THE PROJECTORS:

EARLY MODERN SCHOOL IN RUSSIA AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ENTERPRISE

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[NB: What follow below is serve as introduction to my monograph in progress]

Silvestr Medvedev was conveyed to the scaffold on Red Square, near the Spasskii Gate, on February 11, 1691. The learned monk had been condemned to death more than a year earlier, having been accused of crimes no less than conspiring to kill Tsar Peter and Patriarch Ioakim, have Peter’s half-sister, the overthrown Princess Regent Sofia, crowned, and usurp the patriarchy for himself. The Naryshkin government had kept Silvestr alive, hoping to extract from him confessions incriminating alleged supporters of Sofia. Apparently, it had failed in this, despite the help of “fire, and whips, and other tortures.” Now Medvedev, a poet and a teacher of humanities, was finally beheaded, his body dumped into a pit by the poorhouse at the Pokrovskii Monastery.²

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Medvedev was the author of the “Academic Privilege,” *Privilei na Akademiiu*, the first-ever project for a school charter in Russia, a document that referenced Western European models in its very title. Medvedev had likely prepared the “Privilege” to be submitted to Tsar Fedor in 1681. After Fedor’s death, he tried once again to get it approved, this time by Sofia, but the monk lost his bid. The princess vacillated and eventually chose instead to appoint the Leichoudes brothers to organize an academy in Moscow, a concession to the patriarch made in an ultimately futile hope to secure his support in her political maneuvering against teenaged Peter and his Naryshkin supporters. This naturally provoked bitter acrimony between Medvedev and the “Grecophile” faction that stood behind the Leichoudes, and this rivalry turned into a public theological debate featuring mutual accusations of heresy. As long as Sofia remained in power, she and her staunchest partisan, Fedor Shaklovityi, the head of the Streltsy Office, vowed to protect the monk from his enemies, who now included the patriarch himself. But after the regency fell in 1689, these connections served only to seal Silvestr’s fate.

Silvestr Medvedev’s story is instructive in a number of ways. Most obviously, it reminds us that a struggle between “modernizers” and “reactionaries” did not define the political alignments of this age. In Sofia’s 1689 overthrow, Peter I’s supporters also included some of the more isolationist members of the elite, such as the reigning patriarch, while his opponents counted among their ranks such leading “Westernizers” as Prince V. V. Golitsyn and Medvedev himself. Political lines were thus drawn on the basis of factional allegiances, of memberships in aristocratic clans and patronage networks. At the same time, this episode also emphasizes how closely Medvedev’s efforts to establish an academy were intertwined with his political affiliations. The monk’s ambitions, his thirst for power and status, were not external to his educational project, but decisively shaped the structure of the organization he sought to create. In fact, the “Privilege” said very little about the content and methods of instruction at his would-be

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academy. Instead, it sought to establish the rector’s exclusive control over advanced teaching throughout the Muscovite realm. Among other things, it prohibited instruction in Greek, Polish, Latin, and other foreign languages anywhere except at the academy, even in private homes. The academy was also to perform an inquisitorial function, examining the religious beliefs of foreign scholars seeking employment in Russia, investigating suspicious foreign books, cases of public abuse of the Orthodox faith and church traditions, and so on. Furthermore, the “Privilege” presented the academy as independent, for all practical purposes, from the authority of the church and the patriarch, while listing numerous monasteries that were to be assigned, along with their estates, to the academy for its maintenance. Finally, this document also included an attempt to secure a permanent commitment from the tsar, who by affirming the “Privilege” was to swear on his own behalf and on behalf of his successors to maintain the academy “in complete integrity and without any change whatsoever.”

Indeed, as B.L. Fonkich observes, “ambition, jealousy, and hatred towards potential opponents of his plans—that’s what directed Medvedev’s pen as he was composing the ‘Privilege.’” This becomes especially clear when we consider the factors that motivated efforts to prepare the charter on the basis of drafts produced earlier by Medvedev’s former tutor, court preacher and poet Simeon Polotskii (1629-80), and to get it approved in 1681. In this, competition fueled Medvedev, as he reacted to the arrival in Moscow of a potential rival, one Andrei Belobotskii, who sought employment as a teacher, and to the success of an existing rival, the monk Timofei, in opening a school at the Printing Yard. The “Academic Privilege” aimed explicitly to monopolize the teaching field and to eliminate competitors, to secure authority and resources for its author.

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More than a curious footnote in history, the Medvedev episode stands as an illustrative example of how change was generated and institutions were created in the early modern era. This book argues that institutions neither built themselves, nor were somehow naturally brought into existence by the needs of modernization and the pressures of war and technological change. Instead, we ought to understand the introduction of new institutions and organizational forms as having been animated by the efforts of individuals and groups to implement their personal initiatives: projects driven by career, material, or ideational considerations, or, usually, by a mixture of these. Such initiatives varied in terms of scale and order. Some were about creating new organizations, such as, in Russia, Moscow University (1755) or the School of Mines (1773), while others were about inventing a new government post, defining a new administrative function, or introducing a new regulation or regulatory norm. Arguably, the expansion of the state in Russia and elsewhere was possible insofar as it enabled such enterprising actors to pursue their agendas, as the individual projects they proposed and implemented served as the building blocks for the edifice of “rationalization” and “bureaucratization” being constructed on the threshold of the modern era.

In order to explore this process, this book focuses on the evolution of schools in Russia in the crucial early stage of early modern state building under Peter I and his immediate successors. Founding new schools, “educating” Russia—this represents a trademark of Peter I’s reign and reformist program in much of the historiography, as well as in public perception. Russia’s first emperor is often associated with forcing his people to learn new subjects in new schools. These educational initiatives are often understood as having been fueled by the practical needs of Peter’s new military, since building a regular army demanded trained technical personnel. Finally, new schools and schooling are viewed as essential for the social engineering project unfolding in Russia in the eighteenth century, for the drive to create “new men” and a new
“Westernized” elite. More broadly, Peter’s school initiatives also stand as the direct forerunners of things to come, of the “modern” school of the next century, associated as it was with rationality, masculinity, discipline, and empire. A school—alongside, perhaps, a ship and a file of well-drilled infantry—could serve as an appropriate symbol of the Petrine regime.

Schools did change tremendously in the period under consideration. In the seventeenth-century, Muscovite education was based on informal practices of transmitting knowledge from a tutor to his pupil. When the first schools began to appear at the very end of this century, they were conceptualized in essentially artisanal terms: a “school” was a congregation of pupils around an autonomous “master” and his “apprentices.” There was no set curriculum, no record keeping aside from basic expense accounting, no attempts to formalize interactions between the teacher and his students. By the time of Catherine II’s accession to the throne, however, Russia boasted a number of educational institutions not all that different from the classical schools of the nineteenth century. Their rules and instructions established, among other things, a hierarchy of staff, a functional separation of duties, the regulation of the teaching process and the everyday behavior of the pupils and teachers, and increasingly formalized assessment procedures. In short, schooling had become institutionalized. These schools aimed to do more than disseminate knowledge; they also pushed the pupil to internalize prescribed models of behavior and thought.

The question this book seeks to address is how such schools—and, by extension, the novel

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8 Kosheleva, “Education as a Problem.”
institutions and practices that formed the administrative infrastructure of the early modern state—came into being.

