



**Reconstitution of the right to welfare in the post-socialist context:
the case of employment and related social protection policies in Russia**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Research Question	3
1.2. Outline	3
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1. The Evans and Donnelly debate	5
2.2. Defining the post-socialist common sense	6
(a) Common sense	6
(b) Fairclough and Steger's 'globalism'	7
(c) Fraser's critical assessment of 'post-socialist' condition	9
(d) Evans' 'market discipline' and Cox' 'poor relief'	10
3. METHODOLOGY	13
3.1. Critical discourse analysis	13
3.2. Policy analysis: Bacchi's 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach	14
3.3. Ethical considerations	16
3.4. Limitation of the study	16
4. RECONSTITUTION OF THE RIGHT TO WELFARE: THE CASE OF EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED SOCIAL PROTECTION IN POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA	17
4.1. Background information on welfare, social protection and employment in the Soviet Union	17
4.2. 'Colonising' recontextualisation: external intervention policies on employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia.	20
<i>Question 1:</i> What's the problem represented to be?	21
<i>Question 2:</i> What presupposition and assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?	21
<i>Question 3:</i> How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?	24
<i>Question 4:</i> What is left unproblematic in this representation of the 'problem'? What are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?	25
<i>Question 5:</i> What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?	28
<i>Question 6:</i> How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How can it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?	30

4.3. ‘Appropriating’ recontextualisation: employment and related social protection policies in the domestic discourse in post-socialist Russia	31
4.3.1. ‘Appropriating’ recontextualisation: 1991-1999	32
(a) Narrative and imaginary of Russia’s current state	32
(b) Narrative and imaginary of employment and social protection	33
4.3.2. ‘Appropriating’ recontextualisation: from 2000	36
(a) Narrative and imaginary of Russia’s current state	36
(b) Narrative and imaginary of employment and social protection	37
5. CONCLUSION	40
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	43
BIBIOGRAPHY	44
APPENDICES	
Appendix 1. Documents used for policy analysis	47
Appendix 2. Documents used for discourse analysis	48

1. INTRODUCTION

Reinforcing the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the ‘UDHR’), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (the ‘Declaration’), unanimously adopted in the aftermath of the Cold War, provides that all human rights are ‘*universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated*’, and that ‘the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, *on the same footing*, and with the same emphasis’. Giving a fair acknowledgment to the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, the Declaration also states that ‘it is the *duty* of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to *promote and protect* all human rights and fundamental freedoms’ (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993)¹.

Despite this unanimous and strong worded endorsement, the question of indivisibility of human rights, particularly the position of social and economic rights in the equation, principally coded in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (the ‘ICESCR’ or ‘Covenant’), remains unsettled within the current debate.

The transformations which took place with the demise of the socialist statehood at the turn of the 1990s had a fundamental effect across-the-board on either side of the collapsed ‘iron curtain’. This historical shift, what Habermas called ‘the new obscurity’, ‘crisis of welfare state’ and ‘the exhaustion of [left-wing] utopian energies’ (Habermas 1986, p. 48), led to the claims on the single world history, scholarly arguments on investment promotion as progressive realisation of economic and social rights agenda, and false opposition of ‘post-socialist’ common sense in which struggles for the recognition of difference eclipse struggles for social equality (Fraser 1997, Fukuyama 1992, Lorenzo 2015, Lorenzo 2015, Fraser 1997). However, although the global legal human rights regime, upheld in the above-mentioned declarations, is said to embrace the unity of all rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, it is argued that the market, to which the current global reality is subordinated, pursues only those rights necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms. As a result, the catalogue of the rights associated with the market qualifies human beings as *individuals* and agents of a particular kind and type (Evans 2005a).

¹ Emphases in this paper are added by the author.

In this setup, international instruments like the declarations constitute a formal recognition of the universal indivisibility principle: internalising a part of long lasting struggle for its recognition, it at the same time serves as a convenient closure for the dominant human rights discourse, which is informed by the market discipline and buttresses a single narrative of what Steger called ‘globalism’ (Steger 2005). In Steger’s view, ‘globalism’ constitutes a neo-liberal interpretation of globalisation as liberalisation and global integration of markets, linked to the spread of particular version of ‘western democracy’, aimed at shifting its notion towards ‘liberal democratic direction’, even more so after the dissolution of the socialist statehood, and construed in a ‘taken for granted’ rhetoric of ‘inevitable, irreversible, imperative process without responsible agents, bringing economic benefits to everyone’, ‘spreading democracy’ (Steger 2005) and, almost synonymously to the latter, human rights (Evans 2001, p. 623). By doing so, it offers an idealised version of human rights that obscures consequences of the described discourse: that is, the discrepancy between the formal human rights regime, which posits the universality of all human rights, and actual human rights practice, which has been founded upon distinction between universal civil and political *rights* and uneven economic and social *entitlements*.

Although the ‘transition’ of the former socialist countries² towards market economy and western democracy informed by such ‘globalism’ is arguably neither entirely distinct from nor entirely the same as the transformations which are taking place on a wider international level (Fairclough 2007), nowhere have the ‘bankruptcy of state socialism’ (Habermas 1990, p. 3) and following ‘transformations’, executed in appallingly radical and rapid manner, demonstrated this discrepancy between the formal and actual universality of all human rights so evidently as in the ex-socialist states, particularly in the countries of the former Soviet Union (the ‘FSU’)³. It is recognised that the post-communist transition, which altered the political and economic systems of the FSU and Central and Eastern Europe (the ‘CEE’), had dramatic effects on their welfare states, traditionally responsible for provision of social and economic rights (Cook 2007a, Cook 2015, Cook 2007b). Yet, it has also been claimed that globalism did not have a uniformed impact on post-communist welfare states: whereas the Central and Eastern Europe’s ‘success story’ is widely attributed to the ‘Europe effect’ with the positive impact of European integration in building welfare state programmes to compensate their citizens for ‘the

² The terms ‘former socialist’, ‘post-socialist’, ‘ex-socialist’ as well as ‘former communist’, ‘post-communist’, ‘ex-communist’ states are used here interchangeably.

³ The terms ‘former soviet’, ‘post-soviet’, ‘ex-soviet’ are used here interchangeably.

traumas of system transition and economic openness’, the former soviet states ‘*have allowed* their welfare state to collapse to far greater extent’ (Orenstein, Haas 2005, pp. 130-131). With respect to the latter, little has been said on the nature and impact of transition programmes designed by international organisations to reform the existing welfare state and its employment and social protection, the core to secure economic and social rights, nor has the way these programmes were picked up and implemented by the post-soviet states been discussed. The overlooked nature of this phenomenon in the context of post-socialist countries is admitted in scholarly articles (Cook 2007b, Bowring 2013), and thereby offers a fertile ground for research. Exploring this academic gap, the present research work argues that the formally recognised unity of all human rights serves as a convenient discourse closure for the market discipline, selective in its pursuit of only those rights necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms. It contributes to the existing body of literature with its findings on the case of the right to welfare, as established in employment and related social protection policies and discourses, in the post-socialist context of the former Soviet Union’s successor – the Russian Federation (the ‘RF’ or ‘Russia’).

1.1. Research Question

Elaborating on the literature presented in the next chapter with application of critical discourse and policy analysis framework, in this study I, therefore, shall address the following research question:

- i. How has the right to welfare in relation to employment and related social protection been reconstituted in post-socialist Russia?
 - a. How have employment and related social protection been recontextualised by external policy interventions?
(How has ‘colonising’ recontextualisation occurred?)
 - b. How have employment and related social protection been recontextualised at the national level in the domestic discourse?
(How has ‘appropriating’ recontextualisation occurred?)

1.2. Outline

To address the above research question, I commence with the literature review to place it within the current academic debate in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I then outline the applied methods and

describe how the critical discourse and policy analysis framework is instrumental in addressing the research question. The findings are presented in Chapter 4, where they: first, provide background information on welfare, employment and social protection established in the Soviet Union (Section 4.1); second, analyse the ‘colonising’ recontextualisation in the external policy interventions on employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia (Section 4.2); and, third, examine ‘appropriating’ recontextualisation of employment and related social protection in the domestic discourse of post-socialist Russia (Section 4.3). While looking into the domestic discourse, I discuss narratives and imaginaries of Russia’s current state and those of employment and related social protection throughout two stages of ‘appropriation’: (i) 1991-1999 (Section 4.3.1) and (ii) 2000-present (Section 4.3.2). Finally, I draw conclusions in Chapter 5 and present recommendations in Chapter 6.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I situate the research question within a current state of arts on civil-political and economic-social rights, post-socialist common sense, globalism and market discipline. I start with the Evans-Donnelly debate on universality of economic and social rights to demonstrate the inherent imbalance between these two sets of human rights and how certain theoretical frameworks allowed to it to be overlooked by authoritative scholarship. I then turn to defining post-socialist common sense with a help of Fraser's critical appraisal of 'post-socialist condition', Steger and Fairclough's 'globalism', and Evans' 'market discipline' which explain the actual subordinate relationship of the sets of human rights and the means by which such subordination appears invisible, opaque. Here, the literature also looks into who and why endorses such concealment and underlying reasons of its proliferation in the aftermath of soviet statehood's demise. I will end with discussion of Cox' thesis on social protection mechanisms of the poor relief as sustaining the order and 'minimizing the risk of chaos in the bottom layer', and its potential implications for the question of reconstitution of the welfare rights in the case of employment and related social protection in the post-socialist Russia.

2.1. The Evans and Donnelly debate

Starting from the post-war human rights architecture, in their well-known *'The West, Economic and Social Rights, and the Global Human Rights Regime: Setting the Record Straight'* Whelan and Donnelly attempt to challenge the widespread belief that 'Western' countries have been antagonistic to economic and social human rights. By examining wartime planning, drafting the Universal Declaration and the Covenants, and development of functional regimes for money, trade, and workers' rights as well as the European regional human rights regime, authors arrive into a conclusion that Western advocacy of economic and social rights was strong, consistent, and essential to creating the post-war international order, which was intended to consolidate and strengthen Western welfare states (Whelan, Donnelly 2009). Furthermore, discursive re-situation of Western states 'where they in fact have always been', in their belief, may contribute to efforts to protect the liberal democratic welfare state, and the vision of interdependent and indivisible human rights that underlies it, from the host of challenges it faces in the early twenty-first century (Whelan, Donnelly 2007, p. 949).

