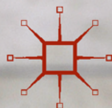
EASTERN EUROPEAN YOUTH CULTURES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Edited by

Matthias Schwartz
Heike Winkel



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Matthias Schwartz
Center for Literary and Cultural Research, Germany

Heike Winkel
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

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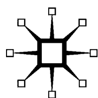

Selection, introduction and editorial matter © Matthias Schwartz and Heike Winkel 2016
Individual chapters © Respective authors 2016
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016 978-1-137-38512-3
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First published 2016 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-55912-1 ISBN 978-1-137-38513-0 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137385130

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Eastern European youth cultures in a global context / [edited by] Matthias Schwartz, Heike Winkel.
pages cm

1. Youth—Europe, Eastern. I. Schwartz, Matthias, editor. II. Winkel, Heike, editor.
HQ799.E92E37 2015
305.2350947—dc23 2015023896

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Contributors

José Alaniz is an associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Department of Comparative Literature (adjunct) at the University of Washington, Seattle. He is the author of *Komiks: Comic Art in Russia* (2010) and *Death, Disability and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond* (2014). He chairs the Executive Committee of the International Comic Arts Forum (ICAF), the leading comics studies conference in the US.

Dominik Antonowicz is a lecturer at the Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. His research interests include sport fandom, in particular various aspects of commercialisation of sport that have had an impact on fan culture. He has written numerous publications about the social aspects of sport, including 'Fans as a community of invisible religion' published in *Studia Socjologiczne* (2009).

Tamara Hundorova is Head of the Theory of Literature Department at Shevchenko Institute of Literature in Kiev, Ukraine. She is the author of eight monographs (all in Ukrainian), including *Transit Culture: The Symptoms of the Postcolonial Trauma* (2013); *The Post-Chornobyl Library: Ukrainian Literary Postmodernism* (2005); *Kitsch and Literature: Travesties* (2008); *The Emerging Word: The Discourse of Early Ukrainian Modernism* (2009); and *Femina Melancholica: Sex and Culture in the Gender Utopia of Olga Kobylianska* (2002).

Catriona Kelly is Professor of Russian at the University of Oxford, and the author of many works on Russian culture and Russian literature, including *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (2007), awarded the Grace Abbott Prize of the Society for the History of Childhood and Youth, USA. *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero*, appeared in 2005, and the Russian translation in 2009. Her latest book, *St Petersburg*: *Shadows of the Past*, was published in 2014.

Stefan B. Kirmse holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and is currently based at Humboldt University, Berlin. His recent books include: *Youth and Globalization in Central Asia: Everyday Life between Religion, Media and Western Donors* (2013) and the edited volume *Youth in the Former Soviet South: Everyday Life between Experimentation and Regulation* (2011).

Alfrun Kliems is Professor of West Slavonic Literatures and Cultures at Humboldt University of Berlin and Co-coordinator of the project 'Cultural Icons in East Central Europe: The Afterlife of Romanticism' at the Leipzig Centre for the History and Culture of East Central Europe (GWZO). Her recent publications include *The Post-Socialist City: Continuity and Change in Urban Space and Imagery* (2010, with Marina Dmitrieva), and *Der Underground, die Wende und die Stadt* (2015)

Radosław Kossakowski is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Gdansk University; he is also principal investigator of a research project titled 'The meaning of football: The social dimensions of fandom culture', funded by the National Centre of Science in Poland. His recent publications include 'Proud to be Tukker: A football club and the building of local identity – the case of FC Twente Enschede'; and 'The cosmopolitan game? Contemporary football in the light of Ulrich Beck's theory'.

Félix Krawatzek is a British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Politics, University of Oxford. His research interests include memory studies notably in the context of Europe, and migration studies. Publications include 'Entangled memory: Toward a third wave in memory studies' in the journal *History and Theory* (2014).

Matthias Meindl works as part of the research project 'Literature and Art on Trial', funded by the Swiss National Foundation and based at Zurich University. He is also co-editing (with Professor Sylvia Sasse) a collection of essays, case studies and documentation on this subject. As a translator he is working (alongside Professor Georg Witte) on a collection of texts by Moscow poet and activist Kirill Medvedev.

Elena Omelchenko is Professor and Academic Director of the MA programme at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg, where she is also Director of the Centre for Youth Studies. She is author of more than 100 articles and books on various aspects of youth cultures in Russia: youth solidarities, gender issues and sexuality, memory politics, prison experience, body images and nationalism. She is head of several collective projects on youth, youth identity and youth cultures.

Anna Oravcová is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology, Charles University in Prague, where she is writing her dissertation on the construction of authenticity in Czech rap music. Related publications include essays in several edited collections: 'In Search of the "Real" Czech Hip-Hop' in *Hip-Hop in Europe* (2013) and 'Czech Hip Hop Underground' in *Revolt through Style: Current Music Subcultures in Czech Republic* (2011).

Jovana Papović is a cultural theorist and theatre and documentary film director in Paris. She researches cultural and political practices and identities of Serbian contemporary youth and is a founder and Art Director of the 'Museum of the Transition', a multidisciplinary platform for research into the post-socialist transition in the Balkan region.

Astrea Pejović is a cultural theorist, producer and documentary film director in Belgrade. She researches cultural and political practices and identities of Serbian contemporary youth and is a founder and producer of the 'Museum of the Transition', a multidisciplinary platform for the research into the post-socialist transition in the Balkan region.

Herwig Reiter holds a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute in Florence. His research interests include the sociology of the life course, issues of work and unemployment among young people, and qualitative research methods.

Ken Roberts is Professor of Sociology at the University of Liverpool. His major research areas are the sociology of leisure, and the sociology of young people's life-stage transitions. Since 1991 he has co-ordinated a series of research projects in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union investigating how various social groups' circumstances have changed during the political and economic transformations of their countries. Publications include *Surviving Post-Communism: Young People in the Former Soviet Union* (2000), *Youth in Eastern Europe and in the West* (2009), *Class in Contemporary Britain* (2011), *Sociology: An Introduction* (2012) and *The Business of Leisure* (2015).

Sabine Roßmann is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the Institute for East European Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, where she is currently researching militarisation, nationalism and gender concepts in modern Ukraine, political socialisation and youth organisations in Russia, and xenophobia and racism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. She is co-author of the study *Hate Crime in Ukraine* (2010).

Guzel Sabirova is Deputy Director of the Centre for Youth Studies at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in St Petersburg. She holds a PhD from the Institute for Sociology in Moscow in 2006 on the Muslim identities of women visiting Qur'anic courses at Moscow mosques. She has authored a number of articles on the ethnic and religious identities of young people, the integration of children of migrants in schools in Russia, and urban changes in Central Asia.

Matthias Schwartz is a research associate at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin. Recent publications include *Expeditions into Other Worlds: Soviet Adventure Literature and Science Fiction from the October Revolution to the End of the Stalin Era* (2014) and *Gagarin as an Archive Body and Memory Figure* (co-edited, 2014).

Christine Steiner studied social sciences at Humboldt University, Berlin. She currently works at the German Youth Institute and her research interests include educational and youth research as well as life-course analysis and labour-market sociology.

Tomasz Szlendak is Professor of Sociology and Head of the Institute of Sociology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Publications include: *Supermarketization: Religion and Sexual Customs of Youth in Consumer Culture* (2004), *The Sociology of Families: Evolution, History, Diversity* (2011), *Heritage in Action: Re-enactment Movement as a Way of Participation in Culture* (2012) and *The Neglected Playground* (2003).

Gleb Tsipursky is Assistant Professor of History at Ohio State University. His publications include: *Having Fun in the Thaw: Youth Initiative Clubs in the Post-Stalin Years* (2012) and 'Integration, celebration, and challenge: Youth and Soviet elections, 1953–68' (in *Voting for Hitler and Stalin: Elections under 20th Century Dictatorships*) (2011). He is currently completing a full-length monograph entitled *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Cold War Soviet Union, 1945–1970*.

Heike Winkel is a research fellow and lecturer at the Institute for East-European Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her recent publications include: 'Strong emotions, weak subjects: On the role of hurt feelings in the trial against Pussy Riot', published in *The Role of Religion in Eastern Europe Today* (2015); she is currently involved in a research project dealing with the role of literature in the Gulag.

Anna Zhelnina is a researcher at the Centre for Youth Studies, National Research University, St Petersburg. Her recent publications include ' "It's like a museum here": The shopping mall as public space' in *Laboratorium* (2013), 'Learning to use "public space": Urban space in post-Soviet St Petersburg' in *Open Urban Studies* (2014) and ' "Hanging out," creativity, and the right to the city: Urban public space in Russia before and after the protest wave of 2011–2012' in *Stasis* (2014).

Vera Zvereva is a research fellow and manager at the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, University of Edinburgh. She is the author of two monographs: *Network Talks: Cultural Communication on the Russian Internet* [in

Russian] (2012) and *Real Life on TV Screen* [in Russian] (2012). She is a co-editor of collected volumes: *From Central to Digital: Television in Russia* (with Vlad Strukov) [in Russian] (2014); *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States* (with Ellen Rutten and Julie Fedor) (2013), and editor of the cultural studies reader *Mass Culture: Contemporary Western Studies* (2005).

Introduction

Matthias Schwartz and Heike Winkel

In early 2015, about one year after the overthrow of the old regime in Kiev, after the Russian annexation of the Crimea and the outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine between separatists supported by Russians and Ukrainian troops, a significant youth initiative arose in Ukraine: students from universities and colleges all over Ukraine compiled a video message for their fellow students at universities in Russia. The widely distributed video contained a number of scenes, each showing several student groups gathered around different speakers giving short speeches. In an effort to oppose the narrative of a Ukrainian 'fascist' threat which dominates the public discourse in Russia, the speakers in the video evoked the spirit of the Maidan protests, presenting themselves as revolutionaries. They called on their Russian contemporaries to not rely on Russia's official mass media reporting on the events taking place in Ukraine, but instead to be critical and seek objective truth about the situation. It did not take the Russian studentship long to answer the public address in the form of similar video messages, and more groups from other Russian and Ukrainian universities joined them, with video clips in support of or in opposition to the official Russian media perspective pouring in from Crimea, Lugansk, Lviv and Moldova. All of these video messages were recorded in the same manner, designed in the same style and presented different perspectives on the events.[1]

Of interest here is the ways in which these video messages function as means of youth intervention and youth self-representation in the Russian–Ukrainian propaganda war. All of the young people shown in the clips are dressed casually and neatly and make an engaged, assiduous, cheerful impression. In their appeal, the pro-Ukrainian students conjure a long-established Soviet-style notion of youth, stating that students in both countries stand for 'progressive motions, the strength and future of a nation', and that they were counting on their fellow students' solidarity.[2] In the Russian video, this motif is taken up to underscore the idea that students are their nations' 'best representatives'.[3] In terms of content, each side represents the official version of the conflict supported by its respective government,

while the emphasis on youth was meant to grant their statements a specific authenticity.

However, a closer look at the clips reveals that the ideal evoked in these messages is ambiguous. The Ukrainian students appear to be the heirs of their fellow students who fought for democracy in the Orange Revolution in 2004. Back then, after the collapse of the socialist societies in the region, many had hoped that the young people would at last complete the political transformation into a better world for which their parents had fought. Yet these political upheavals failed in one way or another, and in comparison to the diverse rebellious crowd at the Maidan, with its self-organised units and sectors, improvised armour and weapons, highly imaginative disguises, and uncompromising deeds, the young students in the video look as gentle as lambs.

Moreover, these staged and thoroughly planned video messages present a progressive youth that is totally conformist to political strategy, managed by policy-makers on both sides of the conflict. There is no spirit of rebellion or self-assertion against an older generation, against state institutions or other authorities present in these statements. We see young adults acting as agents of political mainstream and civil affairs rather than a generation of youth that is willing to think and act differently than their parents' generation. This is not only symptomatic for the role that young people played during the 'revolution of dignity' in Ukraine 2013–2014, which was originally initiated by students who were soon pushed aside by other social groups and activists, but also of great significance in a broader perspective. These video messages shed light on the fact that the notion of youth itself has undergone substantial change over the last decades.

The book takes precisely this finding as a starting point in order to take a closer look at the meanings of youth cultures in Eastern European societies. It operates on the assumption that the conformist youth who appear in the videos and present themselves as loyal to their respective government might be seen as exemplary for the broad majority of young people in post-socialist countries, despite the fact that the videos are obviously staged. Therefore its focus is not on scandals with public appeal initiated by rebellious youngsters, on dissident counter-cultures or artistic breakings of taboos, carried out by what seems to be a very small minority. Radical art collectives such as Voina and Pussy Riot or the women's rights advocates from Femen may be impressive examples of young activists who gain attention worldwide, but they are not representative of the cultural practices, political engagement, public belongings and social networks – of the distinctive self-images, codes, fashions and imaginary communities – that most young people in Eastern Europe are part of. In order to achieve a closer understanding of Eastern European youth cultures today, we want to suggest a focus on everyday routines and imaginary belongings that incorporate and transform regional, transnational and global influences and tendencies.

Eastern European youth cultures have undergone significant transformations between the Soviet period and today. The new generations growing up a quarter of a century after the breakdown of state socialism have knowledge of communist regimes and the Cold War only from schoolbooks, movies or the memories of older friends and family members. One might therefore ask if the adjective 'post-socialist' is still applicable to these young people. At the same time, the neo-liberal market economy and globalisation have reshaped post-socialist societies even more fundamentally than Western European ones who did not have to cope with regime changes in parallel with new economic and globalising forces. The change to Eastern European societies has been not only fundamental, but has also taken different directions in different states: most of the post-socialist countries have joined the European Union, while some have had to cope with civil wars and separatist movements, including the former Yugoslavian countries as well as Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, whereas Belorussia and Russia have chosen a more authoritarian way. In light of these heterogeneous development paths, many scholars object to the region-based term 'Eastern Europe' because it undermines a differentiated approach to the diversity of experiences and implies the existence of a homogeneous entity that in reality is rapidly vanishing.

The book takes up precisely these scholarly reservations in order to more thoroughly analyse youth cultures in Eastern Europe in a globalised world. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss in more detail the challenges that arise in regard to the study of youth cultures in Eastern Europe before giving an outline of the volume's structure and objectives.

Redefining Eastern Europe

The designation 'Eastern Europe' has a long history, starting in the age of Enlightenment, when the region was originally constructed in western discourse as a distinctive backward area of the Continent. The region was later firmly established as a threatening communist bloc during the Cold War (Wolff, 1994; Chernetsky, 2007; Todorova, 2009), and the term was never used as a positive self-definition. As mentioned above, in the 25 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the region has diversified significantly, but this did not mark the end of Eastern Europe as a joint research field in western academia. The common social and cultural heritage of the socialist era is still more or less present, as are the consequences of its downfall, such as rapid privatisation, the economisation of public goods and contested political systems.

At the same time, Eastern Europe, like other world regions, is deeply influenced by globalisation processes. Recent research has been reflecting on these developments, pointing out the particulars of the evolution of Eastern Europe in this context. Proponents of the so-called transition theory

have put forward the thesis that the crash of state socialisms was received mainly as a liberation from economic and political constraints and marked the beginning of a steady catching-up process for countries that aspired to first-world status politically, economically, socially and culturally. In this framework, people from Eastern Europe were regarded as successors and imitators of their western paragons. Other theorists regarded even the demise of state socialisms as a result of cultural globalisation and not as a culmination of internal forces (Ther, 2014).

The authors of this volume aim to take these research conclusions one step further. Beyond the controversial matter of whether the transition experience is dominantly influenced by internal (post-socialist) or external (global) factors, whether it has an intimidating or motivating effect on the population, this volume takes into account its uniqueness to civilisation. The crash of socialism in Eastern Europe coincided with the increase and acceleration of globalisation processes. This caused peculiar overlaps and interactions of effects and developments that differ with regard to certain realms of experience. When confronted with an unsettling globalised world in which conventional values and understandings are being challenged, people from Eastern Europe encounter these challenges with a vast amount of experience of living in countries with unstable political structures and social institutions, precarious economic perspectives, and uncertain moral and cultural ties. What the so-called transformation theory regarded as a transitional phenomenon specific to post-socialist Eastern European societies, are in fact realities that many industrial countries are now facing in times of global finance crises and EU austerity programmes. Southern European countries such as Spain, Greece or Italy, where we observe extremely high youth unemployment and youth migration, are just some examples of this situation. Therefore, the integration of the Eastern European experience into the field of youth studies can be used to gain a deeper and more differentiated understanding of the challenges that countries in the East as well as in the West face in times of globalisation.

Rethinking youth

Our understanding of youth cultures has been deeply affected by shifts in the common notion of the meanings of youth itself. Global developments after the end of the Cold War questioned the widely accepted understanding of youth as a limited transitional chapter of life between the end of school education and the beginning of steady employment, which is a rather specific understanding of the term, typical for the post-war period in Europe and North America (Wyn and White, 1997; Heath and Walker, 2012). Young people in a global world can no longer rely on a pre-set interim social status. In times of radical global change that results in multiple instabilities and uncertainties, life trajectories become increasingly complex, and so does

the transition to adulthood. In academic research, this finds its reflection in an intense epistemological and methodological discussion, which aims to achieve a better understanding of the complexity of young people's life and of 'youth' as a life stage. Sue Heath and Charles Walker have given an excellent account of the methodological innovations that new research can build upon within this field (Heath and Walker, 2012). In particular, recent studies have begun to examine the consequences of globalisation for the transition to adulthood in a cross-cultural perspective (Walther, 2006; Dolby and Fazal, 2008). Such research challenges the notion of youth as a 'force of renewal', established as early as 1904, when George Stanley Hall coined the phrase 'storm and stress'. This notion has deeply informed social and cultural studies, which recognised the transnational existence of a life-stage distinguished by a strong wish to oppose established structures and to promote social and cultural change (Gidley, 2001). Lately, it has been increasingly questioned with regard to non-western cultures outside Europe and with regard to changing social premises (Hodkinson and Deike, 2007; Chandra, 2009).

Regarding post-socialist Eastern Europe, this concept of youth seems to be particularly inadequate, not only because of the different status of young people in socialist societies (Riordan, 1989; Kelly, 2007; Beacháin and Polese, 2010), but precisely because of the aforementioned sweeping social changes that the countries have gone through over the last decades (Slowinski, 1999; Mitev, 2004; Róbert and Bukodi, 2005; Kuhar and Reiter, 2012; Kirmse, 2013). The work by Hillary Pilkington and her colleagues on cultural globalisation and Russian youth cultures (Pilkington et al., 2002), is a ground-breaking example of this more differentiated understanding of globalisation with regard to the Russian case. While on the one hand acknowledging strong West–East and core–periphery dynamics of cultural globalisation, Pilkington and her co-authors denied the total homogenisation of all regional differences in the wake of it. Instead, the authors described multiple ways of targeted and selective adoption of global cultural products into the local context. Pilkington then suggested that 'Russia's response to globalisation continues to throw up challenges to western hegemony' (Pilkington et al., 2002, p. 226), precisely because of its understanding of the role it is playing in this process (see also Pilkington et al., 2010; Gololobov et al., 2014).

Recent research efforts examine these diverse effects that globalisation has on young people in different countries, including Eastern Europe (Bagnall, 2005; Blossfeld et al., 2005). These effects are not necessarily aggravating. Ken Roberts (2002) suggests, for example, that globalisation did not necessarily make young people's lives more insecure and immature. Instead, he argues, precisely because Eastern European youth conceived the transition as a liberation opening up new opportunities in individual freedom, mobility, education and welfare, they were eager to explore, and were, in fact, in an advantaged position compared to their western counterparts.

This argument opens up a further perspective for an unbiased reassessment of the Eastern European youth's experience, acknowledging their proactive role, without conceptualising their life-stage as pre-set by certain social, cultural and imaginary conditions (see also Kovacheva, 2000; Kovachev and Chrisholm, 2002).

This volume wishes to expand these research efforts to redefine Eastern Europe and to rethink youth and seeks to contribute to a more differentiated re-evaluation of cultural and political participation that some recent studies have begun to engage in (Loncle et al., 2012). This will serve a broader scope of perspectives, as Eastern European youth cultures refer to different patterns, traditions and understandings of participation than their western counterparts, grounded either in communist traditions or in dissident subcultures, for example. Vice versa, conformism or disaffection with politics or everyday life was regarded differently in Eastern Europe than in western countries.

Starting from such re-evaluations of the Eastern European region and the conditions of youth in a globalised world, the book focuses on the cultural practices of young people in a broad sense. As used in this volume, 'culture' refers to the ways people make sense of common experiences, to strategies of identity building in a political, civic and social field, and to certain behavioural practices of acting, forms and significance of public participation. Accordingly, the volume emphasiaes four perspectives on youth cultures in Eastern Europe, outlined in four parts.

Reconsidering generational change

Part I features contributions that offer reflections on the way the notion of youth as an agent of change underlying the traditional concept of generations, coined by Karl Mannheim, is challenged in the Eastern European context. In 'The End of Childhood and/or the Discovery of the *Tineidzher*?' (Chapter 1), Catriona Kelly starts with a historical perspective by examining representations of childhood and youth in Soviet propaganda, arts and personal experience, which are typical for socialist concepts of youth. She works out a remarkable contradiction of a high visibility of youth, on the one hand, and an unspoken prohibition on the representation of puberty and adolescence on the other. It becomes apparent that in Soviet culture, youth is more an ideological concept symbolising vigour, power, vitality and future than a biological and sociological transition phase, connoted by the word 'teenager'. In doing so, Kelly suggests that the Soviet experience can be used to challenge the western concept of youth as a distinct life phase determined by a high degree of individualisation and estrangement from established norms and institutions. From this perspective, socialist models of youth mobilisation cease to be seen as just a deviation from some western authentic ideals of youth. Instead, they shed light on some tendencies we

can observe in post-socialist Eastern Europe that are also typical for contemporary post-industrial globalised societies in general, where individual career-building leads to an acceleration of life trajectories that challenges the possibility of maintaining a period of juvenile freedom and unconstrained experience.

Ken Roberts, Christine Steiner and Herwig Reiter tackle these changed post-socialist life trajectories in more detail in arguing that generational experiences are becoming much more situation-dependent and less foreseeable. In 'Youth Cultures and the Formation of a New Political Generation in Eastern Europe' (Chapter 2), Roberts offers a macro-analysis of the effects that transformation processes in the wake of the crash of state socialist systems had on young people in Eastern European and Middle Asian countries. He reflects on the particular situation young people had to cope with in undergoing a double transformation: their personal puberty paralleled with the political transitions experienced by post-socialist societies, which have no historical precedent, from state-communism into (nominally) democratic members of the global market economy. From the perspective of research, this raises the question whether western sociology's concepts and theories of youth are able to comprehend these novel circumstances. Roberts's general conclusion is that they are, and that the notion of political generations is exemplary in this regard. Post-1989 Europe experienced increased and intensified processes of individual dis- and reorientation that undermined the process of generation building. While the generation of 1989 can be defined by a somewhat homogeneous shared experience, the heterogenic developments in the following period brought about a high degree of pluralism in regard to young people, with various degrees of estrangement from and engagement in their countries' politics. Yet as Roberts reminds us with regard to the twentieth-century Western European experience, this disaffection of young people with political activism may undermine confidence in and the legitimacy of existing political elites and their policies as well. This, however, might give way to the development of a new political generation, which creates new policies and brings forth political change.

Christine Steiner's and Herwig Reiter's chapter 'Fast Forward to Capitalism? Accelerated Youth in Post-Socialism' (Chapter 3), complements Ken Roberts's macro-sociological perspective with a comparative empirical analysis of two young men from Lithuania and East Germany, two countries that shared several decades of real socialism before entering very different societal trajectories of establishing institutions and cultures of capitalist market democracies. The authors suggest that young people showed a great ability to adapt to the conditions of accelerated change by being extremely flexible in creating fast and steady career paths. The concept of accelerated youth they are proposing brings an innovative feature to the transformation paradigm by rejecting the idea of Eastern European youth as trying to catch up with their western contemporaries. In addition, 'accelerated youth'

may serve as a scientific tool to describe not only Eastern European experiences, but youth biographies in a contemporary globalised marked economy in general. In any case, it adds to the reconsidering of Eastern European youth cultures the important notion that the majority of young people undergo this age period without being part of political movements, social organisations or (sub)cultural scenes.

The last two chapters of Part I look more closely at the cultural implications of these non-political life trajectories and how they change the notion of what Mannheim would have called 'generation in actuality' and 'generational consciousness', which nowadays constitutes itself in 'unconscious' traumatic ways. Papović and Pejović deal with the ambivalent relationship between mainstream und underground cultures in two successive post-socialist generations of young people. In their contribution 'Revival without Nostalgia: The "Dizel" Movement, Serbian 1990s Cultural Trauma and Globalised Youth Cultures' (Chapter 4), they provide an analysis of the revival of Dizel as a movement that developed in the post-war Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and served as an embodiment of the country's nationalist ideology. Its members promoted a Mafioso fashion style, listened to the newly constituted music genre 'turbo-folk' and ideologically mobilised Serbian nationalistic stereotypes against others in former Yugoslavia. About ten years later, in the post-Yugoslavian Serbia of the new century, Dizel had an enormously successful revival amongst youth and became a sort of 'mainstream subculture'. Papović and Pejović undertake an analysis of the reasons for this comeback and show how the estrangement with politics in actuality not only shifts the perception and performance of cultural legacies, but also enables popular cultures to transform ideological narratives. Following the general dynamics of floating youth styles and fashions in a globalised present, youth cultures thus unconsciously may contribute to the failure of a local – in this case Serbian – society to cope with the cultural trauma caused by the wars.

Tamara Hundorova develops a similar argument in regard to the vanishing constellations that might constitute a 'generational experience'. In her chapter 'Symptom of the Loser and the Melancholy of the Post-Soviet Generation', she analyses the trans-generational effect of post-Soviet trauma in contemporary Ukrainian literature, as evidenced in the symptomatic literary character of the 'loser'. The loser's 'sick body' emerges as a widespread phenomenon in Ukrainian youth prose during the 2000s, and characterises how the post-Soviet generation identifies itself. As a symptomatic phenomenon, the loser indicates the presence of a direct link between social collapse and an individual's somatic states, and simultaneously stages the crisis of communication between generations, characteristic of post-socialist youth. The melancholy connected to the sick body prompts characters to adopt the mask of the loser, reflecting *ressentiment*, homelessness and a reluctance to enter the adult world. The loser thus in a way appears to be the inverted

mirror image of 'accelerated youth', when even dramatic political events such as the 'Orange Revolution' or the 'Euromaidan' are unable to constitute a common 'generational consciousness', because, similar to the Dizel movement, the loser perceives 'generational change' as just another extravagant game of traumatic post-socialist experiences.

Popular belongings: Subcultural places and globalised spaces

Part II analyses forms and functions of popular youth cultures in the post-socialist realm. This includes the emergence and development of local formations, participation in and resistance against the forces of globalised trends, the engagement with western popular youth cultures as well as the role of former underground dissident subcultures in the contemporary context.

The first two chapters present globalised youth cultures such as hip hop and football fanatics and show how their local belongings and subcultural codes and practices are reshaped in relation to mainstream culture and commercial business. Anna Oravcová's analysis in ' "Rap on Rap Is Sacred": The Appropriation of Hip Hop in the Czech Republic' (Chapter 6), gives insight into the practices, styles and attitudes of this fairly new post-socialist subculture, dating its origin back to 1993. Based on in-depth interviews with Czech rappers, content analysis of their lyrics, and participant observation, this chapter explores the different forms of appropriation of hip hop in the Czech Republic and thereby contests the notion of simple mimetic cultural imports from the USA into the post-socialist realm, instead emphasising a highly self-confident approach with regard to local standards and needs. Oravcová outlines the discourse evolving around the proper mode and status of hip hop music as mainstream or underground culture. Authenticity becomes the crucial discursive tool in these debates of who is or is not a 'true' hip-hopper. However, Czech hip hop is for the most part performed by white middle-class men who mostly depict quite traditional and stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity, especially in the form adopted by right-wing organisations. At the same time, however, political activists, social workers and educators are trying to spread hip hop among Roma youth in order to reach out to them. By doing so, members of the Czech hip hop culture engage in exactly the same discussions that we find in the West about the question of the authenticity of youth subcultures in the wake of their commodification and commercialisation.

Football as a site of subcultural practice is also subject to rapid commercialisation. In their chapter 'Flaming Flares, Football Fanatics and Political Rebellion: Resistant Youth Cultures in Late Capitalism' (Chapter 7), Dominik Antonowicz, Radosław Kossakowski and Tomasz Szlendak explore the phenomenon of football fanatics in the light of rapid political, economic and cultural modernisation, with a particular focus on the rapid

transformation of Polish football caused by the organisation of the Euro2012 championship. The authors examine football fanatics and their rebellious subculture as a form of resistance in the period of late capitalism. To characterise this change, the authors introduce the concept of social 'archipelagos', which, in contrast to traditional subcultures, describe a much shallower, less engaging and softer notion of belonging that refers to lifestyles rather than values. By doing so, the chapter explores various aspects of the clash between traditional football subculture dominated by working-class youth, the fragmented *subworlds* in archipelagos, and the transnational forces of commercialisation that have 'colonised' football since the beginning of the 1990s. While overall youth's social space is fragmented into various distinctive lifestyles, the football stadium remains one of the few places in which many different young people share their subcultural belongings together.

The subsequent chapters provide a closer look at these fragmented belongings in a globalised world, which occur when traditional subcultural codes of authenticity or resistance fail to constitute distinctive underground heroes or rebellious subjectivities. In 'Everything Feels Bad: Figurations of the Self in Contemporary Eastern European Literature' (Chapter 8), Matthias Schwartz offers an analysis of Eastern Europe's frustration prose by young authors born in the 1970s and 1980s, written in the first decade of the twenty-first century in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. What is common to most of their literary protagonists is a general feeling of bewilderment, desperation and loneliness that dominates their daily lives, which in Poland, for instance, was discussed within national media as being typical of the so-called Generation Nothing. Through an analysis of the literary works of Dorota Masłowska, Mirosław Nahacz, Irina Denezhkina and Serhiy Zhadan in particular, the chapter shows that their heroes feel bad because of a double paradoxical figuration of the self: on the one hand, they still long for the ideals of young outsiders, of rebels without a cause and of the angry, wild men and women canonised in western pop culture, but at the same time the heroes' re-enactments of globalised modes, styles and subcultures do not fit into the post-socialist reality of social fragmentation and the neo-liberal market economy they live in. Frustration prose thus serves as a means to articulate the ambivalent feelings and to offer imaginary negotiations and reinventions of adolescent identities.

Alfrun Kliems presents another case of the shifting notion of underground belongings and subcultural subjectivities in a globalised world in '"Bright reference point of our youth": Bondy, Podsiadło and the Redefinition of the Underground' (Chapter 9). She offers an analysis of Jacek Podsiadło's essay *Podróż dziękczynno-błagalna, totalna i realistyczna do świętych relikwii Egona Bondy'ego* (A Grateful Pilgrimage in the Style of Total Realism to the Holy Relic of Egon Bondy) (2008), reading it as a fictionalised reflection on the continuity and discontinuity between the underground and pop culture, both of which figure here as potentially subversive forms of

expression before and after the political and social upheavals following 1989. The Czechoslovakian Underground artist Egon Bondy, forever young in the eyes of the Polish poet Jacek Podsiadło, has lost nothing of his attractiveness for the present, despite the fact that the political and artistic realms of state socialism that his dissident attitude refers to disappeared long ago. While simultaneously reflecting on the impossibility of underground art in the twenty-first century, Podsiadło idolises Egon Bondy as an underground role model who resists globalised popular cultures and their capitalisation of all kinds of allegedly subversive phenomena. Thus, Podsiadło's *Pilgrimage* essay allows for reflection on the vanishing political, historical and aesthetic relevance of juvenile dissident subcultures and their underground artistic practices, as well as on the dynamics of intergenerational and transnational belongings that constitute tradition in youth culture.

Thus the chapters in Part II add an Eastern European perspective to the general discourse on the shifting relationship between subcultural belongings and globalised popular culture, between local subjectivities and the transnational commercial mainstream in a globalised context, a shift that changes the notion of youth cultures significantly.

Reshaping political activism: Between rebellion and adjustment

The topic of contested subcultural practices, fragmented subjectivities and lost underground heroes leads to Part III, which deals with the question of how public activism is challenged in times of political crises, economic instability and social insecurity. The case studies reveal a broad range of activism, from politically conservative attitudes towards the state that intend to secure and improve a certain status quo, to rebellious behaviour. Most of these activities are in some way closely intertwined with ideas of the nation-state, but do not address governmental politics in a traditional left- or right-wing way known from western democracies. Even if they fundamentally oppose the current political regime, the young people featured in these cases all become active in the name of better governmental politics.