That this question needs to be asked at all might not be obvious, for the answer appears exceedingly clear. Much like other innovations in Russia in the first half of that century, these new schools were apparently the fruit of forceful efforts by the omnipresent reforming monarch himself. While older accounts portrayed Peter I as a Promethean progressive and compulsive “Westernizer,” more recent works tend to present his approach to education as inconsistent, pragmatic, even opportunistic. He may have been an unwilling reformer, driven by very pragmatic considerations, but he was a reformer nonetheless. In other words, whereas in Western Europe “educational theories and schools of all sorts were usually the results of individual experimentation in pedagogical techniques,” in Russia “it was the emperor, and the emperor alone, who initiated serious educational activities.”9 Of course, there is no denying that Peter I, like many other rulers of the age, did personally drive some changes, playing a major role in designing and building novel institutions. As is well established, Peter could work incessantly on projects dear to him, setting aside many hours to pore over successive drafts of his Naval Ordonnance or his grand collegiate regulation.10 Yet, Paul Bushkovitch rightly warns us against presenting Peter “as a sort of deus ex machina whose magic wand effects all change in a society that is a vacuum.”11 As the following chapters demonstrate, in education, as well as in numerous other areas, this was not the case. As concerns modern schools, the myth of Peter the demiurge is


poorly supported by sources. In fact, unlike on other topics, Peter I himself never wrote anything extended on schooling; there are but a few lines on the subject scribbled in Peter’s trademark illegible handwriting. We must therefore deduce the emperor’s personal views on education from official decrees supposedly based on orders given orally or from unrecorded discussions with his associates. While Peter very much supported and promoted the need “to teach” (uchit’) his subjects, he rarely, if ever, spelled out what exactly this might entail. There existed a huge gap between his exceedingly short, vague orders and the specific trajectories of organizational development taken by a given school. His associates had to fill this gap as they saw fit, in the ways they thought would prove most advantageous for them.

Nor is it enough to simply point to borrowings from Western European models, since no certainty had yet emerged in Western Europe itself as to organizational forms for the training of officials and officers for the emerging “well-ordered” state. Practically speaking, during that period institutionalized schooling was not necessary for educating military or naval professionals and the established practitioners themselves—the generals and admirals—did not promote it. Rather, they typically viewed training on the job and through apprenticeship as far more necessary and valuable. Vauban, early modern Europe’s greatest military engineer, said of the graduates of the cadet companies established by Colbert: “They brought nothing to the service, they have seen nothing, thought about nothing, and know nothing but fencing, dancing and quarrelling.” In Vauban’s own corps du genie, engineers learned through practice by drawing ground plans of fortresses and entrenchments, not by training at institutionalized schools.12

Ironically, Field Marshal von Münnich, the founder of the Noble Land Cadet Corps in Russia, did not have any formal schooling himself. By reading books and observing engineering works in his native Germany, he learned enough to impress Peter I in the early 1720s when he competently and efficiently completed the construction of the Ladoga Canal. So, rather than

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being built on the basis of some self-evident imported template, the organizational forms that the new Russian schools acquired by the middle of the century were invented by competing, self-serving actors. While these actors heavily drew on different models existing or emerging in the Western Europe, they created specific combinations and adaptations of these models shaped by their priorities of self-promotion, of cultural or social engineering. This book intends to identify and examine such players, investigating their modes of operation and the logic behind the invention of the early modern school in Russia between the end of the seventeenth century and the accession of Catherine II.

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The issue at stake is not just the schools, but also the growth of early modern state institutions, and their “rationalization” and “bureaucratization” more generally. In the past few decades, historians of early modern Europe have been gradually but steadily dismantling the historiographical abstraction of an activist absolute monarchy purposefully building a “well-ordered police state.” In its place, a new picture of early modern regimes has begun to emerge. It is defined by “social collaboration” between the monarchs and the elite.13 Rather than presenting eighteenth-century rulers—including that role model for them all, Louis XIV—as having ruthlessly reduced elites to obedience with the help of a fairly effective and centralized bureaucracy, scholars now think of that period as one of negotiation and compromise. Studies of early modern France in particular stress the crucial role aristocratic networks played in severely curtailing rulers’ arbitrary powers, while also in enabling them to rule. That anything even remotely resembling a modern bureaucratic state apparatus existed in that period remains open to doubt: it was largely through court factions and patronage networks that the monarch could govern and mobilize resources. Consequently, political dynamics in early modern European states tend to be understood as driven not by a struggle between modernizing rulers and

backward-looking elites desperate to preserve their autonomy, but rather by the private interests of individual families and elite factions, as well as by competition between them. The rulers are likewise presented both as decidedly not “absolute,” and also as not very modern or modernizing in terms of their mental outlook and political agendas. In perhaps the most striking formulation of this thesis, Guy Rowlands argues that even the enormous expansion of Louis XIV’s army “was shaped not by an agenda of ‘modernization’ and ‘rationalization’ but by the private interests of thousands members of the propertied elite, from the monarch down to the humblest provincial nobility and urban bourgeoisie.” The “well-ordered police state” in general, according to Andre Wakefield’s revisionist account of cameralist practices, might have been “nothing more than a paper tiger,” “an empty promise.”

This focus on the “pre-modern” dimension of eighteenth-century polities and politics also increasingly dominates much of the recent scholarship on Petrine and post-Petrine Russia. Scholars tend to emphasize the centrality of informal relationships, personal models of functioning, and kinship-based networks, as opposed to formal, impersonal, and rationally organized structures, for understanding the political process of the era. As a result, great rulers of the age appear much more constrained in their ability to reform and “modernize” than previously thought; they are often presented as having difficulty balancing atop the squabbling aristocratic factions, if not being carried along by these squabbles altogether. Ultimately, the great “Petrine divide” seems not so deep after all, as the first emperor’s supposedly new, “regular” state now looks more like a façade, behind which traditional administrative practices, social relationships,


and cultural patterns continued unabated. Peter himself appears as firmly belonging in terms of his intellectual outlook and mental habits to the world of late seventeenth-century baroque Muscovy, and not as a rational precursor to “Enlightened absolutism.”

Indeed, decades ago David L. Ransel brought to historians’ attention the role of aristocratic clans and hierarchies of patronage in dominating the court and upper administration of the Catherinian era; both proved crucial to articulating and carrying out the royal will. Exploring the role of boyar clans and gentry kinship networks in seventeenth-century Muscovy, scholars have further emphasized the continuities between the pre-Petrine and post-Petrine political systems. Most recently, P. V. Sedov has chronicled the struggle between court


18 For an overview, see Ernest A. Zitser, “Post-Soviet Peter: New Histories of the Late Muscovite and Early Imperial Russian Court,” Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 6, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 375-92.


factions during the last decades of the seventeenth century, while Paul Bushkovitch’s groundbreaking study presents Peter himself as having governed by managing competing elite groups, largely dominated by the very same boyar clans that ruled Russia in the previous century. These accounts of early modern politics go hand-in-hand with studies that stress the predominance of seventeenth-century cultural practices and modes of self-representation in Peter’s royal self-fashioning. Even as the tsar asserted a radical break with the past, he did this very much within the framework of late Muscovite semiotics. Recent studies of early eighteenth-century administration likewise indicate that it was far removed from the ideal of rationally organized, centralized, and effective “bureaucracy.” Indeed, D. O. Serov’s colorful portrayal of the “statesmanship and criminal activity” of some of Peter I’s associates demonstrates the centrality of private concerns and outright corrupt machinations for the process of “Empire-building.”

The question, therefore, is how to account for the undeniable growth and rationalization of state agencies—for their increasing sophistication and the growing invasiveness of information-collection and regulation—while keeping in mind what we have learned about the

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predominance of “traditional, personal modes of functioning” during that period. This arguably implies tracing the emergence of early modern institutions out of the incessant competition between various informally organized hierarchies and networks that recent scholarship emphasizes. The fractious and personal dimensions of early modern politics have to be explicitly integrated in our accounts not only as a reminder of the predominance of the “traditional” in that era, but also because they enabled and drove the birth of the more modern, “rational,” and “well-ordered.” This means granting agency to multiple individuals at different levels of society—agency not only in the sense of avoiding, subverting, or opportunistically exploiting the changes that emanated from the center, but also in the sense of actively contributing to change through purposeful, conscious, and strategic actions. Finally, we need to explain why the institutions that we view in retrospect as more modern, “rational” and “well-ordered” might have benefited these actors such that they would make efforts to create them. Put differently, the explanation has to demonstrate how these institutions were produced by multilevel and multidimensional competition between diverse players acting in their own interests.

This is precisely the picture now emerging in such diverse works as Guy Rowlands’s study of Louis XIV’s army, Jacob Soll’s analysis of Colbert’s system of information gathering, and Andre Wakefield’s exploration of the ways in which the experts in “cameral sciences” (or “inventors-entrepreneurs of state finance,” as he calls them) built the practices of the “well-ordered police state” in the German lands by promoting the cameralist vision that “served their own private interests, securing positions in territorial Kammern and German universities.”


