentary Elections 2016. When the coalition started to fall apart, Alexei Navalny further estranged himself from its affairs. It would be imprudent to involve in controversial cases when he already had aspiration for next national election - Presidential ones.

Fundraising is a peculiar ICT mobilization strategy. Both presence and underdevelopment of it on websites of political actors gives auspicious background for considerations regarding the impact of location. As it was in detailed addressed earlier, projects of Alexei Navalny were actively involved in fundraising. Financial reputation of this political actor does not imply presence of significant financial resources, Thus, to fund his activities Alexei Navalny needs to collect donations from population. Moreover, it is apparent that he understands value of microdonations as way for users to 'buy in' his cause. Because Alexei Navalny operates in Russia and publicly refrains from financial or other forms of relationship with foreign stakeholders, Navalny indeed has to rely on sources provided by supporters.

At the same time, being in exile Mikhail Khodorkovsky is more flexible with financial sources. Having liberty to operate with his own financial sources, he potentially can collaborate with other stakeholder. Moreover, because he is not in Russia, Khodorkovsky money are rather a subject of stipulations than to official scrutiny from Russian government.

Empirical examination demonstrated that logical assumption that website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Khodorkovsky and Navalny converged during the post-EP was false. Certain differences observed during the two phases of electoral period concerned development in already present strategies.

## **Conclusions**

In order to identify which website-based ICT mobilization strategies were affected by location during the electoral period, a comprehensive mapping of all websites administered by Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny was conducted. This enquiry revealed complex interplay of various factors that affect these strategies, and location was proved to be one of these factors. The main reason of differences is ability of inability of physical presence in the country.

Exile status triggers a chain of consequences that range from estrangement from the people's preferences, inability to built personal relationship with target groups by means of direct contact with their representatives and practical obstacles in realization of desired actions. In addition, exile puts a political leader under higher influence from the international community. In the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky he appeared in between rhetorics of Russia and the West. As it was indicated in the research, discourse matters because it is not primary whether an oppositional leader was involved in unpopular actions, but whether members of his target audience shares such an opinion.

Since Mikhail Khodorkovsky appeared in exile he had to adopted his political objectives to the new status and its implications. This in its turn resulted in deviations in regard of website-based ICT mobilization strategies as it was evident during comparison of cases of Alexei Navalny.

Due to inability to participate in elections directly, several strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky were aiming at creation of a grassroots cluster of supporters. From this perspective, growing number of such supporters until a sufficient level would lead Russia to the regime change. Consequently, website-based ICT mobilization strategies of countering hegemonic discourse, fostering deliberation online, recruiting, as well as conducting legal and electoral projects were determined by this factor. Inability to participate in elections directly and nature of exile also lead to deliberate depersonalization of the oppositional movement, which in its turn affects such website-based ICT mobilization strategy as shaping idea of a political personality.

At the same time Alexei Navalny was located in Russia during the electoral period that also affected his political activities. Unlike Khodorkovsky, he early expressed the ambition of direct participation in elections and even running for the main position in Russia. Being physically present in the country and thus having ability to exercise his charisma on potential supporters, Alexei Navalny concentrated his activities on anticorruption crusade. Website-based ICT mobilization strategies served a channel to present process and results of these activities. On the one hand, Navalny demonstrated that he has educated and complex approach to the issue of corruption and is prepared to combat it on the level of legislature. On the other hand, he understood that talking about distant legal matters is not going to win him support of masses, whose wellbeing is affected by corruption in Russia. Thus, key website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Alexei Navalny were targeted at exposing perpetrations and exposing and addressing issues related to population wellbeing. These two strategies worked as contrast shown by demonstration of 'positive' consequences of corruption enjoyed by state officials and negative - of which suffers majority of Russian citizens.