Félix Krawatzek explores the ambiguities of rebellion and political control with regard to Russia in 'Fallen Vanguards and Vanished Rebels? Political Youth Involvement in Extraordinary Times' (Chapter 10). He looks at the sustained mobilisation of Russian youth, considering the shifts in the political spectrum and the interrelationship between state-controlled initiative and grass-root engagement in Russia in the course of the last two decades with the help of a comparison of the perestroika era and the Putin/Medvedev era. Krawatzek provides a reassessment of the Perestroika era, which has often been idealised as a period of 'rebellious' youth movements, and shows how youth mobilisation was then a central object of political calculations, with the movements inhabited by a strong paternalistic attitude towards the youth. During the last years of the Soviet Union the failures

of the Komsomol became visible alongside an emerging culture of informal youth groups. The Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution' marked a turning point and led to enforced mobilisation initiatives. Krawatzek reveals the manifold ways in which Russian youth have expressed their political opinions after 2005. It gives an insight into a heterogeneous milieu of activist groups who engage in exploring and applying diverse new techniques of mobilisation. Krawatzek argues that even groups loyal to the official Kremlin politics sometimes elude official control.

Sabine Roßmann focuses on Ukraine as the country where the idea of post-socialist youth rebellion was formed. However, rather than perpetuating the myth of a unified youth revolution that revealed a consistently progressive world view, her contribution, ' "To serve like a man": Ukraine's Euromaidan and the Questions of Gender, Nationalism and Generational Change' (Chapter 11), offers more differentiated and critical insight by examining different concepts of femininity during the Euromaidan and the role that young women played in the protest. Rossmann undertakes a comparison of the media coverage of the Euromaidan protests and focuses on interviews with participants of the protests in Kiev. These analyses reveal the ambivalences of gender issues during the Euromaidan. Quite 'traditional' notions of femininity, which in recent decades had served as an anti-communist claim, became popular here, and the prevailing concepts of Ukrainian nationalism and the dominance of paramilitary structures during the escalating protests reinforced such conservative gender issues. Although some young women did not want to comply with their role as supporters and occupied rather progressive positions during the Euromaidan, traditionalism prevailed in the end and a generational change did not take place.

While Félix Krawatzek and Sabine Roßmann analyse how public activism is shaped by concrete political circumstances, state initiatives and revolutionary dynamics, Matthias Meindl looks at the literary reflections of such rebellious behaviours and marginalised movements. In 'The Conception of Revolutionary Youth in Maksim Gor'kii's *The Mother* and Zakhar Prilepin's *San'kia*' (Chapter 12), Meindl takes a close look at Putin's Russia, where state politics undertook and continue to undertake everything possible to prevent the contagion of society with revolutionary impulses. He delivers a close reading of the novel *San'kia* (2006), written by the infamous writer and revolutionary Zakhar Prilepin, a former activist of the extremist opposition National-Bolshevist Party, which is now forbidden. By comparing it with Maksim Gor'kii's novel *The Mother*, the classic of Socialist Realism, Meindl shows that Prilepin's fiction does not, as many critics have suggested, simply propagate rebellion against the Russian state, but, through its construction of the protagonists and their distorted characters, calls into question whether revolution is at all feasible or even desirable. By doing

so, the novel reflects on the seemingly almost insurmountable difficulties of growing up in post-Soviet Russia, and on the circumstances of the youth's political fight.

Whereas extremist rebellious activism among young people is a marginal and marginalised phenomenon in contemporary Russia, Anna Zhelnina (Chapter 13) explores how politically active, educated young people from the urban middle classes contribute to and transform mainstream politics in an adjusted way. Her chapter '"*Polittusovka*": An Alternative Public Space of Young Politicians in Contemporary Russia' provides an empirical analysis of the St Petersburg-based Polit-gramota discussion club, founded in 2006. The group consists of young, well-educated urban people active in the fields of politics and journalism. Their club aims to implement a new understanding of politics, opposed to 'official' forms (meaning boring, homogenous, never conflicting with the state's dominant point of view), which prevail in the public sphere. The club abandoned any clear-cut ideological programme in order to allow open discussion and competition and brings together representatives of different parties and political ideologies. Polit-gramota and the network that emerged around it engage in the strengthening of its members' professional skills and net-sourcing abilities, organising public debates on television, overcoming age boundaries, and enabling pathways to successful careers in St Petersburg's political sphere and beyond. The analysis reveals both the pragmatisms of this kind of political engagement and the biases of its self-understanding. What becomes apparent here is a new political culture that goes beyond the dichotomy of opposition and conformism. It presents a youth that will possibly form the future elites of Eastern European societies and that has left all kinds of rebellious behaviour behind them.

Contested agency: Civic engagement and everyday practices

Part IV takes on the question of how young people realise their individual and collective agendas in changing, often highly politicised, public spaces without being directly involved in political movements or activities. Elena Omelchenko and Guzel Sabirova offer a conceptual approach. In their chapter 'Youth Cultures in Contemporary Russia: Memory, Politics, Solidarities' (Chapter 14), they argue that Russian youth cultures are characterised by the concurrence of the Soviet experience, which still shapes habits and views, and the influence of globalised trends. As young people in Russia have continuously been an object of state regimes of patriotic education from Soviet times until today, the changing youth cultural scenes in Russia cannot be appropriately described through the dichotomy of subculture versus mainstream. Instead, the authors suggest a 'solidarity approach' as a conceptual tool to understand the dynamics of

sociality and identity building amongst contemporary youth. The benefits of this approach are that it highlights the specificity of the Russian experience without claiming an exceptional status for it, but making it compatible with other national youth cultures in the West as well.

Gleb Tsipursky researches another contemporary youth culture shaped by the Soviet experience: volunteer youth militias, which have grown into an increasingly common sight over the last few years, especially in smaller provincial towns and on the edges of cities. They patrol the streets and combat what they consider violations of public order. In 'Public Discourse and Volunteer Militias in Post-Soviet Russia' (Chapter 15), Tsipursky examines these militias as a contemporary form of state-initiated youth mobilisation. By embedding this phenomenon in its historical context and comparing it to the Soviet tradition of youth militias, Tsipursky sheds light on continuities that exist in terms of attempts to shape a conformist youth. In contrast to former times, the current organisations are not the result of external pressure or governmental orders. The people's patrols embody a form of state-sponsored engagement on behalf of civil society. They meet the everyday needs and actual desires of contemporary youth striving to fight social insecurities and to secure public interests, thereby internalising hegemonic values. The chapter also discusses the discourse evolving around such organisations' patrol activities, which sheds light on public attitudes towards young people that range from praise for the effort to cultivate well-ordered public spaces to critical responses against the autonomous tendencies inherent in such activities.

Vera Zvereva and José Alaniz look at how popular new media practices and products change the everyday practices of young people in a contested way between conformism and self-expression. Vera Zvereva's contribution 'Battlefield Internet: Young Russian SNS Users and New-Media State Propaganda' (Chapter 16), takes up the perspective on the interrelation of youth cultures and strong nation-state agency with reference to the Russian internet as a contested media space. While the Russian internet was initially regarded as a space of alternative freedom, during the course of the information wars of 2013–2014, the government put huge efforts into the creation of a 'patriotic' internet. Young Russian internet users of 'Generation Zero', who learned the use of digital media from childhood on, were one key target of this policy. Using the campaign in support of the accession of Crimea to Russia in the spring of 2014 as an example, Vera Zvereva shows how these efforts were reflected in the social networks and blogs of Runet by young users. Her analysis contradicts the widespread assumption that young people who develop intense activity on the internet mostly are inclined to liberal views. In fact, the Russian internet exemplarily shows that in times of prevalence of a strong patriotic discourse, young people tend to adopt it, if it looks appealing. Conformism as the desire to belong to the majority is a more widespread strategy of youth identity-building, even in the realm of digital media.

José Alaniz's chapter 'Flashy' Pictures: Social Activist Comics and Russian Youth' (Chapter 17), provides another example of how everyday use of media becomes a means to organise and channel social engagement. It analyses the ongoing social activist project 'Respect: Comics from around the World', launched at the 2011 KomMissia comics festival in Moscow, with support from a European Union grant. The project addresses the problems of intolerance, racism and neo-fascism in Russia; the comic books produced for the project, small chapbooks with red covers, were distributed freely to young people in physical as well as digital form, designed to reach a population used to new media technologies. Relying on sociological research and interviews with Respect artists, Alaniz examines the project's outreach strategies and the biases about contemporary Russian youth which underlie them. He reflects on the advantages and limitations of comics as value-driven pedagogical tools as well as the media context out of which Respect emerged, namely the recent rise of graphic novels as a means of political education and activism, and points out the limits of such state-sponsored engagement to teach 'tolerance' in ways accessible to (an imagined notion of) Russian youth.

In the concluding chapter, Stephan B. Kirmse employs a broad comparative perspective on everyday practices of young people in Eastern Europe in a globalised context. Drawing on ethnographic research in Kyrgyzstan, Kirmse suggests in 'Youth in the Post-Soviet Space: Is the Central Asian Case Really So Different?' (Chapter 18) that Central Asian youth, especially in urban locations, are currently participating in many of the same globalising processes that can be observed elsewhere – both in the former socialist world and further afield. In looking at young students and their leisure culture of *gulianie* (walking), he shows how the appropriation of public spaces is closely linked to certain established concepts of the private sphere, but at the same time incorporates former socialist social habits and global lifestyles. In doing so, he integrates the often marginalised region of Central Asia into research on Eastern Europe, and reflects on the coincidence of transnational experiences on the one hand and local specificities on the other. This enables him to overcome the relationship between the local and the global not as a schematic dichotomy of (socialist and post-socialist) old and (western) new. Instead, he shows that sociological macro-analytical tools can grasp the meaning of 'youth' as a transitional age period only to a certain degree, and demonstrates that their very specific 'generational' experience can sometimes be found in quite banal daily cultural practices.

All in all, the Eastern Europe experience shows that the fundamental changes caused by the collapse of state socialisms and the subsequent increased globalisation that happened in the region have defined a new set of challenges for young people, which, in turn, requires revisions of the concept of youth itself. In a globalised present, youth cultures still play a significant role for young people to position themselves in relation to their

local, national and transnational surroundings. Yet generational change has lost its conflictive, confrontational potential. Rather, it has become a fluid, partly 'accelerated', partly 'melancholic' transitory stage without a specific goal or point of reverence. Accordingly, imaginary belongings among young people became much more fragmented and contested than in the former more gated subcultural identities, as they must constantly be negotiated and repositioned between local places and global spaces, underground and mainstream, 'authenticity' and commercialisation. Political activism in this context of uncertainty and vulnerability means first of all the longing for stability and order, adjustment to a strong state, diffuse solidarity, and often quite traditional social and political relations rather than offering alternative progressive options or definite political and ideological agendas. A similar longing for conformity and solidarity is also visible in the everyday practices and social activities of young people, who very often engage themselves in popular media, new social networks and urban spaces – in order to adopt quite mainstream conservative views or conventional globalised life styles. Youth cultures in this way offer adolescents of different age groups diverse opportunities to cope with social uncertainties, transitional stages, ambivalent belongings and cultural uneasiness, ranging from known socialist role models to globalised fashion styles, from local national engagements to transnational leisure activities.

Acknowledgements

This volume is the product of an ongoing research project which started in 2011 with a master seminar and an international conference on 'Black Box Youth' at the Freie Universität Berlin, followed by numerous discussions, presentations and preliminary publications (see Schwartz et al., 2013). We have greatly benefitted from the stimulating contributions provided by our students and all the conference participants. Above all, we are sincerely grateful to Georg Witte (Institute for East European Studies, Freie Universität Berlin), Christine Gölz (The Centre for the History and Culture of East Central Europe GWZO, University of Leipzig), Alfrun Kliems (Institute for Slavic Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin). We would also like to thank Naselie Asatryan and Diana Aurisch for their editorial support.

The book project would not have been realised without the great engagement and patience of Harriet Balker and Andrew James as representatives from Palgrave.

Notes

1. http://www.sras.org/youtube_conflicts_youth_debate_ukraine, date accessed 14 May 2015.
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTem6zo9fiw#t=114, date accessed 14 May 2015.
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zn69mAzPwjg#t=76, date accessed 15 May 2015.

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Part I

Reconsidering Generational Change

1
The End of Childhood and/or the Discovery of the *Tineidzher*? Adolescence in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture

Catriona Kelly

This chapter examines the cultural and social force of the adolescent in Russian culture, focusing on the Soviet and post-Soviet period.[1] My purpose is to assess Soviet understanding of the pre-adult years, and the gaps and contradictions in this perception. I also look at how representations of the shift from childhood to youth have changed since the demise of the Soviet Union and the arrival – under direct influence from the West – of a much greater preoccupation with the transitional phase and with the figure now often referred to using a word transliterated from English, the *tineidzher* (teenager). Following the famous yet often misunderstood strictures of Michel Foucault in *L'Histoire de la sexualité*, I do not, however, see this process of 'westernising' perceptions of the transition between childhood and youth as necessarily contributing to the 'liberation' of the human subjects involved (Foucault, 1976). Rather, I shall be concerned to emphasise that the silences imposed by the canons of official (and unofficial) Soviet culture on certain corporeal topics could be in some respects more 'liberating' than the stress on the importance of frank sexual discussion that followed. In any case, the post-Soviet period (as in contemporary western countries) also saw the emergence of another kind of anxiety focusing on adolescence, where the established cliché of the 'end of childhood' as the loss of innocence started to be intermingled with the idea of 'vanishing childhood' as a symptom of social malaise, producing widespread concern about supposedly premature puberty and its consequences.

In tracing 'the invention of the teenager' in Russian culture, I am primarily concerned with what one might term 'public' representations of the boundaries between childhood and youth, of the kind to be found in the creative arts, popular medical literature and advice literature for parents.[2] However, I also include some discussion of the extent to which these have resonated in

lived experience, as those undergoing what is sometimes named in Russian as 'the transitional age' (*perekhodnoi vozrast*) seek to grasp what is happening to them according to the norms and standards of the society they live in.

'Childhood' versus 'youth': The anatomy of a polarity

'Childhood' and 'youth' were, in terms of Soviet 'agitation and propaganda', easily recognisable phases of life, with their own age-specific organisations (Octobrists and Pioneers for 'children' up to the age of 14 or 15, the Komsomol for 'young people' from 14 or 15 to their mid-20s). Schoolchildren were categorised into those from the 'younger classes' (*mladshie klassy*) and those from the 'older classes' (*starshie klassy*). Both 'children' and 'youth' featured in Soviet slogans – 'Thank You, Comrade Stalin, for a Happy Childhood', 'Children Are Our All', 'Soviet Youth Votes for a Happy Life' – but the term *podrostok*, or a 'half-grown person', the nearest equivalent to 'adolescent' in common parlance, was not marked or honoured in this way.

The vagueness of the 'transitional' phase was expressed also in the flexibility of age boundaries. The age of criminal responsibility was, from 1918, fixed at 16; however, from 1935 it was lowered for certain crimes, particularly theft, to the age of 12. Labour legislation also fixed 16 as the age when a person might begin adult work, in the sense of the length of the day and the tasks assigned. However, work according to a limited tariff could begin at 14; and 'socially useful work', that is, participation in collective activities, such as collecting scrap metal, child-minding during elections, organising games and so on could start at a significantly younger age. There was also a good deal of fluidity over the age of admission to 'children's' and 'youth' organisations. From 1922 to 1936, the Young Pioneers accepted children from 10 to 14; from 1936 it accepted those from 11 to 16; in 1939, the age boundaries were changed again, to include those between 10 to 15; and, in 1954, the age span was changed to 9–14, before settling in 1957 at 10–14.

Perhaps the most striking case of uncertainty is the age at which marriage was allowed. In 1918, this was set at 16 (for women) and 18 (for men). However, there was soon a good deal of public pressure both for the lowering of the age (from the rural population) and the raising of it (from the educated urban public). In 1926, the age at which marriage was allowed for women was raised to 18, but a year earlier it had been decreed that in the case of appropriate certification from a doctor (that sexual maturity had been reached) the registration of a marriage would be allowed at 17. Jurists of the day also pointed to a notable inconsistency, in that there was nothing prohibiting the contraction of a de facto marriage earlier. Article 151 of the 1926 Criminal Code (which remained in force throughout the Stalin years)

forbade 'sexual relations with persons who have not reached sexual maturity'. But 'sexual maturity' was not directly associated with age (in contrary to the 'age of consent' specified in English law, prohibiting sexual relations under the age of 16). On the contrary, an individual approach was taken. As a commentator on the Codex of Marriage, the Family, and Care for Children (1926) put it, this age was to be understood as:

> a degree of sexual development according to which there is the possibility of fertilising someone else or being fertilised [*oplodotvorennym* – [*sic*], in the masculine form] by someone else. The question of whether a person with whom sexual relations have taken place is not resolved on formal grounds – whether they have reached a particular age, but in each individual case, *according to the specificities of the sexual life of the given person* [italics original], and in cases of doubt, with the participation of a medical expert.[3]

The formulation ignored the issue of sexual relations that did not involve the possibility of 'fertilisation' (consigning to limbo both homosexual relations and intimacy among people at a late stage of life). More significantly for the present discussion, though, it associated sexual activity with a phase of life at which development had been completed – an understanding that also underlay the customary term for 'puberty': 'the moment of the onset of sexual maturity' (*moment nastupleniya polovoi zrelosti*, a phrase that suggests the completion of growth, rather than the actual course of development).

In turn, this polarisation between different phases of life, 'childhood' and 'youth', with little sense of any intermediate phase between the two, has affected the historiography of pre-adult experience, with separate discussions focusing on 'childhood', or alternatively 'youth', at different historical periods.[4] If the focus in work on youth has been on issues of political control and social participation, often rotating round the question of the extent to which young people conformed – or did not – to Soviet reality, then work on children has tended to be preoccupied with the victimisation of children under Soviet power.[5] In other words, the question of agency has been crucial to the study of youth, but has been answered in advance with reference to the study of children – the latter have invariably been assumed to be what a historian of the Holocaust has termed 'always and everywhere the most innocent victims' (Novick, 2000, p. 255). The compartmentalisation of the discussion has by extension ignored awkward questions about age thresholds and about the manner in which they might be crossed.[6]

This conceptual problem for retrospective academic work on childhood and youth in the Soviet Union is thus derived not just from stereotypes (based on likely behaviour) that are widespread outside the culture, but also from certain features of Soviet culture itself. Celebration of youth (as the

future of society and the guarantee of enduring communist tradition) was ubiquitous:

> Our youth [*nasha molodezh'*] is a phenomenon without parallel the world over; its magnificence and significance may even be beyond our own grasp. Who gave it life, taught it, raised it, assigned it the business of revolution? Whence came forth those tens of millions of skilled workers, engineers, pilots, combine harvester drivers, scientists, and scholars? Can it really be us, the oldsters, who have created this youth? But when? And why did we not notice? [...] But look: in these radically new, fairytale spaces of the factory shops of Kramatorsk, in the endless expanses of the Stalingrad tractor plant, in the mines of Stalinsk, Makeevka, and Gorlovka, and on the first, and on the second, and on the third day of creation, on planes, and tanks, and in submarines, in laboratories, over their microscopes, over the wastes of the Arctic, next to every possible kind of capstan wheel and crane, by all the entrances and exits – everywhere are tens of millions of new, young, and terribly interesting people.
>
> (Makarenko, 1937, vol. 1, pp. 3–4)

But the trumpeting of youth's importance went alongside an enveloping silence with regard to adolescence – above all, though not exclusively, the symptoms of puberty in a biological sense.

'The secret of producing children': Puberty and silence in the early Soviet period

The invisibility of adolescence in the Stalin era was not an entirely new phenomenon. Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the period when sexuality generally became more visible in Russia (Engelstein, 1992), juvenile sexuality had represented a problematic case. A thinker such as Rozanov, for example, had advocated early marriage as a way of ensuring that children did not turn to masturbation – that is, as an instrument of sexual control.[7] In this, 1917 did not mark a significant rupture, contrary to the widespread myth of the immediate post-revolutionary years as the time when the 'glass of water' model of sexual relations held sway unchallenged.[8] In fact, a much more prominent element in the culture was anxiety about the emergence of a mechanistic attitude towards relationships between the sexes. Panteleimon Romanov's 1927 story 'The Trial of a Pioneer', for example, portrayed the persecution of two 15-year-olds, Andrei Chugunov and Mariya Golubeva, by their peers in a Young Pioneer troop because their gently romantic relationship had been discovered. The other Pioneers snooped on them and hounded them, culminating in a trial at which Andrei was upbraided for his sentimentality:

> 'If she was necessary to you for physical intercourse, then you could have honestly, in a comradely style announced this to her, and not corrupted her by picking up handkerchiefs and carrying bags instead of her. We need women who march in step with all of us. And if she needs a chaperone to get her across a stream, then, brother, we don't need someone like her.'
>
> 'She wasn't necessary to me for physical intercourse at all,' said Chugunov, blushing deeply, 'and I won't allow insulting... '
>
> 'So what did you need her for?' asked the chairman of the court's right-hand neighbour [...] 'What on earth for in that case?'
>
> 'What for?... How should I know what for?... All in all... I talked to her.'
>
> 'And you had to go and hide away from everyone for that?'
>
> 'I wasn't hiding, I wanted to be alone with her.'
>
> 'You could have been alone with her for intercourse. That's your personal business, because you wouldn't have been removing her from the collective, but acting like that, you were setting up a whole ideological direction.'
>
> (Romanov, 1927)

In fact, Panteleimon Romanov's story did not so much demonstrate the triumph of mechanistic physicality among adolescents as indicate how alien such a phenomenon was, in the eyes of an older generation (Romanov was born in 1884). The story was, indeed, criticised at the time for being out of touch. It appeared with an editorial note stating that the author's knowledge of actual Pioneer life was insufficient and inviting (by implication critical) responses ('Ot redaktsii', 1927). A discussion duly ensued, and Romanov's story was described by one Pioneer collective as having a 'harmful orientation'. However, the alternatives suggested had nothing to do with sexual licence: rather, another Pioneer group requested more ideological input from the Party network: 'Instead of frivolous illumination of the sex problems among pioneers, Pioneer workers request that Party circles should come to our aid in a Marxist manner, and that they should work through and illuminate the issues of sexual education for Pioneers in a scientific way' (Gusev, 1927, pp. 144–145).

The British educationalist Beatrice King, a fervent supporter of 'progressive education', who paid several visits to Soviet Russia in the late 1920s and early 1930s, noted that 'Communists of long standing' espoused views on sex education that were, as she put it, 'no more advanced than those of the suburban parents living in other countries'. King was particularly struck by the contradictory attitudes of a friend who had not told his son anything at all about reproduction and was then bewildered about how to talk to the

boy, who had been 'put in the picture' by the children his own age with whom he associated in the courtyard (King, 1936, p. 102).

If reticence with regard to sexual behaviour by adolescents was the rule at a period when 'sex in public' was treated with relative indulgence,[9] inevitably, the prohibition on the direct representation of 'physiology' that was asserted at, for example, the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 could only further mute discussion. In 1937, Anton Makarenko, who had become the canonical provider of advice on Soviet family life, as well as children's institutions, wrote dismissively, in his *A Book for Parents*, about the whole idea of sex education:

> To begin, a sharp contradiction between parents' liberalism and parents' idealism set in. It suddenly – who knows why – with unmistakable obviousness began to become clear that the problem of sex, notwithstanding any explanations that might be given, notwithstanding their heroic truth to life, still remains the problem of sex, and not the problem of cranberry kissel or apricot jam. As a result of this, the problem demanded a level of detail that was unbearable even in terms of the most liberal yardstick, and had to be kept secret. Truth, in its striving for the light, clambered out in a form that made even the blindest of parents feel a sensation as though they were fainting [...]
>
> And second, it turned out that, despite all their most conscientious efforts, despite their scientific camouflage, parents were still telling their children exactly what all those 'dreadful boys and girls' would have told them – although the whole point of parents' explaining was to pre-empt this. It turned out that the secret of producing children does not exist in two forms.
>
> And then in the end people started remembering that since the very beginning of the world there has never been a case where young people entering into the state of marriage did not have sufficient information about the secret of producing children, and as is well known ... always in only one form, without appreciable deviations of any kind. The secret of producing children is, so it would seem, the only area where arguments, heresies, and dark spots have never been observed.
>
> (Makarenko, 1937, vol. 1, p. 210)

Makarenko's view of truth – something best kept hidden lest it emerge shockingly on the surface, and something that would emerge anyway in pure and uncorrupted form, if only left to itself – was contradictory. Yet the message was clear: silence with regard to reproduction was definitely the best policy.

It was not just the 'physiology' of adolescent experience – and the long history of disquiet which this aroused – that made adolescence hard to address in terms of the official Soviet canons. Crucial, too, was the proscriptive

character of Socialist Realism with reference to the aesthetic of the body. The ideal was a well-proportioned, well-muscled and conventionally handsome physique that was directly governed by the canons of neo-classical art as enshrined in the academic teaching practices of Russian institutes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before the October Revolution, the adolescent body had sometimes been evoked by painters: examples include Mikhail Nesterov's touching portrait of his gawky, angular daughter, *Natasha Nesterova on a Garden Bench* (1914), or Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin's *The Bathing of the Red Horse* (1912), which shows an equally scrawny and physically inchoate young man, with disproportionately long limbs and an awkward pose. Soviet portraits, on the other hand, divided into those of pre-pubescent children (who were acceptable because they were proportionate) and young adults. A transitional body was as intolerable as would be the adolescent boy's transitional voice, with its lurches from growls to falsetto, in a classical choir. In Aleksandr Deineka's *Boys Running Out of a Water-Course* (finished 1935), the 'boys' in question have fully developed, broad-shouldered and classically proportionate bodies. The 1946 poster by Boris Ioganson, *Soviet Young People Vote for a Happy Youth*, shows a young woman who is dressed, coiffed and shaped as though she were a well-preserved 35-year-old.

As the entire culture rushed towards the future, so children were supposed to strive towards adulthood, indeed, old age. A *Krokodil* cartoon published in the early 1950s showed a boy boasting to a group of slightly younger children, as he stood by a newly created artificial sea, 'I can still remember when all this was dry land!' (Zhukov, 1952) (Figure 1.1).

Accelerated development simply bypassed the tricky phase between 'childhood' and 'youth'. There were no problematic phases of development in Soviet culture: the 'great leap forward' had its place in ontogeny, just as it did in the history of the nation at large.

'Time for love': Representing adolescence in the post-Stalin era

As the Thaw took hold of Soviet culture in the late 1950s and early 1960s, some of these assumptions changed. In the work of writers such as Vasily Aksenov or Boris Balter, a new view of 'youth' as a specific phase of human experience took hold. For the characters in works of fiction such as Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars* (1961), and *Half-Way to the Moon* (1966), or Balter's *Goodbye, Lads* (1962), this was a time of self-exploration and even a modicum of conflict with the older generation. In *A Ticket to the Stars*, the narrator referred to his father with half-joking disrespect as 'my dobbin' (*moi kon'*).[10] At the same time, 'physiological' themes were still played down, and there continued to be an emphasis on 'comradely' relations between young men and women.[11] Attitudes to juvenile sexuality remained wary. The results of a 1961 questionnaire carried out by the Komsomol indicated that only 2.6 per cent of those questioned thought that 'bad health, lack of children, lack of

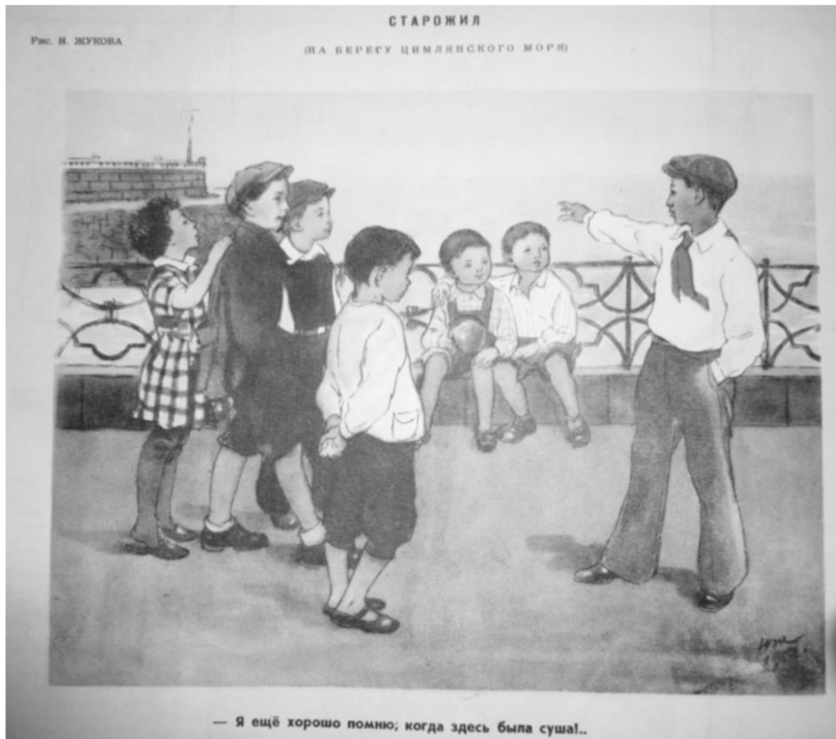

Figure 1.1 N. Zhukov, 'The old inhabitant', cartoon from *Krokodil* (1952)

sexual satisfaction' might be reasons for the breakdown of marriage (with a still lower rate of positive responses to this question in the countryside and among manual workers). On the whole, people were inclined to see things the other way round: as a response from a 36-year-old beekeeper in Tomsk province put it, 'Ask doctors to tell you how many girls get married as virgins. That'll give you the exact proportion of families that are likely to last' (Grushin, 2001, p. 291).

Yet there were a few comments that linked the silences of the Stalin years with family unhappiness. In the words of two Leningrad students aged 22 and 27, 'T. O.' and 'E. O.':

> Most young people are simply not brought up to understand the physiological relations between a man and a woman. The 'knowledge' that they acquire, usually from the streets, from jokes, from their peers, and not from intelligent, tactful, and experienced people, in the first place leads newly-weds to dead ends and painful questions. This is a rebuke to our

> parents' generation, who often deliberately avoided this important side of life.
>
> (Grushin, 2001, p. 287)

'T. O.' and 'E. O.' were typical of those holding such views in that they were from the cultural elite – highly educated and from a big city. Their standpoint can certainly not be considered typical of the country as a whole.[12] It was still relatively uncommon for parents to 'bring up' their children in any active sense (that is, with reference to explicit ideological or emotional patterns). Typical in this respect was a respondent to the Komsomol survey who claimed that the reason why so many Soviet marriages collapsed was that 'many young people are completely unprepared for marriage; they can't do the laundry or cook, and when they have a baby, they leave it with their parents to look after'(Grushin, 2001, p. 288).

At the same time, it was, of course, the educated cultural elite that formed opinion, and this evidence for a shift in values towards sexual behaviour is supported elsewhere. For example, the author of a book on children's cinema published in 1974 emphasised that physical love should be considered a joyful rather than shameful or obscene phenomenon. As an example of how such love had been successfully portrayed in the cinema, she cited Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968). A sequence that made it clear that the hero and heroine had just had sex (showing Romeo sitting naked on Juliet's bed) was described as 'pure and beautiful' (Kabo, 1974, p. 76).[13]

But Soviet representations of youth were still generally cautious in evoking the physical side of adolescence. This caution was clear even in what, by Soviet standards, was an adventurous representation, Valentin Rasputin's *Rudol'fio*, first published in 1966 (Rasputin, 2003). Rasputin's short story portrayed a young schoolgirl's flirtatious obsession with a male neighbour in his late twenties.[14] In their original conversation, the girl, 16-year-old Io, had taxed 28-year-old Rudol'f that 'you adults only pay attention to adults, you're all dreadful egoists', but soon made sure that this strategy did not work in her case: she began telephoning and visiting Rudol'f and generally exhibiting behaviour of the kind that in a later era would have been named as 'stalking'. That said, Io was not, from Rudol'f's perspective, either threatening or predatory. The first time that they met, he observed 'she was still just a little girl, fifteen or sixteen, not more, as he realised right away, looking at her round face with the fluttering eyelashes'. On a later occasion, he remarked that 'below her dress anxiously peeped her breasts, like two little nests some unknown species of bird had made to raise their fledglings in'. From the first, Rudol'f was aware of the issue of boundaries: 'He had no idea what he might and might not say to her.'[15] Though bitterly opposed by the older women in Rudol'f's circle – his wife, bored with Io's ceaseless telephone calls, or her mother, anxious over her frequent absences – the relationship

emerged as fundamentally innocent, or at least until Io demanded that Rudol'f kiss her on the mouth.