Most notably in the Russian case, David L. Ransel has suggested that the competition between court parties of the Catherinian era was directly contributing to the development of “systematic government.” Although the “ability of statesmen to act, even the reformer’s ability to reform, depended on maintenance of the traditional hierarchies of patronage through which actions could be effected,” these patronage contests played out behind a bureaucratic facade were “important over the long run in reinforcing a belief in the efficacy of legal relations.” And, while the reform proposals themselves proved important in “asserting the primacy of objective, legal standards over personalism,” they also “had an immediate purpose as weapons in the battles between personal and familial groups vying for power.” In particular, proposals to create a governing council of some sort that would regularize the day-to-day exercise of power by the ruler invariably came from the leading court factions that struggled to avoid marginalization at a given moment, while those enjoying the full confidence of the monarch never initiated such reforms, since it would constrain their own discretion.\(^{29}\) Recently, Brian J. Boeck argued that the imperial absorption of the Don region, a process that brought with it modern notions of territorial borders and sovereignty, grew out of both complex and shifting balances of power and interest between the tsar’s confidants and agencies, and also Cossacks forcing issues and concepts upon the tsar’s representatives and manipulating those that were being forced upon them in turn.\(^{30}\) E. V. Anisimov points out that we should understand the emergence of pre-Petrine offices (prikazy) and, later, Petrine administrative departments as a result of a gradual institutionalization of

\(^{29}\) Ransel, *Politics of Catherinian Russia*, 7, 134. Note the nearly simultaneous rediscovery of “bureaucratic politics” in the nineteenth century in Alfred J. Rieber, “Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia,” *Social Science History* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1978): 399-413, and the tradition of scholarship that drew on his insights. Most recently, Peter Holquist takes up this approach in his study of the Main Administration of Land Management and Agriculture in the 1900s-1920s, yet he focuses mostly on ideational agenda, on a specific institutional culture emerging within this particular department, and not on the institutional trajectories. Peter Holquist, “‘In Accord with State Interests and the People’s Wishes’: The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia’s Resettlement Administration,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 151-79.

\(^{30}\) Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3, 7, 117.
specific ad hoc personal commissions the ruler assigned to individual dignitaries.\textsuperscript{31} Anna Joukovskaya has masterfully reconstructed in great detail one example of the transformation of a commission (\textit{poruchenie}) into a more institutionalized agency (\textit{uchrezhdenie}) through the efforts of a notoriously entrepreneurial official, Aleksei Kurbatov (1663–1721), who sought to improve his administrative standing and to promote his own circle of clients.\textsuperscript{32}

This monograph builds on these insights by considering the emergence and development of early modern institutions, specifically schools, in eighteenth-century Russia as a cumulative result of a multitude of uncoordinated, finite institutional and organizational changes. These changes emerged in a number of areas: the rules of resource distribution and extraction, the rules of access to particular corporate bodies, pieces of information, or hubs of decision-making, and the modes of codifying relationships between individuals and entire organizations. A specific self-interested actor or group of actors designed and implemented each of these modifications; these were players, to quote Douglas North, “with the bargaining power to devise new rules.”\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Peter I’s associates would have failed to consider how a particular innovation or amendment might affect their personal power, finances, or access to the sovereign. Each of these changes produced benefits for some people and disadvantages for others; implementing them required efforts by specific persons, using the necessary administrative, symbolic, human, financial, and other types of resources, while also building alliances to achieve these changes. For any one of these changes to take place, its proponents and potential beneficiaries had to invest sufficient resources and effort to overcome opposition from

\textsuperscript{31} Anisimov, \textit{Gosudarstvennye preobrazovaniia}, 46–7; see also Sedov, \textit{Zakat Moskovskogo tsarstva}, 30–3.

\textsuperscript{32} A. V. Zhukovskaia [Joukovskaya], “Ot poruchenii k uchrezhdeniiu: A. A. Kurbatov i ‘krepostnoe delo’ pri Petre I,” in \textit{Ocherki feodal’noi Rossii}, vol. 13 (Moscow: Alians-Arkheo, 2009), 314–76. See also a recent dissertation that stresses the role of individual bishops in driving changes with the Orthodox Church under Peter and his successors: Andrey Vyacheslavovich Ivanov, “Reforming Orthodoxy: Russian Bishops and Their Church, 1721-1801” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2012).

Those who stood to lose from it. The roles and methods of these institution-builders will form the focus of my analysis below.

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As the late historian of early modern state-building Jan Glete asserted, “complex organizations do not emerge spontaneously.” Rather, “they are the result of the human ability to achieve both coordination and change: that is, to act according to conscious strategy.” Glete suggested that we draw upon theories of innovation and entrepreneurship in our conceptualization of change-making in the early modern context. After all, the rulers, ministers, and military leaders of that era were often innovators—or, following Samuel Johnson, “royal projectors”—who had to develop new technologies of power, administrative processes, and political links in order to survive in a competitive environment.34 In this way, they do not appear radically dissimilar from those who, in order to build new business, “master new technology, create new types of organization, and create confidence amongst a broad group of consumers that their product is better.” Glete singled out the organizational, technological, and political dimensions of entrepreneurship, stressing as prerequisites for a successful entrepreneur the abilities to find and motivate skilled personnel, to channel resources, including negotiating with the existing elites, and to make lasting alliances with individuals and groups that might benefit socially and economically from the opportunities created by new institutions. Entrepreneurship sometimes involved actively altering the rules of human interaction, manipulating information flows, and seeking to legitimize one’s efforts by persuading others of the importance of the central state for the protection of social order.35


Thinking about early modern state building as entrepreneurship, Glete explicitly tapped the ideas of Joseph A. Schumpeter, who put the figure of the entrepreneur at the center of economic analysis. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurs perform the “distinct economic function” of reforming or revolutionizing the patterns of production by exploiting new technologies, sources of raw materials, products, market niches, ways of organizing the industry, and so on. Importantly for our purposes, entrepreneurs are not just inventors, but individuals who get things done. Schumpeter argued that entrepreneurship characterizes a specific stage in the evolution of an organization: with time, small firms launched by entrepreneurs evolve or merge into large “bureaucratized giants” that “expropriate” entrepreneurs and absorb smaller firms. Within these bureaucratic giants, entrepreneurship takes place insofar as employees temporarily act as entrepreneurs in the course of their professional routines.36 Schumpeter’s theory of entrepreneurship offered its most valuable insight by refusing to assume that change is necessarily induced exogenously or, in other words, that entrepreneurial activity is merely a reaction to shifts in the external environment. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurs generate endogenous change, since they are able to break the routine and implement innovation.37

The concept of entrepreneurship has also become increasingly important for explaining change in institutional analysis and policy studies. Scholars in these fields explicitly seek to overcome the “continuity bias” that developed out of social scientists’ heavy concentration in the last decades on path dependency and the resilience of the traditional, as they understood change both in terms of punctuated equilibrium and as being primarily driven by exogenous shocks.38

While the previous generation of scholarship tended to present individuals as overly socialized,

36 Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (London: Routledge, 1994), 123, 132-34, 156.


recent works on institutional theory have proven much more open to allowing for the “purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions.”39 The roots of this strand of literature are often traced to Paul DiMaggio’s assertion that “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly.”40 Building upon this thesis, a growing number of studies explore “policy entrepreneurship” as a source of change and innovation within modern bureaucratic systems. These authors investigate the factors that explain the emergence of these entrepreneurs and the success or failure of their efforts, including their career patterns and methods of policy entrepreneurship.41

Similarly, a growing body of empirical work in organizational studies documents how change happens in large organizations. At the forefront of their author’s attention is the paradox of “embedded agency,” that is, the question of how change agents or institutional entrepreneurs—business leaders or other actors within firms and organizations—whose beliefs and conduct are supposed to be channeled by the existing institutions, are able to overcome institutional constraints and innovate.42 Scholars in the field of institutional studies introduce the


notion of “institutional work” that includes not only the dramatic and the visible, but also seemingly mundane “day-to-day adjustment, adaptation and compromises of actors attempting to maintain institutional arrangements.” Institutions themselves are viewed in this context as the “products of human action and reaction, motivated by both idiosyncratic personal interests and agendas for institutional change and preservation.”43 Studies of institutional entrepreneurship generally orient on such themes as the field conditions (i.e. the structure of the relevant professional domains and the entrepreneur’s position within them), the role of networks, or the role of ideas in channeling and legitimizing change. In a similar vein, Joel Mokyr has recently pointed to the role of “cultural entrepreneurs,” such as Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, in creating new “epistemic focal points that people can coordinate their beliefs on.” To him, these are individuals who refuse to take the existing epistemology “as given and try to change it and, of course, benefit personally in the process. Much like other entrepreneurs, the bulk of them make fairly marginal changes in our cultural menus, but a few stand out as having affected them in substantial and palpable ways.”44

