

Managing migration risks by means of electronic technologies

Gestionando los riesgos de la migración mediante tecnologías electrónicas

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to explore some of the present-day practices relating to the use of electronic technologies in managing migration risks in order to assess the degree to which electronic communications are employed today by regional authorities concerned with the implementation of Russia's migration policy. The authors utilized the following methods: 1) analysis of electronic services run by regional authorities concerned with migration policy; 2) expert semi-structured interviews with representatives of state and municipal authorities and non-governmental organizations (N=19, July–September 2016); 3) a survey of immigrants (by questionnaire) (n=150, Volgograd Oblast, July–August 2016); 4) a survey of the population (by questionnaire) (n=456, Volgograd Oblast, March–April 2016). The findings from these activities helped achieve the following: identify some of the migration risks affecting the social-economic situation within the region; develop a special model for managing migration risks, which presupposed making wide use of the reverse communication potential in communication between public authorities and the population and actively engaging citizens in the process of shaping regional migration policy; explore some of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of electronic services run by public authorities concerned with migration policy; analyze these to develop and implement the model for managing migration risks based on a set of criteria proposed by the authors. The study produced the following conclusions: the authors' model for managing migration risks presupposed a set of procedures that couldn't be put into effect without using electronic communications: gathering information on the migration situation; choosing and discussing a strategy for managing migration risks and techniques for mitigating negative effects; organizing reverse communication to be able to learn about people's reaction to this kind of activities; evaluating the results from the implementation of a specific solution. An analysis of electronic services engaged in resolving migration issues indicated that the majority of these services were aimed at just providing information and certain services, with most lacking interactive functionality and providing only limited functionality for reverse communication.

Keywords: migration risks, electronic participation, adaptation, integration, interaction between public authorities and the population, electronic government, social media.

RESUMEN:

El objetivo de este estudio fue explorar algunas de las prácticas actuales relacionadas con el uso de tecnologías electrónicas para gestionar los riesgos de la migración a fin de evaluar el grado en que las autoridades regionales emplean actualmente las comunicaciones electrónicas relacionadas con la implementación de la política migratoria de Rusia. Los autores utilizaron los siguientes métodos: 1) análisis de los servicios electrónicos administrados por las autoridades regionales relacionadas con la política de migración; 2) entrevistas semiestructuradas de expertos con representantes de autoridades estatales y municipales y organizaciones no gubernamentales (N = 19, julio-septiembre de 2016); 3) una encuesta de inmigrantes (por cuestionario) (n = 150, Volgograd Oblast, julio-agosto de 2016); 4) una encuesta de la población (por cuestionario) (n = 456, Volgograd Oblast, marzo-abril de 2016). Los resultados de estas actividades ayudaron a lograr lo siguiente: identificar algunos de los riesgos de migración que afectan la situación socio-económica dentro de la región; desarrollar un modelo especial para gestionar los riesgos de la migración, que presupone hacer un amplio uso del potencial de comunicación inversa entre las autoridades públicas y la población e involucrar activamente a los ciudadanos en el proceso de configuración de la política migratoria regional; explorar algunas de las características cuantitativas y cualitativas de los servicios electrónicos administrados por las autoridades públicas relacionadas con la política de migración; analizar estos para desarrollar e implementar el modelo de gestión de los riesgos de migración en función de un conjunto de criterios propuestos por los autores. El estudio arrojó las siguientes conclusiones: el modelo de los autores para gestionar los riesgos de la migración presupone un conjunto de procedimientos que no podrían llevarse a la práctica sin el uso de las comunicaciones electrónicas: la recopilación de información sobre la situación migratoria; elegir y discutir una estrategia para gestionar los riesgos de la migración y las técnicas para mitigar los efectos negativos; organizar la comunicación inversa para poder conocer la reacción de las personas a este tipo de actividades; evaluar los resultados de la implementación de una solución específica. Un análisis de los servicios electrónicos dedicados a resolver los problemas de migración indicó que la mayoría de estos servicios estaban destinados a proporcionar información y ciertos servicios, careciendo la mayoría de la funcionalidad interactiva y proporcionando solo una funcionalidad limitada para la comunicación inversa.