The fact that even such studiedly harmless evocations of adolescent physicality could have explosive potential was brought out a few years later, when the film director Dinara Asanova (1942–1984), then a young student fresh from the Kirghiz capital of Frunze, and studying on a course for directors at VGIK, the All-Soviet State Institute of Cinematography, chose to adapt *Rudol'fio* as her graduation project. The film version of Io's story, released in 1969 by Lenfil'm, where Asanova had begun working after leaving VGIK, was considerably more reticent than Rasputin's story. Where Rasputin's Rudol'f was definitely both attracted to Io and worried about his interest, the cinematic version of the character, played by the famous actor and guitar poet Yury Vidzor, came across as far more self-confident, indeed arrogant, living in a well-appointed flat with status symbols of the time prominently displayed: a reel-to-reel tape-recorder on which he played Bach; hunting rifles suspended from the wall; a large library; a typewriter; and two large photo-portraits of himself and his equally glamorous wife. Such a man, it was clear, was unlikely to see a schoolgirl's crush as anything more than a temporary amusement, and his reading of the riot act to Io ('you assume other people have to be interested in what interests you. You're an egoist!') was hardly a surprise. Asanova also underlined Io's ethnic background – she was a Latvian – and set the story in a city that resembled Riga, thus associating this transgressive narrative with a part of the Soviet Union that Russians saw as more 'racy' and 'western' than Russia itself. But even with these precautions, the film ran into trouble before it was released. A scene where Rudol'f and Io walked down by the sea was cut, and after *Rudol'fio* came out, Asanova was blocked from further directorial commissions for five years.

Asanova's later films included some of the most imaginative studies of young people produced by the Soviet cinema. Yet, on the whole, she stuck to safer cases of transgressive behaviour such as problems with discipline at school, uncertainty over life direction or social disaffection. Relationships between the sexes were secondary, and often idealised. In *The Woodpecker Doesn't Get Headaches* (1974), the teenager at the centre had frazzled relations with his parents and elder brother, but passed lyrical interludes with a girl from his school. However, the atmosphere was pre-pubescently platonic, unruffled by any sexual undertone. It was only later, in *The Lads* (1983), a film about a work and sports camp for 'difficult' young people, that Asanova returned to the problems specific to juvenile sexuality. The film included a disturbing scene in which two of the youths at the camp, taking exception to one of the youth leaders, whom they considered arrogant and out of touch, not only attacked him physically, but also displayed threatening behaviour towards his girlfriend. While one of the lads inveigled the youth leader into the water and began to throw wild punches at him, the other grabbed hold of his girlfriend and began trying to drag her off. The scene was inconclusive,

but clearly indicated that inappropriate attitudes to boy–girl relations were now seen as part of the 'difficult' paradigm (with the emphasis on harassment of young women by their male coevals – in this respect, Asanaova's *Rudol'fio* had been more unconventional, if also less explicit in its relation with the 'sexual' theme).

By and large, though, late-Soviet coverage of 'youth issues' emphasised above all the importance of broader social roles, as inculcated not just by correct family upbringing and education, but also by looser methods of socialisation such as the provision of rational leisure. Participation in the collective was given much more weight than individual development or life phases.[16] Yet there were signs of a shift below the surface. The revival of interest in classical anthropology, with its emphasis on ritual, meant that adolescence was starting to have more prominence in the context of what Russian *etnologi* customarily referred to as 'traditional culture' than in previous eras of Soviet academic history.[17] Advice for parents had also begun to include guidance on instructing children about sexuality – of however oracular a kind. From the late 1960s, *Nedelya* [This Week], the supplement to *Izvestiya*, a mouthpiece for liberal views at this time, carried quite a lot of coverage on the topic of sex education. The pioneering article appeared in 1967. Referring to the formation of couples among adolescents as a kind of 'romanticised friendship', which continued in a different key the joshing relationships where boys pulled girls' plaits and so on, it warned parents against attempting to interfere: if young people were mocked, they would simply close up altogether. It counselled parents to look at their own relationships and make sure that these did not come over as dull and routine. Above all, it was important that the significance of love should be emphasised: here, the author of the article played safe by mentioning Anton Makarenko ('Vospitanie', 1967).

Aside from this rather timid publication, the silence still dominated for nearly a decade, but by the late 1970s more explicit consideration of the topic began. A trigger for this seems to have been a pilot scheme initiated in Lithuania in 1975–1976, where discussion of relationship and family issues figured alongside classes giving preparation in subjects such as cookery and house maintenance (Mukhina, 1978). A comparable scheme in Moscow, running from 1978, provided pupils in some schools with discreet guidance about 'the facts of life', under the supervision of their year-group teacher (*klassnyi rukovoditel'*). However, in line with the explicitly pronatalist measure that had initiated the teaching (a ruling by Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party and City Soviet, 'On the Current Demographic Situation in Moscow and Methods for Improving This and Stimulating Natural Population Growth'), there was a strong emphasis on ingraining gender roles: boys were to be taught to regard girls as 'future mothers' ('Uroki', 1978).[18] Conservatism with regard to gender roles was matched by conservatism of a more general kind. Georgy Aseev, the head of the

City Department of People's Education (Gorono) in Moscow, was keen to reassure the public that the canons of educational practice had not been jettisoned: every family in the city should receive a copy of Makarenko's book for parents (with perhaps unwitting ambiguity, he observed, 'Unfortunately, to this day we have no better lectures on this topic than the lectures in A. S. Makarenko's *A Book for Parents*') ('Uroki', 1978).[19]

By the end of 1978, though, an extensive round-table discussion published by *Nedelya* was largely approving about the decision to offer schoolchildren more guidance about what was coyly referred to as 'the stork'. As Aseev now put it, 'While we sit round feeling squeamish, children will go on getting answers to "their own" questions – only not from teachers and parents' ('Shkola', 1978). Exactly this issue – that adolescents were 'finding out' in any case, and not in the way that Makarenko had anticipated – continued to be used as a justification in later articles published by *Nedelya*. In 1982, the staff journalist Elena Mukhina began by referring to the discovery of a notebook belonging to some Moscow girls studying in class 6 (about 13 years of age) that was sexually explicit enough to make scruples about the disruption of innocence rather comical. In moving from there to the 1978 Yugoslav film about two schoolchildren conceiving a baby, *Time for Love* (*Prishlo vremya lyubit*), she made clear the costs of ignorance. Her description of regular classes of sex education in various Moscow schools, led by doctors, and accompanied by sessions on family life and the importance of marriage, made no pretence of neutrality: clearly, this new practice was to be approved.[20]

Four years later, another article by Mukhina in *Nedelya* tackled the difficult subject of teenage pregnancy at greater length and more explicitly. Ostensibly, the discussion was concerned with problems outside the Soviet Union, but for once not in the West: this was a series of case studies from fraternal socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In the middle of the article, though, suddenly appeared a paragraph citing statistics from the Soviet Russian city of Perm'. According to these, Mukhina wrote, out of every 1,000 pregnancies recorded, only 317 related to children conceived within wedlock and carried to full term. A full 272 ended in abortions, and the other 400 or so pregnancies all related to children conceived outside wedlock: 140 were born to single mothers, and the other 271 to couples who had married hastily after the child was conceived. As Mukhina put it, there was an increasing mismatch between physical development and psychological development all over the world – including, she implied, in the Soviet Union (Mukhina, 1986).

Beyond the official Soviet press, criticism was blunter. A book published in 1981 by two émigré physicians who had worked in the USSR, *Sex in the Soviet Union*, was sharply critical of attitudes in the society that the two authors had left behind them. It was one of a number of publications from the so-called Third Wave that mocked the ignorance and hypocrisy of intimate relations

in Soviet culture (Shtern and Shtern, 1981). But the fact that the authors of *Sex in the Soviet Union* had worked in their former motherland as sexologists was itself an indication of changing views, as was their own sense of the need for reforms.

Interestingly, the glasnost era – which saw the rise of a tidal wave of publications about sexual topics aimed at adult audiences – did not mark a complete break with existing perceptions of adolescence. Rather, as in the 1920s, the appearance of more explicit material accelerated anxiety about what was seen as premature development. A notable moment was the republication of Panteleimon Romanov's *Trial of a Pioneer* in 1988, presented as a curiosity from the Soviet past (Romanov, 1988). Typical of the characteristic Gorbachev-era emphasis on social problems was a new emphasis on the prevalence of child abuse – previously an unmentionable topic – in Soviet society. A 1990 article, for example, catalogued disturbing cases from a variety of schools and children's institutions.[21] At the same time, the emphasis on aberrant behaviour pushed from immediate view the issues to do with reforming behaviour in 'normal' families that had come up in the 1970s and 1980s, though the rash of new books on male–female relationships often included some material about the physiological changes that occurred during puberty, and various new publications, such as the newsletter *SPID-Info* (AIDS-Info) with a 'sexual enlightenment' remit were now accessible to adolescents, if not by any means aimed specifically at them.[22]

The *tineidzher*: Toward a new view of adolescence

If the glasnost era had represented only a partial shift away from the values and representational practices of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years, the process of change accelerated from 1992. The collapse of the Soviet Union had brought an end not just to the Communist Party, but also to the official organisations for children and young people. Indeed, the demise of the Komsomol came a year earlier than that of its parent organisation: 1990 saw the movement split into a 'Russian Union of Youth' (Rossiiskii soyuz molodezhi, RSM) on the one hand, and 'Communist Initiative' on the other. While a successor organisation to the Komsomol was re-established in 1992, no club or society with universal status for young people emerged at the time or later. The minority of the young who wished to join an organisation – a less attractive prospect now that belonging no longer brought advantages in terms of opportunities to study and work – had a free hand in deciding which type of organisation they preferred.[23]

Gone, too, was the old propaganda association between youth participation, the legitimacy of the governing party and social order. All the muscle of the United Russia Party could not turn its junior wing, Nashi ('Ours'), into more than a fringe group, its influence waning after the financial crisis of 2008.[24] The title of the organisation was easy prey for jokes (its members

were renamed *nashisty*, a pun on the Russian word for 'fascists'), and it was neither traditional enough to appease those who missed the Komsomol, nor modern enough to be on the crest of a new wave. Once that no political party could pretend to speak for *all* legal minors, there was no longer any virtue in constructing youth as a homogeneous and harmonious group moving smoothly towards a universally defined social goal. This was one part of the background to the emergence of a much more sustained interest in the problems of adolescence. The borrowed word *tineidzher* (as already mentioned, a transliteration of the English word *teenager*) was, from the 1990s, often used to capture precisely the mixture of confusion and contumely that was now expected. 'Like a real teenager, you have passed stern judgement on the other people living in this slough of depravity', commented one of the sources cited in the 'National Corpus of the Russian Language'.[25] The term *tineidzher* was also regularly used in discussions of social anomie, as in a 2012 report on drug and alcohol abuse by young people in Yaroslavl'.[26] Further, the term 'transitional age' had been joined by another widely used phrase, *trudnyi vozrast*, 'the difficult age'.[27]

The growing popularity of J. D. Salinger's classic representation of adolescent angst, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), provides an intriguing sidelight on this shifting view of the 'transitional age'. The fact that the book could be presented as a study of the malaise afflicting young people in capitalist America meant that it was translated into Russian relatively early, in the 1960s, and went through two editions (1965 and 1967) comprising a total of 165,000 copies. In 1983 and 1986 it was reprinted again (in editions of 50,000 and 165,000 copies, respectively). In the late 1980s, the size of print runs increased significantly: in 1987 alone, a new edition ran to 200,000 copies, and in 1988, a volume also including work by Ray Bradbury came out in a run of 500,000 copies. A further edition of 120,000 copies was issued in 1989. It is very clear that the interest of the book now went far beyond its status as a portrait of 'capitalist America'. While it might seem that, by the start of the 1990s, everyone who wanted the book was now likely to own a copy, publishing continued vigorously in the next two decades. Between 1991 and 2010, *The Catcher in the Rye* was issued in around 30 different editions (including a new translation that attempted greater fidelity to the original than the diplomatically 'smoothed down' 1965 version by Rita Rait). The total number of copies printed was somewhere around half a million.[28] While they might seem meagre compared with the print-runs in the late Soviet period, the print-runs in post-1991 Russia represented anticipated sales in an unregulated market for books, rather than a state publishing house's view of the title's importance, and pointed to real buoyancy of demand. The success of the book was, in the new Russia, where most runs were in the low 1000s at best, something quite out of the ordinary.

A home-produced literature was also starting to celebrate the counter-cultural teenager, as in an eloquent complaint in an online author's text from 2011:

> You called my words Censorship. You glued up my mouth with Scotch tape from my earliest childhood, and put me in a long line of others like me. We're all cockroaches and you pay us no mind, you say what we think is lies [...] I draw gallows in my exercise book, and you call me abnormal, although you're the ones who invented the word 'Suicide' – specially for us. You want to cover us up, like a smear of dirt on a white dress.
>
> (Muzei, 2011)

It was especially, though, the development of sexual feelings and behaviour that attracted attention. This frequently became the occasion of laments about 'premature puberty', said now to have become 'a norm', as claimed, for example, by a 2010 article in the fashionable (and on the whole liberal) magazine *Snob* (Konradova, 2010). Such jeremiads moved in exact parallel to comparable items in western publications (see, for example, Williams, 2012). Alongside this, however, the provision of advice precisely aiming at aiding adolescents to express their sexual feelings and desires had become widespread. Take for example this guidance on a website with the collusive title of 'Dlya tineidzherov – prosto klass!' (roughly, 'Cool Stuff for Teenagers'), which suggests to young women the positions that they might choose to adopt in order to maximise sexual pleasure:

> Don't try any fancy experiments to begin with. The position you need isn't exactly romantic. Stick a cushion under your buttocks and pull your legs up, knees bent, to your chest. If you do it like that, you won't feel like turning into an asexual or putting your lad on a starvation diet of kisses on the cheek.[29]

Whether recollected with humorous hyperbole (as in a woman in her thirties who commented in 2005 that she and her contemporaries 'have all been married lots of times, but Mum and Dad are still virgins'), or with a kind of defensive pride, 'Things were very strict with us', the Soviet Union was widely seen as another world.[30] But representations and experience are in some respects distinct, and the issue of whether the denial of symbolic importance to adolescence actually signified the kind of atrophy of sexual behaviour that this retrospective view would suggest remains open – as does the question about the impact of much more overt discussion of juvenile sexual behaviour.

'Where lies the boundary between childhood and youth?' Adolescence in lived experience

It is not just with hindsight that the telescoping of adolescence in Soviet representations was seen to have validity for real lives also. As a poem by Yuri Voronov (1929–1993) saw it, accelerated ageing was a notable feature of experience during the 'Great Patriotic War'. By the time that his generation received their passports – traditionally the first step to adulthood – they were already seasoned fighters at the Front and in the Home Guard:

> In the days of the Blockade we did not find out
>
> Where lies the boundary between childhood and youth.
>
> In 1943 we were given medals,
>
> But our passports only in 1945.

The resonance of this perception went well beyond the Stalin years: the text still spoke to Leningrad Blockade veterans in the twenty-first century.[31] It was equally common to insist that the physiological side of adolescence had been essentially meaningless at such a time of ordeal.[32] People might laugh at some of the more egregious types of cautionary control – for instance, the fact that boys and girls dancing together in Pioneer clubs were not allowed to touch each other's hands (handkerchiefs were pressed into service) or to speak to each other (they got round this by passing notes).[33] Yet they still might feel a sense of pride in the 'strict' codes that operated, and especially in the emphasis on 'love' as opposed to what they saw as mechanical physicality. Young people were supposed to be idealists and so, naturally, were firmly held to believe in the ideal of love.

The sheer ignorance of 'love's' physical side among many young people of the era could mean that behaviour in the Stalin years sometimes expressed a robust sexuality that was remarkably little burdened with guilt, since people did not recognise their practices as problematic in any way. In village communities, traditional sex games such as 'winding the cotton' (where a young man would approach a young woman and jokingly suggest, with matching gestures, that she should unwind the yarn from his penis) are still remembered by those who reached adolescence in the late 1940s.[34] While this may not be surprising, given the tenacity of most other social and cultural practices out in the countryside until at least the 1960s, there is also evidence of overt adolescent sexual behaviour from urban circles of exactly the kind where Makarenko's emphasis on 'silence' could have been expected to impact. A case in point comes from the journal of a young Moscow man, written in the late 1940s, in which he recollects his physical closeness to a younger boy when he was working as a Pioneer leader at a camp a few years earlier:

> In 1945 at Shatura, there were 14 Muscovites as well as me, and we were now on an equal footing. {As a nervy boy,}[35] I hadn't been put in the big dorm, but in the four-bed room alongside. My {closest friend} favourite friend was the young drummer boy Yura B., with a sweet face and a beautiful mouth. We often used to lie in the same bed, cuddling and kissing, and my former beloved Svetlana would look through the window at us, making the window-frames squeak, {and she kept staring into the room, trying to attract my attention {and I pretended} that I didn't love her any more {only that wasn't true}. In effect, I'd fallen in love with Yura to spite Svetlana.[36]

If silence did not have to mean repression, conversely, the increased emphasis on the need to guide adolescent sexual development that began to filter through in the late 1960s could sometimes lead to an enforcement, rather than suspension, of prohibitions. Mikhail Veller's humorous story *Laocoon* (1993) portrayed the scandal that took place when the director of a secondary school discovered that the authorities had placed a copy of a neo-classical sculpture by Paolo Trubetskoi in the park alongside his institution. 'We've got little girls studying here,' he babbled. 'Big girls too, I'm sorry to say. And with boys as well. *Podrostki*. I'm sorry to say. During the period of . . . maturation . . . you get my meaning' (Veller, 2014). But memories of this period suggest that physical exploration in the years leading up to puberty, as well as during puberty itself, remained widespread, without any particular sense that what one was doing was 'shameful' or 'abnormal'. For instance, the widespread children's game known as *Dochki-materi* (literally 'Daughters-Mothers', but the equivalent of the game known in Britain as 'Mummies and Daddies') might include scenes in which the 'daddy' went to bed with the 'mummy', sometimes taking all her clothes off and cuddling and kissing her; undressing and physical examination was also common during role-playing about visits to the doctor.[37]

This is not to say that adolescent experience in the Soviet era represented the kind of permissive paradise evoked by, say, Margaret Mead's writings about Samoa. There is plenty of evidence from unofficial Soviet literature and from people's recollections of a more disturbing side to ignorance, as manifested, for instance, in the vulnerability of adolescents to sexual assault.[38] However, if one addresses merely the narrow problem of sexual anxiety, then by no means all historical subjects in the 'repressive' era suffered from this, while at the same time there is abundant evidence of such anxiety in materials dating from after the post-Soviet watershed. For instance, online forums reveal that worry about masturbation (Will hairs grow on your palms if you masturbate? How on earth do you stop once you've started doing it and like it?)[39] has in no sense disappeared, despite all the advice on sexual positions likely to take teenage couples to Nirvana. Added to this, the rise of a normative emphasis on anxiety and Weltschmerz

as necessary constituents of the 'teenage' experience would appear to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy in the case of at least some young people, who, instead of taking it for granted that vertical family relationships will endure, are now socialised into the expectation of conflict with what are known with mock-dismissiveness as 'ancestors' [*predki*].[40]

* * *

This chapter has studied the enduring prohibition, in Soviet culture, on the detailed representation of adolescence, and particularly of adolescent physicality, which it has traced to a combination of specifically Soviet factors (for example, the close association between the wellbeing of children and young people and political legitimacy, or the persistence of highly normative canons of physical beauty as perpetuated by the aesthetic codes of Socialist Realism).[41] It has argued that the post-Stalin era saw only a partial shift from the earlier wariness about adolescent physicality, but that the years after 1991 were marked by a much more radical change. In turn, the close association between Soviet identity and the ascetic treatment of the body meant that the relaxation of censorship in the late 1980s became an important blow to the coherence and legitimacy of the political culture. The radically altered attitudes to what it was possible to show and do in public in turn contributed to the evolving memory politics that drew a firm line between experience 'then' and 'now'. At the same time, there seems to be evidence that the fundamental experience of adolescence has not actually changed all that much. In the Soviet period, some private behaviour was considerably more permissive than normative texts and literary works might suggest. On the other hand, the much higher visibility of juvenile sexual relations did not necessarily lead to a radical alteration in practices, or made people more relaxed about their preliminary exposure to sexual experience. Whether the emergence of a culturally dominant concept of the specific needs and nature of the so-called *tineidzher* will in due course entrench, or transform, this situation is a question for researchers of the future.

Notes

1. Parts of this chapter draw on material from an article of mine that has appeared in Russian (Kelli, 2013). My thanks to the Leverhulme Trust for sponsoring the research for that article, under the grant 'Childhood in Russia: A Social and Cultural History from 1890' (www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/childhood), and to my collaborators on the project for their help. I would also like to thank the organisers of the 'Black Box Youth' conference, Heike Winkel and Matthias Schwartz, and the other participants, particularly Hilary Pilkington, for their comments.
2. The whole issue of the significance of 'public' versus 'private' is, of course, controversial: an earlier historiographical tradition that took for granted a straight split

between public conformity and private dissidence (see, for example, Shlapentokh, 1989) has been succeeded by scrutiny of exactly where the boundaries might lie (see, for example, Siegelbaum, 2006). For recent discussions of 'inventing the teenager' in the West, see (Baxter, 2008), (Savage, 2008) and the film of the same title by Savage and the US director Matt Wolf (2013), though all these sources are concerned with youth culture in a broad sense rather than with the years around puberty specifically.

3. See the commentaries by P. V. Gidulyanov: in (Gidulyanov and Krasnikov, 1927, p. 31). On the pressure to lower the age of consent, see ibid., pp. 32–33. On the calls to raise it, see (Sverdlov, 1958, pp. 111–112). For Article 151, see (Gidulyanov and Krasnikov, 1927, p. 151) and (*Ugolovnyi kodeks*, 1953). For a fuller discussion of the complicated history of legislation on age thresholds in this area, see (Engelstein, 1992; Healey, 2001, 2009).
4. The historiography of youth experience is significantly better developed than the history of childhood: see e.g. (Fisher, 1959; Pilkington, 1994; Gorsuch, 2000; Omel'chenko, 2004; Fürst, 2010; Neumann, 2011; Uhl, 2014).
5. For the former pattern, see esp. (Gorsuch, 2000; Fürst, 2010); on the latter, (Ball, 1994; Vilensky, 2002; Caroli, 2004; Vilensky and Frierson, 2010). As the indexes of many general histories of Soviet life, for instance (Fitzpatrick, 1999), indicate, social historians are also primarily attentive to issues such as child abandonment.
6. To some extent, this is true of work on childhood and youth in western cultures also (the 'Chicago School', for instance, focused exclusively on youth culture). However, by the 1980s, a literature on children's agency started to emerge. Among early work of considerable significance and influence was (Coles, 1986; Jones and Prout, 1990). A general synthesis of the sociological literature on children's agency is given in (Oswell, 2013).
7. For a detailed discussion of this era, see (Kelli, 2013).
8. One aspect of the mythologisation is the crediting to Aleksandra Kollontai of the 'glass of water' ideology, considering the sexual act 'not as something shameful and sinful but as something which is as natural as the other needs of a healthy organism – such as hunger and thirst'. Modern biographers have pointed out that she never said anything like this, and indeed, in *The Love of Worker Bees*, produced a detached and rather ironical portrait of a mechanistic attitude to sexuality in the shape of a promiscuous young woman worker (see, for example, Farnsworth, 1980).
9. See Eric Naiman (1997) *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
10. (Aksenov, 2014). The novel, first published in *Yunost'* in 1961 (nos. 6–7), was also turned into a popular film, *Moi mladshii brat* (My Younger Brother, directed by Aleksandr Zarkhi, 1962). Balter's *Goodbye, Lads!* (Balter, 1963) created less of a sensation in the Thaw era itself, but was reprinted in 1965, 1978 and 1971, and adapted by the author as a play in 1964.
11. As in *A Ticket to the Stars*, for instance, where the narrator encountered girls, but was at most shyly friendly towards them (Aksenov, 2014).
12. It should be said that even in the cultural elite, attitudes to prohibition were not uniformly negative, as is illustrated both by Joseph Brodsky's recollections of his early romantic adventures (Brodsky, 1986) and by the memoirs of the poet Viktor Krivulin (Krivulin, 1998, p. 15): 'We all lived in the shadow of sweet prohibitions, in a society with a repressed sexual undertone.' From this point of view, what was prohibited was still more seductive.

13. Kabo was also the author of moralising guidance and fiction for young people: see e.g. (Kabo, 1975).
14. The story was first published in the Siberian journal *Angara* 2 (1966); it has since been frequently reprinted.
15. This phrase occurs twice on the first page of the story.
16. On this side of Soviet youth culture, see e.g. (Omel'chenko, 2004, pp. 30–41). On gender socialisation specifically, see (Attwood, 1990).
17. See, for example, the work of T. A. Bernshtam, whose first publication in 1962 dealt with bridal wreaths, and who was later to focus on the rituals accompanying puberty: see e.g. (Bernshtam, 1991).
18. See also ('Shkola', 1978; 'Semeinyi razgovor', 1978).
19. (Attwood, 1990) also emphasises the pronatalist character of the didactic materials aimed at schoolchildren in this period, linking this to the 'demographic crisis'.
20. (Mukhina, 1982). The original title of Zoran Čalić's film was *Lude godine* (The Foolish Years), and it spawned several made-for-TV sequels. The film appears to have been genuinely popular in the USSR, as is indicated by its continuing availability in numerous copies on the Russian-language internet.
21. (Eremin, 1990). The main theme here, though, was the improper use of force (a teacher of military training in a school had encouraged pupils to beat up anyone who was failing to perform drill properly, etc.). For a discussion of the general scaremongering about child and youth issues at this point, see the Conclusion to (Kelly, 2007).
22. See e.g. (Kochetov, 1989).
23. In the Soviet era, membership of the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations was not compulsory, but by the late Soviet period, not belonging was unusual, and was likely to have a negative impact on the testimonials that one received from teachers at school, which were, in turn, crucial to one's post-school career.
24. Even the site of the organisation was, as of July 2013, lacklustre, with only seven news items on its front page in a period of over six months: http://www.nashi.su/ (last accessed 30 August 2014). Patriotic displays in Russia (e.g. for 9 May, Victory Day), often prominently featured children and teenagers, but without emphasising their links to any specific organisation (see, for example, the performance by a children's choir from Saratov for 9 May 2014, http://www.rg.ru/2014/05/10/reg-pfo/dethor.html, last accessed 30 August 2014.
25. See www.ruscorpora.ru (last accessed 12 May 2013).
26. 'Every fifth teenager aged 14 or under admitted to consuming drinks such as Red Bull, Adrenaline Rush, Bullit etc., and in the age group 15–17, these drinks are familiar to 28.4%' (Rumyantseva et al., 2012).
27. For instance, I have often heard this term used by parents of adolescent children. As of July 2013, this term raised over 750,000 hits on Google (helped by a popular 2006 album, *Trudnyi vozrast*, by the singer MakSim), as opposed to a mere 34,000 for *perekhodnoi/perekhodnyi vozrast*, though the latter remained the preferred term on medical advice sites, etc.
28. Figures for the Russian translation, *Nad propast'yu vo rzhi* (Moscow, 1965 etc.) are from the catalogue of the Russian National Library.
29. http://www.prosto-klass.ru, date accessed 12 May 2013. This item has since disappeared from the website, an indication of increasingly restrictive views towards juvenile sexual expression in the course of the 2010s, as expressed

most notoriously in the decree of the State Duma banning the 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientations' among minors (11 June 2013).

30. The first quotation comes from a formal interview with a woman (b. 1971) by Yuliya Rybina, Oxf/Lev M-05 PF48 (she probably meant that at an age when their parents were still virgins, she and her contemporaries had had many partners); the second from my own conversation in 2005 with a person born in the late 1940s.
31. I first came across the poem on a tombstone in the Serafimovskoe Cemetery in St Petersburg in 2009.
32. One of the participants in our life history study for my book on Russian and Soviet childhood, who decided to complete a questionnaire rather than undertake an interview, became very indignant over the question about the extent to which love, flirtation etc. had played a role in his experience of orphanage life in the 1940s: the very existence of the question was an indication that a young foreigner had completely misunderstood the circumstances of people suffering malnutrition and dystrophy. See Oxf/Lev WQ2 AD: male informant (b. 1926).
33. For a discussion of the puritanical management of ballroom dancing in the 1940s, see my interview with a woman born in 1931, CKQ-Ox-03 PF5-6.
34. See, for instance, the interview by Ekaterina Mel'nikova and Veronika Makarova with a woman born in a village in Smolensk province in 1935: Oxf/Lev V-05 PF20B.
35. Here and below the phrases in curly brackets are passages deleted by Rodoman as he worked through the text.
36. (Rodoman, n. d., p. 71). My thanks to the author and to Professor Vitaly Bezrogov for making this text available to me. The names of Rodoman's acquaintances have been changed, given that their consent to the publication of the memoir could not be requested.
37. This is extensively discussed in the work of S. B. Borisov: see e.g. (Borisov, 2002, 2008).
38. This is referred to fairly frequently in our interviews, for instance. An émigré writer whose stories portray late Soviet sexual behaviour as both aggressive and cynical is (Miloslavsky, 1984). There is a more detailed discussion of sexual experience among Soviet-era adolescence in the postscript to (Kelly, 2007).
39. Take this 2010 contribution from a 16-year-old boy, for instance: 'I've got hooked and I can't stop it. How on earth do I stop wanking? (*drochit'*) Only practical advice, and on top of that they say that when you wank you get lots of hairs on your arms and chest, I'm starting to get them, if I stop will they stop growing too? Will my parents find out? http://forum.gorodsalavat.ru/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=2067 (date accessed 26 October 2012).
40. 'Moral panic' about intergenerational tension in fact goes back to the late Soviet era: Lyudmila Razumovskaya's play *Dear Elena Sergeevna* (Dorogaya Elena Sergeevna), originally performed in 1981 before being suppressed in 1983, and revived only in the glasnost era, offers a damning portrait of some indulged young people who behave with complete contempt for their elders. However, this has become a much more important theme, both publicly and privately, since 1991, partly as a result of increased anxiety about 'deviant' behaviour such as drug-taking. The work of Hilary Pilkington, in particular, offers an in-depth study of these dynamics.
41. Arguably, longer-term cultural associations played a role in this as well, for example, the association between the adolescent discovery of sexuality and a moral 'fall

from grace' that was represented by writers such as Leo Tolstoy. I have discussed this topic at more length in (Kelly, 2007, Kelli 2013).

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2
Youth Cultures and the Formation of a New Political Generation in Eastern Europe

Ken Roberts

Introduction

One view is that the post-communist countries are still in transition. This is the consensual view of Europe's political elites who, in the early 1990s, decided that the outcome of the revolutions of 1989 and those that soon followed in the Soviet Union should be transitions into western-type market economies and democracies. In the early 1990s candidate countries were given a long lead time to prepare for admission to the European Union (EU). In 2004 the first group of new market economies and democracies were admitted, though full access to the labour markets in some older EU member states was deferred until 2012. The countries are henceforth expected to continue their transitions.

This chapter dissents from this reading of recent history. It argues that the countries completed a rapid transformation around the mid-1990s, since when change has been incremental and the already transformed labour markets and political processes have simply been consolidated. There is a further way in which we are misled by the transition paradigm. Rather than the East gradually becoming more and more like the West, it is more a case of the East's post-1990s consolidated realities offering the West a glimpse of its own future. All this is illustrated below with reference to changes in East Europe's youth labour markets, patterns of political participation and political cultures. This chapter argues that western social science concepts and theories have proved fit for purpose in analysing the changes in Eastern Europe and the outcomes, thus laying a firm base from which to envisage the likelihood of the formation of new political generations among today's young East and West Europeans, and the likely character of any such new generations.

Change after 1989

Rapid transformation in the early 1990s followed by consolidation has been my own personal experience of travelling into Eastern Europe (and must have been the personal experience of any other social researchers, journalists, politicians and business people who travelled into Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, very occasionally at that time in my case). The visitor experience changed rapidly in the early 1990s: after which the experience became predictable and routine. Travel to Eastern Europe remained an adventure, as it had been under communism, for two or three years after 1989. Many old practices still operated. It remained necessary to obtain an entry visa. There were no green channels at air terminals. Hotels kept visitors' passports throughout their stays. In other respects the countries had become chaotic. In many places there were daily interruptions to supplies of water, electricity and other basic household services. Governments and enterprises were running out of money and salaries were sometimes unpaid for months. There were bouts of hyperinflation in most post-communist countries. All Poles who were being paid salaries became zloty millionaires at the end of each month. There was no retail banking. Credit cards were useless; it was necessary to carry hard currency. After 1989 the post-communist countries became Europe's wild east. Their markets were ungoverned by commercial law: there was none! Businesses needed to organise their own protection. The new market economies were slow to offer a full range of consumer goods and services. In Warsaw in 1992 it seemed impossible to buy a picture postcard, a tourist booklet or any other kind of souvenir. In Gdansk old city centre in 1992 there were no restaurants to be found.