Following these insights, this book argues that the novel organizational forms and institutions of early modern Russia—in this case schools—were built by specific individual and group actors who benefited from particular institutional arrangements and therefore mobilized resources (whether administrative, political, financial, or other) in order to create new


institutions or transform existing ones. A closer look at particular episodes of institutional change during this period will usually reveal the involvement of a grandee, royal official, or a freelance expert, who expected that this change would bring him power, resources, access to the sovereign, or opportunities to gain royal favor. In order to achieve their goals, these agents had to act *entrepreneurially*: they had to step outside existing institutional arrangements, both formal and informal, and beyond their official duties by asserting novel problems in need of solving, proposing and implementing novel solutions, and mobilizing and combining resources in novel ways. Their enterprising efforts focused on the administrative domain, both in the sense that they sought to benefit by shaping administrative structures, and also in the sense that they relied on

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45 Twentieth-century trends in historical theory, arguably, allotted very limited room for individual agency as a driver of historical process. Rejection of crude “great men” theories led to a focus on the ways in which the self is entangled in social and later in cultural systems. By the end of the century the very possibility of an autonomous human-as-actor came to be viewed skeptically, and reflections on the role of agency in historical process have been largely relegated to the fields of sociology and political science. Certainly, many of the more empirical, as well as biographical works produced by historians necessarily continue to acknowledge—if only implicitly—and study individuals who acted strategically and proactively, making meaningful choices. It would be fair to argue, however, that for the more theoretically minded scholars of the last decades, engaging agency meant primarily investigating subaltern agency. See David Gary Shaw, “Recovering the Self: Agency after Deconstruction,” in *Sage Handbook of Historical Theory*, ed. Sarah Foot and Nancy Partner (London: Sage, 2012), 474-94; Miguel Ángel Cabrera, *Postsocial History: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 1-19; Cabrera, “The Crisis of the Social and Post-Social History,” *The European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms* 10, no. 6 (2006): 611-20. On agency, also see “Agency after Postmodernism,” special issue, *History and Theory* 40, no. 4 (December 2001). Particularly in the case of Russian history, this perspective meant discovering and exploring the ways in which ordinary people (including “ordinary members of the elite”), marginalized groups, and the nameless multitude endeavored to avoid the grip of the faceless dominant structures (whether the state, the church, or serfdom), to subvert or to negotiate with them, to carve out small niches for exercising autonomy, limited and clandestine though it usually was. More recently, agency in the early modern Russian context has been fruitfully explored as self-fashioning in the sense of purposefully shaping one’s social and cultural personae vis-à-vis externally defined patterns. See Ernest A. Zitser, “The Vita of Prince Boris Ivanovich ‘Korybut’-Kurakin: Personal Life-Writing and Aristocratic Self-Fashioning at the Court of Peter the Great,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 59, no. 2 (2011): 163–94, and other materials in the same issue of the journal. For self-fashioning in Soviet context, see Golfo Alexopoulos, “Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 774-90. On the importance of the biographical focus, see Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland, “Introduction: Russia’s People of Empire,” in *Russian People’s of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1-17.
their administrative positions to propose change and mobilize resources for implementation. Quite often these entrepreneurs aimed at expanding or defending their administrative positions. They sought to benefit by inventing, or repackaging and employing, emergent theories and methods of “rational” and “bureaucratic” administration. These actors thus served as administrative entrepreneurs, or projectors. This book treats administrative entrepreneurship, or “projecting,” as a driving force behind the birth of early modern institutions.

The role of entrepreneurship in institutional change is becoming increasingly clear in our modern, hyper-bureaucratized era, but it also proved critical during the birth of the early modern state, perhaps especially so in Russia. The Russian state rapidly expanded the scope of its activities: where previously the functions of the state were mostly limited to waging war, collecting taxes, and administering justice, by the late mid-eighteenth century officialdom had inserted itself in an increasingly broad range of social and economic matters. Education and healthcare, science and art, transport and industry, agriculture and religion, poorhouses and orphanages—all of these came to be seen as legitimate targets for state action, regulation, and “policing.” Yet, at the late as the early eighteenth century, even the most advanced states possessed only fairly rudimentary bureaucracies, which were also “patrimonial,” to use Max Weber’s term. As Rowlands demonstrates in the case of Le Tellier’s management of Louis XIV’s armies, the duties of various officers and offices were not strictly defined: their authority flowed largely from their personal relationships with their superiors and subordinates, and they governed through networks of personal clients. At the same time, a ruler commissioning an official to perform a certain novel task rarely, if ever, could supply him with the money, personnel, and information needed to carry it out. That becomes exceedingly clear when we come to Peter I, who chronically underfunded the new initiatives he approved, not only because of a shortage of cash, but also because he did not feel obliged to provide such resources in a timely manner. Successful officials found entrepreneurial—and often extra-legal—ways to secure resources and the cooperation of necessary specialists by involving their own personal
clients or by creatively redirecting funding. In fact, early modern states often developed by absorbing not only patrimonial structures, but also private for-profit ones, from proprietary military units and private arrangements for their maintenance to trading companies that assumed the role of quasi-territorial powers and created the corresponding administrative capacity.\textsuperscript{46} Most notably, David Parrott has recently demonstrated that the “military enterprise” did not represent a dead end in the development of the modern army and military administration. Rather, it played a key role in that process, as centralized state-run armies and procurement systems grew essentially by “nationalizing” that which had been originally built by military entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{47} Indeed, many administrative units were truly “blended institutional spaces,” frustrating efforts to draw a line between the state and society. These included “private taxation companies; private trading companies that fulfilled state economic goals; banks and credit markets that specialized in government securities; guilds that enforced state economic regulations,” and so forth.\textsuperscript{48}

In this context, one could make a career by creating administrative enterprises and by amassing and exploiting a network of offices, both financially and politically. This also means that, for those already at the core of the “patrimonial bureaucracy,” expanding or defending vaguely defined mandates and resource bases became a constant preoccupation. Weber notes that competition over distribution of income sources “provides a strong incentive for the gradual delimitation of administrative jurisdictions.”\textsuperscript{49} For those on the margins or outside of the administrative field, the task was to find and “regulate” a niche for themselves; once again,

\textsuperscript{46} See especially Adams, \textit{Familial State}.


competition contributed to increasing bureaucratization. Producing new regulations became an important form of projecting, a kind of expertise that could be sold, as Andre Wakefield demonstrates in the case of the cameralists, since it allowed an entrepreneur to attract the ruler’s attention and establish a reputation as an expert. Even more importantly, regulations and bureaucratic procedures served as a technology of power that allowed administrative entrepreneurs to define and defend their administrative domains, to lay claim to resources and authority, and to structure their relationships with other players. This was especially salient with regards to more marginal actors, who could not assert their status purely through their (weaker) social connections and personal relationships with the ruler, and who sought to compensate for this by formalizing their standings vis-à-vis other actors. Yet, as we shall see, for these bureaucratic regulations and procedures to take root, they also had to be useful to a sufficient number of other actors, who might use them to achieve their own ends.