Palabras clave: riesgos de migración, participación electrónica, adaptación, integración, interacción entre autoridades públicas y la población, gobierno electrónico, redes sociales.

1. Introduction

Given the continual reproduction of social risks, the current situation of uncertainty, the need for highly professional antirecession governance amid an uptick in immigrant flows, imperfect legislation, an equivocal attitude on the part of the receiving population toward migrants, and a spike in xenophobic and ultraright sentiment, the changes in the existing social order one is witnessing today are a serious challenge for the local and global systems of regulation, cutting across just about any area of life in society and signaling the need to search for and employ novel, more efficient technologies for managing migration risks.

The authors view migration risks as a measure of uncertainty and possible negative/positive consequences arising as a result of migration processes, which are influenced by the quality of the way they are managed and the kind of technology employed at all stages of the process: from identifying risks to minimizing them by way of implementing special programs (adaptation, integration, multicultural, national security, etc.).

Requirements for technologies to be employed in managing migration risks, including information technologies, are quite stiff, as they are viewed as important and significant for all participants in the migration process, i.e. a country (region) receiving migrants; a contributing country (region), from which migrants are coming; the receiving population; the leaving population (emigrants); the arriving population (immigrants). Thus, technologies for managing migration risks ought to facilitate the resolution of a set of objectives relating to migration: from global to individual ones.

Today, most researchers are convinced that implementing electronic technologies in the area of managing migration processes may, on the one hand, facilitate boosts in its efficiency, and, on the other hand, make the activity of authorities concerned with migration policy more accessible and comprehensible to the population.

2. Analysis of the literature

2.1. Managing migration risks

Managing migration risks is an area that needs further research, with the global scale and erratic course of migration processes signaling the need to search for and employ novel, more efficient, including information, technology in the area. The authors find it conceptually crucial to reconsider some of the traditional schemes for managing social processes, which may be regarded as the latest discourse in the study of migration (Collier, 2013).

Defining risk as the object of sociological analysis and investigating its implications and areas of its manifestation and utilization may be regarded today as a contentious issue and a poly-paradigmatic sociological concept. Risk is an interdisciplinary category, which has yet to be given a universally accepted definition. Each science that utilizes this concept has its own view of how to define it and how to interpret it (Beck, 2000; Luhmann, 1991; Massey, 2002; Rosa, 1998; Stark, 1991). There are two major approaches in the foreign literature that construe risk as a social phenomenon. Based on the realistic approach, risk is interpreted in scientific and technical terms. This approach is employed in technical and engineering sciences. It is centered on the concept of possible harm, as well as the idea of the possibility of figuring out, through calculations, when it may occur and what

consequences it may entail. Here, risks defined as the “product of the probability and severity) of an adverse event (i.e. a hazard)” (Bradbury, 1989). Under the approach, risk is construed as an objective, measurable, and cognizable fact that is independent of sociocultural processes.

The other crucial approach to analyzing risk is the sociocultural approach, which is focused on social and cultural context. This approach emerged on the basis of philosophy and sociology. It comprises three major areas of focus: the cultural-symbolic dimension (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982), risk society theory (Beck, 2010; Luhmann, 1991), and calculative rationality theory (Foucault, 1969/2002). Proponents of the first focus area view risk as a component of the relationship between a person and the world around them. The second dimension is focused on macrosocial changes brought about when shifting to high modernization. Proponents of the third area of focus maintain that risk exists by way of human discourse. But, with all the variety of approaches in risk sociology, it is important that risk, as is believed by proponents of a sociocultural paradigm, is determinable and can be calculated, which can make it possible to make use of social risk research in governance (Yanitsky, 2003).

Given the characteristics of Russia’s historical development and their impact on the development of domestic riskology, the above view of risk is only in its incipience in Russia at the moment. While acknowledging the high scientific significance of researchers’ quest in the area of migration, it, nevertheless, is worth noting that research on migration risks has been rather limited, with resulting solutions having yet to be utilized extensively in public authorities’ actual governing activity. Analyses of social risks associated with migration processes cannot yet be regarded as accurate calculations based on which one could build a meaningful and effective program for managing migration processes to prevent risks from turning into reality.