Then by the mid-1990s the visitor experience had been transformed. Gdansk was dense with (mainly German) tourists who thought they were visiting Danzig. Nearly all premises in the old walled town had become souvenir shops, bars or restaurants. Entry visas were no longer required for European Union (EU) citizens who visited candidate countries. Airports in East Europe's capital cities had new terminals, green channels and other westernised practices. Hotels noted passport numbers then handed the documents back to guests. In capitals and other major cities new hotels, shopping precincts and office blocks were under construction every year. There were new restaurants on each visit. Travel to Eastern Europe was no longer an adventure. Incremental change soon became the new normality, as is the case in West Europe's cities. The internet became available, internet cafes opened, then soon closed as people bought PCs and laptops. Mobile phone services became available, and within a few years were being used in every public space. By the late-1990s the visitor experience in Prague, Bratislava or Warsaw was hardly distinguishable from that in any West European capital.

It was not just for visitors that the period of transformation – rapid change into something entirely different – was ending by the mid-1990s. This also

applied to young people's experience of their life stage. The class of '89, the young people who were approaching the end of their formal education at that time, had a historically specific experience. The futures for which they were being prepared were suddenly snatched away. Few were devastated. The old security had gone but there were so many new possibilities (see Roberts and Jung, 1995). These young people were among the first citizens in their countries to experience a choice of political parties. They experienced the change in television – channels dedicated to light entertainment between the adverts. They saw shops open and become stocked with a full range of consumer goods. Window shopping became a pleasure. They experienced the abolition of internal passports. You could work and live in any part of your country provided, of course, you could obtain a job and afford accommodation. These young people had first-hand experience of the West entering their countries. They also experienced the abolition of exit visas and the removal of the need to apply for entry visas for visits to EU states by citizens of candidate countries. You could visit the West simply by boarding a bus and showing your passport. Hundreds of thousands of East Europe's young people took immediate advantage of this (see Dubsky, 1995). Some visited simply to look and experience life in the West. Others stayed for a while and earned some money, thereby becoming part of the first wave of pendulum migrants.

The class of '89 and its predecessors may always judge the present using communism as a benchmark. For them, all post-communist political regimes will have earned some merit simply by being not communist. The events of 1989 demonstrated how narrow and shallow the genuine support for the old system had been in East-Central Europe. However, the class of '89 and its immediate successors will have been the last cohorts to be able to use personal experience of life under communism as a yardstick. These cohorts of youth found their life-stage transitions caught up in the whirlwind of change that followed the collapse of the old system, whereas by the mid-1990s there were already cohorts of school leavers who had never engaged personally with any wider society in which people did not have a choice of political parties, or in which it was impossible to travel to the West, where one was not surrounded every day by consumer advertising, and where it was necessary to search and compete for jobs. None of this has been new and exciting for them. It has been just mundane normality (see Markowitz, 2000, for evidence from Russia). The countries have continued to change, but much more slowly than in the early 1990s. The changes will be hardly perceptible for young people in today's Eastern Europe. There are historical parallels. The post-scarcity cohorts who grew up in the West after the Second World War took for granted full employment and progressively rising standards of living. It was only their elders, who had lived through the 'hungry 1930s', who experienced the post-war conditions as an improvement (see Inglehart, 1977). Today's young East Europeans have cognitive knowledge

of communism and few would choose to restore the system even if this was possible, but their benchmarks in appraising their own lives are more likely to be the lives of their parents – from here on the class of '89 and its successors – and conditions in other countries of which they have some experience, and these other countries are now likely to include pre-2004 EU member states.

Differences within and between post-communist countries have widened since 1989. Until then they all had basically the same communist education, economic and political systems, and their citizens led a common socialist way of life. Differences were widening throughout the 1990s and have since been consolidated. This applies to differences between and within countries. Career groups that were formed in the new labour markets in the 1990s have been developing into new social classes. Political processes and cultures have stabilised.

Labour markets and economic cultures

Some members of older age groups survived the shock therapy of the early 1990s without damage to their lifestyles or life chances. Some exemplary communists were reborn as good capitalists. However, far more lives were damaged beyond repair as enterprises closed, up to 50 per cent was ripped from living standards and savings were decimated by hyperinflation. Status earned under the old system was lost. The real value of retirement pensions shrank alarmingly. Dismay and anger were likely to be directed at the countries' new political leaders. People said that the communists had at least been serious politicians. The short-term outcomes of the revolutions of 1989 were not what most of those who had supported change had either hoped for or expected, though many expressed a willingness to make sacrifices if, in the long term, their children and grandchildren would benefit (Roberts and Jung, 1995). Yet in the short term, elders were often distressed by young people's uses of their new freedoms. Elders knew that it had become more difficult to obtain employment than when they were young. Young people's plights attracted sympathy, but many of their elders were confused and dismayed. They were alarmed at how town and city centres and neighbourhoods had become unsafe with unsupervised groups of young men (and somewhat fewer young women) just hanging about. Young people's apparent materialism was deplored – their willingness, it often appeared, to do whatever was necessary to make money then spend it ostentatiously (Magun, 1996; Zuev, 1997; Saarnit, 1998).

The revolutions of 1989 were not instigated by young people. The young simply joined in the demonstrations and celebrations. The leaders were from the classes of '68, not '89. Poland's Solidarity was led by a middle-aged electrician. Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum was led by an ageing playwright. It has become easy to forget that the aims of the change movements did

not include dismantling welfare states in the name of reform or selling enterprises to foreigners (subsequently called foreign direct investment). The change movements were not pro-capitalism. Rather, they sought national liberation and real socialism – countries run by and for their own citizens. In Poland there were hopes that the newly independent, overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country would re-moralise a decadent Europe. Materialistic young people were betraying such hopes.

In practice, young people's mindsets were more complex than the condemnation suggested. The top values of the majority were family followed by friends. Many depended on these relationships for food and housing, chances to earn money, or, as some put it, simply to survive the 1990s (see Roberts et al., 2000). Most left school or college with a strong desire to obtain employment that corresponded with their specialties – the occupations for which they had been educated and trained. Communism had adopted a version of the German system of education and vocational training, and its ethos survived into the early years of post-communism. Ideally, young people wanted to work with and earn respect for their skills and knowledge. It was force of circumstances that obliged them (temporarily, they hoped) to 'do anything' to earn money.

That said, money had become more important than formerly, and everyone in Eastern Europe realised this. Income inequalities were widening. Under communism it had been difficult to spend the money that one earned. The system systematically bred shortages. It was an economy of queues and waiting lists. In the new market economies anything could be bought, more or less immediately, provided one was able to pay, and consumer advertising was ubiquitous. It was also the case that, in the early 1990s, 'business' was the new glamour career. Young people were excited by the prospect of working for themselves, developing businesses and, as a result, becoming wealthy. Most made some effort to do business. In most cases this meant trading – sometimes just on local streets, but sometimes more adventurously by shuttling across country borders. Cigarettes were the most common merchandise. Some young women celebrated their new freedom to sell their own bodies. Sex work (briefly) became a status occupation in certain subcultures. Meanwhile, other women (again briefly) celebrated their new freedom to 'live normally' as full-time housewives.

However, it was not young people's own preferences but circumstances dictated by economic restructuring and labour market processes that shaped the careers of young East Europeans in the 1990s. The reforms divided them into three broad career groups. First, there were those who obtained jobs soon after completing their full-time education then remained continuously and fully employed, though not necessarily in the same jobs or with the same employers. The second group became long-term unemployed. The third group, the largest in many places, can be described as underemployed. Their experiences were diverse, but located them somewhere between the

fully employed and the straightforward unemployed. Some practised 'survival self-employment'. Some of these, and others who had an employer, were in and then out of work, then in work again. Their jobs were often unofficial, without a contract, and officially or de facto temporary. The work could be seasonal, such as in agriculture or tourism-linked. Many of the jobs were part-time, or nominally full-time jobs that paid less than a proper full-time salary. The new private sectors were the source of most of this employment. Commerce was faster to open shops, bars and restaurants than to revive coal mines and steel mills.

Anyone who has been involved continuously in youth research in Eastern Europe since 1989 will have encountered a series of surprises. An attraction of the field has been that findings have been difficult to predict. One surprise has been the speed with which upcoming cohorts experienced their new, post-1989 circumstances as simply normal while researchers were still grappling to understand this new normality. A further surprise has been how labour markets and terms and conditions in different types of employment have changed – and also the ways in which they have not changed – since the mid-1990s. It then seemed reasonable to expect that as the economies recovered from shock therapy, then grew continuously and strongly from year to year (as happened in most of the countries), the fully employed career group would expand while the other groups contracted and eventually disappeared, thus the main divisions among young workers would be by their types of occupations, as in the West (up to now). The relative sizes of the career groups have always varied from place to place, with the fully employed group invariably being largest in capitals and other major cities. Everywhere, however, the relative sizes of the groups appear to have remained little changed since the mid-1990s (see Roberts et al., 2008). The benefits of economic growth have led mainly to improvements in the terms and conditions of employment of the fully employed, who have developed into their countries' new middle classes. In Russia it is estimated that just one-fifth of households have become better off (often much better off) than under the old system (National Research University Higher School of Economics and Expert magazine, 2011). The family household is the unit that is classed for purposes of consumption, and new middle-class households' standards and styles of life are typically supported by more than one stream of income. Jobs may be in the public or the private sector, with public sector salaries having recovered since the early 1990s. Other middle-class incomes are from self-employment in substantial and enduring private businesses (Roberts and Pollock, 2009, 2011b).

Today, members of the class of '89 include members of the first generation of new middle-class parents, and they typically adopt strategic approaches to their own children's education. They ensure that their children attend good nurseries, elementary then secondary schools. Private education is most likely to be used selectively, depending on whether standards at

public schools are considered satisfactory. Formal schooling is usually supplemented with private coaching at crucial stages, such as preparation for university entrance examinations. Parents ensure that their children acquire useful skills, including competence with ICT and foreign languages. The parents invariably expect their children to progress through higher education, and possibly to gain some experience in a foreign (invariably western) country. They will always use the 'connections' that they, as middle-class parents, possess in order to open doors for their children (see Tomanovic, 2012).

The new middle classes are minorities of the populations in all East European countries, but everywhere this has become the new class of aspiration. The workers' state is no more. The working classes have been demoted and degraded. Young people today do not prioritise business or employment in a specialty. Rather, they aim for the middle class. Where expansion has been unregulated, swollen higher-education systems flood the labour markets with graduate middle-class wannabes. Those who are unable to obtain middle-class employment and achieve middle-class lifestyles at home have two options. They can migrate in search of the western way of life. This traffic continues, usually still intended as pendulum migration in the first instance, though those concerned may eventually become part of a long-term diaspora. Westward migration is now much easier (it is legal) for young people from post-2004 EU member states, and there are now cross-border networks of friends and relatives to facilitate the flows. The alternative is to stay at home and wait for the arrival of the great global market economy (see Roberts et al., 2005). Optimism is still alive among young East Europeans (see Horvat and Evans, 2011), but must surely fade among today's and tomorrow's thirtysomethings, even when they are continuing to insist that they are still in life-stage transition, and that their countries are still in transition towards becoming 'properly functioning' market economies which, some still say, will surely mean good jobs for all.

Political participation and culture

Most members of the class of '89 can have played no direct part in the momentous events of that year. Unless they were at university or lived in capitals or other major cities, they are unlikely to have taken to the streets at any stage. We know that for many families the changes simply happened, maybe with their tacit approval, while they continued with their lives as best they could in their homes, workplaces and schools (see Roberts, 2012a). Nevertheless, young people were well represented, indeed highly prominent, in the street marches in Leipzig and other GDR cities, among the crowds in Prague's Wenceslas Square, in the partying in Berlin when 'the wall' was opened on 9 November, and when crowds celebrated the outcome of the 4 June election in Poland. The June election was the true history-making event of 1989. It was the first genuinely contested election permitted under

communism. Solidarity won all but one of the seats that were up for election. The scale of Solidarity's triumph astonished everyone. Afterwards Poland's communists simply faded away and in time were reconstituted as social democrats; Poland's first post-communist government was formed, which demonstrated beyond doubt that it was indeed possible to topple communism – and during the remainder of 1989 the rest of the East European 'dominoes' fell.

It is impossible to offer any reliable estimate of the proportion of young people who became involved in any political activity during 1989, but there was confidence at the time that the advent of 'true' democracy would lead to an upsurge and a broader blossoming of civil societies in all the East European countries. Young people would have a choice of political parties. They would be able to speak their minds and associate freely. Above all, they would be able to participate in rebuilding their countries, thereby building their own lives while helping to make history. The big surprise for youth researchers was that the expected upsurge in political activism never happened (see Lomax, 1997).

Nearly all those who were on the streets in 1989 soon joined those who had remained throughout in their homes, schools and workplaces, and most have remained politically inactive ever since – except during short-lived explosions of protest, some of which have led to regime change (see below). Most young people have known how they want their post-communist countries to develop. They have been virtually unanimous. They admire the West – its democratic politics and its standards of living. These are the kinds of societies that they want their own countries to become. In the early 1990s the youth of Eastern Europe were the continent's most enthusiastic Europeans, eager for their countries to become full members of the EU (see, for example, Niznik and Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, 1992). Membership of the EU and other western-based international organisations have had their overwhelming support, and all post-communist leaders in Eastern Europe (west of Ukraine) have endorsed these goals. The problem for their citizens, young and old, has been the slow (if any) pace of change in their own lives. It took very little time for young voters to grow disillusioned with their new post-communist political elites. The context was the big problem: the countries' economies imploded and living standards fell alarmingly. Politicians rapidly became figures of ridicule and contempt. Hence, before long, the return of (ex)communists to power in some of the countries. Young people were unimpressed by the squabbling of politicians in democratically elected assemblies. They soon became suspicious of politicians' real motives, especially when politicians' lifestyles were grossly out of line with their official salaries. By the mid-1990s most young people felt that most politicians were in politics to serve their own interests rather than to serve their countries (Roberts et al., 2000; Roberts, 2009).

Young people in Eastern Europe are not politically apathetic. Most have strong opinions, but these typically include contempt for all politicians and a determination to remain personally disengaged from formal politics, while seeking private solutions to their own problems using private resources. The strong opinions that young people express sometimes appear contradictory. They will say that they are pro-democracy, then almost in the next breath argue that their country really needs a strong political leader. The most popular and trusted politicians in the ex-Soviet Union include some of the most authoritarian presidents (see Dafflon, 2009; Lillis, 2010a, 2010b; Roberts and Pollock, 2011a).

The atypical young people who have joined political parties since 1989 are an important group not on account of their size, which is tiny, but because they have been slowly replenishing their countries' political elites. These are now composed of mixtures of pre- and post-1989 entrants to politics. Most young political activists in Eastern Europe since 1989, as under communism, have not been just enthusiastic supporters but have been at least interested in the possibility of building political careers. This has not necessarily meant becoming an elected politician, the first step towards which has been inclusion on a party's list of candidates: from this position there have been good chances of election to a parliamentary assembly where the party has a chance of gaining a share of power. A political career can also be built by joining the 'new nomenklatura', that is, the class of political appointees. These positions may be in public administration, a public service or a business in which a government has a stake. Activists whose roles in their parties become known can soon find themselves being approached by members of the public seeking assistance from politicians in registering a business, solving a tax problem, obtaining a health and safety or fire certificate, permission to build and so on. There has been an understanding that any such assistance will not be provided without 'compensation'. Such arrangements may operate on a long-term basis, and these arrangements (of which many citizens or members of their families have some personal experience) corroborate suspicions that the countries' entire political classes are corrupt, no matter what party they belong to, and whether they are young or old. Throughout Eastern Europe the initial new recruits to politics after 1989 were more likely to have been nurtured in the communist parties than anywhere else (for example, see Zhuk, 2010). Where else might they have obtained appropriate experience?

East Europe's democratically elected politicians have not been subject to some of the checks that have been created over decades in more mature western democracies (see Roberts and Pollock, 2011a). East Europe's political parties are fragile. None (except ex-communist parties) have been built upwards from grass-roots support. They are all based on caucuses formed around political leaders. New parties have sometimes been able to build up electoral support rapidly, and sometimes party memberships also, only then

to see both fade away just as quickly. It has not been unusual for politicians to change parties, or for parties to be reborn under new names, or to make dramatic policy shifts, sometimes associated with the interests of a new sponsor. Politicians have not been constrained by long-standing party ideologies and programmes, approved by mass memberships, which elected representatives have been expected to implement. The new democracies have yet to create independent civil services that will subject politicians to rules, starting with politicians' exclusion from the ability to make appointments to jobs and rules governing the award of government contracts. Under communism, the countries did not develop independent legal systems. The role of law was to enforce the wishes of the government, and such cultures take longer to change than institutions.

It is also relevant that since 1989 a major role of governments that have sought integration into the West has been to implement international agreements. These include agreements with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, NATO and, most important of all, the EU. This has limited the ability of East Europe's politicians and parties to appeal to voters with distinctive policies which, if elected, they are able to implement.

Voters in countries that have joined the EU can use their votes to dismiss their governments and promote different parties and politicians into power, but, they ask, what difference does this make? There appears to be just an exchange of positions within the same 'political class'. In countries that have opted for so-called managed democracy (or had this imposed from above) young people have been prominent in the street protests that have sometimes toppled presidents and their governments (see Collin, 2007; Beachain and Polose, 2010). This happened in Belgrade in 2000 (the fall of Milosevic) and in the subsequent 'colour revolutions' in Georgia in 2003 (the Rose Revolution), Ukraine in 2004 (the Orange Revolution) and the Kyrgyz Republic in 2005 (the Tulip Revolution). There was a further revolution in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2010. The problem for most of those who took to the streets has been that the outcome in all these cases is better described as regime change rather than a real revolution. After the events, popular political activity subsided once again. As in 1989, young and older demonstrators resumed their private lives in their homes, and returned to their schools and workplaces.

We will return below to the prospects of those who have stayed at home, disengaged from formal politics, eventually becoming the seedbed for the formation of a new political generation during the twenty-first century.

Theories and concepts

All the above conclusions about post-1989 developments in Eastern Europe are the result of using theories and concepts formulated by western social scientists, originally when examining their own societies, to analyse

post-communist trends and conditions. Today, we all recognise that researchers are most likely to find what they are looking for – even though there is always the possibility that reality will be distorted, or that there are alternative ways of seeing. Western social scientists who headed East after 1989 were prepared for this. Few had predicted the collapse of communism. Likewise, the West's political elites were unprepared for 1989. An obvious fact about the new situations in Eastern Europe was that there were no precedents. There had been no previous transformations from communism into capitalism, market economies and multi-party democracy. Thus, western researchers were prepared to be challenged; to be made aware of the inadequacy of their stocks of theory. It seemed likely that East Europe's own social scientists would lead a new wave of theoretical innovation and renewal. They would surely respond to the challenge of explaining why their countries had become communist, its legacy, why the system had collapsed, and the new patterns of economic, social and political life that seemed certain to develop. Yet none of this has actually happened. Western social scientists have not been forced into paradigm shifts. Knowledge transfer has been overwhelmingly from West to East rather than in the other direction. East Europe's social scientists have been eager to absorb western economics, political science and sociology. We can only speculate about the reasons. It could be that a singular modernisation process is currently under way throughout the world and that, up to now, the West and its social sciences have been the most advanced. Post-1989 labour market and political conditions in Eastern Europe have been distinctively post-communist, but they have proved comprehensible and explicable using western researchers' existing theories and concepts. There have been special practical difficulties in gathering data in the East, but in terms of our thinking, we (researchers from the West) have been given an easy ride (see Roberts, 2003).

Many situations and practices encountered in Eastern Europe since 1989 have been beyond the bounds of normal western experience. There have been new routes into business, like 'honest robbery privatisations'. The vast scale of unemployment as well as underemployment in many places has been a new experience for western researchers. So has seeing households cope with steeply shrivelling incomes. However, the formation of new labour market career groups such as the underemployed has been explicable in terms of familiar labour market processes (see Roberts, 2006). The emergent class structures in Eastern Europe, where the new middle classes have been the fastest to form, and the other large class has been a new lower class, are unlike the patterns of socio-economic stratification in West European countries, but are explicable in terms of familiar class-formation processes (see Roberts and Pollock, 2011b). 'Managed democracy' has been among the most difficult new arrangements to absorb into western thinking. History will decide whether this is the latest variant of communism/csarism/khanism or a step towards the development

of multi-party competitive political systems – or an enduring alternative to both.

Western theories about youth life-stage transitions have proved fit for purpose in Eastern Europe because key concepts, including 'youth' itself, had already been redefined in ways suited to the post-industrial age. The 'teenager' first became a topic of public and private discourse in the 1870s in Europe (see Savage, 2007), and youth culture from the 1920s (see Fowler, 2008), but before the Second World War the social science of youth was dominated by the concept and theory of adolescence formulated by the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall (1904). His view was that adolescent psychology and the social behaviour that typified the age group could be explained in terms of individuals adjusting to the physiological changes that started with puberty. From the 1930s onwards this view of adolescence became fused with psychoanalytical thought, and the goal of adolescent development was said to be the emergence of a stable adult identity (see Erikson, 1968). However, by then the American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead (1935, 1971) had shown that among Pacific Islanders adolescence was not a period of strain and turmoil, and this encouraged sociologists to argue that the youth 'life stage' was socially constructed.

In most countries, in public discourse the term 'youth' has become associated with a particular age group. In North America it is the teenage high-school years (12–18). In the UK it is age 14–21. Fourteen was the age at which young people became able to finish their education and local education authorities were also given statutory responsibility for the provision of youth services for 14–21-year-olds by the 1918 Education Act. Since then, the notion that 'youth' are 14–21-year-olds has stuck in popular culture. However, nowadays most West European sociologists insist that the ages when youth begins and ends are socially variable, and in recent decades youth has tended to begin earlier than formerly, largely due to the marketing of consumer products such as 'teenage' fashions and music to the pre-teens – also, youth tends to last longer due to young people remaining longer in education, and thus there is an upward movement in the ages at which they typically enter adult employment, marry and become parents. In Eastern Europe, where under communism the Komsomol organised 16–28-year-olds, neither youth researchers nor the wider populations have found it difficult to accept that the youth life-stage might extend beyond age 30. In America, where the term 'youth' has remained firmly attached to the high-school years, researchers have coined new concepts such as 'emerging adulthood' (see Arnett, 2005) to cope with the upward extension of the betwixt and between years. Meanwhile, Europe's youth researchers have been willing to accept that young adults can still be accomplishing their youth life-stage transitions throughout their twenties and even into their thirties.

There has been considerable conceptual innovation by western youth researchers during the life stage's extension. Researchers have noted that the sequencing of transitions has been destandardised. Nowadays young

people may marry (or cohabit) prior to completing their education. They are quite likely to become parents prior to marriage. There is no longer any standard, normative sequence. 'Yo-yoing' has become more frequent: leaving school for a job then returning to education; likewise, leaving the parental home and then later on returning to live with one's parents (see Pais, 2003). Lengthened transitions are said to have enlarged the scope for young people to build 'choice biographies' (see Bois-Reymond, 1998). An outcome is said to be the individualisation of biographies, meaning, on an objective level, that every young person has a unique sequence and combination of experiences and, on a subjective level, responsibility for building one's life is privatised (see Beck, 1992; Roberts et al., 1994). East Europe's youth researchers have embraced this new (to them) thinking. The post-1989 changes in young people's lives have not challenged western concepts and theories; rather their comprehension has required the adoption of western concepts and theories.

Given its success in other domains, maybe we can use western experience about the formation of political generations to envisage whether another (a second) new post-communist political generation is imminent in Eastern Europe, and, if so, its likely character.

A new political generation?

Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) is best known as a founder of the sociology of knowledge, but he also became and continues to be the start point for discussions about political generations (see Mannheim, 1952). Reflecting on his own experience in Europe between the two world wars, Mannheim argued that new political generations were formed in times of major historical change, when upcoming cohorts found that the policies and thinking of existing political elites were simply not in accord with their own experiences and views of the world. Mannheim believed that every cohort was influenced profoundly, with lasting effects, by events and issues that it confronted when first becoming politically aware, that is, typically during youth. Later on, they knew whose and which sides they were on and could respond to new events and issues accordingly. Mannheim argued that in periods of major historical change the upcoming cohort was likely to reject the politics of their elders and become available for recruitment by new political movements, parties or party factions. His inter-war examples were the then ascendant communist and fascist movements. In time, each new generation would replace older political elites and govern their country in a different way. Thus a new political era would dawn, which would last until further historical change led to the formation of yet another new political generation.

Such a new generation was formed in the West after the Second World War, after Mannheim's death. The baby boomers, at that time described as the first members of a post-scarcity generation, were the vanguard cohort

(see Inglehart, 1977). Their arrival in politics was announced in the student movements of the 1960s. Since then, despite regular announcements of the arrival of Generations Y, Z (cohorts with distinctive new experiences during their youth such as the ecstasy generation and the emergence of the internet) (see, for example, Reynolds, 1999; Wyn and Woodward, 2006; Milner, 2010), there does not appear to have been a successor political generation (see Majima and Savage, 2007).

With regard to the formation of political generations in Eastern Europe, in all the countries there must have been generations led by the first cohorts who grew up with no personal experience of any system other than communism. These generations include the builders of communism, and they included true believers. However, there were clearly dissident factions in the countries that became communist after 1945, and in 1989 these factions led the successful 'revolutions from below' in East-Central and South-East Europe. Communism in most Soviet republics was ended differently by 'revolutions from above'.

Subsequent research has confirmed Mannheim's claim that cohorts are profoundly and permanently influenced by issues and events that occur when they are first becoming politically aware (see, for example, Schuman and Corning, 2000). However, Mannheim's ideas have been built on in several important ways. First, we now know that a cohort's basic political outlook can continue to develop until those concerned are in their thirties (Burnett, 2000). Second, a new generation may not make its main impact on politics until cohort replacement has made its members into a critical mass of voters and politicians, which may take several decades. Third, the eventual political impact of a new generation will not necessarily be by implementing policies that its members advocated when they were teens and twentysomethings. All political generations necessarily respond to – and may revise earlier ideas in – the political, economic and ideological circumstances that prevail when the generation achieves political power. The baby boomers in western Europe benefitted from the full employment, strong and steady economic growth, rising living standards and the welfare states that were created after the Second World War, but the relevant policies were implemented by members of the generation formed between the world wars, when young people were being attracted into communist and fascist movements. The baby boomers were the source of the student radicals of the 1960s, but as a mature political generation they became the authors of neo-liberal politics. Thus we should not expect current cohorts of young people, if they form and mature as a new political generation, to act on what they sincerely believe today.

Two features of the upcoming cohorts of East Europeans diminish their likelihood of becoming a new political generation. First, few are gaining experience of political activity and organisation. As explained above, the

exceptions are usually absorbed into the incumbent political classes. The formation of a new generation is likely to depend on young people who are seeking change being joined by disaffected established politicians. This development is neither impossible nor even improbable. A person can join a new political generation at any age. Second, young people and their countries' politicians do not disagree fundamentally on which direction the countries should be heading in. In Eastern Europe they mostly want to become 'normal' western-type societies, that is, with economies and politics similar to those of West European countries. Young people are critical not of their governments' declared aims but the governments' failure to realise these, while the politicians gain advantages for themselves and their families. The formation of a new political generation will be contingent on the eventual propagation of alternative visions for the countries' futures. Meantime, young people's contempt for their countries' politicians has one of the same effects as radical political activity. It prevents existing politicians and parties replenishing or developing firm bodies of electoral support, thereby creating space for a new politics.

There are better prospects for the formation of a new political generation in the West than in Eastern Europe. Young people in pre-2004 EU member states are now complaining vocally about their inability to obtain jobs and salaries that will enable them to live as well as their parents. This predicament is spreading from south to north (see Chiotaki-Poulou and Sakallariou, 2010; Cuzzocrea and Tavani, 2010), and from the least qualified early school-leavers (who became 'at risk' from the 1980s onwards) to encompass higher-education graduates (see Roberts, 2012b). Policies that worked in the past – macro-economic growth and more education and training for the young – have ceased to deliver, and incumbent politicians have nothing else to offer. There are ways in which West Europe's youth labour markets increasingly resemble those in Eastern Europe – school and higher-education graduates confined to precarious jobs and other forms of underemployment. There are also complaints that all politicians are 'just the same' – a privileged career group – and that voting makes no difference. However, in the West, as in Eastern Europe, as yet there are no exciting alternative futures on offer.

In so far as EU integration continues – as and if the single market is complemented by a currency union, a banking union then a fiscal union – 'Europe' itself could become the focus for new popular political movements. Up to now 'Europe' has been an elite project in the older member states. Europe has been a popular issue in Eastern Europe ever since 1989, but the unanimity that has prevailed since then could soon fracture. In 1989 the EU was an economic powerhouse that the newly independent states aspired to join. What happens if young people decide that their countries have become 'harnessed to a hearse' while the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) forge ahead?

Future political generations are likely to be transnational, but not global, though as Edmunds and Turner (2005) have noted, some preconditions now exist including global communication that is facilitated by the internet. Despite this, historical contexts and contemporary conditions in different parts of the world, including West and Eastern Europe, remain very different, and therefore young people's preoccupations remain dissimilar.

Conclusions

The implication of the preceding analysis is that there are no remaining big mysteries except what will happen in the future. We know how the transformations in former communist countries have changed the situations of young people. We know the outcomes (up to now) because the period of rapid change and genuine transformation ended in the 1990s, and western social science's theories and concepts have worked well in understanding both the change processes and the outcomes.

There are other changes affecting young people's lives that have not been addressed in this chapter. For example, youth in Eastern Europe now participate in leisure-time subcultures that are similar to those with longer histories in western countries. From these we know that the subcultures are important sources of fun, wellbeing and temporary identities for the participants. Yet more often than not, subcultures have zero wider signficance beyond their direct activity or groupings, other than as a point of voyeuristic interest to others (see Miles, 2000). Young and older people's enduring identities still tend to be fixed by place, ethnicity, family, gender, age and occupation. Young people throughout Eastern Europe have become users of the internet and mobile phones. Digital technologies have changed most people's lives at work, but the impact on the rest of their lives and societies has been slight compared with earlier new technologies such as television and, before that, electricity.

Young people who are able to join East Europe's new middle classes are most likely to decide that they can build better lives at home than by migrating. Other young people may also stay and wait for the market economy to boom while 'getting by' in a 'meantime that could last indefinitely'. Alternatively they can exit their home countries but are likely to find that, as migrants, their jobs and salaries are inferior to those of locals with no better qualifications (see, for example, Bagatelas and Kubicova, 2004; Anderson et al., 2006). All groups of young East Europeans grumble. It is mainly the better-educated members of the countries' new middle classes, however, who complain about imperfections in their countries' democracies and demand more 'voice' (see Roberts and Pollock, 2011a). Other young (and older) people complain about the acute shortage of decent jobs. They know that all occupations pay far less in their own countries than in the West (see Galgoczi et al., 2009). They may not (yet) realise that they are not catching up, but in

practice they are likely to remain forever poor relations (see Kornai, 2006). Any equalisation is as likely to be through downward adjustments in the West as by catching up in the East.

National governments specifically, and politicians in general, are most likely to be blamed by everyone for everything, but this alone will not make young East Europeans into a new transformative political generation. It is possible that they will become such a new generation but, as this chapter has suggested, this is more likely to happen among young people in the West. They are now discovering that the globalisation and financialisation of capitalism (see Lapavitsas, 2011) mean that their labour costs/salaries are being made competitive with those in Eastern Europe (and Asia). Indignation will spread when young people realise that their inability to obtain jobs and salaries that they consider commensurate with their education and qualifications is not a temporary blip due to the 2008 banking crisis and subsequent recession, but a longer-term new reality.

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3

Fast Forward to Capitalism? Accelerated Youth in Post-Socialism

Herwig Reiter and Christine Steiner

Introduction – Post-socialist transformations as varieties of acceleration

Transitions from central planning to a market economy constitute a historically recent phenomenon, as Ken Roberts (2003, p. 490) maintains: 'There are plenty of earlier examples of transitions from authoritarian rule to multi-party democracy, but not from a command to a market economy. Most of the countries made this transition rapidly, big bang style.' Big bangs, one could argue following Ken Roberts, constitute extreme forms of instantaneous acceleration: they change everything and redefine life chances and relationships in space and time. In the case of post-socialist transformations in Europe, this movement of change was not entirely contingent. After the fall of the Berlin Wall many of the former communist countries in Europe entered into a modernisation race towards 'western' standards. In order to escape their ascribed 'backwardness' (Gershenkron, 1962) and become compatible with the membership requirements of supra-national entities like the European Union, societies were rapidly liberalised and deregulated. In a convergent process of 'catch-up modernisation' (Zapf, 1995) these countries adopted modernised political, economic and legal institutions of the market economy, democracy and welfare state. This fast transformation introduced uncertainties, which were unknown in the life course model of the before 'authoritarian welfare state' (Leisering and Leibfried, 1999). Mass unemployment, poverty and new forms of inequality were among the consequences.[1]

Social change and its consequences for young people have been at the heart of many debates in youth research; and change keeps fuelling the controversy over the rights and wrongs of its theoretical assessment (see for instance the 'Beck-debate' between Woodman, 2009, 2010; Roberts, 2010, 2012). Unlike slow and creeping changes towards destandardisation and higher individual uncertainties that are attributed to, say, the supposed movement from high to late modernity, post-socialist transformations

deliver promptly. They provide us with the historically unique opportunity to observe at first hand the impact of massive social change undertaken to be in line with contemporary mainstream capitalism. And they can, as we will argue at the end of this chapter, be starting points for revising our conceptual toolbox on the basis of real-life changes that are hardly contestable.