In response to such 'straight record setting' Kirkup and Evans critically question the methodology applied to economic and social rights and argue that by taking the global human rights regime at face value and neglecting the role of politics, power, and interests, Whelan and

Donnelly have presented a distorted and partial view of the inclusion of economic and social rights which results in inaccurate universal portrayal of such rights (Kirkup, Evans 2009, pp. 222-224). Application of an alternative perspective which places human rights in the context of the global political economy allows them to understand the discrepancy between the formal human rights regime, which postulates the universality of all rights, and human rights practice, which is based on the distinction between ‘universal’ civil and political rights and ‘uneven’ economic and social aspirations from the very conception of the human rights regime. Scholars further advance the point asserting that potential constraining policies on the right to pursue self-interest, e.g. taxation as a mean to provide social and economic rights by others, were resisted by key interest groups within civil society, deliberately rejecting economic and social rights and particularly through the adoption of neoliberalism as the new orthodoxy in political economy (Kirkup, Evans 2009). In a similar vein, approaching the Whelan and Donnelly’s arguments from a rationalist perspective, Kang contests their strong claims on the centrality of economic and social rights to ‘Western political values’ and finds them ignoring the way such rights are compromised politically, both in Western domestic and international practices (Kang 2009).

Building up on his arguments on relations between human rights discourse and power, Evans affirms that the catalogue of human rights associated with ‘market discipline’ pursues exclusively those rights which are necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms. Importantly, having explicitly acknowledged not only partiality of the human rights regime but also finding political discourse as one of its integral pillars together with legal and philosophical associates, he arrives into the conclusion that current human rights regime as a part of the contemporary global order, which is increasingly characterised as globalisation, acts ‘as a mask for structural inequalities characteristic of market discipline’ (Evans 2005a, p. 1063). Where the goal of such discipline is concentrated almost exclusively on securing internal compliance and conformity within the system as opposed to delivery of constructive critique, it is, therefore, essential to shed light on hidden and invisible aspects in order not to be limited to addressing consequential but also causal effects.

2.2. Defining the post-socialist common sense

(a) Common sense

The epithet ‘common sense’ is achieved when a particular mode of thought and conduct is unquestioningly accepted as normal (Gramsci 1971). Fairclough defines common sense as

naturalisation of particular ideological representations by a dominant ideological-discursive formation. By winning acceptance as ‘non-ideological’ common sense such dominant ideologies become ‘opaque’, in other words, no longer visible or perceived as ideologically charged (Fairclough 1995, pp. 42-43). For example, Cook starts her analysis of the socialist welfare states from the premise that socialist states have ‘exhausted’ their welfare potential which represents adoption of this common sense in her research (Cook 2007a). This is an important definition to keep in mind as the main objective of critical discourse analysis, a primary research method applied in the current paper, is to denaturalise the discourses. It will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on methodology.

(b) Fairclough and Steger’s ‘globalism’

The ‘post-socialist’, often interchangeably used with ‘post-communist’, condition or common sense could be understood in a more general and more particular sense: the new international situation that exists following the demise of the socialist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, and the particular situation of the ex-socialist states (Outhwaite, Ray 2008). The two are interconnected: while the post-socialist countries possess certain distinctive features and issues in common, the process and trajectory of the change in these countries are shaped by the dynamics and tendencies of the new international situation which are also shaping the change in other countries.

Seen in these terms, having noted that such changes or ‘transition’ of the post-socialist countries towards market economy is neither entirely distinct from nor entirely the same as the transformations taking place on a wider international level, Fairclough reflects symptomatically on post-socialist condition with the help of Steger’s *‘globalism’* (Fairclough 2007, pp. 1-2). Regarded as an outcome of a designed strategy, the discourse of ‘globalism’ is a particularly strong construal of globalisation backed by a powerful alliance of social agencies, including transnational corporations, financial institutions, international agencies like the International Monetary Fund (‘IMF’), World Bank (‘WB’) and World Trade Organisation (‘WTO’), European Union (‘EU’), North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (‘NAFTA’) as well as individual governments as that of the US. Although there are differences in the ‘globalism’ of these agencies, central characteristics of the discourse are relatively the same in their essence. This essence of globalism amounts to the global spread of neo-liberal capitalism and is construed as an inevitable, irreversible, imperative process without responsible agents which brings economic benefits to everyone. Such narrative (description) is presented as background

knowledge (the 'BGK'), i.e. 'naturalised', 'uncontested' discourse, and works as a legitimising ideology which vests the discourse with the prerogative to dictate a 'set of prescriptions' (Steger 2002, p. 224).

The dominant strategy for change in the post-socialist countries at early stage of transition is reflected in so-called Washington Consensus initiated by the above-mentioned agencies which had set of structural adjustment prescriptions. While Fairclough finds it important to distinguish between strategies and their associated discourses and realities, elaborating Outhwaite and Ray's findings (Outhwaite, Ray 2008), he summarises a set of claims which have been made about the post-socialist condition which come at odds with the strategies and discourses of globalism and transition.

Firstly, he finds it misleading to interpret globalisation as 'convergence' or as modernisation in the sense of convergence. In his argument, there is an undoubtful constituent of convergence, *inter alia* 'capitalism is now the only game in town', yet these processes also lead to divergent economic systems. Furthermore, the way in which global strategies are implemented varies between countries in 'path-dependent' ways, i.e. in terms of different history, economic, social and political set ups, where 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not necessarily succeed. Thirdly, 'uneven development', in his view, is not a temporary incompleteness of emergent neo-liberal systems of capitalism but its constitutive underside. Fourthly and most importantly, Fairclough draws the line where relations of centrality-marginality, domination-subordination are produced in these processes, specifically, he explains that the mythical destiny of all post-socialist countries to 'catch-up' with the West', sooner or later to become 'westernised' and 'civilised', is precisely that: a myth (Fairclough 2007, pp. 2-3).

In contrast to these claims, the strategies and discourses of 'globalism' and 'transition' within the post-socialist condition suggest convergence, ignore path-dependency, construe uneven development and inequality as temporary, encourage the myth of 'catching-up' and are salient on the new relations of marginality and subordination that are being established (Sayer 2000). Based on these arguments Fairclough applies the critical discourse analytical framework to the question of recontextualisation of higher education policies in post-communist Romania where he exposes how a discourse could be utilised to legitimise globalism informed transformations and how, consequently, such strategies could diverge at the outcome depending on certain historical and ideological pre-conditions (Wodak, Fairclough 2010).

(c) Fraser's critical assessment of 'post-socialist' condition

Fraser's critical take on 'post-socialist condition' is by no means a definitive negative verdict on the relevance and viability of socialist ideals and is defined as, rather, 'a sceptical mood or structure of feeling that marks post-1989 state of the Left', fought with a sense of 'the morning after', which expresses authentic doubts bound to genuine opacities concerning historical possibilities for progressive social change (Fraser 1997, p. 1). In her attempt to disentangle authentic from ideological, she identifies three consecutive characteristics of post-socialist condition.

The first one among them is the absence of any credible progressive vision of an alternative to the present order. Akin to Steger's 'globalism' and Evan's dominance of 'market discipline', her 'present order' is also a matter of the increased delegitimisation of socialism in the wake of 1989 in the broad sense. What has 'collapsed', in Fraser's assessment, is not just a set of actually existing institutional arrangements but the belief in the principal ideal that was a foundation for movements aiming at social transformation for the last century and a half. Referring to Habermas' 'exhaustion of utopian energies', she concludes that no new comprehensive progressive vision of a just social order has emerged to take the socialism's place which is, nevertheless, not a pretext for vindication of claims alike to Fukuyama's 'the end of history' (Fraser 1997, pp. 1-2).

Fraser's second element of post-socialist common sense is a shift in the grammar of political claims-making which she explains through two tier observations: (1) Empirically, there has been the rise of 'identity politics', decentring of class, and corresponding decline of social democracy; (2) On a deeper level, however, there has been an apparent shift in the political imaginary where many actors appear to turn from a socialist political imaginary, which centres redistribution as its focal point justice, to a 'post-socialist' one, in which the central issue of injustice is recognition (Fraser 1997, p. 2). With this, decoupling of cultural politics from social politics results into the effective eclipse of the latter by the former and ideological construction of social and cultural politics as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Although Fraser devotes her research to challenge this false antithesis, as its pre-condition she names the third fundamental feature of post-socialist condition – 'a resurgent economic liberalism'. She describes it as a globalising wall-to-wall capitalism which is increasingly marketising social relations, eroding social protection and rising inequality in income and wealth as well as in access capabilities (Fraser 1997, pp. 2-3). In summary, Fraser's critical

stance on the post-socialist condition boils down to absence of any credible overarching emancipatory project for a progressive social change after 1989; a decoupling of the politics of recognition from the politics of redistribution; and a decentring of claims for equality in the face of sharply rising material inequality and aggressive marketisation (Fraser 1997, Fraser 2015, Fraser, Honneth 2003). Drawing attention away from inequalities by ‘eclipsing’ social re-distribution with identity politics, in Fraser’s view, obscures the real consequences of the ‘present order’ and, thus, serves as a smokescreen for a ‘resurgent economic liberalism’.

(d) Evans’ ‘market discipline’ and Cox’ ‘poor relief’

Following Gill (Gill 1995) who adopts a Foucauldian approach to the discipline and disciplinary power (Foucault 1991), Evans refers to the dominant disciplines within the current global order as ‘*market discipline*’ which in its selective focus stresses economic growth and development, deregulation, free market, privatisation of public services and minimum government (Evans 2005b, p. 1056). Market discipline, in his finding, is a set of normative relationships with a global reach supported by discourses of truth and widely accepted as ‘common sense’. To illustrate these manifest relations Evans examples of international economic planning, market-based solutions for environmental degradation and social exclusion, the move in privatisation of social welfare provision, initiatives driven under the auspices of international and regional agencies such as World Bank, WTO, EU and NAFTA (Evans 2005b, pp. 1056-1057).

With this interpretation of the market discipline’s scope human rights are conceptualised as freedoms necessary to maintain and legitimise particular forms of production and are established as a set of negative rights associated with liberty, security and property which, in Evans’ view, offer a moral and normative foundation for justifying actions within current global political and economic order. Although the global legal human rights regime is said to embrace the unity of all rights, i.e. civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights, the market discipline pursues and endorses exclusively those rights which are essential to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms. with this respect, the catalogue of rights associated with this market discipline, therefore, describes human beings as individuals and agents of a particular kind (Evans 2005b, p. 1057).