The key difference between foreign and domestic approaches to defining risk is in that the former recognize and construe risk as an indispensable functional component of today’s dynamically changing social system and view it not only from a perspective of threats but from that of potential as well (Giddens, 1994).

Within the context of this paper, of importance is the authors’ definition of migration risk as a measure of uncertainty and possible negative or positive consequences arising as a result of migration processes, which it appears to be hard for us to keep up in wrapping our mind around due to upticks in migration and the resulting challenges facing the entire social system. Further, migration risks are an inevitable consequence of social processes occurring today in Russia and around the world (uneven economic development, armed conflicts, digital inequality, etc.) and an indispensable functional component of the social system in a climate of continual social transformations.

Special significance in the area of managing migration risks is being attached to aligning with present-day realities and the spatial-temporal characteristics of regions that are contributors and those that are recipients of migrants, which presupposes taking account of all manner of available resources, including information ones, factors for pushing out or pulling in migrants, and activity by entities which, through the use of various communication channels, particularly the Internet, a resource particularly relevant to this study, may influence migrants’ decision making, starting with making up one’s mind to migrate and through to receiving assistance adapting and integrating into the society of the receiving country or region.

Among the highest-priority objectives for public authorities concerned with migration policy to address today are identifying migration risks, analyzing the consequences, choosing a strategy for governance, organizing reverse communication in relation to the implementation of adaptation and integration programs, and administering control over carrying them into effect. These objectives presuppose active participation on citizens’ part, which is not likely to be possible without the use of information-communications technology.

2.2. Electronic technologies in governance

Our present-day information society is witnessing rapid penetration of Internet technologies into and its ever-increasing influence on all aspects of modern life. The basis for the development of civilization’s information-technological paradigm is the network interaction principle. The network principle’s flexibility allows for various modifications of organizations and institutions, as well as regrouping of their inner components. The ability to reconfigure the Internet space is one of the major traits of our present-day society and a qualitative environmental characteristic. This could not but have an effect on some of the key characteristics within the system of interaction between the state, the municipal level of government, and the local community, with one witnessing boosts in the emancipation of the person and there arising the need to shift from forms of command influence to those of cooperation and partnership, which may lead to the development and complexification of horizontal social relationships and the convolution of diverse civil institutions and movements into an integral network (Hill, Dean, & Murphy, 2013; *Citizens as Partners*, 2001).

Electronic technologies may be regarded as an efficient medium for organizing this kind of multilevel and differently-directed communication. Currently, most researchers are focused on three major types of electronic communication: providing information via electronic services, public authorities and citizens communicating via reverse communication channels, and engaging in partner interaction, which implies cultivating equal relations between public authorities and citizens (Caldow, 2004). Note that the initiative may come both from government establishments and from the most active members of the general public. Based on this, it may be worth focusing on the following channels for communication via electronic technologies:

- information services offered as part of electronic government that are created by public authorities in order to boost the efficiency of their work;
- platforms for citizens’ electronic participation in governance (including social media resources) that are initiated by citizens.

Electronic government may be regarded as the first and most significant stage in creating the conditions for citizens’ electronic participation in the public discussion of activity by public authorities, in the process of putting together a program for the region’s development, and in the process of integrating migrants into society of the receiving region, cultivating two-way communication between public authorities and the population, and providing citizens with equal access to information communication channels.

In the theoretical literature, researchers have not yet reached a consensus on the interrelationship between the key concepts pervading electronic communication between public authorities and society. For instance, the central term ‘citizens’ electronic participation in governance’ (‘e-participation’) is construed in a variety of ways due to the fact that each researcher exploring the concept tries to define it in their own way, often without taking into consideration the contribution of their predecessors, or tends to dispense with a definition altogether (Van Belle & Cupido, 2013).