In his timely interpretation of late modern life, Hartmut Rosa introduces social acceleration as a 'blanket term for the escalatory logic of modernity' in the sense of a 'progressive dynamisation of the material, social and spiritual fabric of society' (Rosa, 2011, p. 207). According to this diagnosis, social change goes hand in hand with processes of acceleration in the spheres of technology as well as private lives and biographies. Due to the temporal foundation of any kind of modern economic activity, social and technological acceleration is even 'a logical consequence of a competitive capitalist market system' (Rosa, 2010, p. 27). In the former socialist states of Eastern Europe this was a process, 'in whose course the overly inflexible and sluggish structures are replaced by faster and more mobile arrangements' (Rosa, 2013, p. 17).

Against this background we take a comparative look at the two contexts of Lithuania and East Germany, which represent two very different types of transformation. Lithuania transformed in less than two decades from a former Soviet Republic into a market society and, following the EU's 'conditionality approach' (Offe, 2011, p. 27), member of the European Union. East Germany represents the unique case of a sponsored transition in the course of which political autonomy and national economy were abandoned in favour of reunification as early as October 1990.

Lithuania's 'return to Europe' was characterised by an other-directed process of deregulation, privatisation and residualisation of welfare that was mainly driven by organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (for example, Aidukaite, 2004). East Germany, on the other hand, became a member of the European Union as soon as it abandoned its independent socialist statehood and re-unified with West Germany in 1990. In this case, the equally other-directed 'return to Germany' involved the complete adoption of the West German institutional system together with extensive institutional monetary transfers (Wiesenthal, 1995). The costs and risks of reunification became evident only gradually, and the East Germans felt a sense of uncertainty only after some time (Wiesenthal, 1995b). Many people, and especially young people, still view East Germany as a society in transition. It appears to be an irony of history that the East German transformation, which was probably the best organised and most controlled transformation of this scope, should in the end produce uncertainties very similar to other transformations. Our leading assumption is that, in different ways, the overall diagnosis of social acceleration and uncertainty applies to both contexts.

In all post-socialist transformation countries citizens were confronted with a massive loss of familiarity: the institutional framework that had once channelled their lives disappeared and was, more or less abruptly, replaced by another. Change was comprehensive and turned the lives of millions of people upside down. Yet it affected societal generations differently. Adult and elderly people struggled to connect their past in socialism meaningfully to the changed circumstances; they were in a limbo between 'shock and assimilation' (Mau and Zapf, 1998). Many were affected by market-induced mass unemployment, failed to adapt to their role as henceforth commodified 'human resource', and became redundant in the new labour market.

Young people in the 1990s have no or little first-hand experience of communism. Instead, they have the prospect of spending their whole life in the capitalist system and need to project themselves into its unfamiliarity. The transition from universal to insurance-based welfare introduced a far-reaching shift in the biographical significance of successful or failed youth transitions. Furthermore, the institutional rupture that ended planned economies destroyed or at least highly deregulated established pathways to employment that had existed in socialist work societies (Kohli, 1994; Reiter, 2006).

In Lithuania, the youth transition system collapsed. The close institutional links between education and employment in the Soviet system (Reiter, 2006) were replaced by the logic of market matching: state enterprises offering smooth transitions to employment disappeared together with industries and production plants that used to contribute to the Soviet economy. The novel institution of the labour market became one arena in which young people could immediately perceive a change of rule: it was hostile and characterised by high flexibility, low wages and employment security, jobless growth and persistent unemployment (Rutkowski, 2003). In East Germany, the unexpected problems of German Unity were countered with extensive social and labour market policy measures. Many of them addressed the transition of young people to training and employment as a coordinated and joint effort between state schools and enterprises, resulting in low-risk transitions. Yet in East Germany this system worked only due to considerable public subsidies. In a number of regions, more than 85 per cent of training contracts were at least temporarily supported by the state (Freudenberg-Stiftung 1998); and many government programmes support the transition from vocational training to work (Dietrich, 2003). The resultant low unemployment made the transition to work look safer and more stable than it actually was.

In this chapter we intertwine the above-outlined institutional and theoretical narratives of socio-economic transformation and its reflection in terms of acceleration, on the one hand, with the empirical first-hand experiences of acceleration of two young people from within this transformation, on the other. Our comparison of life perspectives and uncertainties of two young men in Lithuania and East Germany allows the empirically

grounded discussion of communalities and differences of the effects of social acceleration in the two contexts.

Comprehensive acceleration in Lithuania – The case of 'Face'[2]

The case of the anonymous respondent Face illustrates the impact that the institutional acceleration of the Lithuanian transition arrangements can have on those young people that are ready to synchronise their own speed with that of the changing context and requirements. Face's account is indicative of the normative adaptations and rationalisations that have to be made in order to be 'fast enough' to live up to the acceleration challenge. His assessment of the situation goes hand in hand with action strategies and ways of relationship management.

Face is one of 30 respondents interviewed in 2004 during an explorative study into meanings of work and unemployment in the context of Lithuania (Reiter, 2008). Face is a 16-year-old school-dropout who was, six months after a school change, expelled from school at the age of 14. At the time of the interview, he had no education beyond nine years of compulsory schooling. His main occupation of 'event organising, newspaper work, club work and so on' is part of a lifestyle that would have been unlikely under Communism. His main ambition is to achieve his goals without a formal education:

> I was expelled for not attending classes (...) because I didn't have time to go to school. Because I was establishing a club X (name), in Y (city), I had a lot of work and I started working as a journalist at the newspaper Z (name), and I didn't have time for school. (...) The point is, my aim is to prove that it is possible to achieve something without studies.

While this could be the statement of a troubled teenager from a broken home, it is in fact the narrative of the younger son of two teachers. Face's biographical project runs counter to what his family represents: although he agrees that a basic level of education is necessary, he categorically rejects the idea of studying as 'something that doesn't interest me at all at the moment'. His decision to leave school and learn about life in a different way questions both his parents' authority as teachers and the whole system of education-based transitions to employment. He ironically calls himself 'a very bad, bad child' because he broke with the family tradition of valuing education: 'I would be an ideal child for my parents if I studied well.' Face rejects any kind of paternalism regarding the ways people earn their living. He demands absolute freedom to choose his way of life and is an uncompromising advocate of egoism and autonomy that are consistent with the new individualism in his society:

> I live for myself and I care only about myself, and for me... everything about others or society, I don't care at all. Because I live by myself, I will create my life by myself and I will see what will come out.

His independence is considerable and he even pays his parents for still living at home. Since he stopped attending school he hardly communicates with them. His individualism is also reflected in his isolation from other people; for instance, he started preferring 'contacts' over 'best friends' that, as is evident from his relationship to one of his acquaintances, may one day become useful.

> I haven't had a best friend for my whole life but that's not bad. I have a lot of contacts, I'm very open. I can tell things to everybody and it's not difficult. The point is, I don't need those best friends. What's the use of them? I have never had best friends or chicks <slang>, nor anyone else. (...)

Face is reluctant to talk about the Soviet period because he does not know much about it. He prefers to live in his time and according to the rules of the post-communist present – 'according to the rules that are now', as he says.

> Well, I could not care less about what was then and I don't compare it. I live now, I live the way I have to, according to the rules that are now. So this is how I live, this year and not the last year.

At least in his hometown, Face is not the only young person in this situation – 'I know about eight people who do not study and whose situation is similar to mine.' His attitude to work is 'very positive' because it brings 'pleasure'; and money is 'the assessment of your work'. He expects his market value to increase with experience alone, but does not imagine continuing like this for long as his competitive advantage of youth will vanish. Altogether, in retrospect he views his success in terms of earning and his quest for independence as good reasons for having left education.

Young people like Face are ready to explore the diversity of possibilities that surround them. In his case, on the biographical level the post-socialist acceleration paradox consists in the lack of distinct projective perspectives despite the greater societal haste towards the future. The choice of a 'choice biography' becomes difficult due to the apparent plurality and arbitrariness of options (Woodman, 2009). As their options for living in the present multiply, young people like Face respond by narrowing down their horizon and by isolating themselves socially. As in the fast West, stable and continuous identities are increasingly replaced by situative and performative ways of identity formation (Rosa, 2011). Acceleration introduces contingency and

coincidence as important categories of experience and as newly recognised selection mechanisms within the exploding possibility space. The option of failure is omnipresent.

In case of Face, situative identity formation can be illustrated with the example of a chance-encounter in an online chat forum with another young journalist, about whom he had read the day before the interview. They meet and Face is offered a job; it was not education that got him the job but 'a huge, huge coincidence, the greatest I have ever had in my life'. The chance and experience of tackling unexpected challenges and meeting new and interesting people makes his life unpredictable. Face refuses to think ahead; he learned to appreciate the unexpected, at least in terms of retrospective rationalisation. However, Face does not reject everything that is 'conventional' or provides stability. He actually likes the idea of a permanent job and 'envies' people who have one. Yet from his own experience he cannot expect it will happen to him. He cannot anticipate the future and rather lives in the moment, leaving the past behind. 'Expected coincidences', as it were, are easily accommodated in the frame of a strategy of blending out the complexity of the environment by foreshortening the time perspective to the present. In this sense, people, and the chance of encountering them, represent opportunities, hopes and expectations that can be favourable when the timing of their emergence is right.

Face's high degree of self-determination is also reflected in his choices, self-actualisation, the pleasure of earning and his drive to achieve. Yet the acceleration of social relations is accompanied by a strong polarisation in the perception of the social environment and by an exaggerated love of liberty. Face establishes himself as the measure of all things and judges others on the basis of, for instance, their capability to keep up with the tempo of the new system. He maintains that people who may be humble and less assertive than others and unable to find a job should be allowed to 'shoot themselves'. He has little sympathy for those who fall behind as it would compromise his own active way of coping with uncertainty. He relates the quality of people to their flexible and short-term availability as if they were human resources. The half-life period of the workforce depends not only on their qualification but also on personality traits that, in case of mass unemployment, may be decisive for access to employment. The following statement exposes the early successful liberal and enterprising 16-year-old Face as an impatient and misanthropic observer of his slow environment that has trouble getting along in the new and accelerated unemployment economy.

Interviewer: Is it easy to get a job? In Lithuania, now, what do you think?
Face: The easiest thing is to get a job; it is more difficult to work than to be employed.
I: Why do you think so? Most people say that there are no jobs.

F: Those who say that there are no jobs are idiots. There‘s plenty of work everywhere, you only have to have a wish. Those people do not want to work. They are only able to complain. If a 16-year-old is able to have five jobs, so it is a shame for a person who is not able to find at least one. It is possible to find a job easily. Go to the jobcentre, shout a bit and you‘ll have a job in five minutes. I have done many experiments with looking for a job and so on. Simply one of my friends, a 19-year-old, has a speciality of a cook, bartender, gastronome, etc, so he wouldn‘t get a job for a long time at the jobcentre. It was enough to go once to the jobcentre to shout well at all those old bags <women> working there and the next morning they called him and he got a job and he is working now. You have to have a wish, you have to go everywhere, but not sit there, at the jobcentre. I don‘t understand the purpose of that sitting and waiting. You have to put your nose into everything; you have to be pushy <slang>, in this sphere. You‘ll achieve things if you are pushy. A person must have brains. A modest person will never find a job, if he will sit in a nice queue and wait, while the others will jump the queue. It means that he doesn‘t deserve to live. They‘d better shoot themselves at once.

I: You talked about shooting oneself. That‘s interesting. Do you think that it is good to shoot oneself?

F: Of course. If a person knows that it is better for him to commit suicide – let him do it. It is better for him this way. Why should one live if he doesn‘t like that?

In a nutshell, in the motto of ‘You have to be pushy’ Face summarises for his neo-capitalist society what Nowotny (1994, p. 32) describes as the imperative of the ‘economically mediated obligation to join in’: ‘The fast group are doing it right. (...) The slow group are far from being socially recognised in their slowness.’ Face seems to agree with this imperative. He translates it into a rather blunt message to the slow and old that they have to understand that there is no place for them in society: ‘They’d better shoot themselves.’ In this way and in his everyday language he addresses the losers of the rapid social change who are the by-product of social acceleration – ‘outcasts of modernity’ and ‘human waste’ as Baumann (2004) would call them. In case of post-socialist acceleration, it seems, the ‘culture shock’ (Nowotny, 1994, p. 84) that results from the therapy of macroeconomic shocks, is accompanied by a desolidarisation with the slow groups in society like the unemployed (Reiter, 2007).

Face is an example of a teenager opposing the usual constraints of growing up in a way that would have been impossible in socialist Lithuania. His everyday competence, knowledge and agency are considerable, and there seems to be no reason for his transition to eventually develop into a failure.

Selfishness, social isolation and autonomy are part of the utilitarian attitude of a young person ready to seize opportunities and to make use of the freedom characterising the post-communist situation.

Future-related uncertainty remains high due to the enjoyable thrill of unpredictability in encounters and situations. In an optimistic reading, his (hyper-)activity could be called productive, creative or even entrepreneurial. These features are welcome in the new market society; yet the fact that they are here attached to a 16-year-old dropout at least deserves a second thought. His attitude allows for unexpected opportunities to occur, yet undermines his capacity to plan. Routine has no place in his world of today. Discontinuing with recognised patterns and according to the knowledge he *can* mobilise, Face can only expect certain things *not* to happen to him, like getting a permanent job he would like. In analogy to the general concept of social acceleration the relationship towards past, present and future is shifted in favour of a focusing on the present. His cognitive strategy of uncertainty management by keeping the future out of sight (Reiter, 2003) may consist of avoiding the disappointment of having dwelled upon expectations, 'dreams' he calls them, in vain.

Young people like Face perceive the collapse of state socialism first of all as liberating; they are aware that the past represents a burden. By occupying new types of job in a new economy Face is innovating and improvising against the mainstream; he is exposed to a high level of knowledge uncertainty. Once thrown out of school, he turns his back on the past and the outdated standard socialisation programme towards employment. He opts for an event-based establishment of competences, rather than a linear, education-based transition to employment. This makes him an example of many young people involved in legal and illegal entrepreneurship in transformation countries (for example, Roberts et al., 1998). By living 'according to the rules that are now' he, together with his like-minded fellows, first of all consolidates a mode of operation ('know-*how*') rather than goals crystallising in the future. He is a pioneer contributing to the establishment of a stock of knowledge for a new society; and with a little luck he may well become a competent member of it.

His dissociation from established forms of knowledge is reflected in the way he organises his social environment. His opposition to formal education comes with evident alienation from his parents. As teachers, they represent not only 'the adult world' but also the stock of knowledge of the former regime and its obsolete reproduction. This may be part of the regular behaviour of a teenager. Yet it may also be an attempt to exclude his parents from those 'circles of recognition' (Pizzorno, 1991) that should be assessing his activities. Instead, his role-models are of his own age and, like him, are breaking ground in the new society, a task for which the parent generation may not provide competent guidance. However, an alternative circle of recognition that could provide the stability of attention that family offers is not established. Social uncertainty is high because strong ties

are abandoned. In order not to reproduce outdated conventions, he drops his family capital and dissociates himself from knowledge that refer to the past of the old system. What remains is an accidental and accelerated set of 'contacts' that he trusts will become useful and competent judges of his performance.

Controlled acceleration in East Germany – The case of Sebastian

The specific experiences that young people made in East Germany depended on their age in the year 1989. Young adults of the early 1990s turned the idea of catch-up modernisation into their life programme; they had many opportunities for independent lives. The label 'Generation Zero', which East German youths of the first years of transition chose for themselves, indicates their readiness to break with the socialist past. The younger children of the reunification were fully affected by the uncertainty associated with the crisis; compared with their older peers they are sceptical towards capitalism and democracy and search for alternative identities and worldviews (Bürgel, 2004).

Sebastian is somewhere in-between these two East German youth generations. As one of 32 young people he was interviewed in 1998 in the frame of a study about the impact of the social and economic transformation on school-to-work transitions (Steiner, 2005). At the time of the interview he is 19 years old and just passed his A level examinations. He will soon start with his one-year-long alternative service in the field of child care, which is merely a compulsory task for him before studying psychology afterwards.

> Well, what does a psychologist do? There are different things. Some time ago I always thought that it is somebody in a room and another one lies on the couch. What I would like to do goes in the economic direction, consulting of companies, team building, selection of applicants, or developing marketing strategies (...) Otherwise there is still the area of higher education, but I don't think I would do something like this.

Sebastian's career aspirations to become *business consultant* directly target a sphere of employment that is paradigmatic for the new, fast capitalism. Yet unlike the younger Face, Sebastian has no experience of this economic world; nor do his relatives or friends. His ideas are primarily based on things that are important for him like earning money, being in a leading position, freedom of choice and autonomy. He distinguishes this sphere from others that in his view essentially correspond to public service. Sebastian introduces himself as individualistic achiever whose attitude is in line with the requirements of his time.

Sebastian's Catholic parental home is unusual for East Germany and he emphasises at the beginning of the conversation that this is an important

aspect of his personality. For instance, he attended a denominational school and very early started playing several instruments and singing in a choir. Making music is an inherent part of the cultural and social everyday life of all family members. His family represents the GDR-version of a bourgeois milieu whose cultural and social capital is highly connectable to the new Germany. Sebastian is aware of the power of tradition and does not believe that he will be the one to end it:

> Well, I don't think . . . , young people always say now: 'I will do everything differently.' I don't believe that. Until now we all did the same.

However, his account includes quite a few clues that he tries to dissociate himself from this milieu. For instance, his scepticism towards public sector employment results from his assessment of his parents' working life as university professor and teacher. He respects their work but not the conditions of this work. His strong dissociation from his family becomes evident when he contrasts his own ideas about studying psychology with those of his parents.

> I believe that mother and father think that getting involved in psychology is a good thing. And they already said that I should definitely do that. But they probably imagine that I should do something like child psychologist. Also because this is somehow obvious because I already work with children [during my alternative service . . .].

Child psychology is not only a conventional subject for his parents. His mother in particular expects that his studies will be associated with his prospective alternative service that was facilitated by his family's vast network of acquaintances. At that time, alternative service could be chosen instead of military service. This could provide him with a future that is somewhat linear, coercive and integrated; yet Sebastian does not want that. The complete absence of music in his future plans, which is otherwise of crucial importance for his family network, can be understood as an implicit statement of dissociation.

He never really talks about these things with his parents, and rather informs them only superficially. Similarly, his contact with his teachers hardly goes beyond the classroom. However, his resistance finally becomes obvious from what he says about his discussions with classmates and friends, as in the following interview passage.

I: Can you talk about the time after the A levels at your school (. . .)?
S: At school? Not at school, but with friends. I also have friends, not only outside school but also inside. We talk about these things and laugh ourselves silly about how we will turn out.

Considering his background and his ideas this laughing with friends about how they will all 'turn out' is at first somewhat irritating. But if we take laughing together for a social practice that negotiates relationships and constitutes sociality among each other then it can also mean something else: it establishes internal solidarity as well as dissociation from others. Laughing communicates deviation from normality; and it can also be an emotional valve for those who consider themselves a minority (see Merziger, 2005, p. 2). In Sebastian's case it relates to the uninterrupted normality of his family, and especially his classmates' employment projects.

> Well, for some it is clear; their life is already predetermined. I don't really know but I have to laugh about it. There are some girls that already applied a couple of times; they start their training now, they will be able to stay (in the training company) and then they will have their profession or so. But most, now, I think, of those who I meet, are also a bit more relaxed.

In this way, Sebastian dissociates himself clearly from the typical GDR-pattern of the secure and expected career, which tended to gain in importance in the course of the drastic economic and social change. Yet in his view such a career is little more than an illusion that would be bought by squandering cultural capital. He recognises supposedly 'safe' options only when they represent a good deal such as, for instance, the career as an officer. To him they are otherwise indicators of 'subsistence anxiety'. In a context that asks for continuity and security it is difficult to follow Sebastian's plea for being more relaxed and less forward-looking. This is especially true because his relaxedness and insistence on being open to the future are easily interpreted as forms of not wanting to become adult. Sebastian masks his vulnerability by decrying the life plans of others.

Other interview passages illustrate social cleavages that start dividing young people and contribute to the erosion of social circles. Sebastian has a long-standing interest in politics. For him, as for many others, the year 1989 constitutes a key experience. He associates the reunification with gain but is aware that it also caused social problems.

The following passage illustrates the importance of having a job for 'getting out' of city X and the declining surroundings which was still possible in socialist East Germany when everybody had a job.

> Very many people are unemployed or so, and are not educated enough, so to say (...) in a way (it) is a remnant of socialism, I would say, that ceased to exist, that they got out of city X every day, to work, and the fact that they sit there all day now means that they of course also see problems differently. That is, it is not just about unemployment, but increasing poverty. Well, so to say, it is only relative poverty, in absolute terms people

> are better off than in the East, but first, many lost their meaning of life, their work for example, or they were not able to find a new one, and then they don't manage to get out of town and see that other people are really doing better and better (...).

Unemployment and lack of education are Sebastian's perceived 'gateways' to political right-wing radicalism. He understands that, for many, unemployment is not just about income loss and poverty – they suffer a comprehensive crisis of meaning. Yet he does not understand their passivity, and their lack of reorientation, which is entirely up to them. Yet active involvement requires education; after all, getting rid of unemployment alone is not enough to address questions of meaning.

Sebastian portrays his former neighbours as immobile and decelerated, requiring public support. Cultural empowerment, political educational work and confidence-building measures are among his suggestions to bring meaning back to the lives of these people. In the end, Sebastian himself searches for meaning: his orientation towards individualisation results in an ambivalent dynamic of social belonging and dissociation. Finding meaning in life is one of the things he would like to accomplish.

Although Sebastian is far less radical than Face, the topics of his account can be summarised along the same criteria of outcome, knowledge and recognition uncertainty.

Sebastian's distinct achievement-driven individualism combines youthful openness and curiosity with an affinity to economic ideas. Yet he does not want to realise these ideas by giving up his autonomy. Instead of a predictable life course and employment career he is in favour of openness and self-determination. Those activities that he can imagine pursuing in the future, like economic counselling, marketing or being a freelance author, are all essentially entrepreneurial. Within his objectively rather secure societal and family environment Sebastian wants outcomes to be open, and, unlike Face, he knows exactly how his future should not be: completely fail-safe. In view of the social cleavages that characterise his city he knows that there is no such thing as complete security: not even education guarantees a safe job.

Although Sebastian's assessment of the situation is quite realistic, he does not manage to communicate this to other people beyond his immediate circle of friends, and especially his parents. His life evolves somewhere in between the newly propagated capitalist way of life on the one side and the narrowness of social reality on the other. Yet he does not resolve this tension by breaking with what is expected of him. His solution takes the form of a compromise: studying corresponds to his idea of autonomy and it satisfies his family's expectations. His camouflage-tactics towards his parents prevent breaks but do not produce any dialogue between the generations.

Notwithstanding this compromise, Sebastian's attempts at social dissociation are obvious: for instance, his refusal to connect to the family life style of making music or to working in specific occupations. He and his peers also distance themselves from specific others such as people who seek order, classmates who want a fast and safe career, or political radicals who are too demanding for him. He has little sympathy for all these others and their inclinations that are products of their time; he ridicules them, or belittles their convictions.

Different from Face, Sebastian's misrecognition is more selective and not automatically extended to all people who think differently, strive for something else, or don't find their way in the new society. His basic attitude, however, remains liberal even if it concerns questions of public support for people in need.

The big bang effect: Accelerated youth in post-socialist neo-capitalism

Doing things differently from older generations and choosing a different way of life is one of the privileges of youth. Yet as generational change is accompanied by both hope for innovation and fear of loss of power this privilege cannot be taken for granted. In most societies, the ambivalence of change is moderated by extensive socialisation programs and synchronised transitions. Accordingly, distinct claims by young people in terms of alternative life styles as well as rebellion and protest are usually regarded with scepticism.

This was different in societies where the balancing of the ambivalence of generational change was undermined by the speed and scope of their 'big bang style' transformations to capitalism. Organised dynamisation and dismantling of welfare structures resulted in a devaluation and delegitimation of everyday practices, routines and biographical patterns – even in case of the tidy East German transition management cushioned by comprehensive state welfare policies. Following Hartmut Rosa's concept of acceleration it seems questionable whether these countries will ever achieve the aspired re-stabilisation implicated in the notion of transformation. Social acceleration turns late modern western societies into time-saving economies: there is always a way to learn more effectively, or to rationalise work. Permanent reforms and the hegemony of project-based organisation keep everyone and everything in motion. Accelerated societies are characterised by a prevalence of growth, production and innovation over social reproduction. Transitions and transitional uncertainties have become constitutive of everyday life and are no longer reserved for biographical stages such as youth.

Our examples of Face and Sebastian belong to the group of post-socialist youth that readily faces the new societal challenges. The 'actual beginning of their life story' (Bürgel, 2004b, p. 26) is marked by social rupture; it constitutes, first of all, a moment of liberation (Reiter, 2009) and a chance for

self-realisation. Youthful openness and curiosity merge into an orientation towards economic success and hedonistic life styles.

The effect is immediate: at first glance, Face and Sebastian seem to be unburdened by uncertainty: neither their values nor their plans and activities appear to be inappropriate in the new society. However, from our point of view this apparent sovereignty and lack of uncertainty is in fact the result of their coping with questions of uncertainty: corresponding to the particular conditions of growing up in the post-socialist contexts of Lithuania and East Germany, they represent very different uncertainty profiles and realisations of the biographical transition 'pattern of liberation' (Reiter, 2010).

Face acts within the Lithuanian context of radical and largely unmediated transformation and comprehensive acceleration. He turns his back to the dead-end perspective inherent in the conventional education-based transition to the world of work and decides to pursue the high-risk alternative of an event-based, informal 'training on-the-job'. He embarks on a pioneering enterprise of self-development by turning permanent openness towards novel experiences into a life style. Face lives in the Here and Now, with little more than a vague idea that he may one day be too old for his way of life.

In the more moderate East German context Sebastian adheres to conventional forms of education. He is irritated by his family's and peers' security orientation and rejects a totally predictable life course, but does not openly break with it. He tries to find a pragmatic compromise between the things that are important for him and increasingly narrow social expectations; in the end he remains committed to his context by camouflaging his true interests.

Face's path is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty. He cannot rely on the next favourable coincidence or encounter, and there is no guarantee that the relevance of his practical knowledge will survive the day. Sebastian cannot actively use his rather realistic insights into the workings of the new society; he knows, or at least he assumes, that certainties can be fragile and elusive. Sebastian is a somewhat distant observer, not the risk-taking entrepreneur that Face is becoming. In a way, Sebastian seems like Face's younger brother who still has a long way to go before reaching 'real' autonomy.

Both Face and Sebastian promote and practise social distance. Face associates with like-minded peers who are casual but useful. He does not respect people who are too slow to adapt to the new requirements and cannot keep up with the speed of time. Sebastian disassociates himself especially from his peers, from people searching for order and a safe career, and from right-wing youths. He expresses his disrespect by ridiculing them, by downplaying their convictions and by avoiding them. Unlike Face, Sebastian is in favour of a certain collective responsibility for people who stay behind and are lost under the new circumstances.

Their different experiences with regard to social integration are also reflected in their way of talking about social stratification. Sebastian differentiates his environment above all in terms of space and talks about people in higher or lower positions or in his concrete new or old urban environment, whereas Face's perspective is temporal when he speaks about old and new contacts or the speed and age of other people.

Face and Sebastian provide insight into how youth is different in post-communist contexts – and that flexibility as a means of reducing social inequality comes at a price. Face's break with the past, the old and the elderly goes hand in hand with an immunisation against the contingency of social relations. In a way, his *self-exclusion* disambiguates the ambiguity of post-communism: there is no place for a narrative that mediates between past, present and future. The future is imaginable only as a repetition of his own experiences of discontinuity; and with a little entrepreneurial luck it may well become a success story. However, he is fully aware that his window of opportunity is temporary: there is always somebody younger, and faster to take over.

Sebastian's is a story of persistent attempts of dissociating himself from continuity expectations surrounding him; his everyday experiences are incompatible with his ideas of life. Yet instead of breaking with his environment he enters into a creeping and silent process of *alienation*. The 'official' *persona* of the well-adapted Sebastian coexists together with an 'unofficial' one that pursues his own agenda. This mimetic ability to blend in with the environment without giving up his original perspective, this simultaneous combination of transformation ability and underdetermination reminds us of the social figure of the *Trickster* as a typical inhabitant of societies in transition (Szakolczai, 2009, p. 155). In this way, he contributes to the preservation of the ambiguity of the post-transformation situation and to the unresolved relationship between the East German past, present and future.

Both cases of (comprehensive and controlled) acceleration provide us with clues as to how to conceptualise youth in transformation societies. For Face, youth ends when one cannot keep up anymore; what comes afterwards remains unclear and yet undefined. For Sebastian, youth is associated with a clandestine life that is at risk of remaining unfulfilled. In different ways, both cases point to neo-capitalist varieties of redefining youth without the opposite and goal of a consolidated, normative model of standard adulthood (Blatterer, 2010).

Notes

1. An earlier German version of this chapter was published as Reiter and Steiner (2013).
2. The English term 'Face' was the pseudonym chosen when he was asked how he should be referred to in the study.

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4

Revival without Nostalgia: The 'Dizel' Movement, Serbian 1990s Cultural Trauma and Globalised Youth Cultures

Jovana Papović and Astrea Pejović

Global culture uses revival, among other things, as one of its means of production; the 1970s were marked by a revival of 1950s popular music, 1960s popular culture was paraphrased in the 1980s, the 1990s were largely inspired by the 1970s and the first decade of the millennium experienced a comeback of the 1980s. Following that, as the logic of revival in popular culture dictates, the 2010s has seen a revival of the 1990s. While the global market found another well of profit in this revival, the trend has created a lot of controversy in Serbia, where the 1990s brings with it not only the popular culture from the decade but also a strong political implication. The last decade of the twentieth century in Serbia witnessed Slobodan Milosevic's government, wars, isolation, international discredit and hyperinflation. These preconditions, together with a great level of corruption and the collapse of the economic system, opened the space for an overall criminalisation of Serbian society.

The most conspicuous manifestation of this criminalised social (dis)order was the birth of the 'Dizel' movement, centred around a group of criminals who wore Nike Air Max trainers, expensive sport brands clothing, lots of thick golden chains and drove luxurious cars. This group's capital came from warfare and the black market. 'Dizels' (Dizelasi) were brutal individuals who acted by their own laws and represented a threat to the hierarchy of moral values that the Serbian cultural elite adhered to. However, when the turbulent and unlawful 1990s ended with the 5 October 2000 civic democratic revolution, the Dizel movement disappeared due to the state's fight back against black market and the homogenisation of Serbian and global culture.

The seemingly forgotten Dizel movement appeared again through 'Dizel' parties in several Belgrade clubs from 2006 onwards. These parties were akin

to costume parties, where young people dressed as 'Dizels' and listened to Serbian popular music from the 1990s. Although popular amongst youth, these parties were marginal and did not raise significant public debate. In late 2011, however, a big music event entitled 'I Love the Nineties' took place in the Serbian capital of Belgrade, and a few days later in Novi Sad, the second largest city in Serbia – and the naming of the festival created instant media reactions and a lot of controversy. Public speech strongly criticised both its name and content, stating that it generated an unwelcome reminder of the 1990s in Serbia and the ex-Yugoslavian region and of everything the decade represents. Public figures such as intellectuals, alternative musicians and music critics openly criticised the naming of the concert, but also the people who would visit such a festival, asserting that the music was the worst music ever produced and that the event promoted the degradation of moral values, as psychologist Zarko Trebjesanin stated for a daily newspaper.[1] Many of the newspaper articles on the festival declared that it celebrates the darkest period of Serbian history and people's biggest nightmare.[2]

Regardless of what the establishment had said, the 'I Love the Nineties' festival gathered around 15,000 spectators. Driven by the elitist criticism, we went to the concert to see who would be celebrating the 1990s. As we expected, it was another costume party, with a large number of young people dressed as 'Dizels'. The majority of them were 1990s teenagers who, we assume, came to fulfil a nostalgia for their childhood. What we did not expect to see was a significant number of the audience who were apparently born in the second half of the 1990s or later and could not possibly feel nostalgia for a period they had not experienced. This chapter focuses on this younger generation of the festival audience, which is also the first generation whose period of primary socialisation took place in the democratic, transitional Serbia. We will refer to this generation as 'Generation T', where T stands for transition. We are creating the term 'Generation T' in dialectical relationship with sociologist Isidora Jaric's category 'Generation R' (R stands for 'rat' – war) in which she includes people born between 1971 and 1984 (with a remark that generation itself is not a monolithic concept). Jaric created this category in relation to Douglas Coupland's 'Generation X', stating that Generation R did not have the variety of choices that Generation X had, but 'grew in an isolated society without the possibility for independent decision making'. For Generation R the 'nineties are the period when their expected transition to adulthood was interrupted by the war, embargo, poverty and overall isolation' (Jaric, 2003, p. 276). We create the term 'Generation T' in order to underline that this younger generation that revives 'Dizel' lives, unlike their predecessors, in a democratic society, consumes global popular culture and has a variety of cultural choices in its range – yet they choose to revive the specific local memory of the 1990s.

