

# Margarita Ushakova

Practitioner in community & business-association governance · prospective doctoral researcher

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## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Business associations and business–state interaction; governance and self-organization of membership communities, in particular the shift from founder-led to collegial models; social capital and civil-society self-organization; the nonprofit and voluntary sector as an institutional form — with a comparative interest in the European, especially German, tradition of chambers and voluntary business associations.

## PROPOSED DOCTORAL DIRECTION

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Building on my master's thesis, I propose to study **when and why business communities function as effective intermediaries between small business and the state**, and **how a community's internal governance (founder-led vs. collegial) shapes member engagement, outcomes, and organizational resilience**.

Two assets make this feasible from day one: (1) an **original longitudinal dataset** on member behaviour and governance that I designed, collected, and hold in full (Business Club Etalon, 2014–2020 — annual member surveys through a governance transition); and (2) a durable professional network across dozens of communities. The core empirical material is therefore already in hand rather than dependent on future fieldwork, and the project lends itself to a comparative European arm — German business chambers and Vereine as an institutional counterpoint to the Russian cases I know from the inside. (*Direction to be refined with the host group/supervisor.*)

## EDUCATION

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### National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) — Moscow

Master (magistr), State & Municipal Administration; specialization: State Administration and Regulation — 2023

- Thesis: *Modern models of interaction between small business and the state* — qualitative design based on in-depth interviews.
- Recognized in Germany at **Master level** by the KMK/ZAB *Zeugnisbewertung* (Reg. LN2026/21715-1, 2026) — formal eligibility for doctoral admission at German universities confirmed.

### Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy & Public Administration (RANEPA) — St. Petersburg

Bachelor, State & Municipal Administration; specialization: Effective State Administration — 2019, **diploma with honors**

### Gustav Käser Training International — Switzerland · Management programme — 2018

*Earlier:* state-level olympiad winner in Physics (secondary school).

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### UNIO — Center for the Creation & Development of Communities — Moscow

Founder & Chair · 2021–present

- Advisory practice and closed **Club of Community Leaders**: advised and mentored leaders of business clubs, civic associations, and brand communities — reported reach of **50+ organizations** through consulting, training, and mentorship.
- Founded the **UNIO Award** (2023–24), the first Russian national award for communities and private clubs: multi-stage selection, expert jury (incl. the founder of the TenChat business network and a co-founder of Community University), public online voting, winners announced April 2024.

### Business Club Etalon (ANO “Center for Unification & Development of Entrepreneurs”) — St. Petersburg

Managing Director · 2015–2020

- Scaled the club to **250+ members**; raised member retention from **83% (2014) to 95% (2017)**, sustained at ~91–93% through 2020.
- Led a governance transformation from founder-led to elected, collegial structures: resident-initiated activity quadrupled (**15% to 60%**, 2018–2020), the active core grew (**15% to 44%**), election participation rose (**41% to 62%**) — while administrative costs fell ~1.5x.
- Designed and ran the annual member-survey programme (2014–2020) that produced the longitudinal dataset underpinning my proposed research; findings presented at a national civil-society research conference (2021).

## St. Petersburg Union of Entrepreneurs (NPO) — St. Petersburg

Methodologist · 2014–2015

### TEACHING & MENTORING

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- Author and instructor, “Business Community Management” educational programme.
- Mentor to community founders and leaders across 50+ organizations (via UNIO and the Club of Community Leaders).

### PUBLIC & CIVIC SERVICE

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- Member, Youth Council, Administration of the Kolpino District, St. Petersburg · 2018–2021.
- Chair, Council of Leaders, Association of Children's & Youth Public Associations · 2010–2014.

### PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

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- Ushakova, M. A. (2021). *From Autocracy to Collegiality, or How to Build a Self-Governing Community*. **CongressTime**, 1(14), 30–33.
- *How to Build a Self-Governing NGO: a business-club case* — X International Conference of Civil Society Researchers, Moscow, October 2021.
- *Hierarchy in Community* — X Eurasian Event Forum (EFEA), St. Petersburg, January 2021.
- Invited speaker, Roscongress platform — session on the development of regional and sectoral communities, June 2023.

### AWARDS & RECOGNITION

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- **Youth Prize of the Government of St. Petersburg, 2020** — nomination “Business and Management”.
- Letters of gratitude from St. Petersburg municipal bodies and public councils, incl. for pandemic volunteer service — 2020.

### RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

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- **Methods:** qualitative research design, in-depth interviewing; survey design and longitudinal panel administration (2014–2020 member-survey programme); seeking to extend toward quantitative and mixed methods at doctoral level.
- **Field instruments:** community analytics and CRM-based member-behaviour tracking; programme evaluation in membership organizations.
- **Practice:** facilitation, community governance design, stakeholder management across business, civic, and government actors.

### LANGUAGES

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Russian (native) · English

### REFERENCES

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Available on request.