What, then, of the sovereign? The point here is by no means to deny Peter’s role, but rather to be much more specific in identifying the modes and extent of his intervention in each individual instance, and to take seriously the agency and agendas of those around him. From the perspective adopted here, a monarch could appear in two roles. First, the sovereign could act as a “projector-in-chief,” personally mobilizing time, money, and human resources for a project of one kind or another. Peter I serves as a particularly vivid example of such an approach. Prioritizing the role of administrative entrepreneurs is therefore not intended to question the tsar’s ability to intervene dramatically and decisively; his word was literally the law. He would sometimes issue amazingly, even obsessively detailed instructions regarding the production of specific naval goods or pieces of equipment. Peter often relegated day-to-day matters to established administrative agencies, while he personally designed and directed various important projects, like making a map of the Gulf of Finland, or constructing certain buildings, from his own residences to rope warehouses, or restoring fortifications. This involved designating trusted associates, who might be either foreign or from the ranks of the low-grade officials and would
thus stand outside of the official hierarchy. Often, it was up to such associates to inform the Senate or the relevant college that the sovereign had commissioned them for a certain task and then request necessary materials and personnel. They worked in close personal contact with the tsar, who presumably issued most of his instructions to them orally, but we can only guess at the frequency and the nature of such communications. We can be reasonably certain, however, that these interactions gave Peter’s associates ample opportunities to shape the his opinions and to dictate, for all practical purposes, many of the details of a given project.

Secondly, the monarch could set the vector and limits of entrepreneurial projecting by expressing his or her priorities and preferences, and thereby signaling what types of projects might receive support. No less important was the ruler’s role in creating a space for the projectors to act by disrupting preexisting institutional and social frameworks. That the sovereign could and did establish the general direction of entrepreneurship does not mean, however, that he or she determined the content of all projecting. It was up to the entrepreneur, in competition with his rivals, to articulate an unspoken royal wish. Indeed, more often than not, the royal “will” had been “configured” by the expectations and demands of a narrow but active elite circle; the discussion of state policy among the sovereign’s associates turned into a struggle for the right to interpret that will. Yet, as we shall see, many projectors pushed for initiatives that reflected the direction of royal thinking vaguely, if at all. Naturally, few managed to successfully pursue projects that ran contrary to expressly formulated royal preferences, especially in the case of such energetic rulers as Peter I or Louis XIV. However, in practice, there existed huge grey areas where institution building progressed unaffected by a ruler’s specific preferences. Generally, the majority of top decision-makers, including the sovereign, had only the most indistinct idea of what the institution in question might look like and what the proposed solutions and practices might entail. Administrative entrepreneurs thrived on this

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uncertainty: they actively reused and repackaged rhetorical constructions, filling them with meaning that suited their interests and backgrounds.

Finally, my focus on the ways in which competition for resources and authority drove institutional dynamics should not be taken to mean that ideas do not play a role in my analysis. I do not necessarily view the projectors as cynical and opportunistic; to sharply juxtapose “cynical” administrative entrepreneurs and “true” progressives would be as ahistorical as contrasting “scheming” projectors with “true” statesmen. Certainly, even the most opportunistic projectors internalized certain ideational paradigms and their previous intellectual backgrounds did, in certain ways, frame and channel their thoughts and actions. Rather than investigating the extent to which they “believed” the ideas they peddled, however, I am interested in the instrumentality of these ideas, that is, the ways in which people drew on them to advance their interests. From this perspective, concepts and theoretical paradigms provided raw material for new proposals and helped to justify and legitimize both projects and projectors. They also facilitated solidarities and held together networks of adherents and supporters (international as well as local), including influential patrons. Moreover, a desire to promote a certain ideational agenda served as a motive for projecting and, in that sense, entrepreneurs’ interests were not limited solely to material considerations. In fact, we see instances in which a project’s ideational content manifestly conflicted with the prevalent ideological environment or general policy directions. Administrative entrepreneurs, even those operating within the confines of the Petrine and post-Petrine monarchies, were able to mobilize resources to implement projects that had little in common with the sovereign’s interests or preferences.

We thus cannot study the emergence of the early modern state without also studying administrative entrepreneurs and their efforts. On the one hand, we should look at the ways in which the set of resources available to a particular projector shaped his entrepreneurial strategy and tactics. This might include a network of connections, direct access to the ruler or other key decision-makers, a team of colleague-clients, a reputation for expertise that could lend
legitimacy to a project, or the ability to mobilize financial or administrative resources in support of an enterprise. On the other hand, we should consider the entrepreneur’s competitive environment, especially the potential effect of his project on the interests (resources, authority) of other actors, and the opportunities for self-defense available to them. We should also be aware of other entrepreneurs promoting alternative projects in the same area. The stability and sustainability of a particular organizational change in such circumstances depended on the projector’s skill in attracting the resources needed for its implementation, which included assembling a coalition in support of the project. It also depended on whether other actors were inclined and also had the resources to employ the new organizational forms and rules to meet their own goals. As we shall see, in the absence of “users”—who would needed new organizations and regulatory norms to defend and advance their own interests and to formalize their relationships to other actors—innovations were likely to be unsuccessful, even if they had been sanctioned at the highest level.

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Contemporaries recognized the crucial role these enterprising individuals, or “projectors,” played in inventing the structures of the early modern era: it was the “Projecting Age” across Europe. Daniel Defoe famously coined this phrase in his 1697 pamphlet, “An

Essay on Projects,” in which he asserted that “the past Ages have never come up to the degree of Projecting and Inventing, as it refers to Matters of Negoce, and Methods of Civil Polity, which we see this Age arriv’d to.” Projects, according to Defoe, were “schemes” that “allow the Author to aim primarily at his own Advantage, yet with the circumstances of Publick Benefit added,” such as “Improvement of Trade, and Employment of the Poor, and the Circulation and Increase of the publick stock of the Kingdom.”

This combination was primarily responsible for the deeply ambiguous attitude to projectors found among their contemporaries, an attitude characterized by a mixture of fascination and apprehension and that was noticeable already in the seventeenth century. On the one hand, “projecting” and “inventing” reflected what appeared to be the spirit of the age, a belief in the possibility—indeed, the necessity—of the purposeful, rational reordering of society. On the other hand, the openly venal motives of many projecting authors proved hard to swallow. A serial projector himself, Defoe devised a variety of schemes, ranging from a method for preventing robberies to the establishment of a farm for breeding civets. His own relentless projecting notwithstanding, however, Defoe still decried other projectors as “predators.”

Defoe thus attempted to draw a line between two types of projectors. There were the vastly more numerous variety, those who “turn their Thought to Private Methods of Trick and Cheat, a Modern way of Thieving,” as a result of which “honest men are gull’d with fair pretence to part from their Money.” Such a projector is but a “contemptible thing.” There also

au début de l’époque modern à paraître,” in Frédéric Graber and Martin Giraudou, eds., Les Projets comme Institutions, XVIIe - XXe siècles (forthcoming).


existed a precious few who engaged in “Honest Invention, founded upon the Platform of Ingenuity and Integrity”: these projectors should be encouraged, as “new Discoveries in Trade, in Arts and Mysterie of Manufacturing Goods, or Improvement of Land, are without question of as great benefit, as any Discoveries made in the Works of Nature by all the Academies and Royal Societies in the world.” In a 1753 essay, Samuel Johnson attempted to defend the projectors, “whose rapidity of imagination and vastness of design raise such envy in their fellow mortals, that every eye watches for their fall, and every heart exults at their distresses.” A projector could be carried away by schemes and plans that eventually prove to be impracticable, precisely because of the very qualities of daring, imagination, and resourcefulness—“ebullition of a capacious mind, crowded with variety of knowledge, and heated with intenseness of thought”—that make him capable of useful inventions in the first place. Indeed, projectors’ propensity to fail in their designs represented the corollary of their willingness to try new things. Still, Johnson’s 1755 Dictionary had to acknowledge two definitions of the term: “one who forms schemes and designs,” but also “one who forms wild impracticable schemes,” akin to “quacks and lawyers.” Even Adam Smith, that great champion of the market, in his Wealth of Nations distinguished between useful “undertakers” (responsible entrepreneurs) and projectors who peddled “expensive and uncertain projects . . . which bring bankruptcy upon the greater part of the people who engage in them.”