This chapter is based on the empirical research undertaken at the 'I Love the Nineties' festival with 23 members of Generation T. The main question

behind the research was why Generation T chooses to follow a subcultural movement that originates in the most traumatic period of recent Serbian history. In order to find a possible answer to this question, the first part of this chapter introduces the way in which Serbian 1990s popular culture, especially music, articulated the political field and ideological struggles. Further, we position the Dizel movement within 1990s Serbian popular culture. In conclusion of the first part, we analyse the preconditions for the Dizel revival on the wave of the global revival of 1990s popular culture. The second part of the chapter considers the collected answers through Piotr Sztompka's theory of cultural trauma and the idea of cultural disorientation. Using this theory will help us to comprehend how Serbian society copes with the traumatic period of the 1990s and how it reflects on Generation T.

Nineties music and 'Dizel' movement in Serbia as a field of political articulation

Nothing reflects Serbian 1990s politics better than the debates around music production and consumption from this decade. Music played a remarkably important role as an identity outline, especially with the breakup of Yugoslavia, when Serbian society became polarised based on the relation to war in Bosnia and Croatia and Milosevic's politics. Both academic and everyday debates recognised listening to 'western' music genres (mostly 'rock and roll'[3]) as an expression of 'open-mindedness', cosmopolitanism and 'pro-European (Western) values', while the consumption of domestic, 'turbo-folk' music was recognised as the sentiment of pro-Milosevic's, 'nationalist' political stance,[4] as regarded by the critics.[5]

'Turbo-folk' music progressed from the 'newly composed folk music' that was a dominant genre in socialist Serbia,[6] into a meta-genre, rooted in traditional Serbian melodies (but also Islamic – Turkish, Iranian) with added 4×4 electronic music beats. Turbo-folk lyrics were mostly about love and, in the videos, singers were always dressed in expensive clothes, with a lot of jewellery and fast cars. The name of the genre was coined by Montenegrin alternative musician Rambo Amadeus, who constructed it in order to explain new tendencies in the 1990s post-Yugoslav music production. Turbo-folk was the most popular and most present music on media in 1990s Serbia and it has kept its position until the mid-2010s. Its immense popularity outlived Slobodan Milosevic and his ideology, and it still represents Serbian mainstream music in 2015.[7]

In the polarisation between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, reflected in rock and roll and turbo-folk, another music genre, 'dance' music, gained its popularity and undermined the strict West/East dichotomy constructed by the cultural elite. Already in 1992, the Croatian dance band ET – Electro Team – became very popular in Serbia, representing the first cultural exchange from the bottom level after the ex-Yugoslavian war started (Bejker,

2011, pp. 102–106). This new genre fitted completely within the trend (at the time) for MTV and Viva TV, paraphrasing the style embodied in bands such as Technotronic (hit 'Pump Up the Jam' from 1989) and McHammer (hit 'Can't Touch This' from 1990).

In the book *Diktatura, nacija, globalizacija* (*Dictatorship, Nation, Globalisation*) philosopher Misa Djurkovic makes the argument that Milosevic's politics needed dance music as a propaganda tool in order to step away from nationalist cultural representations (Djurkovic, 2002b, pp. 205–229). When the war in Bosnia and Croatia was coming to its end, western political discourse presented Milosevic as a 'guarantor of peace and stability in the Western Balkans', without whom the Dayton Agreement (1995) would never have been accomplished (Becker, 2008, p. 12). At that point, as Djurkovic argues, Milosevic needed to bring Serbian public opinion closer to the West, which was at that moment represented in the Serbian media as an opponent. In order to do so, Milosevic recognised popular culture as the most effective way to reach a wider public. Since dance music was inherently a western genre it suited well Milosevic's change of discourse.

In that sense, dance music could be interpreted as a suitable communication channel between Milosevic's politics and youth population. This fast, fashionable and ever-present music easily became popular with the 1990s youth generation, with its simple love lyrics and fast rhythm. Soon, dance music became the most present genre in Serbian media. Songs like '200 na sat' (200 mph) by Ivan Gavrilovic and 'Oči boje duge' ('Rainbow Coloured Eyes') by Dr Iggy became 1990s anthems. Together with the expansion of dance music, the Dizel movement evolved into a widespread subculture.

The Dizel movement first became visible in the streets of Belgrade at the beginning of the war in Bosnia, when war business and war affairs brought back to Serbia a significant number of criminals who operated within the Serbian diaspora across Europe. With them, a lot of foreign black-market capital was imported – money, expensive fashion garments, sports cars, jewellery and similar. One of the most prominent representatives of homecoming criminals (and one of the rare survivors) was Kristijan Golubovic who claims that he brought Dizel to Serbia when he came back from London in 1987. In an interview he gave for Serbian television, Pink, he stated that he mixed Mr. T's fashion style (lots of gold chains) with jeans and silk sweatshirts that were popular at the time among working-class youth and football supporters in the UK, where Golubovic operated as a petty criminal and martial-arts fighter.[8]

There are two versions of the story how this movement got its name: on one hand, there is a belief that the name came from the diesel fuel that was used for the fast, expensive cars driven by the icons of the Dizel movement. The other story tells that the name originates in the Diesel fashion brand that was popular among members of the movement.

At the beginning of the 1990s the movement was relatively marginal. At first, followers were young boys who lived in the same neighbourhoods where criminal activities and the black market were most prominent. The criminals often recruited these young boys to become their proxies and they became the rare citizens who had access to western material goods, while the rest of the country was living in poverty.

Socio-political circumstances in early 1990s Serbia turned Dizels into the only successful individuals in society. As they represented the only group that was able to generate capital, these criminals easily became role models for Serbian youth. When the trade embargo against Serbia was abolished in 1995, the Serbian market opened again to western goods; fashion elements of the Dizel movement became accessible, which enabled Serbian youth to follow their heroes' fashion style. The number of young people on the streets dressed in the style of Dizel significantly increased,[9] and from this point Dizel became a signifier not for the several criminals who introduced the style, but for a phenomenon that we could understand as a subculture.

While the country was mourning after the war, young members of the Dizel subculture wore colourful sweatshirts and listened to fast, happy-go-lucky dance music; they were also wearing ostentatious golden jewellery that was considered to be mocking the impoverished Serbian society. The cultural elite criticised the everyday praxis of the young Dizels for being escapism-driven and for promoting entertainment. Young Dizels were, therefore, accused of laughing in the war victims' faces. In this sense we can interpret the Dizel subculture as a form of moral provocation. Dick Hebdige argues that subcultures question normality through symbolic practices (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 73–79); even though it is very hard to completely calibrate Hebdige's model (based on British subcultures on a post-socialist context), we could understand Dizel as a subculture that intended to challenge Serbian war 'normality'.

The 1990s–2000s Dizel revival

In 2006, the Belgrade rap musician Ivan Ivanovic (aka Juice) published a song 'Brate minli' (Dear Bro') in which he announced a big comeback of Dizel iconography (the song is about fast cars, Nike Air Max trainers, sweatsuits and 1990s 'Tarzan' hairdos) with the lyrics: 'You thought we settled down, but we have only disquieted'.[10] In another lyric, he says: 'While we are in the neighbourhood and live the reality',[11] referring to 'we – us' as to Dizels – the group that did not disappear during the 1990s and early 2000s but has only waited for an appropriate moment to re-emerge.

The answer to the question as to why the period between 2006 and 2008 was the chosen moment for the revival of the Dizel subculture could be found in the citizens' general disenchantment with the Serbian democratic

reconstruction. After a short enthusiastic period, the post-socialist transition in Serbia showed up as a painful process; the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003 introduced system instability, and corrupt privatisations led to the highest-ever level of unemployment in the country. Shaken democracy was even more compromised when the financial crisis of 2007–2008 impacted the Serbian economy. Due to many challenges, everyday life in Serbia started to resemble the everyday life from the 1990s; a great number of discharges occurred on the labour market, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) decreased, the government went through many reconstructions and, finally, the democratic coalition that came to power after Milosevic fell apart.

Furthermore, Vojislav Kostunica, at the time Serbian premier, and his coalition partners used certain turbo-folk music stars in their electoral campaign, which was the first time after the democratic revolution that those performers were portrayed positively. This created a discrepancy inside the country's cultural politics that, until that moment, had promoted discontinuity with 1990s popular culture. We could take this electoral campaign as a starting point of the reinterpretation of the 1990s popular culture and Dizel subculture within the democratic context, which eventually resulted in the 'I Love the Nineties' festival in 2011.

The 'I Love the Nineties' festival, as the peak of the Dizel subculture revival, gathered 25 dance-music performers from the 1990s. Among the audience we singled out 31 young boys and girls who were the most conspicuously dressed in Dizel style, 23 of whom belonged to Generation T, 17 boys and 6 girls. The main question in the survey was 'What do the nineties represent to you?' Our subjects in the majority answered by quoting generic, general opinion of their parents or older siblings – that those years were very hard times. Still, when we asked them about their own memories, most of them answered: 'I don't really remember anything, I was too young.' Although they have no active memory of the 1990s, the majority great number in our sample considered the decade as joyful, since they remember their early childhood, early school years, playing in parks, riding bicycles on relatively empty streets, going to city beaches and swimming pools because they didn't go on holiday. Still, they see these as positive memories, since spending the whole summer in Belgrade created a certain feeling of special unity with their friends: 'Our parents didn't take us to Montenegro to the seaside but we spent summers all together in the neighbourhood.'

When we asked them why they wear Nike Air Max trainers, almost all of them answered that this is because they are the most comfortable or the most beautiful trainers on the market. After we mentioned that Nike Air Max are the most distinctive and criticised symbol of the Dizel subculture, we got answers like: 'That is actually not true', and an explanation that Nike Air Max is an American product. Also, they added that the revival of the

1990s is a global trend they are just following. They also were aware that Nike Company hadn't produced the Air Max model for over ten years, and that they had started to produce them again as a vintage model. Furthermore, they underlined that the majority of 'MTV' stars today actually look like Dizels from the 1990s. This testifies that Generation T emphasises the western cultural origins of the Dizel subculture in this revival, rather than the local socio-political context in which Dizel emerged.

When we asked them why they were listening to 1990s Serbian dance music, the majority answered that dance music is popular among the older generation, among their siblings and older friends; they added that the genre is quite popular in Belgrade clubs, so it came naturally for them: 'I listen to it every Saturday when I go out, and also, my older brother played it for me even when I was a child.' Our subjects also pointed out that they love dance music because it is an alternative to Serbian mainstream music, 'turbo-folk'; furthermore, they considered themselves quite progressive for doing that. Still, they did not understand the political implication of the Serbian music scene from the 1990s, and they were not familiar with any connections between the performers and political structures or that Milosevic's government used music as a tool of cultural representation.[12]

When we switched to the topic of their being fascinated by 1990s criminals, we found out that the Dizel criminal persona is interiorised as a comical stereotype. Criminals are still part of the imaginary of the subculture, yet they are not understood as active agents of the 1990s social dynamics, but rather as mythical subjects. Our sample identifies Serbian criminals from the 1990s with popular culture representations of the mafia such as in the films *Scarface* or *The Godfather* or in the television character Tony Soprano. One of the boys who we interviewed even wore a T-shirt with the character Tony Montana from the film *Scarface*. For them, Serbian criminals are fictional characters. We believe that this interpretation of the criminal figure comes about for two reasons. First, criminals who operated inside the 1990s Serbian black market either died or climbed up the political ladder during democratic transition; second, the iconic documentary film *See You in the Obituary* (Vidimo se u citulji) from 1995, which came after also an iconic book *The Crime that Changed Serbia*, displayed 1990s Belgrade criminal circles in a slightly comic manner.

Summarising the answers to our questionnaire, we could see that members of the Generation T who were part of the Dizel revival and visited the festival actually did not refer to the socio-political roots of that subculture, but appropriated global aspects from the style. Their references position Dizel subculture as a part of the global 1990s revival, not as an awakening of the turbulent 1990s in Serbia. Although, evidently, this is the case, we are wondering how this generation managed to reinterpret the 1990s without a specific local political connotation?

The 1990s as a cultural trauma: 'Retreatism' as the main coping strategy of the Serbian official politics and its impact on youth cultural practices

Sociologist Piotr Sztompka in his article 'Cultural trauma: The other face of social change' defines cultural trauma as a societal disturbance caused by a 'cultural disorientation'. He believes that the concept of trauma should be used in 'analysing the problem of negative, dysfunctional, adverse effects that major social change may leave in its wake' (Sztompka, 2000, p. 450). Sztompka depicts many different social changes that could produce a traumatic experience: 'revolution, radical economic reform, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, acts of terrorism, assassination of the political leader, opening secret archives and revealing the truth about the past, revisionist interpretation of national heroic tradition, collapse of an empire' (ibid., p. 452). If we approached a detailed analysis of the 1990s socio-political affairs in Serbia, we would see that almost all of these social disturbances occurred at different intervals during the decade, which strongly affected the development of the cultural trauma. On 5 October 2000, a civic movement led by the oppositional political coalition Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) managed to overthrow Milosevic, which could be taken as a starting point of democratic transition in Serbia. What was expected from the newly formed government to start with is what Sztompka calls 'post-traumatic adaptations' (ibid., p. 453) – to create mechanisms that would translate traumatic experiences, in order to eventually overcome the 1990s cultural trauma. However, instead of deconstructing and clarifying 1990s traumas, the democratic transition produced its own traumatic experiences: the Serbian prime minister, who was in a way the embodiment of democracy in Serbia, was assassinated in March 2003, which produced a new destabilisation and another civic disappointment. From that point, Serbia experienced several changes of governments and geopolitical transformations, namely the independencies of Montenegro and Kosovo. At the elections in 2014, Serbia returned to more conservative politics, led by a new prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, formerly a minister of information in Milosevic's government between 1998 and 2000. What was supposed to be a period of 'post-traumatic adaptation' became a transitional confusion.

Based on Sztompka's theory, the roots of Serbian transitional confusion and the emergence of sensitive issues, such as the revival of the Dizel movement, could be found in the official Serbian 'strategies for coping with cultural trauma'. Sztompka explains the mechanisms for coping with cultural trauma with regard to Robert Merton's 'treatment of anomie, and social adaptations to anomic conditions' (ibid., p. 461). He depicts four typical adaptations: 'innovation, rebellion, ritualism, and retreatism'. Analysing the implementation of those adaptations in the case of transitional Serbia, we could perceive 'retreatism' as the main coping strategy. Sztompka marks

'retreatism' as a 'negative' or 'illegitimate' strategy, manifested in 'ignoring trauma, repressing it, striving to forget it, and acting as if trauma did not exist' (ibid., p. 461). In this case the denial of a traumatic past in Serbia is underlined already by the fact that the 1990s war in Bosnia and Croatia has never been given an official name. Furthermore, in public speech, the role of Serbia in this war is diminished, especially when it comes to crimes against humanity. On 31 March 2010 the Serbian parliament passed a resolution condemning the Srebrenica massacre, but it is still rarely regarded as genocide. Furthermore, the treatment of the unresolved issue of Kosovo leads public opinion to believe that the province is still an integral part of the country (the Serbian national broadcaster 'Radio Television Serbia' as part of *Central News*, which is also the news show with the highest rating in Serbia, always shows a weather forecast for Pristina (the capital of Kosovo) during the national forecast report). From this, Generation T – growing up in an atmosphere of ignorance towards the 1990s – can hardly gain a critical perspective or position against recent history and numerous conflicts between Serbia and its neighbouring countries.

On the other hand, Sztompka underlines two strategies as indicators that a society copes positively with cultural trauma: 'spontaneous or purposeful "cultural production" and 'the emergence of counter-cultural movements' (ibid., p. 461). Unlike the omnipresent 'retreatism', these 'positive' strategies are hard to perceive in the contemporary Serbian cultural politics and cultural production. Regarding the fact that the cultural production in Serbia is mainly sponsored by the state budget, cultural institutions in Serbia generally neglect the 1990s as a field of interest, not including sporadic independent and non-governmental organisation (NGO) led artistic scene initiatives. Culture is a field that suffers the most during transition – with very low budget made available; it is not only that official cultural institutions are not producing suitable cultural content, but a vast majority of them are closed (mainly museums) or privatised (cinema and some theatres). Serbian cultural politics also retreats from reflecting on music, meaning that the 1990s (music) production has not been translated inside transitional discourses. Therefore, Generation T's revival of Dizel, managed to convert this politically sensitive issue to pure fun through parties and fashion.

An unstable transitional period marked by constant political turbulences made coping with the traumatic 1990s of lesser importance for official Serbian politics, which completely concentrate on EU integrations. 'Retreatism', therefore, turned into a strategy of choice in Serbian official political affairs, cultural politics, public speech and media discourse. Dealing with conflicting recent history has obviously been a delicate but also painful topic for Serbian officials who chose to retreat from the issue and to stay quiet about it. The unresolved 1990s controversies – nationalism, porous borders, refugees, veterans – together with the continuous

presence of numerous 1990s politicians who worked closely with Milosevic, transformed this decade into one of public taboos. In the atmosphere of an overall social neglect of the problems that the 1990s brought, Generation T manages to reinterpret 1990s symbols through a global paradigm, which is paradoxically closer and more understandable to them.

Conclusion

Many establishment reactions to the announcement of the 'I Love the Nineties' festival requested the authorities to prohibit it. From both a moral and a political point of view, this was obviously a very painful event for the members of those generations who witnessed the 1990s in Serbia; yet to prohibit this festival would be against the democratic principles that Serbia is striving towards. Even more, a demand for prohibition would have concurred with the 'strategy of retreatism' in coping with cultural trauma, as analysed in this chapter. 'Retreatism' as a strategy of cultural adaptation to the present does not mean only a way of actively repressing or consciously ignoring the recent traumatic events of civil war and economic breakdown, but also demonstrates the astonishingly small role of culture in the post-socialist development of Serbian society, most transparently present in an indifferent and impassionate attitude of the official cultural politics to the history of the cultural codes and styles that are being revived in the 2010s. Most importantly, the 'I Love the Nineties' festival revealed that contemporary Serbian youth does not have a conscious relation towards local political and historical aspects of the cultural heritage of the 1990s. The case of the Dizel youth subculture points out that young people today may grow up and become active political subjects without understanding their local history and its painful implications for contemporary Serbian society. Due to the 'retreatism' that reduces the complexity of the 1990s issues, young people in Serbia do not have a concise knowledge or understanding of the multitude of meanings that the 1990s brings. Instead, they create provisional associations primarily connected with the global 1990s popular culture in order to align with the current revival, without paying much attention to its traumatic political implications in Serbian society.

In this sense, we believe that it is a question as to whether this is symptomatic not only for Serbian society, but also for various local youth subcultures in a globalised world. The examples used throughout this chapter refer to an obvious and painful historical moment, yet, on a wider level and with less traumatic implications, are we witnessing the birth of a generation that is becoming an important political actor but which manages to omit different socio-historical contextualisation and, consequently, decreases the importance of near and local-specific cultures and histories?

Notes

1. Cited in Novi Magazin, 7 October 2011; 'Povampirenje pseudokulture' ('Return of a Pseudo Culture'), http://www.novimagazin.rs/opusteno/volim-devedesete—povampirenje-pseudokulture, date accessed 25 September 2014.
2. Jovana Gligorijevic, 'Diskretni sarm mracne nostalgije' ('Discreet Charm of the Dark Nostalgia'), Vreme 1080, 15 September 2001, http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id= 1010685, date accessed 25 September 2014.
3. From the late 1950s, socialist cultural politics encouraged rock and roll production in order to represent Yugoslavia as an enlightened (cosmopolitan) communist country, culturally and politically close to the West and in opposition to Soviet countries, which strictly prohibited western influences. (See: Ivan Colovic, *Divlja knjizevnost*, 2000; Ljubodrag Dimic, *Agitprop kultura – agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945–1952*, Beograd 1988; Radina Vucetic, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, Beograd, 2012.)
4. Anthropologist Stef Jansen in his book *Antinacionalizam* (Antinationalism) explores 'discursive practices of post-Yugoslav antinationalism', giving special attention to the connection of music production/consumption and politics in 1990s Serbia. Jansen's antinationalists came from the socialist class of cultural elite who understand their position in the society as 'opinion makers'. (Stef Jansen: *Antinacionalizam: Etnografija otpora u Beogradu i Zagrebu*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2005.) It is very important to point out that the academic discourse around music mostly came from this group and that they ascribed the 'nationalist' connotation to the listeners of domestic music genres.
5. See: Erik Gordi, *Kultura vlasti u Srbiji*, Beograd, 2001; Ivana Kronja, *Smrtonosni sjaj: masovna psihologija i estetika turbo-folka*, Beograd, 2001; Milena Dragicevic Sesic, *Neofolk Kultura: Publika i njene zvezde*, Sremski Karlovci, 1994; Sabrina Ramet: 'Nationalism and the idiocy of the countryside: the case of Serbia, in ethnic and racial studies', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 1/1996, pp. 70–87;
6. Despite its popularity, which is materialised in a high number of printed records, 'newly composed folk music' had never been acknowledged and present on dominant media in Yugoslavia. Due to the idea of supranational Yugoslav identity, culture connected to tradition – folk culture was held in a hermetic field of folklore, reduced to vernacular culture and its progress was denied. Although 'newly composed folk music' was produced in public record companies, as its popularity brought significant profit, it wasn't marketed in the way that rock and roll was marketed (see: Ivan Colovic, *Divlja knjizevnost*, 2000; Vesna Djukic, *Drzava i kultura – studije savreme nekulturne politike*, Beograd, 2012)
7. Another perspective in the debate around 'turbo-folk' considers that understanding this genre as a system of Milosevic's nationalist representation is reductionism and that the issue is way more complex, reminding that agitation for nationalism had never come from the 'turbo-folk' performers, but from politicians and intellectuals. Also, this side of the debate promotes 'turbo-folk' as a field of subversive expression, with a potential for female emancipation inside Serbian patriarchal society. Furthermore, this side considers that 'turbo-folk' opened a space for representation of neglected minorities such as roma, homosexuals or transgenders. See: BranislavDimitrijevic, *Ovo je savremena umetnost, Turbo-folk kao radikalni performans*, in Prelom, no. 2/3, 2002, pp. 94–101; Olga Dimitrijevic, 'The body of the Female Folk Singer: Constructions of National Identities in Serbia after 2000', *Genero*, 13/2009, pp. 13–41; Misa Djurkovic, 'Ideologizacija turbo-folka',

in *Kultura*, 102/2002, pp. 19–33. Misa Djurkovic, *Diktatura, nacija, globalizacija*. Beograd, 2002; Misa Djurkovic: *Ideoloski i političkisukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji*, Beograd, 2004.

8. TV Gerila (available in Serbian), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbRLQCXCOM4&feature=relmfu, date accessed 20 June 2014.
9. Although at the time of 'Dizel' emergence it was dominantly a male movement, at the time of its expansion from 1995 a lot of young girls also embraced this style, representing themselves as equal to boys.
10. Original in Serbian – Vi ste mislili da smo se smirili, ustvari smo se uznemirili.
11. Original in Serbian – Dok mi smo u kraju i živimo realnost.
12. Many sources argue that singers from the band Tap 011 sang for the electoral campaign 'Yugoslav United Left Party', a political party led by Milosevic's wife Mirjana Markovic. One of the biggest 'dance' stars, Ivan Gavrilovic dated Milosevic's daughter Marija Milosevic and, generally, the majority of the Serbian dance scene was popularised through her radio station and recording company, Kosava.

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5
Symptom of the Loser and the Melancholy of the Post-Soviet Generation

Tamara Hundorova

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, trauma has become a central concept for human consciousness and post-traumatic experience can be considered a defining feature of post-Soviet literature. The entire history of the twentieth century is associated with deeply traumatic events – the Holocaust, the Second World War, Hiroshima. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist system is also increasingly conceptualised as a trauma, which, on the one hand, erases memories of the totalitarian past and which, on the other, has a social and cultural impact, manifesting itself in the body, language and subjectivities of future generations. Studies of trauma suggest that trauma has to be thought and talked through, otherwise it transforms into a spectre – one that pursues, provoking excessive behaviour and melancholy. This chapter analyses the trans-generational effect of post-Soviet trauma in contemporary Ukrainian literature, particularly via the symptoms of 'loserdom' and the 'sick body'.

The theory and sociology of trauma rightly emphasises the issue of generations. But it is surprising to note that post-Soviet generational identity and its forms of social and cultural construction are, apart from a few exceptions, yet to be studied in detail. Karl Mannheim conceptualised the essence of generational identity as the common experience of a specific historical situation such as war, revolution or economic crisis. However, contemporary discussions revolve around whether generational consciousness coalesces solely as a result of collectively experienced crises, as well as alienation from and breaking with past generations. While the radical and transformational role of generations in social and cultural processes is recognised, the notion that generations are but a natural link in the chain of socialisation and acculturation (particularly in terms of preserving and transferring social and cultural norms) continues to gain ground.

It can be stated with confidence, though, that the role of generations in contemporary socio-cultural theory is yet to be fully appreciated, especially when defining the nature of various sociological, psychological and cultural types of consciousness via generational identity has, since the beginning of a new millennium, become increasingly popular. One thinks of Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, Generation P (after Viktor Pelevin's eponymous novel), Generation Me, Generation @, Generation Porno, Generation Zero and so on. Meanwhile, difficulties with this type of thinking arise in terms of methodology and terminology. First and foremost, it is a question of whether a single and unambiguous definition of generational identity can do justice to the complexities of identity. How do class, ethnic and gender factors interact with generational identity? Most importantly, what do we understand by the concept of generation? Is it just a biological and social group that matures at a certain time, or a conscious, discursively formed identity, which itself becomes a form of symbolic capital?

Naturally, biological and socio-cultural generations are categories of a different order. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, a generation possesses its own internal structure: it is far from a homogeneous and/or total identity. Within a specific generation, for instance, there are different groups and different stages, which are, in turn, defined by certain ideas and symbols. A broader generational identity forms through internal and external oppositions, even struggle, and the declarative self-definition of a generation cannot hide the internal contradictions present in its processes of self-identification. We can observe a similar situation in the Ukrainian post-Soviet generation, which came of age after 1991.

Starting from the 1990s, generational identity in Ukrainian literature is fixed according to decade – the 1980s generation, the 1990s generation and the 2000s generation all rush to declare themselves. Generational solidarity becomes the defining aspect of these decade-oriented identifications. This solidarity coalesces through a series of signs, symbols, myths and rituals, which foster support and the reproduction of a specific group identity. Thus, the 'younger generation of 1990s writers' announced the 'birth of a new hero' in 1995, that is, themselves. Representatives of this generation such as Ivan Andrusiak, Volodymyr Danylenko and Serhiy Zhadan agreed, by and large, that their consciousness is socially alienated and, at the same time, more receptive to non-rational and asocial aspects of subconsciousness. One of the ideologues of the 1990s generation, the poet and philosopher Maksim Rozumnyi, stated that, for this generation, the field of literature will emerge from all kinds of deviations: 'hallucinations, narcotic stupor, dreams, madness' (Rozumnyi, 1995, p. 294).

After some 12 years, the next generational group named itself the '2000-ers' (*dvotysiachnyky*) and issued its manifesto in the form of an anthology, *Two Tonnes of the Best Young Poetry* (2007). As the foreword explains, the *dvotysiachnyky* are the youngest generation of mature Ukrainian poets,

and their symbolic marker is *weight*, both physical and metaphysical. It is not only a question of 'two tonnes of the best, brightest and original contemporary poetry', but the real physical weight of each of the poets included in the anthology. In total, this amounts to exactly 2,000 kilogrammes – two tonnes. Hence, within a single post-Soviet generation, two generational groups construct completely different identification markers for themselves. While the 1990s generation escape into their own 'internal Mongolia' and the sphere of the irrational, the 2000s generation, by contrast, assert themselves via their material presence in this world. On the whole, then, after years of enthusiasm for textuality, the 'death of the author' and cultural simulacra, we see these authors persistently affirm the physical presence of the writer.

Trans-generational apocalypse

Despite of the different self-identifications, one can still define a general image of the post-Soviet generation, one which unites the generations of the 1990s and 2000s. After the fall of totalitarianism in 1989, alienation from the Soviet past is characterised first of all by the experience of the people of older generations who grew up under socialism and, during the crisis-ridden 1980s, were compelled to make a sudden reassessment of their values. However, post-totalitarian trauma also affects young people and children who did not experience (or experienced only partially) the influence of the socialist system. This trauma gives rise to feelings of uncertainty and instability: it severs familial connections between parents and children, and destroys one's sense of historical continuity, prompting dissociative behaviour and *ressentiment,* to follow Nietzsche, finding itself in a situation of the moral and psychological revolt, beyond the boundaries of good and evil. Trans-generational psychology is of particular use in this regard: traumas experienced in childhood subvert one's sense of security. These traumas intensify feelings of defencelessness and emotional disturbance, provoking further aggressive behaviour on the part of future generations.

The post-totalitarian generation thus emerges as traumatised twice over: on the one hand, they are traumatised by the reassessment of one's parents' values and, on the other, by the absence of socio-cultural norms and orientations, which are substituted for active imitations by mass consumer society. In the 1999 novel *Generation P*, Viktor Pelevin observed that the 1990s generation had lost its real socio-cultural markers, instead becoming a product of brand mythologies. In this way, Pelevin outlined the danger of a new totalitarianism for post-Soviet consciousness: the power of simulacra and symbols of mass culture. Moreover, just as youth subcultures began to play a socialising role for young people, so did the iconic images and models of behaviour available in mass culture, which are equally open to personal choice. As Mannheim asserts: 'Sceptical, "destructive", analytical

thinking is likely to be found among the members of generations that had gone through radical changes in the realm of power' (Mannheim, 1992, p. 216).

Alongside the crash of the socialist system, children lost their connection not only to their parents, but also to reality itself, which neither suits, nor protects them. Parents stop playing the role of a social and cultural authority for the younger generation. The post-totalitarian generation compensates this loss of communicative connection with virtual freedom. For this generation, the defining marker of self-identification becomes the apocalyptical experience of one's place in space and time: the collapse of the old world and anticipation of rebirth.

In this vein, the rise of apocalyptic feelings in post-totalitarian youth subcultures merits discussion. These experiences are characteristic not only of Douglas Coupland's Generation X, who felt the emptiness of the heavens and the absence of history, which every 'X-er' has to create as they tell their own story. Feelings concerning the fragility of existence and the emptiness of the stars above characterise the post-Soviet generation, in particular, the 'eternal teenager', the archetypal lyric hero of poet and writer Serhiy Zhadan. The immaturity associated with the first post-Soviet decade was bolstered by anticipation of the apocalypse. As the 1990s wore on, people even began to speak of the 'adult poets' who made their names during the 1980s such as Oleh Lysheha, Vasyl' Holoborod'ko, Vasyl' Herasymyuk, and the trickster poets of the 1990s – the teenage poets. Serhiy Zhadan emerged as the leader of the latter, whose characters are deprived of parents, a past and maternal love. As one of them confesses in *Depesh mod* (2004; *Depeche Mode*, 2013): 'God, this always gets me down, you know, when I see that someone was alive before me and, unlike me, had a real life, ate breakfast, had sex, maybe even loved someone, went to the market and the shops' (Zhadan, 2004, p. 151).

The traumatic juvenile subjectivity of post-totalitarianism is perhaps reflected most strongly in Zhadan's poetry of the 1990s. Zhadan's lyric voice experiences this time as a period of fatherlessness, when a lack of faith and *ressentiment* regarding the past (which has turned out to be of little use) results in a sense of homelessness on the part of his juvenile persona. Homelessness leads to never-ending journeys and a loss of faith in the world of adults, who themselves lack roots in the 'new life'. In this scenario, Zhadan's lyric subject is a sad clown living rough at railway stations, a punk who does not want to grow up and, at the same time, a revolutionary of the 'homeless' and 'alcoholic' generation of the 1990s. For instance, Zhadan testifies as follows about his generation:

> all these adolescents are so helpless against the years
> and their hearts are hard like slate
> and yet brittle like slate

and the only thing left is to listen to winter
as it looms
and warm up the heavens with a plastic lighter.