Testing of sub hypothesis revealed that involvement in campaigning during pre-EP does not lead to convergence in regard of website-based ICT mobilization strategies. Meanwhile, selected cases are not entirely appropriate for testing this logical assumption. Due to personalized political objectives of Alexei Navalny, he was not highly involved in Russian Parliamentary elections 2016. If the cases with two oppositional leaders both participating in elections in similar manner (directly or indirectly) can be identified, it could be useful to test this assumption.

Website-based ICT mobilization strategies are designed to transcend physical borders and boundaries and thus they should be less affected by location than, for example offline mobilization strategies. Meanwhile website based ICT-mobilizations strategies are affected by offline activities, which in their turn are more directly influenced by location. Untangling of the interrelations between multiple factors that influence online mobilization strategies is task for further research. In order to clearly prove that certain ICT mobilization strategies are influenced by location, more appropriate cases shall be identified. Meanwhile, political realities do not always supply social scientists with

well established and clearly delineated cases. Instead, it often sets a task to give answers to such questions with existing cases. Nevertheless, social science has to investigate them because scientific inquiry is capable of revealing which methods of political mobilization prove to be more effective and what kind of side effects can be invoked by often utilitarian approach of political leaders to mass mobilization.

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## Appendix 1

Website-based ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny during electoral period: March 18, 2016 - March 18, 2017. EXTENDED VERSION

ICT ACTIVITIES (STRATEGIES)	PRE-ELECTORAL PHASE		POST-ELECTORAL PHASE	
	Kh.	N.	Kh.	N.
1. Countering hegemonic discourse	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. content prepared by political actors (ordered by websites administration)	<b>a,b</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a,b</b>	<b>b</b>
b. content prepared by users (approved by websites administration)				
2. Fostering deliberation online	yes	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes
3. Shaping idea of a political personality	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
4. Perpetrations exposure	no	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>
5. Exposing and addressing issues with population well-being	no	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>
a. Collection of complaints from population				
b. Demonstration of impact of solving problems				
6. News and media activities	yes	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes
7. Informing about non-project events	no	no	<b>yes</b>	no
a. about future events				

b. about past events				
8. Recruiting a. Activists b. Volunteers	<b>yes a</b>	<b>yes b</b>	<b>yes a</b>	<b>yes b</b>
9. Fundraising	No	<b>yes</b>	no	<b>yes</b>
10. Collecting users personal data a. Registration of user accounts for online activities on a website b. Providing of data for participation in offline activities	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>
11. Conducting legal projects a. Legal projects b. Legislative initiatives	yes	<b>yes</b>	yes	<b>yes</b>
12. Conducting electoral projects a. Candidates application for support b. Channel for users to provide support to candidates c. other forms of engagement in elections	<b>yes</b>	yes	<b>yes</b>	<b>yes</b>

## **Appendix 2**

Questionnaire for in-depth interview with high-ranking representative of Mikhail Khodorkovsky team

1. What impact does exile has on the mobilization conducted in framework of Mikhail Khodorkovsky projects, like Open Russia and Instead of Putin?
2. How exile effects ICT mobilization strategies of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, in particularly carried out via websites?
3. Do you consider content published on Open Russia website as an attempt to counter hegemonic discourse?
4. Why such significant attention is paid to deliberation of users online on the new design of Open Russia website, launched in November 2016?
5. Please, comment on the recruiting conducted via websites of Open Elections, Instead of Putin. Why recruiting is targeted predominantly at activists?
6. New design of openrussia.org, released on November 2016 has a news section. Does it makes Open Russia an additional function of a news platform?
7. In the period during October 2015 until February 2016 Open Russia project legal protection was carried out in collaboration with Alexei Navalny. Why this collaboration was ceased? Did it change nature of the project?
8. Why fundraising is so scarce on websites of Mikhail Khodorkovsky?
9. Would you say that there were any difference in discussed ICT mobilization strategies in the period before elections on September 18 2016, and after it?
10. Would mobilization be done differently if Mikhail Khodorkovsky was in Russia? Are there some mobilization strategies or activities that are not appropriate or not reasonable for carrying out from exile?

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