In Russia, the discourse about projectors and projecting centered on their selling questionable schemes to the ruler, rather than the public. Naturally, the tradition of individual subjects or groups presenting policy proposals to the tsar has much deeper roots, traceable at

55 Johnson, “Projectors.”


least as far back as a 1539 petition from the residents of Belozero. Under Peter I, however, “projectors” became a recognizable, even ubiquitous phenomenon. The notorious Petrine pribyl’schiki, or “profiteers,” have become legendary; they specialized in devising new sources of revenue for the cash-starved treasury, basically creating the new taxes. Just like Western Europe’s projectors, both the pribyl’schiki and their successors throughout the eighteenth century were generally viewed, at best, as naïve and shortsighted enthusiasts carried away by their grandiose schemes, but more often as fortune-seekers, impostors, and con men, abusing the sincere fascination of the tsar and his associates with things foreign. So, just as Defoe and Smith tried to distinguish between pernicious schemers and useful “undertakers” in Europe, so in Petrine Russia we see a distinction between two types. Selfish projectors who act on the margins of the policy field, hawking proposals that are obviously unrealistic, and perhaps even damaging for the interests of the state stand apart from “true” statesmen, who present not “projects,” but legitimate and useful “reform proposals,” and act from within the government.

Upon closer examination, projectors are not so easy to dismiss, and the line between “projecting” and “real” statesmanship often appears extremely blurry. For N. N. Pavlov-Sil’vanskii, who authored the first full-blown study of projecting during Petrine era and published a number of key documents, projectors were important precisely because their very existence demonstrated that the tsar was not alone in his reformist aspirations. Rather a number of his subjects representing diverse social strata shared his goals. These “progressives,” moved by an “extreme degree of infatuation with the West,” penned proposals often very similar to measures envisioned or implemented by Peter himself. When that was not the case, their naivété and impracticality explained any discrepancies, serving to further emphasize the tsar’s pragmatic

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58 M. V. Klochkov, “Pribyl’schiki i donositeli petrovskogo vremeni,” Zapiski Imperatorskogo Khar’kovskogo universiteta 3 (1915): 1–16.

Yet Pavlov-Sil’vanskii’s analysis of projects also indicates, for example, that Peter took seriously not only policy documents prepared at his request, but also proposals submitted by obvious “projectors,” such as Fedor Saltykov, his emissary to England. Peter sent documents of both varieties out for examination and elaboration by the relevant bodies and officials. Put differently, the tsar does not appear to have recognized either projecting as a distinct phenomenon or projector as a distinct (and inferior) species of political actor.

P. N. Miliukov went much further, not only taking “projects” and proposals seriously, but also presenting them as central for the political process and Peter’s agenda. Indeed, Miliukov viewed Peter’s reforms as “initiated spontaneously and worked out collectively.” More recent studies of projectors step back from this wholesale denial of Peter’s contribution to policymaking, while also decisively rejecting the notion that projectors were separate from and external to the “government.” Indeed, Roger Bartlett takes a much broader view, picking up on Samuel Johnson’s characterization of Peter I, Charles XII, and many other activist monarchs as “royal projectors.” He treats the Petrine transformation as one colossal “project,” insofar as it reflected the “rationalistic concern to define and recreate the temporal world,” not only the “rational entrepreneurial spirit of the age, but also its capacity for untested and untestable visionary undertakings.” The same goes for Catherine II and for key ministers of her era, including the Shuvalovs, Ivan Betskoi, and Grigorii Potemkin. While this imperial projecting


was part and parcel of eighteenth-century European philosophical and political culture, with its mentality of “optimistic mechanical planning and social engineering,” it was also rooted, according to Bartlett, in the Russian tradition of autocratic rule, which made possible direct practical interventions by the monarch (and by powerful dignitaries) in many spheres—this would have been problematic or impossible in Western Europe. Projecting again appears integral for early modern state building, rather as a phenomenon external to it.

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The use of the word “project,” rendered either as prozhekt, or proekt, was first recorded in Russia in 1705 in reference to drafts or preliminary versions of official documents. In our contemporary usage “project” could mean both a document (a plan of action) and the efforts to implement a plan (usually collaborative and carried out by a temporary, rather than a permanent team). To avoid confusion, the term “project” is used here only in that latter sense, while documents outlining new regulations or formulating plans of action shall be referred to as “proposals,” or “policy proposals.”

Policy proposals in early modern Russia could take different forms. The most immediately recognizable are those submitted by the so-called pribyl’shchiki, or profit-seekers, especially characteristic of Peter I’s reign and often concerned with identifying new sources of revenue for the treasury (the aforementioned new taxes). Proposals presented by relative outsiders, such as members of non-elite groups or foreigners proved especially noticeable at the time. Over the years, some of these outsiders would come to specialize in producing numerous documents touching upon a wide variety of issues. The documents’ often lowborn authors seemed to evince impudence, both by daring to meddle in the affairs of the state and to offer


advice on a comically broad range of issues, and also by expecting pecuniary reward for their seemingly impracticable and misguided contributions to the “benefit of the state.” Their proposals thus appeared strikingly inappropriate to contemporaries, whose sentiments echoed the hostility projectors so frequently provoked among the Western European public.

After Peter’s death, the court battles of the late 1720s and the dynastic crisis of 1730 gave rise to a wave of explicitly political proposals, which touched upon the rights and prerogatives of the autocracy and the legal status of the nobility, and even involved as signatories, if not as drafters, hundreds of members of the elite. In the second half of the eighteenth century, there developed more institutionalized forms of submitting and soliciting proposal and opinions. These included Catherine II’s famous Legislative Commission of 1767-68 and competitions organized by emerging associations, such as the Free Economic Society. By the middle of the century, policy proposals evolved into an identifiable genre of political writing addressed directly to the monarch or indirectly via her favorites and possessing its own conventions of structure, presentation, and rhetoric. These documents sought to catch the reader’s attention with elaborately phrased, dramatic evocations of supposed threats to the interests of the state and the “common good.” They further offered well-structured remedies for the situation—sometimes framed by references to theoretical models and backed up by analysis of policies previously pursued in this field in Russia and of the best foreign practices—and called for the ruler to take specific steps. Invoking Peter became an especially important device for legitimizing projects, which were often presented as conceived by the first emperor or as an extension of his legacy. Of course, this contributed to expanding the myth of Peter as Deux ex machina Sometimes proposals would also include texts of regulations to be approved, or organizational charts and

65 On this episode, see I. V. Kurukin, Epokha “dvorskikh bur’”: Ocherki politicheskoi istorii poslepetrovskoi Rossii, 1725-1762 gg. (Riazan’: NRIID, 2003); Kurukin and A. B. Plotnikov, 19 ianvaria-25 fevralia 1730 goda: Sobytia, liudi, dokumenty (Moscow: Kvadriga, 2010).


budgets of agencies to be created. Discussions of projecting and projectors in early modern Russia usually addressed proposals of this type.

In practice, limiting our discussion to such formal, fully articulated proposals would mean artificially segregating these texts from the wider universe of policy initiatives and debates. Scholars often concentrate on the most visible published documents, many of which were explicitly conceived as literary texts and which do appear as strikingly distinct in both their structure and content. If we look at a broad range of proposals in the context of day-to-day governmental practice, however, it becomes harder to sustain a clear-cut distinction between “obvious” projecting texts and more mundane administrative and policy documents becomes harder to sustain. Rather, such texts would appear as at one end of a lengthy continuum, while at the other end one would find a multitude of formal and informal missives, memorandums, “points of inquiry” (вопросные пункты), and the like. Even dignitaries widely recognized as active projectors did not necessarily follow the conventions of this genre in all their works. While some of their proposals manifested as highly elaborate political documents, others could take the form of shorter notes, personal letters, or even oral presentations during the sessions of the Senate or other collective bodies (in the latter instance they might be recorded in the minutes of the meetings). Thus, for the purposes of my analysis, I will consider calls for institutionalizing distribution or redistribution of resources—whether financial, symbolic, informational, or other—and changes in the rules of interaction between agencies and individuals, regardless of the form the specific proposals took.