The present-day Western literature has produced two major approaches to construing the term ‘citizens’ electronic participation’ (‘e-participation’). Proponents of the first approach view electronic participation as a component part and an outcome of the development of the concept of electronic government. There, however, has been a lack of research devoted to the analysis of the place and role of citizens’ electronic participation as a structural element of electronic government (Layne & Lee, 2001; Bennett, 2015).

Under the above approach, electronic participation is construed as a mechanism for reverse communication in electronic government, a collection of tools for interaction between citizens and public authorities. Sceptics claim that this view of electronic participation is inconsistent with the design of the entrenched 4-stage model for electronic government, proposed by American scholars K. Layne and J. Lee, which will not incorporate the mechanism for electronic participation (Layne & Lee, 2001). However, in the view of researchers K. Siau and Y. Long (Siau & Long, 2005), this gives no reason to consider the classic model outmoded. Scholars have suggested modernizing it and supplementing it with the fifth developmental stage, termed ‘electronic democracy’, which incorporates special tools for engaging citizens in governance, like online voting and surveys. A component part of electronic democracy is citizens’ electronic participation (e-participation), which the above group of researchers views as a narrower concept.

In the Western literature, increasingly wide use has been made of an approach that expands the scope of the concept in question and prioritizes the human factor over technological characteristics. Under this approach, electronic participation is construed as enhancing the performance of public authorities using the latest technology based on improvements in the quality of communication among citizens and between citizens and public authorities (Macintosh, 2006). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) prioritizes the active role of citizens and construes electronic participation as the process of engaging residents of a certain region in governance via information technology (Macintosh, 2006). Based on this approach, citizens’ electronic participation has two major objectives: implementing in practice the concept of citizens’ participation in the process of governance and turning public authorities into participative establishments via the institutionalization of participation as a standard value (Macintosh, 2006). One of the channels ensuring interaction between public authorities and society is social media, which in the present-day literature are construed as a collection of websites and Web applications that ensure mass network interaction, communication, and information exchange (Hill, Dean, & Murphy, 2013).

Given the topicality of the issue of managing migration flows, of special interest is the analysis of the quality of electronic communications in the area. According to official sources, electronic government, the official channel for functional-role communication, is a relevant form of organizing the activity of public authorities, including those concerned with managing migration processes (the Government of the Russian Federation and relevant establishments within it, the Chief Administration for Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.). It has been declared that, through the wide use of information-communications technology, electronic government is intended to ensure a whole new level of promptness and convenience in terms of providing participants in the migration process with information on the activity of state authorities, boosting the quality and accessibility of state services provided to citizens, simplifying the procedures and reducing the waiting times for using those services (e.g., obtaining an international passport, residence permit, or a patent for the conduct of work activity, paying a state duty, etc.), which ensures the population equal access to these

resources and uniform standards of service, regardless of the status of those seeking help, and helps overcome administrative barriers associated with using state services (Infometer, 2015). Citizens' electronic participation (e-participation), as the second stage in fostering interaction between public authorities and society, is only in its incipience in Russia at the moment. This, especially, is the case at the regional level, where there are very few instances of e-participation technology being employed and the level of participation culture is quite low, with the engagement of citizens in the process of regional governance via novel information technology still remaining "technology for the sake of technology" and an "artificial practice" (Magro, 2012) as far as regular citizens are concerned.

3. Methods

In conducting the study, the findings of which formed this paper's basis, the authors employed the following methods: 1) an analysis of electronic services provided by regional authorities concerned with migration policy; 2) expert semi-structured interviews with representatives of state and municipal authorities and non-governmental organizations (N=19, July–September 2016); 3) a survey of immigrants (by questionnaire) (n=150, Volgograd Oblast, July–August 2016); 4) a survey of the population (by questionnaire) (n=456, Volgograd Oblast, March–April 2016).

The study's purpose was to explore some of the present-day practices relating to the use of electronic technologies in managing migration risks. To achieve the study's objectives, the authors had to carry out an analysis of existing electronic services run by public authorities and experts.