(Zhadan, 2001, p. 19)

Generational autism

This section analyses post-Soviet identity in youth literature, and particularly the symptom of the 'sick body' as a specific biological, social and psychological phenomenon characteristic of the post-Soviet generation's self-identification at the beginning of the 2000s. The symptom of the sick body first and foremost points to an unbreakable connection between social disorder and an individual's somatic state, such as problems with digestion, sexual disorders, breathing difficulties and fear of death. This phenomenon signals the shift of post-post-modern consciousness from anthropocentrism to biological and zoological anthropologism, which Rosi Braidotti considers to be the new political and affirmative figure for the modern post-human world (Braidotti, 2013, p. 104). This condition reflects the substitution of a didactic means of socialisation, characteristic of Soviet subjectivity, to a socialisation which is performative and staged.

As Slavoj Žižek suggests: 'The symptom arises where the world failed, where the circuit of symbolic communication was broken' (Žižek, 1989, p. 73). This symptom emerges in particularly striking form in texts by writers entering the cultural scene during the 2000s. On the one hand, the interruption of symbolic communication is characterised by a break with history, parents and tradition, yet, on the other, this communication cannot be reduced to the salon discussions of experts, as in the 1980s scene, nor to public speeches on the square (the 'carnival'), symbolising the post-modern 1990s scene (for example, 'Bu-Ba-Bu' group of Iurii Andrukhovych, Oleksandr Irvanets and Viktor Neborak). For writers of the 2000s, group-oriented socio-cultural competency becomes the model for interaction.

Typical motifs for this generation's prose revolve, for the most part, around the disconnection between generations, the loss of parents, life without a mother, homelessness, travel, depression, alcoholism, rejection of society's identifying markers and the deconstruction of social and cultural myths. The ideals, references and tastes of this writing are not rooted in the present: for them, time either hangs or shifts into a kind of frozen past. The past, however, is not historical: the era of history has come to an end. Instead, these are rather selective images of the past, with their problem areas removed. Moving into the past is not painful – young people are already inoculated against historical traumas and troubles. Moreover, they do not wish to be rooted – neither in history nor in the present at all.

It is also worth discussing the specific kind of 'autism' present in young Ukrainian prose of the 2000s. The self-identification of these authors forms within the social boundaries of like-minded thinkers, through publications, blogs and internet publications: they are interested only in 'living contemporaries' and 'topical literature'. Metaphorically speaking, this condition could be analysed with reference to symptoms of autism. Like autism in general, literary autism arises from genetic disease and manifests itself in non-standard social communication. The principal cause of literary autism is generational, and its symptoms include broken connections between generations. This disconnect emerges from distrust in the cultural practices – deformed by the totalitarian system – of previous generations, particularly the so-called adults.

As noted by Hannah Arendt, the totalitarian experience becomes an even greater problem when totalitarianism itself disappears. Totalitarianism destroys the private world, eradicating the individual and dooming him or her to solitude. Meanwhile, Arendt suggests, 'Even the experience of the materially and sensually given world depends upon my being in contact with other men, upon our common sense which regulates and controls all other senses and without which each of us would be limited in his own particularity of sense data which in themselves are unreliable and treacherous' (Arendt, 1968, p. 173). Instead, the younger generation is taken hostage by the privacy destroyed by totalitarianism and comes to trust only their own unreliable and treacherous sensory organs, giving preference to their own (virtual) community.

Symptom of the 'sick body'

The symptom of the sick body channels non-communication and autistic auto-communication in contemporary Ukrainian youth prose. In a culture that has survived the post-modern epoch of the 1990s, the body does not emerge as whole, as a material object identified with itself, but instead becomes dissociated and performative. In modernist texts, the body often appears in the guise of desiring flesh, the embodiment of 'I' and other – often conflicting – desires, but also as a text inscribed with different cultural signs and practices. The performative understanding of the human body is a post-modern phenomenon based on the notion that different life streams are capable of unlocking the body. As the philosopher Valerii Podoroga puts it, the body is bounded by 'thresholds into existential territories'. These existential territories are neurotic to the extent that though individuals desire, they are afraid of encountering the Other: their bodily thresholds are painful and pull in different directions. Thus, the post-modern concept of the body suggests that 'an individual life is not locked in the body-threshold like a prison, but always – a whirlwind, a spin, a switching of depth and surface, a change of bodily states independent from fixed and visible bodily forms' (Podoroga,

1995, p. 20). This circulation of body and its existential thresholds gives rise to the sick body in works by the *dvotysiachnyky*.

In the paradigm of the closed and limited body, sickness is associated foremost with the incorrect transmission of information, or a 'communicative pathology', which arises when the boundaries of the 'strategic assemblage, which is called I' (ibid., p. 211) are transgressed. By contrast, according to the paradigm of the post-modern body, changeable and flowing, sickness is associated with constant repetition, re-embodiment, fragmentation and reconstitution. For instance, the mentally ill character Votstsek in Iurii Izdryk's eponymous 2002 novel *Votstsek & Votstsekurgiya* – often touted as the calling card of Ukrainian post-modernism – is endowed with the ability to transform his body in a number of ways, and it is sickness that gives Votstsek the demiurgic power of bodily reconstitution. In particular, Votstsek believes that 'the people in your dreams weren't stupidly tied to their own bodily shells, you could freely combine – place several people in one body or divide a single person into a couple of different ones, shuffle, change places, size different people up for bodies of different people or even objects or things, yet the essence of things wasn't fixed once and for all, it emerged in its own eternal richness of all possible combinations' (Izdryk, 2002, p. 47).

Post-modern in style, practically all the novels of Iurii Andrukhovych, Iurii Izdryk and Oksana Zabuzhko written in the 1990s stage the destruction of 'I' and the differentiation of the individual, but also the creation of parallel or divergent virtual bodily identities. For example, in contrast to the apparent variety of characters, Andrukhovych's novels are dominated by variations of a single psychological type – the post-Soviet bohemian, such as Iurko Nemyrych, Hryts' Shtundera, Khoms'kyi in the 1992 novel *Rekreatsii* (*Recreations*); in *Perverziya* (*Perversion*) (1996), the protagonist Stakh Perfets'kyi dissolves into 'a plethora of faces and a plethora of names'. In Oksana Zabuzhko's *Poliovi doslidzhennia z ukraïns'koho seksu* (1996; *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*, 2011), the protagonist is likewise split between virtual hypostases – debauched lady, poet, small girl, lover.

The opening up of a closed organic body and the virtual play of hypostases in each of these representative works of the 1990s, in their own way, symbolise post-totalitarian consciousness. Deep changes, marked by a break with the Soviet past, freedom of self-expression and re-evaluation of values lead to a particular form of existentialism – by opening up your own bodily 'I' and its possible combinations. Moreover, during the 1990s, this variability makes itself felt as a sickness or ailment. Disease causes painful transformations, personality fragmentation and a search for a lost 'I' (as in Izdryk's *Votstsek*). Yet this ariability also multiplies the Orpheus-like journeys between time and space for Stakh Perfets'kyi in *Perversion*. In contrast, sickness becomes desirable and far from terrifying in the young prose of the 2000s. Alterations to the body's boundaries and surface with the help of different technologies (piercing, body-building, tattoos, cloning, robotic components) also

transform the negative connotation of the sick body into an entirely more positive phenomenon.

Turning to the differences in depictions of bodies between the 1990s and 2000s, an essential difference between these decades is as follows: the interests of the 1990s generation – represented, for example, by Andrukhovych – range from physics to metaphysics and back again. It is in this space that its protean alter egos wander, having lost the immutable barriers of their identities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, young writers turn away from the endless reincarnations and wanderings of their protagonists, characteristic of the previous generation, and begin to profess the so-called immanent sincerity and naiveté of their alter egos – and they define their own identities foremost in physical categories. The poetry anthology of the 2000s generation – the very emblem of which is corporeality (weight) – signals this return of the body: 'Weight is put forward as if instead of a literary manifesto: here we are in literature, and you can measure us only according to certain categories – age, weight, and, someone suggests, height too' (Zhezhera, 2008).

It is not only the return of the body that defines this generation, but that self-same body's sickness. Conditions of physical pain, psychological disorder within oneself and spiritual hypochondria characterise most protagonists of the novels and novellas written by the 2000s generation – Irena Karpa, Oleksandr Ushkalov, Mykhailo Brynykh, Liubko Deresh. In a certain sense, the protagonists of their novels, such as Irena Karpa's *50 khvylyn travy {koly pomre tvoia krasa}* (50 Minutes of Grass {When Your Beauty dies}) (2008), Sashko Ushkalov's *BZhD* (2007), Mykhailo Brynykh's *Elektronnyi plastylin* (Electronic Plasticine) (2007) and Liubko Deresh's *Kul't* (Cult) (2002), are symbols for the 1990s. The protagonists of these novels clearly affirm their own physical presence, yet in actual fact exist at the boundaries of their internal and external selves, of their own subjectivity and another's, of reality and beyond. Moreover, the body itself acts as body-affect – its existential thresholds are ready to combine with other bodies and communicate with other people, but this condition lingers, and encounters with the Other fail to occur.

The sick body cannot defend itself, external forces penetrate it and tear down its boundaries to the point where its organic borders are no longer clear. The body becomes similar to a computer-generated hyper-reality, like in Brynykh's *Elektronnyi plastylin*, in which the body is reminiscent of plasticine, and in Deresh's *Kul't* – a monstrous body. In Ushkalov's *BZhD*, the body is easily imitated as if the body is a limb or prosthesis, for example, 'an arm and a leg in army uniform' (Ushkalov, 2008). The body takes on a hypochondriac character when, as Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari affirm, the organs are destroyed and there remains no brain, nerves, chest, stomach or insides – only the skin and bones are left. It is precisely this state which the protagonist of Irena Karpa's *50 khvylyn travy* experiences.

The sick body phenomenon can be attributed to *ressentiment*. As Max Scheler asserts, the environment in which *ressentiment* grows is foremost those who serve someone else, who are subservient and find themselves under another's authority. Liberation from another's gaze and power can be considered a constitutive principle of *ressentiment*, insofar as the latter is always present in relations between the serving and the served, the older and the younger, and it is fostered by emotional stress, rebellion and a sense of insult.

At the same time, *ressentiment* reflects the deferral and after-experience of a specific negative emotion. This submerges into an inauthentic and fabricated world from which you cannot break out and see what is real. It is worth noting that *ressentiment* is a physical phenomenon: it generates a sick 'feeling of the body' – and, frequently, disgust. This condition produces a distancing effect on one's own body as if it was something alien and separate, and carries within it a desire to revenge oneself, even destroy oneself.

The loser generation

Under the influence of *ressentiment*, the 'sick' 2000s generation creates its own hero – the loser. This is what Dan'o, the protagonist of Karpa's *50 khvylyn travy,* calls himself when he talks to himself: 'You've launched the loser inside yourself, and one day that bitch will burst out of your ear, nose, throat, backside in the form of bright purple flower' (Karpa, 2008, p. 6). The loser exists as a 'non-organic' and 'non-hierarchical' body without organs. Flashes of pain burst forth in this immanent envelope of bodily existence, organs form and change. Life is made harder by the fact that you have to be a 'good loser' and, like in the advert, laugh:

> Laugh,
> Laugh,
> Laugh. All the while in
> five dimensions.
>
> (Karpa, 2008, p. 6)

In the end, 'thoughtlessness' and 'helplessness' are tokens for the loser. As the parade of young invalids presented in Karpa's novel runs, 'I'm thoughtless. You're strengthless – *ia bezdumna, ty bezsylyi*'. Life, body, and nature take on perverse, sick forms. In Ushkalov's novel *BZhD*, Baz does not want to grow up; Ievka in *50 khvylyn travy* cannot stand children crying and does not want to have children because 'she already hated everything that could crawl out of her own repulsive insides' (Karpa, 2008, p. 10). Indeed, Ievka, regardless of her success with the opposite sex, is a homeless child who desires old age.

The loser consciously accepts their identity in a world without a father, that is, without authority. As a rule, the loser lives in virtual reality, giving them a sense of wholeness and security. He or she keenly feels the disconnect between the internal self and external surroundings. As contemporary psychologists says, 'a good enough mother' (Winnicott, 1973, p. 10) should harmonise these divergent worlds, satisfy them, but this mother is also absent in this world. In a situation where this good mother is absent, and this image can be extrapolated to one's own country, the loser feels their homelessness rather painfully. This situation of homelessness for a loser is re-created in Ushkalov's *BZhD*. While the title's abbreviation decodes as *bezpeka zhyttiediial'nosti* (literally: 'life safety') – a subject introduced in Ukrainian schools and universities with the aim of socialising, quickly and easily, the younger generation – the novel's epigraph is a line taken from Russian playwright Ivan Vyrypaev's *Kislorod* (Oxygen) (2003): 'Strange, very strange, where would I be if I didn't exist?' (Ushkalov, 2008, p. 3) The principal scenario of *BZhD* revolves around simultaneous self-eradication and self-affirmation.

'Loserdom' is a form of non-conformist behaviour reminiscent of Generation X, defined by disillusion, apathy and inertia in adapting to a pragmatic social environment. However, the Losers' Generation differ from Generation X: the losers of the 2000s, unlike Generation X, do not even want to create their own histories. Instead, they run away from the adult world and search for people similar to themselves. Age, gender and social limitations play little role in the losers' community. The psychological type of the loser reminds us of the famous Beatles song, 'I'm a loser' (1964). As John Lennon later explained: 'Part of me suspects that I'm a loser, and the other part of me thinks I'm God Almighty.'

The sick body emerges from the post-totalitarian generation's reluctance to grow up and enter the world of the symbolic Father, where victory over another is the principle of survival. This is the place where, as the protagonist of Ushkalov's *BZhD* confesses, you have to 'conquer your own cubic metres of air' from 'some invisible opponent'. The psychosomatic regression of the juvenile into the sick body allows him to become an unthinking machine. Instead, the juvenile exists as a biological-zoological humanoid, which lives in its own world, perceives adult influence as external, yet does not respond to it. In Ushkalov's novel, this condition is reminiscent of a film: 'as if someone else's hand with traces of nicotine on the nails opens the empty projector of your head and loads it with black-and-white film reels, and, to be sure, while these films play, you are alive, well, at least you think that you are alive' (Ushkalov, 2008, p. 87).

The loss of confidence in one's parents, locking oneself into the present, a shattered belief in the happiness that your own home and family can provide, a desire never to grow up, juvenile behaviour that lasts into old age, a lack of faith in the maternal body of society – all of this was tried by

the hippies and the Beat Generation, who created popular culture based on satisfaction and affirmation. The rock stars of old (The Doors, Red Elvises, Depeche Mode, Van der Graaf Generator) serve as an ideal body (limbs) for the losers. True, they are perceived more as 'dead parents' who have lost the sacred aura of the past.

The encounter of the post-Soviet 'losers' generation with the 1960s generation, represented by Vaclav Havel or John Lennon is, to be fair, far from idyllic: 'the late Lennon started to drink at eight in the morning, and at eight in the evening even his glasses started to steam up from the booze coming off his breath, those tiny little glasses, remember, the real Lennon glasses' (Zhadan, 2003, p. 44). Zhadan's lyric subject would like to see the 1960s generation as his surrogate parents, even to be adopted by them, but he is deeply disillusioned when he encounters the infirmity of old age. As Zhadan's lyric subject responds: 'I thought he [Lennon] was God and now what? What is a guy with inflammation of the gums good for?' (ibid., p. 103).

Post-Soviet hypochondria

The mask of the loser is accepted consciously, and signals the discrepancy between internal and external selves, asocial attitudes and the hypochondria born of them. For a long time, hypochondria has been identified with inflammation, as a result of which different parts of the body begin to malfunction, leading to a situation where the body is unable to unite feelings with the object that provokes them. In this way, hypochondria is a symptom of non-communication, a broken connection with the 'other', a manifestation of an unformed or lost ideal. To be precise, all of these symptoms can be ascribed to melancholy. Melancholy is caused by feelings of loss, which are transferred into the future and signal a loss of self – the ideal, adult and socialised self. The famous German psychiatrist Wilhelm Griesinger in a work devoted to hypochondria and melancholia named the latter 'an anomaly of self-consciousness, desire and willpower' (Griesinger, 2000).

The sick body's return to literature in the 2000s is characterised by melancholy and hypochondria, and frequently makes itself felt through monstrous forms of corporeality. In Brynykh's *Electric Plasticine*, the natural body is literally lost: as a result of a coding malfunction in the system, the characters constantly recode themselves, give themselves new names and the body itself becomes interchangeable. As a result, the body becomes material. The body is denaturalised and becomes monstrous, disintegrating in a grotesque fashion as if a mechanical machine, fusing like plasticine. Monstrous too are the esoteric characters of Liubko Deresh's *Kult*, where the summoning of the monster – the Great Mad Worm – correlates to painful, yet desired journeys into the subconscious.

In so far as youth subcultures actively adopt elements of camp, trash and punk, for these subcultures identity is a masquerade and performance.

For them, identity is *extravagant*. Psychiatrist Ludwig Binsvanger states that extravagance is a form of re-creating existential ascension into an extravagant form of existence: ‘Where the *communio* of love and the *communicatio* of friendship is missing and where mere intercourse and traffic with “others” and with one’s self has taken over the exclusive direction of our existence, only there can height and depth, nearness and distance, present and future, have so much importance that human existence can *go too far*, can attain to an *end* and a *now* from which there is neither retreat nor progress. In such a case, we speak of conversion into Extravagance’ (Binswanger, 1963, pp. 343–344).

The sickness into which the post-totalitarian *dvotysiachnyky* escape can be described more accurately as extravagance. Extravagance allows you to avoid growing up, instead you can dive into dreams, hallucinations, in other words, it allows you to become stranded in the present. In the end, extravagance, just like Deleuze and Guatarri’s body-without-organs and monstrosity, become discursive phenomena. These elements form a particular discourse, one where characters are homogenous, as well as their speeches are identical taking directly from online journals.

Post-Soviet homelessness

Both the sick body and melancholy sublimations allow us to speak of a new existentialism in the post-Soviet literature of the 2000s. Moreover, questions of responsibility and growing up emerge as a central concern for this literature. In Ushkalov’s novel, the polemic with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant is key, particularly the philosopher’s idea of the gradual and conscious maturing of a conscious individual. By contrast, Ushkalov’s characters do not wish to grow up; they run away from maturity. In Brynykh’s novel, a whole ‘programme of irresponsibility’ is put forward: ‘One moment I say something, the next I’ve forgotten it. Write it down, cross it out. Convince, then dissuade. A chain of transformations, the law of received services’ (Brynykh, 2007, p. 59).

This is how the new existential thought of the post-Soviet generation is created, where values are not supported by authority, juveniles are reluctant to grow up and the body fuses and twists like stucco. In this regard, the symptom of the sick body produces collisions in connection with the loser’s refusal to confront reality and other people. In a certain sense, all the symptoms analysed indicate suicidal feelings. Yet it would be too big a generalisation to see the post-Soviet generation as tragically lost or suicidal, and to view the ‘losers’ as a constitutive symbol of this generation. With the help of extravagance, losers sublimate their desires through dreams and hallucinations, swearing, sex, drugs and alcohol. Youth prose borrows sensations from marginal subcultures – prisoners, blacks, hospital patients. Although the body of the loser is genuinely sick and infantile, the extravagant behaviour is

most likely just another game after the disillusion of the post-modern carnival of one's predecessors. At the same time, as they adopt the loser mask, the young move to the side, moving beyond the world of adult society in order to return to it anew. This dynamic can be witnessed in the losers' arrival on Ukrainian Euromaidan (2013–2014) and their active role in the revolution of consciousness. After the disappointment of the Orange Revolution, the losers make their return to Euromaidan.

Today, political scientists discuss how Euromaidan demonstrates the division of 'two Ukraines' along generational lines – into the 'parents' who grew up under socialism and the 'children' born after independence. This generation gap fixed by Euromaidan plays an important role in socio-cultural transformations in Ukraine. However, this divide runs between not only parents and children, but different generational identities too – formed within a single post-totalitarian generation. Although the participants themselves of Euromaidan declare the unity of generation, sex and class, it is the divide of generations which is the deciding factor in post-totalitarian Ukrainian society. As Frank Ankersmit does not tire of repeating: 'the past is essentially and primarily a painful past' (Ankersmit, 2002, p. 76). Often, the rewriting of history testifies to the fact that generations are key agents in this kind of traumatic experience.

Translated by Tom Rowley

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Part II

Popular Belongings: Subcultural Places and Globalised Spaces

6

‘Rap on Rap Is Sacred’: The Appropriation of Hip Hop in the Czech Republic

Anna Oravcová

Since 2002 hip hop fans not only from the Czech Republic but also from Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Germany and other countries come together on the third weekend in August at Hradec Králové region near the giant mountains of Krkonoše, more than 100 kilometres east of Prague, to celebrate the biggest event of the summer, the Hip Hop Kemp.[1] Ranking among the ‘50 greatest summer music festivals’ according to CNN (Bremner, 2013) Hip Hop Kemp offers three days of performances by old-school legends and up-and-coming stars from the USA as well as domestic and European musicians. There are dance competitions, freestyle battles, live graffiti showcases, DJ sets till early morning and a hip hop market offering vinyl, CDs and other merchandise from artists and labels. Whether on the main stage, at the smaller hangar or at a random cypher inside and outside the camp area, hip hop enthusiasts speaking the same language are offering their version of ‘real’ hip hop in a local vernacular.

The existence of Hip Hop Kemp and its history, especially the growing number of young hip hop fans that come together for this occasion (now counting up to 20,000 attendees) is a testimony to how hip hop culture became a vital part of Czech youth culture. Czech hip hop subculture started to form as the borders opened after the fall of communism. Influenced by personal experience of those who could travel and by movies such as *Wild Style* and *Beat Street*, graffiti and breakdance were the first elements adopted by Czech youth. By 1993 graffiti crews formed the first rap groups and established the birth of the Czech hip hop subculture (Walach, 2010). Two decades later, hip hop is one of the most favoured music genres among the youth, and elements of hip hop are used in the marketing strategies of different products: for example, a rapping plumber sells mobile phones, animated cows enter a rap battle promoting new yoghurt and beatboxers like to eat at McDonald’s. What once was a small and close-knit subculture has now

been co-opted by the mainstream society, pushing forward the question of authentic cultural expression.

In this chapter I focus on the cultural translation and appropriation of hip hop as a former African American cultural expression into a specific local environment of the post-socialist Czech Republic. The different forms of appropriation of hip hop culture can range from referencing to the roots of hip hop culture and Zulu Nation, and depicting the lavish life of a rap star, to the refusal of any connection with hip hop as a culture, using rap just as a form of expression – and anything in between. Besides the notorious binary dichotomy that splits the scene into so-called mainstream and 'underground', with their respective ideologies, I also discuss the emergence of 'conscious' rap, the position of the Roma minority within Czech hip hop and the possibility of rap music being hijacked by neo-Nazi groups. My analysis and claims are based on in-depth interviews with Czech rappers and on content analysis of their lyrics. I am also writing from the perspective of an insider (see Hodkinson, 2005) since I consider myself a member of hip hop subculture since 1996.[2]

Hip hop as a transnational youth culture – And questions of adaptation

Since the 1970s, what was originally considered a fad has become a cultural phenomenon influencing not only youth all around the globe but also the global market force. Young people use hip hop to construct their identities, teachers to educate, activists to support their cause and corporate agents to squeeze as much capital as possible. In every publication focusing on hip hop, the 'original origin myth' (Alim, 2009, p. 7; Forman, 2013, p. 69; Nitzsche, 2013, p. 14) is being retold: the Bronx, New York, during the 1970s is where hip hop culture, encompassing the four artistic elements (MCing, DJing, breakdance and graffiti) was born with its godfathers including DJ Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa and his Zulu Nation, expressing the specific African American experience in the post-industrial city (Bennett, 2004, p. 178; Keyes, 2004, p. 1; Cobb 2007, p. 3; Asante, 2008, p. 9). As more and more scholars research the complex and often contradictory landscape of the global hip hop culture, the race, class and gender aspects of this cultural practice are being challenged.[3]

While the birth of hip hop culture is closely tied to a specific place, Kelley argues that 'it has been global, or international at least, since its birth' (2006, p. xi). Furthermore, Potter suggests that hip hop was based on 'transnational and mobile cultural movements and appropriations' of which 'Afrika Bambaataa making black anthems based on German technorock in the name of "Zulu" nation he was inspired to create after watching a British film' (1995, p. 142) is an example. Considering the global background of hip hop it is not surprising that it is so appealing to the youth worldwide.

In one of the first compilations of essays covering hip hop outside of the USA,[4] Mitchell asserts that: 'Hip hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world' (2001, pp. 1–2). In the introduction to *Hip-Hop in Europe* (2013), editor Sina Nitzsche suggests:

> [a]s a multidirectional phenomenon flowing back and forth across many borders, hip-hop in Europe undermines established nation-state boundaries in Europe in favor of a networking of hip-hop artists and aficionados. Thereby, American rap functions as a source of inspiration which is imitated, referenced, celebrated, distorted, and sometimes even rejected. (p. 9)

When studying the cultural translation of a phenomenon, most scholars refer to the term 'glocalisation' coined by George Ritzer and defined as 'the interpretation of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcome in different geographic eras', emphasising global heterogeneity and rejecting the notion of cultural homogeneity (2003, p. 193). The process of 'glocalisation' of hip hop 'rather than being smooth and consensual transition, is fought with tension and contradictions as young people attempt to reconcile issues of musical stylistic authenticity with those of locality, identity and everyday life' (Bennett, 2004, p. 180; see also Motley and Henderson, p. 249; Brown, 2006, p. 138). The understanding of any local hip hop scene has to carefully consider the local circumstances and the global cultural flow of commodities, ideas and people that together shape the overall nature of a given hip hop subculture.

What has to be taken into consideration when talking about the Czech hip hop subculture are the specific circumstances of the cultural translation, the time period in which this occurred and the media that facilitated this translation. Unlike the situation of the post-industrial inner-city neighbourhoods from which the hip hop culture emerged and that gave the platform to underprivileged youth to voice their opinions on the oppressive realities of their lives, the hip hop subculture in the Czech Republic was taken up by the youth from the lower middle class who had economic capital, access to MTV and the internet, or had relatives who lived abroad and could travel themselves. Contrary to the romantic view of hip hop and rap as a vehicle for expression for ethnic minorities, in the Czech Republic hip hop is not tied to a specific ethnicity and it is largely practised by white males. Even though in the Czech Republic the Roma minority faces racist stereotypes, hostility from the general population, poverty and having to live predominantly in the so-called socially excluded areas, hip hop as an expression of resistance has been taken up by Roma youth only recently (see also Kolářová, 2011, p. 239).

The authenticity battle: Mainstream versus underground

Subculture, mainstream and underground are terms commonly used in everyday communication with almost taken-for-granted definition, as if we all know what we are talking about but at the same time having different understanding of them (Huber, 2013, p. 9). In a study on contemporary Czech music subcultures, Kolářová (2011) and her collective of researches focusing on punk, skinheads, techno and hip hop define subculture as a community of young people who share a taste in music, values and beliefs, who want to differentiate themselves and who want to belong to a group that has its own space where they regularly meet (p. 236). Pointing out to the shift in the involvement of youth in subcultures compared to the classic studies of western youth subcultures carried out by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Kolářová (2011) concludes:

> It is not possible to equate subcultures with the politics or social resistance of the youth as the CCCS[5] did because it includes too many of those who consume subculture as a form of entertainment [...] All in all we can refuse the idea that youth music subcultures are leftist and that their values are different from the majority of the society even though they label themselves 'underground' or 'free' and even though this might be suggested by the earlier research of western subcultures. (p. 210)

For contemporary youth-music subcultures, the label underground refers to a different situation than the Czech underground cultural movement during Socialism as a form of dissent, criticising the regime and going against it. By the mid-1990s a youth who takes up the lifestyle of subcultures that previously did not exist in the Czech Republic would not remember the conditions of the regime, let alone the then current generation of youth. The term underground today has different connotations tied to the level of exposure to the mainstream popular culture, the process of music production and the level of involvement in the subcultural practices.

The word 'mainstream' is used by the members of youth-music subcultures to refer to the aspects and specific attributes of music within and outside of the subculture. Members of the subculture are distancing themselves from the mainstream (understood as the commercial, mass, popular culture, which they perceive as conformist, unoriginal, inauthentic and inferior) as well as from those within the given subculture who make money from the subculture and have 'sold out' the allegedly 'authentic' ideals of the subculture to the mainstream popular culture (Kolářová, 2011, p. 17; Huber, 2013, p. 8). Under these circumstances, authenticity becomes the main discursive tool that members of the subculture use in order to define the subculture itself and to set the barriers and possibilities of inclusion and exclusion.

These terms are not set in stone, however, and since they are a social construct they are also subject to change over time, depending on who is using them, when and where (Forman, 2013, p. 62). The boundaries between what no longer represents the underground and what is being compromised by the mainstream are permeable and therefore have to be guarded and constantly redefined. What further complicates things and makes these categories problematic in our globalised world and new digital communication cultures is the fact that today '[m]usic comes to achieve mainstreamness not so much through CD singles, hit countdowns and music magazines as it did in 1999, but rather with digital downloads, hit countdowns, file-sharing and social media networking' (Huber, 2013, p. 12).

As a subculture grows in numbers, attracts more youth and becomes more visible, certain elements become commercialised, co-opted to the mainstream popular culture and recognised by the general society. In the Czech Republic, everyone knows that hip-hoppers like to dress in oversized clothes, generally do not wear belts and wear baseball caps. Hip hop is associated with dance, and many dance schools offer classes that include hip hop as one of the options. The other immediate connotation with hip hop is usually embodied by Rytmus,[6] probably the most popular rapper in ex-Czechoslovakia. As one of the rappers I interviewed contends, 'today, when you say hip hop, people say, "Oh yes, those clowns wearing caps, those sprayers vandalising property, tagging the doors with a marker" – and they don't see the good projects'. Graffiti and tagging are elements of the hip hop culture, a phenomenon recognised on a global scale with specific practices and codes of behaviour which tend to be revealed only to those fully committed to the subcultural life and which draw the attention of the youth (see Macdonald, 2001). These invisible local practices are what the participants understand as 'authentic', 'true' or as defining the 'real' hip hop, 'a discursive and symbolic construct' (Froman, 2013, p. 64).

Since authenticity is the crucial defining factor of underground cultures, I would like to suggest a definition that highlights its conceptual difficulties as well as its efficiency. In a general sense authenticity refers to traits such as credibility, genuineness, realness or purity – just to name a few. According to Grazian (2010), authenticity 'is a social construct with moral overtones rather than an objective and value-free appraisal [...] authenticity itself can never be authentic, but must always be performed, staged, fabricated, or otherwise imagined' (pp. 191–192; see also Jeffries, 2001, p. 117; Ochmann, 2013, p. 425). When considering appropriation of hip hop outside of the USA, and the accompanying construction of authenticity, special attention needs to be paid to questions of race and place. Although hip hop is a global phenomenon, the (African) American version serves as a blueprint for localised hip hop around the world (McLeod 1999). As dominantly white, male, middle-class Czech hip-hoppers cannot claim authenticity in regard to racial difference or social discrimination, the way that authenticity is

performed can rather be understood in relation to the use of language, the 'true' image of the rapper, the means of music production or process of commercialisation. First, however, we have to distinguish between those who only consume the subcultural life as a way to pass the time, just because it is 'in', and those who actively participate in the subculture. A similar distinction is offered by Walach in a study of 'The perspectives of extreme right-wing hip-hop in the Czech Republic' (2010, p. 47), who distinguishes between two basic uses of hip hop – instrumental and subcultural. In his analysis, the instrumental usage of hip hop takes only the elements, the fashion and the slang, while the other ads 'hip-hop attitude'.

Jeffries (2011), who focused on the US audience and their perception of authenticity, suggests that: 'Hip-hop authenticity is better understood as sincerity – that is, repeated efforts on behalf of performance to build connections among themselves and the audiences' (p. 117). To do so, an 'authentic' rap first has to be performed in the Czech language in order to be understood by the audience and, second, the content of the message has to correspond with the image of the rapper.

Rappers are viewed as those who say whatever they want to say with no reserve, rap music allows free speech. It is also understood as a therapy, as getting off one's chest whatever is bothering the artist at the time. As one rapper says, 'If I want to feel better, then I really cannot rap about something that is not my reality.'