Evans’ critique of human rights regime goes in line with Fraser’s ‘eclipsing’ and Fairclough’s ‘normalisation’ as he concludes that such disposition offers an idealised vision of human rights that obscures the consequences of the discourse. In other words, it offers an illusion of concord,

an assumed normative consensus whose practical inconsistency could be observed from social movements and social protests (Evans 2005b, p.1054). At the output of his deconstruction, Evans provides three instances which expose the dominance or supremacy of the market discipline in the human rights set out, namely: (1) the work of WTO dealing with arguments over the exercise of liberal freedoms; (2) the ‘Dutch auction’ of human rights: a set out endorsed by market discipline where countries bid against each other to provide the lowest-cost economic environment to attract investors such as low or non-existent levels of employment law, trade union law, environmental protection and human rights regulation (Evans 2005c, pp. 67-69); and, most notably for the further analysis, (3) changing role of the state from a traditional one of a *guardian* of rights to the one of an *administrator* facilitating efficient and smooth operation of market reforms. Here, although in theory governments are assumed to protect human rights of their citizens, ‘in practice leaders are accountable to market forces, most notably *debt structures* and *structural adjustment programs*’ (Mittleman 1997, p. 1).⁴

This view is supported by Cox, who further elaborates it writing that: ‘to cope with the excluded and potentially disruptive, the institutions of global governance [international agencies behind the Washington consensus] have devised instruments of global poor relief and riot control. Humanitarian assistance (*the poor relief component*) has become a top priority of the United Nations and a major activity of a vast range of nongovernmental agencies. Where poor relief is inadequate to prevent political destabilisation, then military force (the riot control component) is evoked by the international community. Together, they help to *sustain* the emerging social structure of the world by *minimizing the risk* of chaos in *the bottom layer*’ (Cox 1997, p. 58). Cox’s argument that the underlying rationale of any welfare and social protection programme run by international networks is, in fact, aimed at risks minimisation of market globalism by subsisting the poorest endorses Evans’ conclusions in the Evans-Donnelly debate and is significant for the analysis of reconstitution of the right to welfare, employment and social protection in post-socialist Russia, especially for examining ‘colonising’ recontextualisation executed under the auspices of foreign policy interveners.

Here, Cook’s work on post-communist welfare states importantly acknowledges that the Russian state liberalised its welfare state and social protection programmes with direct policy guidance, financial incentives, and pressures from a network of international institutions

⁴ I will take a closer look at the impact of these debt structures and their structural adjustment programmes in the analytical part of the current research in Section 4.2

promoting social insurance markets, privatisation, decentralisation, and welfare state residualism. She further adds that the World Bank was ‘preeminent, providing a fully articulated liberal model for the transformation of inherited social sectors and intruding deeply into domestic political processes’, including the direct involvement of Bank officials in state’s policy planning institutions and its support of pro-liberalisation elites (Cook 2007a, p. 252). Her conclusion is that the influence of international actors was contingent on domestic political actors and their policy influence. However, unlike Evans and Cox, Cook concentrates on the implementation aspect of the welfare transformation reforms in Russia and investigates what came at the outcome of them, i.e. *what* was (un)implemented and *to what extent* (un)implemented. As she derives her research from the premises akin to those of Donnelly, she leaves the analysis of the substance of the transforming reforms off sight.

This study, on the contrary, phrases the question of *how* and *whereby* the transformations took place. In the following chapters, elaborating on the present state of the art, I shall discuss reconstitution of the right to welfare in the case of employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia as a manifest representation of the dominant human rights regime which, on the face of it, as Donnelly’s adherents might have argued, appears to sustain economic and social rights, yet, in fact, serves to facilitate policies and reforms necessary for smooth operation of the market discipline. Yet, I shall first outline the methodological framework of the present research in the next chapter.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss how the methods I have applied – a critical discourse analysis (the ‘CDA’) and policy analysis, enabled me to understand how reconstitution of the right to welfare in relation to employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia was effectuated and how these methods could be instrumental tools in uncovering implicit preferences of the dominant human rights discourse to address the research question. I then move onto discussing the ethical considerations of the present research. I conclude this chapter with a note on the limitations of this study.

3.1. Critical discourse analysis

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the dominant human rights discourse has a capacity to win acceptance as a non-ideological common sense through naturalisation of hegemonic ideologies, i.e. making them opaque, no longer visible. In this case, the objective of CDA is to de-naturalise the discourses.

With this in mind, critical discourse analysis is defined as a method of social analysis which combines *critique* of discourse and *explanation* of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality, particularly an explanation of relations between discourse and other social elements like power relations, ideologies, social institutions, as a basis for *action* to change that existing reality in particular respects (Fairclough 2013). It falls under the methodology of constructivism which looks at language as reflection of socially constructed patterns (Moses, Knutsen 2007). It comes from a premise that language is not just used to communicate, but also to build aspects of identity, to render things significant, and (or) to privilege some forms of knowledge over others.

CDA’s acknowledgement of a dialectical nature of a discourse, i.e. ideology as augmented reality and reality as constructed ideology (Fairclough 2015), intrinsic to virtually any ideological formation, provides a practical significance for application of this method. By denaturalising dominant discourses, which are presented as commonsensical or naturalised, and are, thus, opaque or invisible, the CDA method exposes underlying structures of power, dominance and ideology, and provides an entry point for a potential social change.

In Fairclough’s account for a specifically discursive ‘point of entry’, a discourse typically has the following stages: (i) discourse emergence, (ii) contestation, (iii) recontextualisation, and (iv) operationalisation (Fairclough, Wodak 2010). Relevant to the present research, the

category of recontextualisation originates in Bernstein's sociology of pedagogy (Bernstein 1990). In his work on pedagogical discourse, he characterised the latter partly in terms of its particular 'recontextualising principle': 'a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation with each other for the purposes of their selection, transmission and acquisition' (Bernstein 1990, pp. 183– 184).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough further interpret recontextualisation as a dialectic of colonisation and appropriation: one practice colonising another as well as simultaneously being appropriated within another (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999). This dialectic is central to understanding of the recontextualisation of employment and related social protection in the post-socialist context. At this point, emphasising that the application and accommodation processes in various contexts vary due to countries' historical and political agenda, Wodak enumerates case scenarios of such dialectics: sometimes colonisation takes place, sometimes appropriation, sometimes transformation and sometimes outright rejection of a policy, and he concludes with a remark that hegemonic ideologies are disseminated through processes of *recontextualisation* (Fairclough, Wodak 2010).

The chosen approach provides an instrument to investigate and address the identified research question. It sets a framework which allows to break down the question in two consecutive parts: (1) 'colonising' appropriation, examining how employment and related social protection have been recontextualised by external policy interventions, and (2) 'appropriating' recontextualisation, investigating how employment and related social protection have been recontextualised at the national level in the domestic discourse of post-socialist Russia.

Whilst to analyse the domestic discourse in the latter sub-question the present research applies the CDA method, for the examination of international policy interventions in the former, it employs a policy analysis method developed by Carol Bacchi, namely, her 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach (the 'WPR') which I describe in the following section.

3.2. Policy analysis: Bacchi's 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach

The WPR approach, developed by Carol Bacchi on the basis of Foucauldian genealogy, is a method which creates the opportunity to question taken for granted assumptions that lodge in government policies and policy proposals by interrogating, i.e. 'problematizing', the 'problem' representations which it uncovers within them (Bacchi 2009, p. xv). In this sense, this is a critical mode of analysis and it well complements the CDA framework.

The WPR approach makes its objective to make problems, implicit in public policies – explicit, and scrutinises them closely (Bacchi 2009, pp. ix-x). In other words, it makes invisible or naturalised problem representations in proposed policy prescriptions visible, denaturalised. To accomplish this task the WPR method poses six questions which set a framework to analyse policy interventions that are purportedly designed for ‘fixing’ problems *in retrospective*. These backwards tracking questions are as follows:

- 1) What are effects produced by this representation What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
- 2) What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
- 3) How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
- 4) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?
- 5) of the ‘problem’?
- 6) How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi 2009, p. xii).

While the first question creates the starting point for the analysis, subsequent questions probe deeply into policy’s proposals for change, inquiring about rationales for the proposal, deeper seated presuppositions underlying of what ‘needs to change’, and the effects which are likely to accompany this particular understanding of the ‘problem’ (Bacchi 2009, p. x). I will closely use this approach when considering how the right to welfare in the case of employment and social protection was recontextualised in post-socialist Russia in foreign policy interventions in Section 4.2 of the present study.

All in all, I will apply the WPR approach when analysing ‘colonising’ recontextualisation in social protection and social adjustment projects and recommendation of the international bodies, mainly, the World Bank, IMF and IBRD network, which are available in the public domain⁵. Regarding examination of ‘appropriating’ recontextualisation, I will apply the CDA method for analysis of the domestic discourse established in the governmental strategies and official presidential addresses, which are also available in the public domain⁶.

⁵ Respectively on the official websites of the mentioned agencies: <http://www.worldbank.org/>; <http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>; <http://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/ibrd>

⁶ These documents are also available in the public domain: <http://www.akorda.kz/kzhttp://kremlin.ru/>

3.3. Ethical considerations

The research does not raise essential ethical issues for potential social or political implications of the study as the data used for the analysis and presented in the research findings part in Chapter 4 is open access data which virtually does not include sensitive data. Furthermore, the research does not imply conducting interviews and (or) gathering any other qualitative data which may have sensitive and (or) protected content. The basic ethical principles are respected and maintained throughout the research.

3.4. Limitation of the study

To give it a fair acknowledgement, it is important to note that the subject of human rights in post-socialist context of ex-soviet countries is vast. It now expands on now-independent fifteen countries on a time span of more than a quarter of a century throughout which significant transformation and divergence processes took place across political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres. In light of objective limitations of conducting current research, mainly, time and resource constraints as well as the access to the data and its original language, the research scope was delimited to investigate employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia.

Another aspect worth highlighting is the limitations of the analysed data. The research used secondary sources available in the public domain in English, Russian and (or) Kazakh which to a certain extent delimit of what is accessible and, therefore, usable for the research. It should also be regarded that the statistical data featuring for the soviet period and modern day Russia has some institutional bias due to either official or non-official state censorship. Despite all the above, the research subject provides a fertile soil for further research which I address in the recommendations part of this paper.

The last point to address is researcher's bias. The researcher is originally from the post-soviet region: whilst it brings first-hand knowledge and experience in certain aspects of the study and opportunity to access data in the original language, there is also potential for subjectivity. In dealing with the latter, impartiality and a critical stance in assessment and analysis of the resources were paramount throughout the working process allowing different narratives and viewpoints into the study.