The analysis of electronic services was conducted based on specifically developed criteria for efficient electronic communications. In developing these criteria, the authors factored in the potential offered by these services in the way of building awareness among, providing consulting assistance to, and cultivating partner relationships with citizens – the necessary conditions for implementing a proper model for managing migration risks. All in all, a total of 4 criteria were developed (Demushina, 2017), which are as follows:

- 1) the degree of openness and transparency of the websites of public authorities concerned with migration policy;
- 2) the number and quality of electronic services offered on the websites of these public authorities;
- 3) the availability of reverse communication functionality, put in place by these public authorities to assess migration risks in the region and develop an appropriate migration policy;
- 4) the degree to which these public authorities engaged citizens in discussing the concept of regional migration policy.

The study's results were supplemented with data from a series of surveys conducted by the authors between 2016 and 2017. As part of RFBI grant No. 16-13-34011 (Migration Risks in a Multiethnic Region: Sociological and Managerial Analysis), the authors conducted a survey of the receiving population (by questionnaire) (n=500, Volgograd Oblast, July–August 2016), depth interviews with immigrants (n=15, July–September 2016); expert semi-structured interviews with representatives of the scholarly community specializing in the study of migration processes (Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Rostov, Stavropol, Volgograd, Izhevsk, and Kazan) (n=21, July 2016–November 2017).

4. Results and discussion

An integrated sociological study revealed the following migration risks: those within the economy and the area of employment (stiffening competition in the labor market, the decreasing value of labor, off-the-books employment practices, failure to provide proper sanitary and other conditions for workers, the outflow of funds earned by immigrants to their homeland, and the emergence of "immigrant segments" within the economy); declines in society's intellectual potential; the worsening of the criminogenic situation in the region; conflicts on a religious basis; the possibility of enclaves emerging in cities and settlements; the exacerbation of the political situation in the region due to citizens' lack of trust in the government and the media (Drozdova, 2016).

Taking account of the special nature of managing migration processes and today's active use of information-communications technologies and various Internet platforms, from electronic government to social networks, the authors developed a model for managing migration risks. The model is a multistage process comprised of 5 blocks.

Block 1 defines the purpose behind managing risks in the area of migration, which is ensuring a balance within the interethnic area of regional governance and other areas related to it and minimizing negative effects from ever-increasing migration. The situational approach to governance presupposes adjusting governance objectives depending on various relevant factors. The objectives for the model for managing migration risks can also be adjusted, including based on data collected via electronic communications, especially at the municipal level.

Block 2 is associated with the stage of obtaining information about the migration situation and identifying risk; here, an invaluable source of information is social media, but that is provided that one observes all legal and ethical norms and those for the proper use of social media content.

Block 3 involves analysis to identify the consequences of risks; here, one determines the probability of negative consequences arising under certain conditions and develops various versions of models for the possible development of the migration situation in a region, a country, and around the world. Implementing this block of the model for managing migration risks implies active participation on the part of citizens, as only fostering two-way activity (which, understandably, may differ in manifestation and focus) by the population and public authorities and combining traditional ways of interacting with online methods can improve the quality of life in the region, having in consideration people's wishes and suggestions.

Block 4 deals with reacting and implies the choice of strategy for managing migration risk and the choice of techniques for minimizing negative effects, as well as developing an action program for managing migration risks.

Block 5, which comprises the final three stages, implies the actual organization of the process of management and getting a response through reverse communication and involves the implementation of the program for managing risk and control, analysis, and assessment of the outcomes of the solutions employed. Implementing the 5th block is, likewise, impossible without creating awareness, providing consulting assistance, and cultivating coordination-based, partner relations between public authorities and society.

The authors' scheme for organizing the management of migration risks was developed based on an existing model for organizing the management of entrepreneurial risks and presupposes citizen's active participation in its implementation. The model can only work out through the concerted efforts of public authorities and the general public. Collecting information, analyzing it, organizing reverse communication, and consulting, regarded as key processes inherent in the implementation of a model for managing migration risks, could be implemented via electronic communications, the latter's key characteristics being accessibility and transparency.