As for the term “project,” I use it to identify efforts to prepare and implement such proposals. The focus on implementation (even if ultimately unsuccessful) stands at the center of my narrative, for it draws our attention to mechanics of change and emphasizes the entrepreneurial dimension of projecting, since attempts at implementation required investing resources and cooperating with others. Even the preparation of a proposal in itself was not a

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68 On Petr Shuvalov, see Andriainen, Imperiia proektov, 11.
simple one-step task: it could involve assessing the current interests and priorities of the
decision-makers to whom the proposal would be addressed; finding the information necessary
for drafting the text, including foreign sources; and employing a scribe and/or a skilled translator
to produce a polished copy for presentation. Further steps could include gaining access to a
decision-maker; establishing the author’s legitimacy as an expert in a given field; securing the
assistance of those capable of influencing the ruler’s opinion and blocking opposition; acquiring
appropriate financial and human resources once the proposal was approved; and demonstrating
one’s achievements to the decision-maker in question. Each administrative entrepreneur can be
placed in one of three categories, depending on his position within the political-administrative
field, his access to resources and decision-makers, and his entrepreneurial models: the “expert,”
the “minister,” and the “functionary.” All three will be presented in the chapters below. The
boundaries between these types often appear indistinct: a number of projectors occupied an
intermediary position, or could be assigned to more than one category depending on the
circumstances. No less often, we find different types of entrepreneurs acting jointly and
cooperating on an ad hoc basis or forming stable “constellations,” as Joseph Ben-David dubbed
them in the case of French academic politics: “vertical combinations of individual scientific
entrepreneurs or scientific cliques . . . on the one hand, and individual administrators and
politicians, on the other.”

The expert represents the most immediately recognizable type of projector. Generally
speaking, these individuals claimed to possess particular knowledge qualifying them to set up a
new organization or prescribe new rules. Their claims were often justified on the grounds of their

69 On “constellations” as analyzed in the case of French academic politics, see Joseph Ben-
David, The Scientist’s Role in Society: A Comparative Study (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1984), 105; S. L. Kozlov, “Iz istorii intellektual’nogo predprinimatel’stva vo Frantsii: Kak
byla sozdana Prakticheskaia shkola vysshikh issledovanii,” in Permiakovskii sbornik: Sbornik
nauchnykh trudov, vol. 2, ed. N. N. Mazur (Moscow: Novoe izdatel’stvo, 2010), 400–42; S. L.
Kozlov, “Soobschestvo vyskocheck: ‘Sub’ektivnyi faktor’ reformy vysshego obrazovaniia vo
Frantsii epokhi Vtoroi imperii,” Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie 100 (2009), 583–606.

alleged familiarity with the customs and advanced practices of foreign countries, so such experts were often either foreigners or natives who spent some time in regions where a given field was believed to be especially advanced. Occasionally, ranks, patents, or diplomas acquired abroad, or references to foreign celebrities might be invoked to confer additional legitimacy. On the basis of their superior know-how, these experts asserted their ability to design, establish, and run organizations that would fit the presumed needs of the ruler or his ministers. Not infrequently, however, such experts did not ground their proposals in any specific request formulated by the ruler, but rather professed to have discovered pressing societal or administrative problems not yet recognized by the government. Such proposals were also often accompanied by declarations about the projector’s organizational capabilities: entrepreneurs might claim to already have at their disposal core personnel for a future organization, or to have the ability to recruit such personnel through their connections. Naturally, they sometimes referred to successes in performing similar tasks elsewhere. Such projectors tended to be outsiders socially (they were foreigners, low-status locals, or both) and administratively. In a sense, their very marginality forced upon them the role of expert. It also meant that their activities often had to take place within the context of patron-client relations with those who could help them to get the necessary resources and access to decision-makers. In their different ways, Aleksei Kurbatov (chapter 2) and Baron de Saint-Hillaire (chapter 3) both provide examples of such “experts.”

Proposals from experts often represented the prozhekt in its purest form, calling for the creation of a new organization and carrying an implicit (sometimes, explicit) expectation that the projector in question would be appointed as its head. Projector thus literally invented new state functions that he would perform. Sometimes, and especially if the proposal outlined a broad statewide reform, projectors actually focused not on the full-scale implementation of grand ideas, but on receiving a lump-sum monetary reward or some reasonably lucrative appointment in state service. Yet it would be wrong to limit our definition of entrepreneurial success only to episodes when a new organization or set of rules gained approval and became established. Not obtaining
approval for a particular proposal did not necessarily mean total failure, for individual episodes of projecting formed as integral parts of larger entrepreneurial strategies. From that perspective, the very ability to bring a proposal to the attention of the ruler or an important dignitary could be an end in itself. Even if a proposal was not implemented, it still helped the projector to draw attention to his person, contributed to his reputation as an expert, and allowed him to establish or to maintain a channel of communication with the relevant decision-makers. It paved the way for future projecting. We should keep this in mind before condemning some experts’ texts for being overtly grandiose or obviously impractical. The parties involved likely understood that such documents were not always meant for immediate and literal implementation, but rather that they represented a rhetorical tool, a form of communication between the experts and the ruler. Indeed, for established experts, proposal submission became ritualized: periodically presenting proposals allowed an entrepreneur to reassert his status as an expert and maintain communication with decision-makers, regardless of any expectations that his ideas would be implemented. Specifically, the accession of a new ruler or the appointment of a new chief minister could provide an occasion for entrepreneurial experts to signal their availability for service by turning in proposals. These projectors thus appear not all that different from poets and other artists, for whom presenting work on certain times was an obligatory element of playing court politics and cultivating public personae.71

Another common type of administrative entrepreneur, the minister, was a dignitary who might have been a grand patron, a promoter, and manager of numerous parallel projects. For a minister, a project represented a key weapon in his competition with other dignitaries. First,

submitting proposals allowed him to enter into communication with the ruler, to attract his or her attention and, hopefully, divert it from his rivals. It further created possibilities for establishing his reputation as an active and able minister, and for both to claiming competence and also controlling the agenda in specific policy areas. Second, earning royal approval would mean gaining rewards and increasing his social standing. More importantly, a minister could also expand his administrative turf either by inventing new state functions, charting hitherto unregulated domains, or intruding into his rivals’ territories. Indeed, a project dealing with another minister’s area of responsibility had the potential to lead to its transfer to the authority of the minister-projector in question, or to create opportunities to appoint his clients to a rival’s department. Of course, some projects provided a means of preventing or fending off challenges upon one’s own turf. A minister on ascending trajectory could be expected by both his clients and the ruler to put forward a menu of projects as a way of capitalizing on the opportunity before him, while also flaunting his access to the sovereign and his ability to obtain his or her consent. Count Pavel Iaguzhinskii in 1731 and Field Marshal Count Burchard Christoph von Münnich in 1731-32 (chapter 5) provide examples of ministers who signaled their rise in the ruler’s favor by submitting a series of diverse proposals. A minister could further improve his position if he succeeded in “divining” the monarch’s expectations by offering up an idea that fit unspoken or as yet unarticulated intentions on the latter’s part. This would allow the entrepreneur to obtain resources for the successful implementation of his project, while also permitting him to expect that later, more ambitious proposals would also be received favorably. Other projects were driven by attempts to redeem one’s standing in the eyes of the ruler after some unlucky move.

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Successful execution of a project, of course, allowed a dignitary to demonstrate his effectiveness and efficiency, perhaps by staging some public demonstration (a parade, an excursion, a fireworks show, or theatrical performance), the most famous of which included the legendary “Potemkin villages” presented to Catherine II during her trip to the Crimea in 1787. The parades and presentation staged by the Noble Cadet Corps in the 1730s, as discussed in chapter 5, provide more routine examples. These presentations also represent a highly ritualized form of communication; if we condemn them for being so “obviously” staged, we misread their meaning in the eyes of their contemporaries.

Ministers’ administrative entrepreneurship took different forms. Sometimes dignitaries personally drafted proposals, yet they might also put forward proposals suggested by others. Often a given dignitary’s contribution is not clear: he might have been positioned at the head of professional staff, or a network of external experts who collaborated with him on a semi-regular basis. In some cases, we find among his papers multiple drafts of a proposal reflecting his reaction to earlier versions, some of them bearing corrections and amendments in his own hand. Count Ostermann, acting in the 1730s, provides a good example: he may have personally drafted some shorter proposals and opinions, but he also drew on the support of professors from the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and other, unidentified assistants to prepare lengthier documents. Some of the draft proposals preserved in Ostermann’s archive were clearly commissioned by him, while others apparently were prepared by enterprising freelance experts on their own initiative. Especially notorious was the virtual “prozhekt factory” Count Petr Shuvalov set up at his mansion in the mid-1750s (see chapter 6).