4. RECONSTITUTION OF THE RIGHT TO WELFARE: THE CASE OF EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED SOCIAL PROTECTION IN POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA

4. 1. Background information on welfare, social protection and employment in the Soviet Union

Socialist-era welfare states were part of a distinctive developmental model that gave them unique features. Socialist state bureaucracies controlled and planned their economies, allocating most material and human resources. The model entailed much more comprehensive and intrusive employment and income policies than are found in Western Europe, Latin America, and other regions (Cook 2007a, p.31). It maintained full employment and kept wages low and income differentials narrow. Planning authorities set prices according to state priorities rather than costs, favouring heavy industry and defence while subsidising and cross subsidising both production and consumption. Legal private markets and private productive assets were largely prohibited, and the system was protected from international markets as well as competitive pressures. Economic growth was based on extensive strategic agenda which mobilised increasing supplies of labour, materials and energy at a varying level of efficiency (Cook 2015). Developed in the USSR in the 1930s and extended to the Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II, this model, in spite of its arguable over-centralisation and inefficiencies, produced steady and at times impressive increases in GDP until early 1980s (*The Economy of the USSR: Summary and Recommendations*. 1990).

A comprehensive, state-supervised, and budget financed system of welfare provision was embedded in the socialist development model of the USSR. The soviet planners first constructed this model in the 1930s, and in 1960s and 1970s extended it over rural populations and steadily increasing entitlements and expenditures. The state provided universal basic healthcare and education, pensions and other types of social insurance, housing, family benefits as well as social goods at state set prices. Scholars argue that the level and quality of welfare provision were relatively low ‘by Western standards’ partly due to the bureaucratic planning process and inefficiencies resulting in chronic shortage of subsidised goods and housing (Cook 2007a, p.32). Yet the strength of the soviet welfare system was in breadth of coverage and the satisfaction of basic needs (Haggard, Kaufman 2008, pp. 17-20).

At the beginning of transition, the Soviet Union had in place fully articulated, mature system of social security which delivered extensive financial obligations to its population. These

included pensions, sickness, disability, family and numerous other social insurance benefits (e.g. for veterans of WWII, Chernobyl survivors, single mother households, etc.), housing, extensive in kind social protection benefits, which accounted for 40% of the overall social protection and provided to over two hundred of eligible categories, i.e. 'lgotniki', financed from the state budget partly through taxes on enterprises, usually with no direct worker contributions (Cook 2007a, p. 35). Given the very high labour force participation rates for both men and women, the open unemployment in ILO definition⁷ was officially non-existent⁸, social protection system, particularly, pension coverage was nearly universal for those retiring at the end of Perestroika.

Throughout most of the soviet period, the state endorsed full employment of the population while evading socially useful work and leading anti-social parasitic way of life were outlawed. During Perestroika the Soviet government recognised frictional unemployment and the responsibility for unemployment was delegated to the Employment Fund, which came into operation in July 1991, as defined by the Employment Law. Effectively, the Fund operated as an extra-budgetary fund which was used to finance and was managed by the state Employment Service (*Основы законодательства Союза ССР и республик о занятости населения*. 1991).

The Employment Fund had two primary sources of revenue: (i) 1% employer payroll contribution from all enterprises; and (ii) budgetary transfers. In addition, the Fund was entitled to receive voluntary donations. As to the eligibility criteria, the law provided two tier requirements: (1) at least 12 weeks of work in the previous year, and (2) actively seeking work test. Benefits were generally paid on an earnings-related basis and could be supplemented with payments for dependants and training scholarships. In addition, there was a minimum benefit, equal to the minimum wage, for individuals from low wage background or less than one year

⁷ ILO defines the unemployment as follows: 'The unemployed comprise all persons above a specified age who during the reference period were:

- without work, that is, were not in paid employment or self-employment during the reference period;
- currently available for work, that is, were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and
- seeking work, that is, had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment'. (International Labour Organization (ILO) Resolutions Concerning Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, October 1982, para. 10, available at: <http://www.ilo.org>).

⁸ This, however, does not mean that real unemployment did not exist at all despite the official statistics which claimed its total liquidation in 1930s. Due to the nature of the statistical data it is, hence, difficult to identify the real numbers yet both international bodies and scholarship seem to agree that it was comparatively low; unemployment was outlawed.

of service. The minimum benefit was meant to be increased quarterly in line with general price changes (*Основы законодательства Союза ССР и республик о занятости населения*. 1991).

With changes in political climate in 1990, as an outcome of Huston Economic Summit, the IMF, World Bank the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (the 'OECD') and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the 'EBRD'), in close consultation with the Commission of the European Communities, undertook a detailed study of the soviet social and economic state and produced a report on recommendations for its reform also establishing the criteria under which 'Western economic assistance could effectively support such reforms', a blueprint for its structural transformation to towards market economy (*The Economy of the USSR: Summary and Recommendations*. 1990, pp. 1-2). The report's recommendations on social protection policies focused on (i) establishment of means-tested and effectively targeted social safety net, (ii) minimisation of the state's role in setting of wages during the transition, and (iii) industrial relations and trade unions (*The Economy of the USSR: Summary and Recommendations*. 1990). With the soon followed disintegration of the Union this particular blueprint has never been effectuated. Yet its highlighted policy focuses and approach transcended in policy IMF-WB- IBRD interventions in newly emerged post-socialist countries the principal of which is closely considered in the following sections.

4.2. ‘Colonising’ recontextualisation: external intervention policies on employment and related social protection in post-socialist Russia.

Since disintegration of the Soviet Union, 118 projects (including pipeline and dropped projects) for the total commitment amount of USD 19,380.38 million have been run with varied success in the Russian Federation under the IMF-WB-IBRD auspices which included *inter alia* sequences of structural adjustment loans, projects on privatisation, enterprise restructuring, capital market development, legal reform, development of state statistical system, education innovation, health reform, housing, pension reform, and social protection aimed at ensuring the country’s ‘transition’ to market economy⁹. Particularly, the overall projects on social protection amounted to 14. The primary project relevant to the present research ‘Employment Services and Social Protection Project’ (the ‘Project’), a fifteen year loan initiated on 28 October 1992, completed on 30 April 2000, will be analysed through the lens of Carol Bacchi’s WPR approach in this section.

Employment Services and Social Protection Project was initiated in the ensemble with the structural adjustment loan and privatisation projects in the lead up to the state’s retrenchment and pull off from the planned economy. The project provides (1) quickly develop the capacity of the Federal Employment Service (the ‘FES’) to process the anticipated upsurge of benefit claims from the rapidly growing numbers of unemployed following economic restructuring and privatisation; (2) develop the FES’ capacity to carry out active employment policies, including retraining, and commence the design of a modern social security system providing the framework for successor projects in the areas of employment services, social protection and training (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, p. iv). The project description further provides that by means of financing equipment and technical assistance the loan’s deliverables constitute: (a) rapid improvement of the FES’ *capacity* to register and pay benefits to the unemployed, and introduction of *computer systems*, policies, standards and related software; (b) establishment of the FES and Ministry of Social Protection’s (the ‘MSP’) long-term *capacity* to:

- (i) “design programs, enabling mechanism and monitoring methods, for the improvement of labour market policies and management systems; strengthen programme services, including model employment services and programme to deal with mass layoffs, and

⁹ The statistical data is available at:
<http://projects.worldbank.org/search?lang=en&searchTerm=russian%20federation>

standby public service and temporary employment programmes to develop systems for monitoring labour markets and poverty levels to strengthen FES' efforts to organise *job training* for the unemployed in *the new skills required by a market economy* and in the preparation of curricula and training materials;

- (ii) improve *operational effectiveness* of the MSP and develop and test the automation of cash benefit delivery;
- (iii) initiate the design of a modern social security scheme and the development of a master plan and recommendations for the different agencies involved with employment services, cash benefits and social assistance”.

The project suggests that by providing the necessary equipment and training and by strengthening the FES-MSP management it would suffice in provision of timely support for the anticipated a large number of unemployed in the short-term, whilst, in long-term it would benefit the assistance in country's development of *a modern wide range labour market policies supporting the restructuring of Russia's economy*, and computerised social security system (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. iv-v). As potential implementation risks it envisages delays in the timeline, decrease in receptivity on the ground, and exceedingly decentralised approach in reform implementation by the local authorities.

Question 1: What's the problem represented to be?

Recalling that the WPR approach begins by examining what is proposed as a change and working backwards to see how that constitutes the problem. From the outlined project objectives and description, it appears that the 'problem', as represented in the Project, lies exclusively in lack of 'capacity' and (or) expertise resulting in unpreparedness of the FES and MSP in handling large amounts of unemployed as well as lack of or rather mismatch of 'skills' of anticipated unemployed. The Project treats the 'problem' as a purely management issue that could be 'fixed' by means of procurement of equipment and provision of technical assistance, i.e. it highlights the importance of the logistical means, e.g. computers, software and staff training, in resolution of the 'problem'. In the Project, the 'problem' of anticipated increase of the unemployed is expressly identified and addressed as a humanitarian question of poor relief. Such approach in addressing rather consequences of the 'problem' fundamentally obscures its root causes. Hence, I shall explore this question in the subsequent sections in due course.

Question 2: What presupposition and assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

This question involves a form of Foucauldian archaeology, identifying underlying what Bacchi calls ‘conceptual logics’, akin to above-defined ‘common sense’ or Fairclough’s ‘background knowledge’, and political rationalities in the Project policies under current investigation.

The Project builds on from the premise that the soviet economic system was ‘extremely inefficient’ and that both the structure of output and techniques of production reflected ‘a great waste of resources’ (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, p.1). Acknowledging the fact that most of USSR population shared a sense of economic security and involuntary unemployment was virtually unknown it aligns with the Cooks earlier conclusion on soviet welfare state’s ‘exhausting’ itself. Representing a clear example of adopting a post-socialist common sense in its narrative, the Project, hereby, denotes the soviet state’s excessive overspending on public goods labelling it as ‘inefficient’, as opposed to implied efficiency of the suggested policy adjustments principally informed by the market economy. It, thus, creates a binary of ‘inefficient’ and ‘resource wasteful’ soviet socialist in contrast to ‘efficient’ market economy which prepares the ground for dismantling the former by the latter.