Research suggests that openness and transparency are two closely interrelated categories. For instance, in tracing the concept's history, scholar C. Hood identifies the "broadest doctrine of openness" as "...the doctrine that the general conduct of executive government should be predictable and operate according to published (and as far as possible non-discretionary) rules rather than arbitrarily" (Hood, 2006).

Over the past few years, the Russian government has carried out a significant amount of work aimed at boosting the openness of public authorities. For instance, Volgograd Oblast has been implementing a state program entitled 'Information Society (2014–2020)', aimed at boosting the level of interaction among citizens, organizations, and the state based on information and telecommunications technologies (Volgograd Oblast Information Technology Committee, 2014). One of the key criteria for the program's efficiency is the information openness of government websites.

Based on the results from a research project by Infometer, in the fall 2014 the Federal Migration Service ranked first (74.7% openness) in the information openness rankings of websites run by the highest executive government authorities. The agency also led the way in Russia in 'open data' (97.8% openness) among 78 organizations (Infometer, 2014). The websites of executive authorities were evaluated based on their conformance to the requirements set by Russian legislation and their user-friendliness. The recommendations by experts who worked on the above project included a set of requirements for coverage of current work (office hours, plans, announcements, meeting agendas and protocols, video broadcasts of meetings, reports on work carried out to achieve the targets for the nation's social-economic development, analytical materials containing assessments of potential risks and costs and gains from alternative proposals and adjustments associated with the passage of particular laws and regulations); the possibility of getting in touch with an executive and their deputies through the official website in online mode (engaging in reverse communication) (the experts were especially strict regarding the assessment of how well the authorities had been implementing new interactive tools for engaging citizens in discussion and how much of a part had been played in the activity of executive authorities by non-governmental organizations); creating mobile services that enabled the use of services provided by the given executive authority, as well as access to information (content on the website) via a smartphone (mobile applications).

As was noted earlier, Russia's Federal Migration Service was discontinued in 2016, its functions transferred over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. With the Federal Migration Service, once a separate establishment, turning into a division of another government agency, it no longer runs a website of its own but just has a designated page on the portal of Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs. It must be acknowledged this has had a negative effect in terms of information's completeness. Based on the findings from expert interviews with members of the scholarly community, reorganizing the Directorate of the Federal Migration Service has made it harder to resolve social, economic, ethnic, sociocultural, psychological, and adaptation issues

relating to migration and carry out communication using electronic technology, becoming a barrier to arriving migrants on various social media platforms. According to a member of the scholarly community who took part in an expert interview, "It's not the job of a law enforcement agency to handle social, economic, ethnic, sociocultural, psychological, and adaptation issues relating to migration. It's true – the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs did handle migration policy under Stolypin. But that was a different Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was concerned with the economy, with transportation. Our today's Ministry is a law-enforcement-type ministry. It cannot address those issues by definition" (an expert opinion, academic community, Moscow, July, 2016).

Engaging the population in the discussion of migration policy and consulting with citizens as to the major means of implementing the model for managing migration risks does not currently appear to be possible using existing electronic services run by public authorities. The functions of utmost importance – the controlling one and the one dealing with ensuring security – are key functions in the activity of said state establishment, with there being much difficulty at the moment paying due attention to the functions of adapting and integrating migrants. These functions ought to be within the remit of other government establishments, including self-governing authorities and civil society establishments, like non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Based on data from the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), the openness of the website run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation was estimated at 51.3% in 2016, with the Web pages of the Chief Administration for Migration still being a work in progress, especially at the regional level (Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), 2016), which placed the agency among those considered as "more of an open" authority, while many other executive authorities concerned with regulating migration processes should be considered as "more of a closed" one or an informationally "closed" one (e.g. in terms of openness, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation posted 48.6%, and the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Health Care (Roszdravnadzor) – 45.8%).