A minister could claim ownership of a project, taking full credit and responsibility for its content and potential implementation. Alternatively, he could act more like a broker, introducing a projector to the sovereign and assisting in obtaining royal approval and necessary resources.

73 On Catherine’s trip to the Crimea, see David M. Griffiths, “Catherine II Discovers the Crimea,” Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge 56, no. 3 (2008): 339-48; Montefiore, Prince of Princes, 376-85.
Naturally, the minister’s access to the ruler was crucial. No less important was having some tangible resources, such as a department with its personnel, or a source of revenue, at one’s disposal. Clients and associates working on draft proposals could be appointed as one’s orderlies, secretaries, aides-de-camp, or as officials in a department under his control. If the proposal was approved, these subordinates would be employed—often unofficially—at the initial stages of its implementation. Further, a powerful minister could use his authority to secure premises for a new organization and to divert from other areas the funding needed to launch it. Peter I was particularly bad at ensuring the delivery of the funding he assigned to new organizations. It thus proved imperative for a minister to either use his political weight to squeeze money from the unwilling and permanently strained treasury, or find some available cash in the departments he controlled. In all cases, a minister’s administrative entrepreneurship was closely intertwined with his efforts to maintain and expand his client networks; often it was openly driven by his clients eager to expand their own career opportunities. Nor could he himself expect to be able to pursue successful projects without the help of reliable and motivated clients.

Finally, the third type of administrative entrepreneur is the functionary, represented by the likes of the diak Andrei Beliaev (chapter 2) and perhaps the teacher Leontii Magnitskii (chapter 4). Functionaries’ proposals rarely took the shape of extended treatises. Instead, their projecting more often emerged in the form of specific suggestions, sometimes done in a very casual, understated manner. Such bureaucratic projecting was often provoked by the action of others. For example, perceiving that an order from his superiors or a new decree from the Senate threatened his administrative turf, or could result in him being held responsible for something beyond his control, a clerk might propose to delineate areas of responsibility more clearly, to redistribute resources, or to codify previously unregulated relationships in a formal instruction. Alternatively, seeing an order from above as too vague, an official might demand from his superiors a more detailed regulation, or draft one himself. Such a regulation would hopefully protect him from blame in the future or allow him to expand his domain; it would also contribute
to further “bureaucratization” and “rationalization” in a given field. Of course, such clerks also acted in cooperation with other types of entrepreneurs. In particular, a clerk’s proposals stood a better chance of being implemented if ties of patronage connected him to an important dignitary. Indeed, those who did not enjoy such linkages were less likely to attempt to act as entrepreneurs at all. A clerk would present his proposal as primarily benefitting his patron by ultimately expanding his administrative domain or by protecting him from political risks. Unlike experts, who stressed their personal contributions to designing proposals and, thus, their own right to be rewarded for successful implementation, enterprising functionaries downplayed their own roles and their interests in the affair. They sometimes even pushed to the forefront friendly experts, presenting them as the true originators of a given idea, posing rather as disinterested servitors doing their duty to support a worthwhile cause.

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This book does not seek to offer a comprehensive overview of the history of education in Petrine and post-Petrine Russia. Instead, it centers on a selection of the most notable episodes in the history of school-related “projecting” in Russia in the first half of the eighteenth century. It thus traces the evolution of organizational forms and illustrates different types of administrative entrepreneurs and various entrepreneurial strategies. Archival materials permit a detailed reconstruction of the vicissitudes of the “micro-political” struggles surrounding specific institutional changes, while granting especial insight into the processes of school institutionalization and the history of the importation of specific organizational forms. The following chapters trace the authorship of specific changes and explore how they reflected the interests of and resources available to particular stakeholders. These chapters also place such happenings within a broader political context by investigating how proposed changes either fit or did not fit with the interests of other actors, while identifying players who benefited from certain provisions in these documents, and demonstrating how these individuals made changes
sustainable by exploiting them. Peter I’s role and the requirements of “modernization” represent two additional themes. As far as possible, I seek to discern and delimit Peter’s personal contribution to these changes by highlighting the instances in which his direct involvement has been documented, and also those in which his participation has been assumed, but does not find explicit reflection in our sources. Likewise, I attempt to localize the specific mechanism and channels through which the needs of building the “regular army” might have influenced these schools, and whether or not the changes in question reflected the views and desires of military practitioners in any concrete way.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of informal teaching practices in Muscovy and their evolution in the seventeenth century, as well as the role of “administrative entrepreneurs” in this period. It considers Peter I’s own approach to education, and introduces briefly some of the most important cases of “administrative entrepreneurship” in education in the early eighteenth century.

The second chapter explores the establishment of the Navigation School in Moscow in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, focusing on the key role that Aleksei Kurbatov, the “profit-maker,” played in the school’s foundation. It outlines how Kurbatov was able not only to use his position as a high-ranking official and the tsar’s close aide to support the establishment and initial development of the school, but also to bolster his own network of clients based on a circle of late seventeenth-century Muscovite Latinizing “bookmen” (knizhniki). In the end, the school’s establishment and its fairly traditional organizational form came into being thanks to the ability of this intellectual circle to exploit the opportunities of the Petrine era to advance their own intellectual agenda and careers.

Chapter 3 looks at the establishment of the Naval Academy in St. Petersburg in 1715. Unlike the Navigation School, this was accompanied by the development of a number of rules and instructions that prescribed modern (for its day) educational practices and organizational innovations, giving a foretaste of what the schools would be like decades later. These ideas,
however, innovative as they were for their time, had little to do with Peter I’s reforming tendencies or the state’s needs. The school’s founder, international adventurer Baron de Saint-Hillaire, had little social influence and few administrative resources. He attempted to compensate by drawing on foreign best practices and by seeking to formalize the scope of his authority and his status (both administrative and social) through regulations that spelled out his relationship with the school’s teachers (his subordinates) and government officials. For Saint-Hillaire, “regularization” was a means of securing a specific administrative role.

The fourth chapter explores the ways in which Peter I worked (or did not work) to regulate schools in his grand naval legislation: the Naval Ordonnance and the Admiralty Reglament. While the preceding chapters highlight one or another key entrepreneur-projector, this chapter centers on no such charismatic figure. Instead, it demonstrates how administrative entrepreneurship functioned at the lower and middle levels of the hierarchy. Within the context of a nascent bureaucracy, several needs—to assert personal authority, to reduce risks, and to re-assign blame—motivated mid-ranking officials and teachers to suggest and implement organizational changes.

Chapter 5 deals with the founding of the Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg in 1731. Unlike the Naval Academy, the Corps became testing ground for the implementation of disciplinary practices that were radically novel by contemporary standards. This chapter demonstrates that neither the outlook of this school, nor the very fact of its creation followed from any practical military needs. Rather, it focuses on court rivalries. By tracing the trajectories of court politics in the 1730s, this chapter explains how exactly the Cadet Corps project got off the ground, how Field Marshal von Münnich ended up being in charge of it, and how he used the Corps in his efforts at self-promotion.

Finally, chapter 6 looks at the ways in which a new organizational form, the “cadet corps,” framed the subsequent educational projecting of the 1740s and 1750s, while also aiding “administrative entrepreneurs” in promoting their agendas. These projectors, in turn, contributed
to legitimizing the corps by referring to it as an “organizational form.” This chapter thus zeroes in on both the Naval Academy’s transformation into a Naval Noble Cadet Corps and also the reshaping of the existing technical schools into an Artillery and Engineering Noble Cadet Corps. The latter phenomenon appears here as part of a constellation of educational projects promoted by the Shuvalov family clan, especially by Count Petr Shuvalov and his cousin Ivan Shuvalov, Empress Elizabeth’s favorite. Unfolding throughout the 1750s, these projects included the foundation of Moscow University, attempts to establish a broader network of schools, and the formulation of a new legislative framework for the education of the nobility in general. I further place the development and implementation of these projects within the broader context of the Shuvalovs’ court strategies.

Finally, the conclusion offers a panoramic view, discussing how the insights presented in these chapters relate to both institution building in Russia in later decades and also goings on other early modern countries. It explores opportunities for comparative research by offering a provisionary argument about what made the picture presented here both different from and also similar to the trajectories of administrative entrepreneurship in Western Europe, as well as in other countries outside Europe, as the latter entered their own period of “Westernization.”