Anticipating potential disagreement, the Project further outlines ‘scaring’ present and future statistics of the adjustment process that has resulted in creation of ‘high inflation and serious anxiety for million people’, twenty to thirty fold increase in commodity prices, sharp income decline, anticipated increase of the unemployed to over 10 million by 1993 and widespread ‘fear of unemployment’ (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 1-3). In this situation the Project is presented as an inevitable single possible solution and buttress to market transition where ‘without some reassurance that adjustment and reform are not going to involve personal destitution, *public support for present economic policies may disappear*’ (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 2-3). This proves Cox’ previously discussed thesis on sustaining those at the bottom layer to ensure smooth facilitation of market discipline.

The Project also employs, what for Evans is short-term hardship endurance for long-term good, when stating that ‘economic adjustment will require a *temporary* decline in output that leads to some *relative* deprivation and personal hardship problems’ (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, p 1). Further in this line, the long-term gain is measured in relation to the reference model, ‘industrial countries’ of OECD (*Employment Services in Industrial Countries*, *Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 11-13), with which

the Russian model, in Fairclough's words, meant to 'catch up'. In sum, these 'scaring', 'market buttressing', 'enduring' and 'market catching up' arguments provide justifications and prepare the soil for state's future pull off and retrenchment from 'extensive' and 'inefficient' budget-subsidised provision of employment and social protection.

The employment programme proposed by the Project, as in the likened reference model of the OECD countries, combines *reactive* and *proactive* measures, i.e. unemployment benefits and job search assistance (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 11-12). Introducing this reactive-proactive binary, the Project sets its priority from the outset in favour of proactive measures. In particular, the Project supports such imbalanced preferences by studies, claiming that '*higher benefits lead to longer spells of unemployment*' and not necessarily to 'an equivalent or better paying job', and concludes that although unemployment benefits do provide the needed income support they could, nevertheless, '*impede the process of market restructuring*' (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 11-12). Hence, it also highlights a recent World Bank survey which suggests that a legal and budgetary distinction is critical for income support and proactive employment programmes to safeguard investments for the latter from 'crowding out' by former's expenditures. This could also be observed from the allocation of the loan's overall budget where the proactive employment programme (USD 10,5 million) and the reactive employment programme (USD 44,3 million) estimate for the biggest expenditure items. Once again resorting to the reference point of the industrial countries as a designated ending point for the Russian employment and social protection system, the Project, provides that there has been a shift of public resources toward proactive policies, particularly training, reflecting the growing importance of human capital development on the one hand, and the decline in public works and wage subsidies on the other, unambiguously makes it clear that job search assistance is cost effective and should be the core of the adjustment assistance offered to the unemployed (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, p 1). Similarly, the dependency-independency dichotomy also underlies the Project.

When it comes to categories, the Project strongly focuses on a safety net in a form of targeted means-tested cash benefits for those facing 'the most serious problems of poverty'. Such binaries and categories as well as the above-described presuppositions are important for a WPR approach's new instrumental step in unveiling the 'problem' representation – a form of Foucauldian genealogy, focusing on the practices and processes that led to the dominance of this problem representation, which is the goal of the next section.

Question 3: How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?

The point of this section is to establish that ‘problem’ representation of Russia’s employment services and social protection has a history, or what Foucault termed as genealogy, and, hence, it could be otherwise. The section aims at observing particular developments as singular events, rather than as part of an evolution towards an inevitable end-point informed by the post-socialist common sense.

The first section of this chapter provided the background information on employment and social protection policies in the USSR. Yet, it is important to explore the genealogy of unemployment predating soviet period and see its conceptualisation in the Western thought to better understand the ‘colonising’ recontextualisation policies of the IMF-WB-IBRD network in the post-socialist context.

Applying the WPR approach in retrospective, an inception point Bacchi takes a Walter’s argument (Walters 2001) that the nowadays commonsensical concept of ‘unemployment’ was ‘discovered’ in the late nineteenth century which prior to that was understood either as an issue of overpopulation, or ascribed to factors exogenous to the market system (Bacchi 2009, p. 61). Noting that it was then conceptualised at a social group level, she subsequently points to emergence of the *social* governance regime and ‘Keynesian settlement’ where Keynesian economic ideas and Marshall’s defence of social rights alongside civil and political liberties settled in the view that the state has a duty to provide citizens with a 'modicum of economic welfare and security' (Bacchi 2009, p. 61). In effect, as previously explained in the Donnelly-Evans debate, security against risk was socialised where the state assumed responsibility for the management of a whole variety of 'risks' whereas the individual was construed as a 'social citizen' (Rose 2000, p. 159). This model of socialised risks was pretty much in place in the industrial countries prior to the demise of socialist statehood. In the governing of welfare since the 1980s there have been (a) a definite shift away from the *socialising of risk* described above, towards an *individualisation of risk* and (b) a focus on targeted groups of individuals.

Thus, the 'problem' of employment and welfare benefits dependency within post-socialist condition, including in post-socialist Russia, needs to be understood within the context of these paradigm shifts. Tying welfare benefits to work obligations forms part of a wider trend Lewis describes as the 'social policy of conditionality', in which citizenship rights come to depend upon performance of particular duties defined by the dominant discourse, power, and (or) interest. Henceforth, the 'active citizen', who is held to be 'responsible', replaces the older

welfare 'notion of universalism and need' (Lewis 2004, p. 25). Within such a politics, says Rose, the aim of welfare interventions is 'to encourage and reconstruct *self-reliance* in both providers and recipients of services' (Rose 2000, p. 265).

The Project's prescriptive recommendations conditioning the success of the unemployment programme to individual's seeking for the *proactive employment* option through acquiring '*lacking*' '*skills*' or better yet *self-employment* at a private enterprise represent an evident reflection of reconstruction of an individual as a self-sufficient, self-reliant individual whose rights, in turn, are coded as compatible individual liberties. While in in this case the Project lays ground for instilling norms and values, i.e. normalisation, of individual's responsibility, self-reliance, and proactivity the established delivery mode of employment services constitutes target groups quite differently. In effect, active job seekers are praised over and polarised with the reactive unemployed focus where employment assistance is reconstituted as a service provider and the unemployed as consumers lacking, however, the clout and value normally associated with consumerism.

Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this representation of the 'problem'? What are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

Summarising the above findings makes it clear that the Project treats the employment/unemployment problem in post-socialist Russia as purely management capacity building issue of both FES-MSP and the unemployed and provides prescriptive 'problem-fixing' 'one-size-fits-all' manner largely ignoring historical and structural particularities and path-dependency. Furthermore, by focusing on prescription of measures on registering, monitoring, deploying and retraining of the unemployed it thereby treats the 'problem' as a humanitarian issue and, thus, deals with consequences obscuring its root causes. By that, frankly speaking, the Project fails to address the elephant in the room. This fourth and central question of the WPR framework aims at uncovering what is left unproblematic and silenced.

As established in above questions 2 and 3, the 'problem' of unemployment is represented to be due to lack of capacity of both FES-MSP, which are described as unprepared, inexperienced, understaffed and technically unequipped, and the potential unemployed, who, in the Project's findings, tend to be lacking 'skills' suitable for 'market economy' and inexperienced in job search due to previously non-existent unemployment. In other words, the 'problem' here, strictly in economic terms, is represented to be a *supply-side 'problem'*, i.e. something is amiss with the supply of labour, the workers themselves and the employment system. Thus, the

Project's goal is to provide technical assistance and tools for FES-MSP's distribution of benefits or, ideally, 'ready' (existing) jobs for the unemployed. However, once having diverted the question from deficiencies in the supply, it becomes evident that the 'problem' of unemployment is a matter of lack of demand (non-existent jobs) resulting from the structural changes taking place with the dismantlement of the soviet state and consequent market endorsed transition. Put in Mitchell's words, '[t]here are simply not enough jobs' and one 'can't search for jobs that aren't there' (Mitchell 2003). The data indicates that a state-owned sector accounted for 77% of total employment in 1991 (*Russian Federation. Employment Services and Social Protection Project: Implementation Completion and Results Report. 2000, p.3*). With decline in industrial output of 20% in 1990-2000, along with IMF-WB-IBRD led mass privatisation, state enterprise divesture and other state retrenchment projects (*Russian Federation. Employment Services and Social Protection Project: Implementation Completion and Results Report. 2000*), no matter how well or often an unemployed is retrained and (or) how well the employment service is equipped and staffed, it, nevertheless, does not lead to creation of more jobs. This demonstrates one of Project's inconsistencies.

Defining an individual as self-sufficient and self-reliant also aids this proposed case-management approach where dealing with the unemployed produces the 'problem' as an individual's sole (in)ability to fit into a labour market. This framing allows structural and systemic deficiencies and hurdles to remain largely overlooked, ignored and invisible, thus, convenient for exploitation by the dominant narratives.

Individualisation of social risks also buttresses the myth that attainment of new 'skills' could be a successful strategy in securing an employment. Identification of 'skills shortages' as a cause of a problem represents unemployment as easily fixable matter and defines those who have difficulty finding work as the ones lacking 'skill'. For Bacchi, however, it is possible to challenge the idea that 'skills' are something sitting outside subjects, waiting to be acquired through making a case that the meaning of skill is 'primarily determined by power, not by job content' (Bacchi 2009, p. 66). Describing the labour force by 'high levels of education, with few differences by gender' and adds that Russia possesses 'a very large network of training institutions at all level', the Project finds it as the potential for successful implementation of the proactive employment service programme (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project. 1992, pp. 2-3*). This representation, therefore, rather supports the argument on what power recognises as skills and constitutes another reflection of the structural shift. Besides the Project is silent about the nature of redeployed jobs: even in an ideal case scenario meeting all

employment targets in quantity, it is unlikely that redeployed vacancies are compatible in their quality.

It should be noted that one of explicitly unlisted objectives of the Project was humanitarian poor relief in order to prevent disappearance of the ‘public support for present economic policies’ (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, pp. 10-12). For this, the project envisaged a safety net in a form of targeted means-tested *cash* benefits for those facing ‘*the most serious problems of poverty*’. Admittedly, this almost word to word repeats Cox’s earlier thesis on appointing social security benefits as sustaining the emerging order and ‘minimizing the risk of chaos in the bottom layer’, the proposed unemployment benefits are meant to target the poorest and reward exclusively in cash. Yet, the Project remains silent about the fact that preceding transition there were an extended number of social benefit recipient categories and almost 40% of social benefits were in-kind benefits, among others, housing, public utilities, healthcare, recreation, subsidised public goods, etc. The introduction of the safety net with targeted means-tested monetarised payments, along with other structural adjustment projects like dismantling housing and utilities subsidies, enterprise social protection, introduction of privatisation, was, hence, far from being sufficient and designed to reach exclusively the poorest.