In this regard, it is worth noting some of the strengths in terms of the structure and design of the website run by Volgograd Oblast's Administration for Migration. The website is quite easy to navigate, with an articulate and easy-to-understand structure, regularly updated, and accessible to all categories of the population (there is a version for the visually impaired), with a portion of the website available in English. The developers are also trying to attract youth audiences. In particular, one can check the news through such well-known and popular services as Twitter (regular information updates), Facebook (updates a couple of times per week), V Kontakte (regular and timely updates), and YouTube. These resources have just one shortcoming, but it is quite substantial – all links to social media and tabs on the Web page of the Administration for Migration (as well as content in English and content for the visually impaired) deal with information that has to do only with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. An analysis indicates the website's poor informativeness when it comes to issues relating to migration.

At the same time, the website provides citizens with the opportunity to benefit from certain online services relating to migration. These include tracking the progress of one's foreign passport application, filing an application with respect to hiring a highly qualified professional, getting one's state duty payment documentation processed, scheduling an appointment online, and tracking the progress of one's permanent or temporary residence application. In addition, the website provides the addresses, phone numbers, and hours of operation of regional agencies within the Administration for Migration. There is no contact information for agency officers. It is worth noting that searching for what one needs may require some effort, as not too much of the information is readily out in the foreground. Overall, the Web page for the Administration for Migration is mainly aimed at providing information. Yet, it still needs work even in that area. Reverse communication functionality is present on the website run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Citizens can put in an online request with a relevant department, including the Administration for Migration. The website offers no functionality that would allow one to get quicker service, put in a suggestion of one's own, or have a say on issues that matter to them.

Unfortunately, far from all citizens and immigrants in Russia use the above services in full measure. On the one hand, this may be due to the government's reluctance to view the population as a full participant in social interaction (Leonova, 2010; Demushina, 2017). On the other hand, it may be due to citizens' lack of trust in public authorities at any level. People's attitude toward the government in Russia may be illustrated by the findings from a population survey by questionnaire conducted by researchers at the Volgograd Institute of Management (n=456, Volgograd Oblast, March–April 2016). Based on the findings, only 40% of respondents who used the Internet visited official government websites, with most doing so with a frequency of 1–2 times per month or less. Note that the majority of these visitors were urban residents (27.2%) and youth aged 18 to 30 (52% of respondents). The least number of visits to government websites to get information was posted by rural residents, as well as retired citizens and ripe old-agers. Only 0.8% of those who took part in the survey said they visited official government websites daily, while 43% said they did not visit those websites at all.

As one can see, to the population the end objectives and goals for electronic government, expressed in information openness and the engagement of citizens in the process of regional governance, still remain "technology for the sake of technology" (Hill, Dean, & Murphy, 2013), an "artificial practice". In the authors' view, these indicators bespeak the insufficient promotion of electronic services and low levels of people's awareness of the potential offered by official government websites, as well as the habitualness of traditional interpersonal interaction among representatives of the older generation when it comes to 'authorities – population' communication.

Over the past few years, reforming the system of managing migration processes in Russia has not facilitated much the development of electronic communication in said area, including for a number of objective reasons, with poor results posted in terms of boosting openness, providing people with relevant information about activity by public authorities, engaging the population in some of that work, administering control over activity on the part of society, and keeping track of and managing migration risks.

Currently, the primary source of feedback from migrants is surveys organized by public authorities and research teams, which, however, do not cover all groups of migrants coming into the country and cannot always serve as a source of complete and objective information. The authors are of the view that, therefore, data from mass surveys ought to be supplemented, by way of monitoring, with data gathered on social media, which may provide a greater effect in managing the migration situation, helping minimize uncertainty and, consequently, minimize the riskogenicity of social interactions.

Another way to obtain information, and at the same time a promising area for research, is the study of the latest migrant user communication practices observed on the Internet, which, no doubt, are a significant channel for helping migrants adapt, and all the more so integrate into the society of the receiving country. However, it appears to be quite difficult to set apart and differentiate this group on social networks, which could only be done through representatives of national diasporas and institutional actors, like national-cultural associations, etc. For instance, based on the findings from a sociological research study conducted as part of Grant No. 16-13-34011 (Migration Risks within a Polyethnic Region: A Sociological-Administrative Analysis) (2016–2017) from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, just 3.6% of migrants were able to get a job through the Internet, which gives all the more relevance to putting in place a special resource for migrants that would provide them with more information. Alluding to the need for this kind of assistance from state authorities, some respondents stated they, normally, had to physically visit the institution and sort everything out in person, while it would be so much more convenient to do it over the Internet, with others stating they trusted information they could obtain from their diaspora, which they definitely counted on (depth interviews with immigrants (N = 15, July–September, 2016)).