The Project’s inception point – the soviet economic system with its employment and related social protection system being ‘extremely inefficient’ and ‘resource wasteful’ as a conceptual underlying logic – is a representation of its derivative nature based on the dominant post-socialist commonsensical discourse. This is also enforced by the Project’s part on assessment of potential implementation risks (*Employment Services and Social Protection Project*. 1992, p 1). In what is supposed to be the Project’s most critical self-assessment part, it identifies three constraints, namely: uncompromisingly urgent timeline, low reform receptivity on the ground and exceeding independence of local authorities leading to improper implementation of the advice – noticeably, all exogenous to the measures proposed in the Project itself. By leaving the proposals unquestionable, it, therefore, conceals itself from potential contestation and contributes to the earlier advanced claim on the ‘discourse closure’.

Taken together, the presented findings in analysis of ‘silences’ left unproblematic are consistent with and further support the research argument based on Evans’ discourse closure for the dominant human rights regime in support of a single narrative informed by the ‘market

discipline' and constitutes a vivid representation of Fairclough's 'colonising representation' in the given context.

Question 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

Following Bacchi's guidelines on the WPR framework, the goal of this section is to provide means for policy assessment. Addressing the stated question, this section abstains from measuring actual policy measures and rather examines three overlapping effects of the 'problem': discursive, subjectification and lived effects.

Discursive effects

Discursive effects are those created by the limits imposed on what can be thought or said within particular problem representation (Bacchi 2009). As observed in the previous sections, by placing the unemployment 'problem' in the post-soviet Russia within the 'inefficient' soviet, 'wasting resources' and 'efficient' reform, 'rationalisation' binary with an evident preference given to the latter, it stigmatises socialist associated 'extensive' public spending on social protection and, henceforward, becomes insensitive to critique and disarms actions to review the policy. In doing so, the discursive effects born by the Project effectuates impotence of actions towards progressive social changes what Fraser refers as 'exhaustion of utopian energies'. The discourse of individual's responsibility framed as individual's obligations which adds conditionality dimension to the individual-state relations to a large extent close off the possibility of employment of the 'rights' discourse.

Subjectification effects

Subjectification effects are those that accompany the ways in which subjects are constituted within particular problem representation (Bacchi 2009). Representation of unemployment 'problem' in the Project is worded in line with the current dominant style of problematisation which defines individuals as primarily responsible for their lives. The Project sees the problem to lie in the capacity deficit of an individual and FES-MSP and prescribes 'fixing' advices focused on capacity buildings, improvement of information dissemination on 'opportunities' for choices to be made.

Yet, as we saw in the above section, when unsealed, the Project's approach which puts the proactive employment services in its cornerstone, in fact, answers to the unemployment 'problem' with *retraining people who already have qualifications* for jobs, i.e. 'opportunities' (thus, Preparation of a Labour Market Information System agenda). With this, it obscures the

real cause of the problem: simply put, jobs are not in place due to structural changes in the aftermath of the demise of the soviet welfare state. This deconstruction reveals an essential inconsistency of the Project.

Such approach applied to define an unemployed as a FES-MSP's customer, an individual as a self-sufficient, self-reliant, and responsible for his/her own choices allows to bypass deeper structural hurdles and streamline desired market reforms while keeping 'those in bottom layer' in subsistence. It became essential in laying a foundation for state retrenchment and welfare state dismantlement.

Lived effects

With this representation of the unemployment problem in the post-socialist Russia, the configuration of employment as right shifts towards customer-provider alike relations of the FES and unemployed. Along with its reactive component of poor relief such representation facilitates reforms favouring market interests.

Even when provided that the technical assistance in training FES-MSP staff and procurement of necessary equipment is successfully achieved to run the 'reactive' employment service, the responsibility for the 'problem' is attributed to the unemployed. And since, as we discovered above, 'retraining people who already have qualifications' does not provide the alleged solution, i.e. create jobs, it is the unemployed individuals who are to 'blame' for failures in not being able to redeploy, as opposed to structural deficiencies. This imbalance demonstrates the power relations embedded in the Project. The Project Competition Report further supports this argument stating that the proactive employment services were not utilised *en masse*¹⁰ (*Russian Federation. Employment Services and Social Protection Project: Implementation Completion and Results Report*. 2000), whereas, the numerical drop in unemployment took place later in the Project timeline and could be rather attributed to the overall economic stabilisation in the country.

In reality, drastic increase of income inequality and feminisation of poverty in post-soviet Russia, two indicators which radically differ from those described in the pre-transition period, could be partly attributed to lived effects of the policy. Applying reforms in 'one-size-fits-all' mode, the Project largely ignored historical and structural path-dependencies and particularities

¹⁰ It is important to note that the statistical data on unemployment for the given period should be treated with caution as official unemployment indexes do not reflect those who were on unpaid leaves and part-time jobs which was a common practice.

which recontextualised employment and related social protection, put in Fairclough's words, in 'colonising' manner.

Question 6: How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How can it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The problem representation of (un)employment and related social protection as capacity deficit and potential welfare dependency is hegemonic not only in post-soviet Russia or the wider FSU region but in the world informed with 'globalism' at large. By drawing on Foucault's argument that problematisation is 'the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false', Bacchi highlights that designated institutions, including the multitude of individuals and agencies involved in 'servicing' the jobless, play a role in sustaining a problem representation (Bacchi 2009, pp. 71-72).

The discourse on employment and social protection is a strong discourse. It has been advanced via IMF-WB-IBRD interventions and despite mixed outcomes and effects described in the section above was replicated in following policies lying a foundation for reconstitution of the right to employment and social protection in post-soviet Russia. An important role in retaining of the discourse was played at the national level. While producing the discourse the international bodies got access to an unprecedented testing terrain to run the project adjustments. Often little contested they, yet, were not translated directly and rather were disseminated via domestic discourses which constituted the 'appropriated' recontextualisation of the initial narrative. I shall now turn to have a closer look at this process in the chapter below.

4.3. ‘Appropriating’ recontextualisation: employment and related social protection policies in the domestic discourse in post-socialist Russia

Fairclough and Chouliaraki have described recontextualisation as a colonisation-appropriation dialectic, where: on the one hand, a recontextualised policy/discourse is in a sense a colonising element, on the other hand, it, yet, enter a pre-structured field of social and power relations within which they are appropriated in different ways, with different outcomes (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999). With this respect, it is suggested that successful recontextualisation entails an ‘external’ policy should be taken up within an ‘internal’ policies which could result into acquiring hegemonic status and be subsequently implemented. In this section I shall consider how the IMF-WB-IBRD network led external policy interventions on employment and related social policies outlined in the previous section were (not) ‘picked up’ at the domestic level in post-socialist Russian discourse. To do so, I herein analyse presidential addresses (the ‘Address’), programme-forming sets of guidelines outlining state’s strategic social and political priorities, since the Project’s launch and later adopted Strategy of Long-term Socio-Economic Development of the Russian Federation until 2020 (the ‘Strategy’) using the above-described CDA approach.

The Russian Constitution (the ‘Constitution’) provides for the presidential addresses to be ‘annual messages on the situation in the country and on the basic objectives of the internal and foreign policy of the State’ (Article 84, *The Constitution of the Russian Federation*. 1993). Given historical and political features of centralised power in Russia, they effectually constitute key agenda setting policy documents addressed not only to the Federal Assembly, i.e. the Parliament, but to all state authorities, to society as a whole. In other words, policy blueprints which are consequently translated to programmatic acts and, therefore, are of particular interest for the current analysis. Applying the CDA approach to these addresses, I shall trace how they argue from ‘is’ to ‘must’, from descriptive narratives of changes in post-soviet Russia to prescriptive policies, from actualities to imaginaries and how this ‘is-must’ shift is justified. In the following sections I shall consider the following questions:

- (i) How do the Addresses and the Strategy narrate the context and changes of post-soviet Russia – what has happened, what is happening?
- (ii) How do the Addresses and the Strategy narrate, more particularly, employment and related social protection – what has happened, what is happening?

- (iii) How do the Addresses and the Strategy envisage Russia in the future (after the proposed reforms)?
- (iv) How do the Addresses and the Strategy envisage, more particularly, employment and related social protection in the future (after the proposed reforms)?

While seeking answers to the above questions, the following sections will also look into how the themes identified in the Project are picked up, elaborated and (or) diverged. In sum, the Project prescribed the Russian state to: (1) improve FES' *capacity* to register and pay benefits to the unemployed, and (2) establish FES and MSP's *capacity* for long-term execution of *proactive* employment policies, *inter alia*, retraining of the unemployed where the major emphasis was put on proactivity of an individual, who from then on is reframed as independent self-reliant 'customer' of the FES-MSP. As mentioned in an earlier chapter of this paper, the WB's influence was contingent on domestic political actors and their policy influence on adoption of 'a fully articulated liberal model for the transformation of inherited social sectors' (Cook 2007a, p. 252). Such liberalisation, as Cook suggests, went in several stages: non-negotiated and contested liberalisation (until 1999), and liberalisation negotiated with the elite (from 2000) (Cook 2007a). I reckon such periodisation informed by the 'politics matters' approach is suited for analysing 'appropriating' recontextualisation of employment and the related social protection in post-socialist Russia. The following sections apply the CDA approach to investigate how recontextualisation was 'appropriated' in the domestic discourse during these periods.

4.3.1. 'Appropriating' recontextualisation: 1991-1999

(a) Narrative and imaginary of Russia's current state

The post-soviet Constitution, adopted on 12 December 1993, established the Russian Federation as 'a social state' (Article 7, *The Constitution of the Russian Federation*. 1993). The conditions which took place in the immediate aftermath of the soviet disintegration are represented as unprecedentedly difficult and frightening crisis. Such situation is approached from the post-socialist commonsensical position and the responsibility for the current hardship is naturally attributed to the failure of the processor system:

'The communist project could not withstand the test on a long-term historical distance. The economic system turned out to be inert lacking mechanisms to adjust to changing realities and new tasks'. This, for the Russian executive, results into 'a continuing backlog from the most developed countries in standard of living and labour productivity, and evident inability to

respond to new, increasingly complex requirements of the modernisation of the new century – scientific-technological revolution, information society, globalisation of global economic relations’ (Presidential Address. 1994). In this layout, the changes are narrated as inevitable, irreversible, and reforms as a rescue, a single possible way out of inevitable destruction. In an evident example of this the Address resumes that ‘the communist experiment is over and there was no force which could have saved it’ and, therefore, ‘the only way out which gave any hope to pass on the brink of the abyss and not to fall into it’ was introducing all enhancing market reforms which primarily based on ‘*responsibility of citizens*’ and ‘*free self-organisation*’ (Presidential Address. 1996). Having answered to the question whether the 1990s crisis was the outcome of the reforms with a definite ‘no’, the Russian executive, further legitimises them by stating that the crisis could not but be exacerbated regardless of the reforms, that the negative developments which the state was facing in the 1990s would have taken place under the planned economy in any case but ‘on a far aggravated scale’ ‘without any pros’. Given such ‘compelled’ nature of the reforms which ‘should have been triggered much earlier’, in the Russian executive’s view, the reformers could only mitigate negative consequences preventing from ‘economic crash caused by the inflation explosion’ which they allegedly did (Presidential Address. 1996).

Upon accomplishment of the reforms Russia is envisioned as ‘a social state build through the market reforms’ with developed entrepreneurship, consolidated society and strong federal statehood. This outcome, in the Russian executive’s imaginary, stems from two interrelated milestones: (1) ‘abandon *utopian* social engineering’ by ‘continuation of the market reforms, transformation of the social and economic system’, and (2) ‘reduction of the reform’s price, i.e. fight against corruption, unjust inequality, poverty and forced unemployment’. As we see the social component including employment question is important in the narrative of conditions and changes in post-soviet Russia of the 1990s.

(b) Narrative and imaginary of employment and social protection

The initiated ‘*painful*’ and ‘*healing*’ transition is described as fragile in need of support and nurture. With this respect employment and related social protection as well as the social economic rights at large are seen as a guarantee for successful further unfolding of the market reforms. Putting reform implementation social protection provision in a conditional relation, the executive states that:

‘We have traversed a considerable part of the way towards a normal market economy. However, if we will not provide the social and economic rights to people... everything could be lost and we would be set back again. The enormously high price, which has been already payed, would be pointless. We would have to start everything from the scratch’ (Presidential Address. 1996).

When narrating the state of employment and social protection, it is admitted that the Government failed ‘to protect the social and economic rights’ and that state’s social obligations are performed in a highly inaccurate manner, ‘with gross errors and with tremendous effort’. ‘When referring to the social protection’ it is further admitted that often the most vulnerable groups of the population are meant, however, ‘today most of the working age population has end up among the most vulnerable’. In this respect, ‘giving people a job with decent earnings’ is ‘a real protection of the social and economic rights’.

The Russian executive sets ‘a paramount focus’ on provision of the social rights. Only by strengthening the guarantees for the social and economic rights, in its vision, the reformers would ‘fulfil their duty before the people as well as *ensure public support for the reforms*’. For delivering this, its prescriptions are: (i) targeted social protection of the most vulnerable, including the unemployed, (ii) increasing incentives and provision of equal opportunities for labour and entrepreneurial activities for everyone ‘which allows to form a wide group of economically *active* and materially *independent* people’, and (iii) rational use of resources allocated for these purposes (Presidential Addresses. 1994-1998).

Here, with regards to the latter, a key point of the narrative is in ‘finding the right balance’ ‘between economic capacities of the country and laws of the market economy’ so as ‘not to disruption of the reforms’, on the on hand, and ‘not to exceed the threshold of the social shock’ caused by emerged ‘poverty, scandalous inequality and unemployment’, on the other. In pursuit of ‘rationalisation’ and increasing ‘efficiency’, the existing practice of social protection, including unemployment benefits, distribution is rated as ‘resource volatilisation’ (Presidential Address. 1997). The envisioned policy solution here is rigidly targeted social protection of the most vulnerable, particularly the unemployed. Drawing on over two hundred categories entitled to social protection which numerically reaches over one hundred million population, the Address label them as ‘excessive’ and incompatible with ‘extreme budget constraints’, therefore, they should be retrenched with the exception of the most vulnerable all provided in monetarised form. Those appealing for retainment, are represented as seekers of self-profit. To justify the retrenchments, the Address refers to a comparison with the social distribution

policies in the developed countries which given their different context rather demonstrates Address' inconsistency.

Advancing along this line, the Address calls for changes in the principles of unemployment benefits provision. In its finding that such payments 'do not stimulate job hunting' and 'professional retraining', the Russian executive anticipates inevitable exacerbation of the employment problem to which, nevertheless, the state 'must be prepared' (Presidential Address. 1997). The implication is to streamline entrepreneurial activities and self-employment:

'Throughout this century a lot has been done to hounding *independent activities, self-initiative, responsibility and activeness*. Nowhere else was the most *entrepreneurial* part of a population so brutally suppressed, *unanimity, passiveness* and *dependency* were implanted'. However, with the new reforms the Russian society has 'found a new life' and, therefore, the goal of the state policy in new realities is to '*unleash society's inner energy*' and '*channel it into the perspective stream*' (Presidential Address. 1998).

As we see, the above findings demonstrate that policy adjustments on employment and social protection advanced by the Russian executive during 1991-1999 period, largely, coincides with those prescribed in the Project, they: first, favour state retrenchment and monetarisation, second, call for targeted payments for the unemployed as the most vulnerable, third, envision entrepreneurial activities and self-employment as crucial outcome of the policies. Such concurrence is representative of appropriation of the external policy interventions at the domestic discursive level and amounts to Fairclough's 'appropriating' recontextualisation.

It is true that at this stage, given the existing realities, the Russian executive principally stresses the role of unemployment and social protection benefits' provision. With its equation of 'reforming with infringement of the socio-economic rights – ruining the reform itself', the Address finds them instrumental in achieving overall market reform targets, in other words, essential for preserving reforms and reformers' credibility, preventing potential societal split and (or) upheaval and ensuring public support for the reforms. This comes in line with the Cox's argument on the role of social protection policies in keeping 'those in bottom layer' in subsistence to facilitate the market reforms.

The discourse also lays a basis for the entrepreneurship favouring approach to the question of employment and related social protection. Although, it warns that in social sphere the focus is placed on reducing the state presence, as opposed to 'state's surrender' in the economic sphere,

it, nevertheless, paved a way towards further retrenchment and de-stating elaborated during the next stage of recontextualisation (from 2000) which I discuss in the section below.

4.3.2. ‘Appropriating’ recontextualisation: from 2000

(a) Narrative and imaginary of Russia’s current state

The Russian state is represented in a state of ‘globalisation’, a nominalisation, and a highly abstract representation of actual processes, which necessarily subsumes a wide range of processes, and could be possibly regarded as mystification of existing diversity by giving it simplified appearance of homogeneity (Fairclough 2005). Moreover, globalisation is problematised as a ‘serious issue’ of the modern world where ‘[n]o country today, no matter how big and how wealthy, can develop successfully in isolation from the rest of the world’, on the contrary, ‘the biggest success comes to those countries that consciously use their energy and intelligence to integrate themselves into the world economy’ (Presidential Address. 2003).

The globalised world is assumed to be of harsh global competition: ‘the countries of world compete with each other in all economic and political parameters’, specifically, in the attractiveness of the business climate, in the development of economic freedoms. Within such hostile setup Russia is narrated as the one which ‘had to give up’ many of its competitive advantages ‘in the period of weakness’ of the 1990s, which were ‘immediately occupied by others’, and, as a result, it is now ‘lagging behind other countries’ (Presidential Address. 2002): For the Russian executive, the conclusion is obvious: ‘[n]o one is particularly waiting for’, ‘[n]o one is going to help’ Russia, therefore, it has to ‘fight for a place under the “economic sun” itself’. In other words, within the established imaginary the Russian society not only has to endure hostile global competition but also has to be capable of ‘catching up’ with ‘others’. And for that, presumably, there is no time for a delay, ‘not even for a day’, as the country ‘needs to keep one step ahead’ and ‘does not and should not fear change’ (Presidential Addresses. 2002, 2008). The recipe for accomplishment of these tasks, in the Address’ prescription, is setting economic growth as a paramount priority by means of investment, occupying global market niches and economic efficiency.

The following themes are salient in the Addresses: (i) globalisation as a ‘problem’, a hostile global competition race, where not every country would be able to overcome it, (ii) its imminent nature and urgency for respective address, (iii) Russia’s ‘lagging behind’ in this race for the place ‘under the sun’ and its need to ‘catch up’ with the world, and (iv) by reducing the ‘problem’ it prescribes a single possible way out through paramount ‘economic growth’. By

founding its narrative in these themes, the Addresses imply that to ‘win’ the global competition the state and society should be free from ‘fear of change’ and be ready to transform and adapt for the new realities, i.e. be ready to make concessions as it comes at an expense. This comes in line with the dominant neoliberal discourse labelled as ‘globalism’ and ‘market discipline’ outlined in the literature review. The concessions or expense, meanwhile, are assumed to be born from social adjustments of, particularly, welfare, employment and related social protection. The next section discusses how the latter is intertwined in the narrative of the Russian executive.

(b) Narrative and imaginary of employment and social protection

Employment and related social protection are described as having been stabilised where merits for the positive trend are attributed to the economic growth: ‘Thanks to this economic growth, almost four million people have left the status of the unemployed and found new jobs over these last years’ (Presidential Address. 2003). Having placed employment and social protection and economic growth in a conditional relation, the Russian executive, further anticipates that such ‘favourable’ economic situation ‘cannot and will not last forever’ and, thus, the society ‘must not stop there’. In this respect, it draws public’s attention to ‘another problem’:

‘The state’s total annual social spending commitments now come to 6,5 trillion roubles. This is almost double the country’s consolidated budget. Over the years, the executive and the legislative authorities have *promised people far more than the Russian economy can actually deliver*. What’s more, *populist slogans* and *empty promises* that *mislead* people and *cheat* on their hopes are becoming more common...

These kind of empty promises do not just *deceive* people’s hopes; they have a *negative impact on our whole ongoing economic policy* and they create *conflicts* and *distortions* in inter-budgetary relations. It cannot be otherwise than a state expenditure is growing at a faster pace than the economy itself.

...I think it is high time that we put an end to this kind of policy. The state cannot, must not and does not have the right to deceive its own people. If we have made a promise to the people, then we must deliver on that promise. Otherwise it is better not to make such promises in the first place’ (Presidential Address. 2003).