Another way for public authorities and citizens to communicate regarding the resolution of migrant issues is Web platforms initiated by citizens and social media. Websites like these could, on the one hand, facilitate the engagement of citizens, including migrants themselves, in the development of activities as part of migration policy, and, on the other hand, help public authorities obtain important information for creating and adjusting their strategy for managing migration risks.

Survey respondents noted a lack of Internet resources that would provide information and consulting assistance to migrants to help them integrate into the society of the receiving country. Yet, the authors' analysis revealed quite a vast number of pro bono portals and forums intended to provide all manner of assistance to foreign citizens. These services help foreigners access legal advice regarding getting an education and having paperwork created and maintained for them, conduct awareness-raising work, which does not impinge on migrants' cultural traditions and values, counteract the spread of extremism and tackle negative perceptions of the Russian Federation, and protect the rights of children and women. Such forums enable migrants to exchange information with one another and discuss issues that are of relevance to them.

Among the most informative resources for migrants available today are the portals The Federation of Migrants of Russia (<http://www.fmr-online.ru/>), Liga Zakon (<http://www.ligazakon.ru/>), Migrants.ru (<http://www.migrants.ru/>), and MigrantMedia.ru (<https://migrantmedia.ru/>). Most of the survey respondents had no idea about these resources. However, the actual websites, despite the significance of the work they do, only provide information and cannot be regarded as a channel for engaging citizens (immigrants/emigrants and the receiving population) in the discussion of issues relating to migration policy, so they may need further enhancing and developing.

5. Conclusion

In a climate of globalization and given the advances in information technology, social media, including ethnic forums, portals, educational servers, and social networks, are bringing about superspatial forms of interaction and enable adaptation and integration, regardless of which country diaspora groups are in and what kind of relationship they are in with their ethnic homeland, including those facilitating the cultivation of cultural patterns and motivation for migrating and studying the language and culture of the receiving country – and, subsequently, motivation for accommodating and integrating immigrants and getting to know the culture of those coming in among the receiving population.

The authors are convinced that cultivating a multicultural model for integration requires that public authorities continue their activity on expanding openness – but do so now not so much from the standpoint of just providing information as through cultivating reciprocity and boosting people's faith in their activity, which can be done only through cultivating responsible attitude toward their obligations and being oriented toward the engagement of citizens in the governing process. Practices of this kind can be implemented through further developing some of the resources that form part of the websites run by state authorities, creating special mobile resources, and, to a greater degree, popularizing the various forms of Internet interaction and social media at large.

This kind of approach to using electronic technology provides a different format of interaction with various national and confessional groups, which, in the authors' view, should also be studied, as they may act as barriers or even sources of menace due to difficulty of regulating and controlling transnational communication using information technology.

Thus, the findings from regional sociological research by Russian scholars attest to a lack of online interaction between regional authorities and the local community. In the authors' view, based on network theory, social reality is constructed by horizontal forms of integration (Latour, 2005), including in communication between public authorities and the population. Electronic government presupposes reconsidering the stance taken by public authorities with respect to the population and the potential for fostering electronic participation in governing society and resolving its problems.

An inevitable consequence of present-day social processes in Russia and around the world (uneven economic development, armed conflicts, social transformations, etc.) is migration risks, which are continually reproduced in a climate of social instability and inequality. Electronic government and social media at large ought to become the basis for managing social risks, as they possess the characteristics and resources required to provide a chance to remediate "the impossibility of communication" (Luhmann, 1997). Identifying migration risks using information technologies, cultivating two-way communication with the population, and promoting citizen participation in the development of practical recommendations on managing those risks may be regarded as a strategic area for managing migration processes with a view to ensuring national and regional security and cultivating a solidary social environment.

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