In this retrenchment forerunner Address, the cuts on social protection and welfare are legitimised by charging social spending with increasing financial burden with which the state budget cannot cope and which is incompatible with the economic growth agenda. What is more, it antagonises the pro-welfare and social protection policy supporters in public’s perception by labelling them as populist, dishonest and undermining state’s credibility. Yet, taking into account the fact that, normally, retrenchments are introduced in an economy in decline or turmoil, there is an inconsistency in this particular case where the retrenchments are

called in a situation of an overall economic growth. This becomes even more evident when Russian retrenchment policies on social protection are compared with analogous policies in other post-socialist countries which resorted such measures primarily during ‘economic shocks’ (Cook, 2007).

Instead of, what it claims to be, budget overspending the policies accentuate the desired outcome on self-initiative, individual responsibility and private entrepreneurship. Similarly to the 1990s addresses, they antagonise passiveness and dependency on state social welfare associating it with a remnant of a soviet past and demise the ‘false stereotype’ that the Russian people ‘are not used to freedom’ and that they ‘need constant supervision’ (Presidential Address. 2005). On such appealing premise, the policies elaborate their new vision of employment and social protection ‘promoting liberalisation’, ‘entrepreneurship’ and proactive ‘self-initiative’:

‘These years... have shown us that Russia does not have to be fated to suffer crises and decay, and that the Russian people are full of *talent, initiative* and *enterprising spirit*, that our people *know how to work*, that they deserve a better life, and that they can achieve this better life *if only we do not get in their way*’ (Presidential Address. 2003).

Reframing individuals as self-sufficient, responsible for their own lives, the policy ‘fixes’ represent solutions as ‘opportunities’ to be taken and ‘choices’ to be made. As in the Strategy, it is admitted that the policies are based on ‘the ideology which has people at its centre, people as *individuals* and *citizens*’, people who are ‘guaranteed equal *opportunities*’ and ‘their success in life depends on their *personal initiative* and *independence*’ (Strategy and Presidential Address. 2008). Yet, the policies remain silent about the limits of individual’s re-framing and that allegedly ‘available’ opportunities do not necessarily correspond to individual’s capacities, and even more so, do not equal to state guarantees.

These open a room for the policies for a further push to reconsider ‘the meaning’ of provisions on welfare and social protection, including those of employment, as ‘*mutual responsibility*’ (Presidential Address. 2013). Such shift from rights to mutual responsibilities effectively demonstrates the reconstitution unconditional rights to conditional entitlements which significantly narrows down the scope of welfare, employment and social protection provision. This is an important point to flag out in development of the internal discourse.

In sum, there are several aspects on which this internal discourse of the policies rests upon. First, the policies condition employment and social welfare protection to the economic growth which is intrinsic to the neoliberal ‘compensatory’ doctrine on social welfare suggesting that

higher economic growth will compensate the costs of market reforms (Orenstein, Haas 2005). Yet, overlooking that the latter does not automatically follow the former, they rather tailor employment and social welfare protection for the needs of the growth itself. For that they, secondly, legitimise retrenchments by labelling presumed social overspending as inefficient, soviet and ‘populistic’, ‘cheating on people’s hopes’. The policies further reframe individuals as initiative, self-reliant, independent, entrepreneurial and responsible for their choices and (not) taking opportunities. This is construed as something the majority should aspire to, whereas, implying that passive, dependent, reactive are residual, peripheral and (or) pathological rather than endemic, thus also drawing attention away from growing inequalities among the majority. By placing individual-state’s mutual responsibility at the cornerstone of employment and social protection provision, the policies, eventually, reconstitute the *rights* into *contractual entitlements*.

At large, the above line up demonstrates successful appropriation of the discourse recontextualising the WB Project prescriptions. As seen from assessing its impact on other policies, like outsourcing state’s welfare and social protection functions to ‘service providing’ NGOs, it represents a start and sequential development of de-stating process which fits well into continuum of overall reconstitution of rights to employment and social protection in post-socialist Russia and, thereby, supports the wider argument on dominant human rights discourse’s pursuit of rights, exclusively necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms.

5. CONCLUSION

The universal indivisibility and equality of human rights principle established in UDHR was once again upheld in the aftermath of socialist dissolution in Vienna Declaration. However, despite this seemingly impeccable endorsement of the unity of all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, in fact, market (or what this study considered as ‘market discipline’ and ‘globalism’), to which the current global reality subordinates or is dominated by, pursues only those rights necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms. The catalogue of the rights associated with market, therefore, qualifies human beings as individuals and agents of a particular kind and type. This results into ‘the new obscurity’, an idealised version of human rights that conceals consequences of the dominant discourse: that is, the discrepancy between the formal human rights regime, which posits the universality of all human rights, and actual human rights practice, which has been founded upon distinction between universal civil and political rights and uneven economic and social entitlements.

In this study, I have looked into how the right to welfare in the case of employment and social protection in post-socialist Russia has been requalified, i.e. reconstituted, under this ‘new obscurity’. Using the critical discourse analysis and policy analysis as methodological basis for the research, I have argued that the transformations which took place in Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union have reconstituted the right to welfare, including its employment and related social provision, in conformity with the dominant human rights discourse and reflect an evident example of the obscured discrepancy between formal human rights regime and actual human rights practice, a paradigmatic shift which has become a common sense of the post-socialist condition.

As research has demonstrated, the success of the reconstitution was effectuated by virtue of two processes: (1) external policy interventions under auspices of the international agencies behind the Washington consensus, namely, the WB-IMF-IBRD network, i.e. ‘colonising’ recontextualisation, which were then taken up by (2) internal discourse at the national level, i.e. ‘appropriating’ recontextualisation.

With respect to the former, the external policy interventions prescribed a series of structural adjustment projects in pursuit of facilitating the state’s retrenchment and pull off from the planned economy and cut its social protection ‘burden’. It should be noted here that the transformations were of an unprecedented scale and reformers, as acknowledged in the scholarship (Cook, 2007), received a *carte blanche*. Their recipe for ‘fixing’ the ‘problem’ of

employment and related social protection was of management and capacity building nature. As the 'problem' is represented as lacking 'capacities' and 'skills', the policies find it sufficient to prescribe measures on the Federal Employment Service's capacity building in provision of reactive and proactive employment services. With a strong emphasis on the latter measure and placing the problem within individual's lack of 'skills', the policies constitute a definite shift away from the socialising of risk, towards an individualisation of risk. By advancing such social policy of conditionality they encourage and reconstruct self-reliance and individual's responsibility. Treating unemployment and social protection as purely management issue it ignores the supply-side 'problem'. In other words, its proposition on retraining people, who in most of the occasions already have qualifications, for jobs which are simply not there reveals its inconsistency and its silence on the cause of the 'problem'. That is, the structural changes taking place with the dismantlement of the soviet state and consequent market endorsed transition. To facilitate the restructuring and transition the policies prescribe monetarised and targeted social protection for those in the bottom layer, enough for subsistence to ensure public support for the reforms and (or) prevent public resentment.

In sum, the policy interventions define an unemployed as a customer of employment service agencies, an individual as a self-sufficient and responsible for his (her) own choices which allows them to bypass deeper structural hurdles and streamline desired market reforms while keeping the poorest in subsistence. This becomes essential in laying a foundation for state retrenchment and welfare state dismantlement and is further picked up at the domestic discourse.

At the domestic discourse level the narrative of the Russian post-socialist state is, first, described as unprecedentedly difficult and of all enhancing crisis, and then as backloging in a globalised race of harsh market competition. Globalisation which needs uncompromising adjustments is construed as inevitable, irreversible, imperative process with an agentive capacity. By employing these scaring narratives, the Russian executive aims at legitimisation of proposed reforms which reconstitute the essence of employment and related social protection. The policy instructions of the Russian executive largely repeat those of the World Bank: they call for monetarised targeted support for the poorest to strike the balance between budget 'rationalisation' and ensuring public support for unfolding of the market reforms.

The merits for late positive trends in employment and social protection provision are attributed to the economic growth which is framed as unreliably impermanent. Stemming

from this weak justification, the domestic discourse further antagonises the pro-welfare and social protection policy supporters in public's perception by labelling them as populist, dishonest and undermining state's credibility. Such state retrenchments reveal an inconsistency of the domestic discourse as normally retrenchments are introduced in an economy in decline or turmoil, whereas in this particular occasion the cuts are called in a situation of an overall economic growth. Instead, the policies see an alternative in self-initiative, individual responsibility and private entrepreneurship. Reframing individuals as self-sufficient, responsible for their own lives, the policy 'fixes' represent solutions as *opportunities* to be taken and *choices* to be made. They open a room for the policies for a further push to reconsider the meaning of provisions on welfare and social protection, including those of employment, as *mutual responsibility*. This shift from rights to mutual responsibilities effectively demonstrates the reconstitution of unconditional *rights* to contractual *entitlements*, which significantly narrows down the scope of welfare, employment and social protection provision, as the latter, unlike the former, is meant to be provided under the condition that the parties would fulfilment the established contractual obligations.

Ultimately, the shift effectively demonstrates successful appropriation of the external discourse at the national level. It represents a start and sequential development of de-stating process which fits well into the continuum of reconstitution of the right to employment and social protection in post-socialist Russia, corresponds with the ideological change in the country and, thereby, supports the wider argument on dominant human rights discourse's pursuit of rights, exclusively necessary to sustain legitimate claims for liberal freedoms.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

As it has been noted earlier, the subject of human rights in post-socialist context of ex-soviet countries is vast. It expands on now independent fifteen countries on a time span of more than a quarter of a century throughout which significant transformation and divergence processes took place across political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres. However, on the other hand, this lays a fertile ground for further research and scholarly work.

In view of the current work, further research is recommended be conducted focusing on comparative analysis of the reconstitution of the welfare rights across the post-socialist countries. Such research could provide illustrative findings in support of ‘colonising’ nature of recontextualisation by the international agencies as well as divergence in appropriation of their policy prescriptions at domestic level.

Widening the scope of the reconstitution of the welfare rights could also be useful.

Conducting similar studies on transformations taken place in education, vocational training, healthcare, pensions, etc. could demonstrate the all enhancing nature of the colonising-appropriating paradigm.

Yet, another theme for research is examining discourses of other actors engaged in the process of reconstitution of rights such as both international and domestic non-governmental organisations, charities, donor foundations, social movements. This could compliment the findings of the present research with insightful narratives of alternative actors. Taking an example of NGOs, an examination of spheres which (not) attracted foreign funding could be one of potential themes.

Another important recommendation for further research is to investigate the effects of the reconstitution of welfare rights on vulnerable groups, women, minorities, *inter alia* the increase of income inequality and the feminisation of poverty in post-socialist context.

Finally, a qualitative research on the subject of the welfare rights reconstitution could also enrich the present framework with invaluable findings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Documents used for policy analysis

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