In this debate on authenticity, who is 'real' and who is not, what seems to be the pressing issue is 'who does the commodification and to what extent?' (Ouchmann, 2013, p. 442). Commodification is something that already existed within the subculture since its beginnings in the streets of the Bronx, when the very first hip hop record was released, while the very essence of an allegedly 'authentic' practice, namely the 'turntable scratches and cuts from record to record, audience call-and-response, breakneck battles on the mic – were absent' (Potter, 1995, p. 45). Ouchmann therefore suggests that 'the underground has an economy which is much more hostile towards commercialization than towards commodification' (2013, p. 435). Even the most orthodox underground artists want to put out CDs and spread their music. What they might not want to see is the elements of hip hop (mis)used by the mainstream society that does not have any apparent connection to the hip hop community.[7]

A specific person can claim authenticity depending on where s/he stands within the hip hop subcultural hierarchy, which can be understood as a pyramid with few rappers on the top representing the so-called mainstream, and a myriad of local rappers constituting the underground. From the point of view of the underground rappers, the difference between those who make it to the top is in the quality of the music, the willingness to 'sell out' and having available funds to support different marketing strategies. As one of the underground rappers puts it:

> I don't listen to the polished songs on the radio. I prefer to play something on the internet, someone who does it on a yoghurt cup and puts his whole heart into it as opposed to someone who has the money for the best sound and knows that it's gonna sell but it lacks the message.

Another rapper described the mainstream as 'hip hop with the elements of pop. Simple text, simplistic rhymes, someone who has the contacts, sells records and the record label funds his marketing' (see also Cobb, 2007, p. 10). One of the strategies that underground rappers use to support their authenticity claim is their knowledge and respect for the history of hip hop culture. The lack of understanding of what the Czech hip-hoppers perceive to be the roots of hip hop culture is one of the main critiques of the current scene aimed at the audience. 'People are so shallow these days they don't feel the need to go back to the roots, to know the history. They just want to put on the clothes and be in.' Employing techniques of 'horizontal intertextuality' (Androutsopoulos, 2009, p. 45) underground rappers reference the 1990s hip hop, the boombap era, using famous music samples or naming particular emcees as a way of establishing the connection with the roots of the hip hop culture and, in consequence, their authenticity. For example Rest, who gained notoriety as a freestyler and battle emcee and who is currently signed to independent label Ty Nikdy, joined forces with DJ Fatte to release two albums. On the album *Střepy* (Shatters, 2013) Rest raps:

> Disco rap is here, where did the boombap go
> It packed its back and left even your track
> They don't know Lootpack, Wu-Tang or Boot Camp Click
> History of rap is lost on them
> 'Raz, dva' (One, Two)

In a track called 'Moudrost hip-hopu' (The Wisdom of Hip Hop) Revolta asks his listeners if they know who DJ Kool Herc is and expresses his wish that the youth would understand what Nas was rapping about and that they would have a role model like KRS-One. The references to KRS-One, Afrika Bambaata and Zulu Nation can be found in the rap production by Foggy Fogosh, rapper, DJ and graffiti artist, a leading member of former crew S.C.U.R (South City Underground Rappers) and the recently established group of emcees called Crewní skupina. Lukrecius Chang listens to Wu Tang Clan and establishes his authenticity by reminding his listeners that he was a member of Rhyme Street Squad, one of the first hip hop crews in Moravia.

In their critique of current Czech rap music the underground community focuses on the lyrical content of mainstream artists who glorify alcohol and drug use, going to parties, flaunting money and material things and who do not have respect and humility. On the one hand, this critique is a good example to show how fluid the term 'authenticity' is: if we define it as

attitude reflecting one's lived experience, it is not surprising that nightlife, partying, drugs and bragging about being the legends of the Czech hip hop scene are permanent themes even on recent albums by mainstream rappers like Vladimir 518 or Orion. Thus they too are able to claim authenticity based on their long involvement with the subculture, being the pioneers of Czech rap and becoming part of a commercialised lifestyle and globalised popular cultures.

On the other hand, the Czech hip hop underground community, which presents itself as open to everyone – as a place where the hip hop culture is kept alive – indeed is as closed as they perceive the mainstream to be. The underground rappers have a tendency to support each other, preach to the choir and get stuck in a vacuum of claiming to be the 'right' hip-hoppers. In the worst case scenario, the mentality gets to a point where any financial success and visibility is deemed as 'selling out' to the mainstream. The concept of 'selling out' is also understood as a pressure to compromise their art in order to be successful. One of the rappers in my research describes his experience:

> Everybody needs money and to pay their bills. If someone was willing to give me money then I would do it. But I would stay true to my own style. I was once given an offer from a radio, but the woman said that I would have to change my instrumentals and my lyrics. They basically liked my flow and my wordplay, but I would have to change the topics I rap about and how I approach them and that would mean that I would not give it my heart any more.

Similarly to the term 'authenticity', the self-proclamation of being underground is similarly a quite fluid criterion. If by 'underground' we would understand the 'do it yourself' ethics of the performers, than we can hardly talk about any mainstream in the Czech Republic. All the hip hop labels are co-founded and run by rappers or DJs/producers. Czech rappers are not dependent on big record companies, especially in a globalised digital media era, when each one can reach the audience on his/her own using social networks or guerrilla-marketing strategies. In times when music does not sell as much as merchandise, there are countless possibilities to get your label's logo onto a shirt or a cap for reasonably low costs. In Prague, there are also a number of semi-professional recording studios where one can record and have the track mastered for reasonable prices.

A very good example of this difficulty to separate mainstream and underground is the first Czech hip hop label, Bigg Boss, co-founded in 2006 by Vladimir 518, a hip hop legend in his own right. A member of a pioneer rap group PSH (formerly known as Peneři strýčka homeboye), graffiti and comics artist and recently also co-author of a book mapping different subcultures in the Czech Republic, he could be considered what the

underground community refers to as 'mainstream'. On his latest CD, *Idiot*, he combines different music styles and features artists on his label, as well as mainstream popular music artists. Music-wise, his record has a crossover potential. In an interview for the magazine *Nový prostor* Vladimír 518 addressed the concerns about his motivation behind his rap music production:

> Although people might suspect that what drives us [PSH] is substantially based on the financial aspect, it was never the case. The most important thing for us was that we enjoy it. And there is not that much money in it anyway, so that we would have to do it no matter what.
>
> (Havlín, 2014)

The label *Ty Nikdy* is another example that hosts a bunch of talented artists, rappers and producers, including Rest, DJ Fatte, and MC Gey, who is famous for his irony and satire, most of the time making fun of simplistic rhymes and the strict topics of rap, such as representing one's city with a lack of imagination. The front man of the label, rapper Idea, sums up the main idea behind the label and his own approach to rap as having: 'feet on the ground, head in the mainstream cloud/all the while independent, with heart down underground' (Uhasit oheň/Extinguish the Fire).

These artists, groups and labels show how fragile these dichotomous distinctions between underground and mainstream actually are. Case in point, a group which blurs the distinction of both categories is Prago Union. With their sold-out concerts, multiple awards and number of CDs under their belt distributed by EMI, Prago Union is considered the best that Czech rap music has to offer. The front man of the group, Kato, used to perform under the name of Deph in the group Chaozz, the very first group gaining mainstream visibility and commercial success all over ex-Czechoslovakia in the late 1990s. Kato's lyrical mastery, his wordplay and ability to use idioms and popular sayings in unpredictable ways put him in this category of poets that express themselves through rap music.[8]

The Roma community and the consciousness of Czech rap music

Although the common categories of mainstream and underground lost their relevance to mark social or political differences and – as shown – became a way of simply performing and fabricating 'authentic' identities with the help of language, style and attitudes, hip hop culture in the Czech Republic nevertheless has not lost its creative potential to express marginalised belonging completely, as the case of Roma minority and so-called conscious rap shows.

Whereas common Czech mainstream and underground hip hop is rather a movement of romanticism and nostalgia for 'cultural expression of

resistance' (Mitchell, 2001, p. 155), young people of the minority group of Roma who actually are the objects of racism, oppression and social marginalisation were not the first ones to pick up the microphones and use hip hop as a strategy of resistance against the hegemonic majority. As already shown, the 'performative' imperative of expressing one's own experience dominates in Czech hip hop culture. In the interview with Vladimír 518 the artist himself admits to living in a bubble, in a society where we all are doing pretty well so there is no need to talk about any kind of crisis (Havlík, 2014).

Roma people living in so-called socially excluded localities and being labelled as 'inadaptable' will probably disagree with such a characterisation of Czech society.[9] Since 2011 there has been an increasing number of anti-Roma demonstrations in different parts of the Czech Republic, which shows the scale of antipathies against the Roma community. The basic negative stereotypes regarding Roma people include: they are lazy, they live on welfare, they don't want to work or be educated, they are involved in all types of criminal activity and their only talent pretends to music and dance. One of the respondents in my research concurs:

> This is the Czech nation. All we do is talk about how Roma people rob and steal, that they are prigs. Nobody will employ them and nobody will let them on stage either. And maybe they are the ones who live the culture to the fullest. One of them will start doing beatbox and the other one will bang on the table. They have so many talented musicians, it's in their blood.

This sounds all too familiar as a racist stereotype – the stereotype of having a potentially criminal nature while having music in the blood has also been used against African Americans as well as Roma people. While Czech rappers tend to describe their neighbourhoods as 'ghettos', the only equivalent of the living conditions comparable to the American representations of the tough life in the 'ghetto' would be the socially excluded location that Czech (and Slovak) Roma people are destined to live in (Barrer, 2009, p. 68). As my research respondent hinted, the Roma hip-hoppers stay in the confines of the 'ghetto' because they do not have the financial means and opportunities to get out (Barrer, 2009, p. 71).

Against this background of racism and discrimination the very first successful representative of Roma minority was Gipsy, the front man of the now defunct group Syndrom Snopp who later released a record called 'Romano Hip-Hop' in 2006 with his group Gipsy.cz in which they combined traditional Roma music with hip hop aesthetics. Since then the group released three more albums without gaining much attention. Since 2012 Lukrecius Chang has become a positive role model for the Roma youth. Involved with the programme 'Roma mentor' Lukrecius, a rapper and European champion

in Kung Fu who works full-time as Assistant of Crime Prevention in his home town of Karviná, offers lectures on hip hop, sport and healthy lifestyle.

The fact that hip hop speaks to Roma youth as much as any other ethnicity around the world has been recognised by activists and social workers in culture centres. One example is a project called 'Slova místo zbraní' ('Words instead of Weapons'). Backed by a European grant from Youth in Action, the project spawned a collective of young talented people that go by the name United Gipsy Crew (UGC).[10] In collaboration with the youth centre in Prague 3, MC Metoděj, who mentored the youth and American emcee/activist/poet and Zulu Nation member Spiritchild, the group recorded three songs and one music video (Oravcová, 2012). Since then they have been working on a new album, supported a campaign aimed at Roma parents to stop sending Roma children to so-called practical schools and are holding regular showcases and concerts.[11]

Social workers around the Czech Republic, especially those working in youth clubs in Roma localities, find that rap and hip hop are viable tools for getting the youth to pay attention and to listen, possibly learn. In this way, hip hop is being adapted to target specific groups and integrate them into the majority society. There are Roma activists who help the talented Roma rappers to get to record studios and take them on different protest meetings, as in the case of group De la Negra, a collective of teenage Roma rappers with lyrics reflecting on the racist nature of Czech society and the living conditions in socially excluded localities, which can be perceived as an 'authentic' expression of marginalised voices. The way in which this Roma youth culture arose, with the support of European and national institutions, social workers and cultural activists, shows that 'authenticity' is here rather a top-down way of adopting the ghetto myth of African American hip hop for a discriminated minority group and to integrate them thus into the mainstream culture, rather than a bottom-up expression of subcultural resistance.

Another way of claiming authenticity and building a bridge between the original American hip hop culture is claiming to represent the 'conscious' subgenre of rap music. In the Czech Republic, underground is sometimes considered a synonym for 'conscious' rap music characterised as having 'politically progressive and racially conscious lyrical content'; it also includes 'positive messages and spiritual lyrics' (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 653). These rappers consciously distance themselves from racism and extreme right-wing movements, and look for more advanced lyrics as compared to those about sex, violence and material fortune.

The era of conscious hip hop was influenced by Slovak rappers such as Majk Spirit or Suvereno and gained much visibility with rapper Revolta, who released his debut album *Evoluce vědomí* (Evolution of Consciousness) in 2012. Previously signed to Mafia Records, Revolta released his second album, *Motivace k činům* (Motivation to Action) under his own label, Revolta

Records, which now includes like-minded artists. The concept of the latest album is twofold. About half of the songs mixing hip hop aesthetics with rock music are dedicated to motivating the youth, telling them to keep trying in whatever is their endeavour. Revolta is a leader of Seberevolta, a collective of young people who live a healthy lifestyle and work out at public courtyards. Seberevolta now has different branches all over the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The other half, the more mellow songs, are devoted to the definition of what hip hop should be. Revolta is distancing himself from the mainstream hip hop production, which he thinks is all about ego trips, partying, drug and alcohol use and rappers who do not want to take responsibility for what they are saying and how their words might influence younger generations. Revolta wants to be a positive role model. References to the political situation are absent from his production, with a tendency to 'allude to social or economic problems rather than address them directly' (Miklódy, 2004, p. 169). While having a major crossover appeal, Revolta is constantly pressured by the hip hop community to stress that he is in fact selling his merchandise for the manufacturing costs, and that making money from these items is not his priority.

Another example is eLKa, who switched to conscious rap after a long freestyle career and two albums. His third album, *Apokalypsa* (Apocalypse, 2013) includes 11 tracks criticising the current social and cultural climate of the Czech Republic, with proclaimed aims to agitate youth to challenge whatever is presented as given, so that they will no longer be part of the herd but become the leaders.

The Czech hip hop underground offers other political rappers, although they have relatively minor success. Among these, the group Memento Mori stands out. The group often performs at different demonstrations and squats, and organises lectures about rap and politics. They affiliate themselves with artists such as Lowkey and Immortal Technique and they translate lyrics to different hip hop songs with a substantial political message.[12]

In this sense, 'conscious' hip hop means social critique aimed at the state institutions, the majority of society and its uniformity, the government and the manipulation of people. However, most of the time the critique does not include suggestions of alternative resolutions, and one could argue that it is rather another version of typical hip hop rhetoric that rappers adhere to, just as they do to other performative strategies.

Czech hip hop and its gender problem

As shown above, the aura of authenticity reproduced by rappers over and over proves to be a core factor for all kinds of appropriations of hip hop in the Czech context, serving to maintain its appeal as a youth cultural expression both in mainstream and subcultural contexts. In this regard, gender issues are of special interest, as they reveal the problematic aspects of this

strategy. Hence initially, American hip hop to a very high degree was a masculine subculture, promoting male styles, habits and values with a sufficient part of machismo and misogynistic attitudes. The Czech hip hop scene was unable to overcome this problematic heritage, and is still dominated by male rappers and journalists, who in a subtle or overt way may deny women any substantial involvement. In typical hip hop visual representations in music videos women are often portrayed as passive fans or cheerleaders. Autonomous female rappers in the scene are not non-existent but are still to a large part invisible (Oravcová, 2013). Also, in the lyrics of most Czech rap songs women are mostly missing, other than mentions here and there of party girls and women as gold diggers. However, 'the absence of misogyny does not equate with a positive representation of women', warn Weitzer and Kurbin (2009, p. 24).

Symptomatic in this regard is the rapper Ektor, who at the beginning of 2014 received considerable attention not only from hip hop media outlets but also gossip sites and magazines in relation to couple of incidents where he allegedly hit a woman. The scandal forced him to release a public statement on YouTube (2014), which is indicative because of the discursive tactics he uses for his approval. Drawing on double standards when it comes to the sexuality of men and women, Ektor basically distinguishes two types of women, putting forth the saint/whore dichotomy (see also McFarland, 2003, p. 95; Ulen, 2007, p. 143). According to this narrative, the 'normal' women deserving the label 'lady' are pure when it comes to drug and alcohol use, obedience and understanding. Any woman who deviates from this prescribed stereotype role model, according to Ektor, can be put in her place by men – even with the use of violence and force.

Following the incident Ektor released a single from his then upcoming album *Detektor* called 'Jak Jinak' (Of Course) with a similar message, in which he talks directly to women who get drunk in a club. The moral of the story is that these women drink to a point when they awaken the inner 'whore', so they have no moral limits and are even willing to perform oral sex in the bathroom with a random guy, preferably the one who has a key to an Audi A5. Once they wake up the next day and realise how they behaved the previous night, knowing they would not be taken as anything other than a 'whore', they have to come up with an excuse, which is the chorus of the song: 'Somebody slipped something in my drink'. Thus Ektor devalues the severe reality of incidents when date-rape drugs are used and turns female victims into immoral perpetrators who compromised themselves.

In this context, rapper Revolta made an effort to bring a different representation of women to the forefront. In his chart-topping single 'Krása ženy' (The Beauty of a Woman), released in 2014, Revolta focuses on 'the real beauty of a woman which has nothing to do with the body' while also criticising women who walk around half-naked and take selfies all the time. He raps about his appreciation for educated women who know who they are and

know their strengths and weakness – women who look up to 'hard-working mothers not models' and would not engage in random sexual intercourse, because they really value themselves.

This song is to be understood as an attempt at launching conscious rap dealing with gender relations. Yet even this politically correct attempt to overcome sexist stereotypes, in waiving all clichés of femininity present in traditional hip hop, is still built on very traditional notions of femininity. This becomes clear in the video, which presents different women (of every age category) in the role of attentive mothers, home-makers and artists. While Revolta's production team claims that this representation corresponds to the idea of re-evaluating unappreciated invisible work done by women, Revolta received substantive criticism from his female fans, accusing him of depicting women in stereotypical, traditional patriarchal situations. What these cases show is that, when it comes to gender issues, even allegedly 'conscious' rappers are still far away from playing a progressive 'subcultural' role in opposition to mainstream culture.

Rap music and right-wing extremism

Another problematic case of translation of hip hop culture into the Czech context appears to be the right-wing extremist rap, which fundamentally opposes the origin of hip hop. While there might be a general lack of knowledge about the history of the American hip hop that serves as a blueprint for hip hop cultures worldwide, Czech hip-hoppers at least still do understand that hip hop is first and foremost an African American cultural expression. The anti-racist stance is employed by the members of the hip hop subculture even though, as mentioned previously, there are anti-Roma and xenophobic tendencies. However, as hip hop in Czech culture is not so much a politicised subculture but a dominantly fashionable attitude and performative strategy, it was even possible for hip hop to be 'hijacked' by right-wing extremist groups, resulting in the production of 'Nazi rap'.

In 2012 the nationalist right-wing organisation Svobodná mládež (Free Youth) published a manifesto explaining why rap music is an appropriate vehicle for recruiting new members and for spreading their ideology.[13] According to national socialists, 'if we were to reject hip hop on the basis of its origins we would also have to refuse skinhead subculture and that is not what we do'. Determined to appeal to the anti-system-oriented youth their legitimatisation of the use of rap music rests on the assumption that it 'is not about offering the audience a musical experience of certain quality, but about offering a worldview, your opinion about a certain matter'. At the end of the manifesto the organisation provides links to the videos and songs that represent 'the best of the Czech hip hop scene' while adding that those are not artists identifying with National Socialist, nevertheless, they are worth supporting because these artists express the ideology of national socialism

'whether they are aware of that or not'. The compilation of artists of their choosing includes, most notably, horrorcore rappers whose production is characterised by a mix of hip hop, rock and metal music and with lyrics full of violence, misogyny, racism and xenophobia as a particular expression of current social issues and their critique via black humour and irony.[14]

Thus, the extreme-right groups have seized the potential of hip hop as a currently fashionable and popular subculture in order to spread ideas that are completely at odds with the roots of hip hop culture in the USA. Even more, they proclaim artists and bands (such as horrorcore rappers) to be right wing, in appropriating their diffuse anti-state and anti-capitalist attitude for their own purposes. The common sexism and traditional approaches to femininity and masculinity, and the double standards regarding sexuality expressed in much of Czech rap music also correspond with the pre-modern gender roles ideals of right-wing extremism, and thus reveal, once again, how open to reinterpretation the claim of authenticity actually is.

Conclusion: 'Rap on rap is sacred'

The aim of this chapter was to show how, in the Czech Republic, hip hop and rap music are adopted and adapted to suit the local circumstances. Czech hip hop is a very vivid and popular youth culture, mostly defining itself as an underground subculture, but with fluent borders to mainstream culture. Given the local circumstances in the Czech Republic today and the transnational conditions forming such understandings as 'subculture' and 'mainstream' in a globalised presence, we have to reconsider the terms themselves. The Czech case study shows that with regard to the globalisation and diversification of the hip hop scene, 'authenticity' becomes a crucial term in understanding this youth culture, defining the credibility of imaginary belongings, style and expression.

As rapper Vladimír 518 suggests in the anthem 'Tady vládnu já' (I Rule Here), 'Rap on rap is sacred'. Everyone has an opinion on what rap is or is not, what it should be and, most of all, who is or should be the authentic, the 'real' representative of hip hop culture. So-called rap on rap is part of the rap repertoire, one of the constant themes of rappers worldwide. These are exactly the self-sacralisations and permanent delineations which constitute and legitimise the partly quite contradictory claims to this youth culture.

There are underground rappers who 'live and breathe' hip hop without the expectation of any financial gain, who are inspired by what they perceive to be the roots of hip hop culture. Others claim to be authentic based on their preference for 'conscious' rap, focusing on the critique of today's society. Even though they refer to themselves as underground, they cannot really be literally underground in a globalised world when, as we have seen, in practice the transitions to mainstream are open and viable options.

Then there are social workers, activists and rappers who adopted hip hop as a form of education – a way, in the Czech Republic, to speak especially to the Roma youth. On the other side of the spectrum, rap music can be adopted by right-wing groups that refuse any connection to hip hop as the former African American cultural expression.

Hip hop in the Czech Republic is not and was not primarily a tool of expression of oppressed youth. The basic concept of authenticity and understanding of rap music is that it always should truly represent one's lived experience and as such it can be adopted by mainstream rappers, representing mostly white middle class, as well as for Roma minority groups or even by extreme right-wing nationalists. Hip hop, as the Czech example shows, in a globalised world is no longer a monolithic thing, but one of the most popular youth cultures exactly because of its performative and linguistic qualities to express heterogeneous imaginary belongings. As Ochmann suggests, 'conceptions of authenticity in hip-hop depend crucially upon what we decide hip-hop to be' (2013, p. 432).

Notes

1. This chapter was written with the support of the Grant Agency of Charles University in Prague; project number: GA UK 630012 and the Specific Academic Research of Charles University in Prague SVV 2014; project number: 260 112.
2. Since 2011 I have been organising hip hop events, workshops and I have been in charge of the dramaturgy and hosting of a weekly underground hip hop radio show called Street Cypher on the only hip hop and dance music radio station in the Czech Republic Radio Spin 96.2 FM. At the same time this work is an integral part of my ongoing research for my dissertation project 'The Construction of Authenticity in Czech Rap Music'.
3. Hip hop and rap are currently used as synonyms by the record music industry, cultural enterprises and fans alike. In this chapter I refer to hip hop as a lifestyle and cultural practice that includes all the elements of hip hop, and refer to rap as a particular element of hip hop, encompassing rapping and freestyle (see also Motley and Henderson, 2008, p. 246; Alim, 2009, p. 2). On a similar note, recent publications challenge the notion of a singular, monolithic hip hop culture. For example, Fernandes uses the term 'Hip hop nation' to refer to 'transient alliances across boundaries of class, race and nation' (2011); Mattar works with the notion of 'global hip-hop identity' (2003, p. 284); Motley and Henderson study the 'global hip-hop diaspora' (2008, p. 243), while Alim suggests that all the local hip hop scenes comprise the 'Global Hip Hop Nation (GHHN), a multilingual, multiethnic "nation" with an international reach, a fluid capacity to cross the borders, and a reluctance to adhere to the geopolitical givens of the present' (2009, p. 3).
4. Other publications dedicated to the cultural translation of hip hop include: *Blackening Europe* (Raphael-Hernandez, 2004); *The Vinyl Ain't Final* (Basu and Lemelle, 2006); *Global Linguistic Flows* (Alim, Pennycook, Ibrahim, 2009); *Close to the Edge* (Fernandes, 2011) and numerous studies published in online journals.
5. Univeristy of Brimingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, active from 1964 until 2002.

6. Due to the long-shared history and proximity of the languages, Czech and Slovak hip hop scenes tend to collaborate a lot and influence each other. Rytmus started out as a beatboxer and is undeniably one of the founders of the Slovak hip hop scene. Being half Roma he is also the most visible personality that Roma youth across the two countries view as a role model. Besides his rap career Rytmus is also a businessman, appeared as a judge in the television series 'Česko-Slovenská SuperStar' (the Czechoslovak version of *American Idol*), in 2013 featured in a large campaign for the Tatra Bank where he was promoting new accounts for students between 15 and 26 years old, and has returned to his former group Kontrafakt. After being accused of 'going mainstream' he has returned to his 'underground' roots.
7. Subcultural membership is sometimes understood as a certain stage between adolescence and adulthood, as a rite-of-passage before a youth becomes a responsible adult and citizen. As Thornton (1995) notes, one way of prolonging participation within a certain subculture is by transforming subcultural capital into economic capital. These employments can include: journalism, fashion, recording studio or in advertising agencies, as is the case of at least three rappers working as copywriters. The yoghurt commercial I referenced at the beginning of this chapter using a battle rap was written by a female rapper.
8. Raveňák (2011), a nickname of Václav Walach, doctorate student at the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Masaryk University in Brno, a Czech hip hop insider, distinguishes three types of approach to rap music production in one of his blog entries for the online hip hop magazine *Cream.cz*. The first category is the 'businessman' whose main motive for rap-music production is making money, which means his songs have to be as simple as possible so that a vast array of people can identify with the lyrics. The second category according to Raveňák is the 'trueschooler', who is involved in rap for the sake of doing rap: he or she is writing about what they are living and mean everything they say. He or she feel they are part of a community and their success is measured by the pats on the back they get from like-minded individuals. The third category, the 'poet', is rapping mainly because he or she has something to say and a desire to say it in the most unique way possible. He or she tries to get to the bottom of things and is not afraid to ask questions that no one else would ask. In this way Raveňák distinguishes three different levels of using hip hop – the economic, the subcultural and the artistic, which are not fixed and can overlap. What he feels the Czech hip hop scene lacks substantially are the poets.
9. The Ministry of Regional development of the Czech Republic defines 'socially excluded Roma localities' as those where there is a concentration of socially excluded people that define themselves as Roma or are defined as Roma by their environment. These localities are characterised by low employment rates, low education, not enough access to legal forms of livelihood and tendency to a risk behaviour. The official web pages include a map of these localities in the Czech Republic (http://www.mmr.cz/cs/Stavebni-rad-a-bytova-politika/Bytova-politika/Programy-Dotace/Ostatni/Socialne-vyloucena-romska-lokalita, date accessed 15 March 2014).
10. More similar projects are held at youth clubs around Prague. Poet/emcee Bonus is working with Roma youth at the Plechárna club where he is mentoring a new group of young singers and rappers called Cincinaty. Among notable Roma groups are Angel Mafia from Prague and De la Negra from Krupka, who regularly perform at local demonstrations, with their lyrics aimed at a critique of racism.

11. The campaign was led by the Slovo 21 organisation and the goal was to stop the segregation of Czech and Roma children. About 30 per cent of Roma children are sent to specialised schools characterised as being for children with mental disability, which then prevents them returning to a regular institutionalised educational system http://www.romea.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/tiskove-zpravy/slovo-21-prakticka-skola-neni-pro-budoucnost-romskych-deti-prospesna, date accessed 15 March 2014.
12. The topic of hip hop politics and education is also heavily promoted and supported by a group of authors running the Hip Hop Molotow webpage.
13. In October 2012 the 'Ideology of Extreme Right and Its Reflection within Current Subcultures' conference was held at Jan Evangleista Prukyně University in Ústí nad Labem, where at least four papers focused on the potential of the appropriation of rap music and graffiti to spread the ideology of extreme right organisations.
14. For a period of time debates were held around the unfortunate match of names, as the aforementioned rapper Revolta matches with the name of the extreme right organisation. Revolta was then accused of being some kind of 'Trojan horse' infiltrating rap. The Svobodná mládež website specifically names Revolta as supporting multiculturalism and therefore his music cannot be endorsed.

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7 Flaming Flares, Football Fanatics and Political Rebellion: Resistant Youth Cultures in Late Capitalism

Dominik Antonowicz, Radosław Kossakowski and Tomasz Szlendak

The aim of this chapter is to explore the phenomenon of football fanatics in Poland. The analysis is conducted in the light of rapid political, economic and cultural modernisation that Poland has undergone since it joined the European Union (EU). At the heart of our analysis lie football fanatics, young people passionate about football and their clubs – and undoubtedly one of the most interesting yet still largely underexplored aspects of Polish society (Sahaj, 2007). Football fanatics, also known as industrial fans or scarf boys (see Antonowicz, Kossakowski and Szlendak, 2011), are among the most active young people in modern society both on and off the football pitch. In thinking about their role in society it is useful to consider the concept of civil society explored by Alexis de Tocqueville and his seminal book *Democracy in America* (2000 [1835]), written while he was travelling across America. The French philosopher was positively surprised by the degree of self-organisation and civic activism of local communities. His attention was particularly drawn by a number of voluntary associations, through citizens' attempts to advocate but also balance various needs and interests in the public realm. These grass-roots activities and civic engagements stood in opposition to what he had experienced in France, in which society relies on the good or bad will of the ruler. If Alexis de Tocqueville was to witness contemporary Poland, he would see a number of fan organisations that attract highly active young people to act in the public realm. Most probably, he would find them to be the beating heart of civil society in Poland. For some, however, football fanatics appear to be a primitive and frustrated mob that seeks opportunities to air their anger and therefore they need to be at least isolated from others. Yet for others this is an extraordinary example of a community that has managed to produce unique social capital that spills beyond the football stadium. This chapter seeks to address the intriguing question as to why – in a society in which the youth

do not want to rebel – football stadiums become the arena of some of the most spectacular socio-political conflict between football fanatics and higher social classes (represented by the government), which not only involves politics and sport but also brings to the fore a more general issue of the rapid cultural transformation of Polish society.

The turbulent history of football fandom in Poland

The history of football fanatics reaches back to the early 1970s when organised groups of fans attempted to follow their teams not only at home but also on away games. It is difficult to explore the real life of football fans under the communist regime due to lack of information. The regime tried to cover up any forms of social unrest that were at odds with the line of official propaganda. The nature of industrial fans has been always rebellious but we have patchy data about violent incidents at specific periods. According to Tadeusz Górecki (1989) – who based his estimation on official reports – between 1984 and 1988 there were 99 violent incidents related to football matches in Poland. Other sources such as the diaries of legendary hooligans such as Roman Zieliński (1996, 1997) from Śląsk Wrocław suggest that the scale of violence related to football matches was considerably higher and more disruptive. Notwithstanding the number of incidents, football stands have been an arena of largely uncontrolled crowd behaviour, which often turned against fans of the opposite team but also against police and other uniformed forces responsible for keeping law and order during football matches.

Football fanatics – as many other young people participating in subcultures – have never been overtly keen to respect law and order. However, in the 1970s in Poland different groups of fans could support their teams from the same stands without going into battle. With the passage of time and inspired by the idea of football hooliganism (Spaaij, 2006) they not only began to battle against each other but also to demonstrate hostile attitudes towards the communist state and its institutions. Overall, the communist regime became the common enemy as its uniform forces often used their brutal power against the fans in order to restore law and order during match days. Moreover, football stadiums served as a prime venue for young people to demonstrate anti-communist and patriotic views. Not many demonstrations of this kind took place, but in the sporting history books there remains the crowd's standing ovation received by Lech Wałęsa – at the time an iconic leader of Solidarity – after being smuggled into the stadium during a UEFA cup game between Lechia Gdańsk and Juventus Turin (Kordek and Nawrocki, 2013). Already in the late 1970s, however, young fans from the biggest clubs began to form alternative, unofficial and rebellious groups (Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1988). It remains unresolved as to why, in doing so, the Polish fandom culture followed the English hooligan model instead of the Italian one (ultras). Yet regardless as to the reason for adopting

the English model of fandom, it needs to be underscored that at the beginning of the political transformation – 1989 – violence was one of the most distinctive elements of football culture in Poland. The number of hooligans' incidents reported by the police rocketed dramatically in the first years of transformation (Gorący, 2009; Kamiński, 2012). It reflected the highly turbulent times in politics, the shrinking economy (and raising unemployment) and, most notably, the weak state failing to exert its authority in many aspects of social life. Among these was football, in which corruption on the pitch, the drinking culture among officials and the hooliganism on the stands became its prevailing characteristics. The rapidly transforming society lost its stable axionormative backbone due to devaluating its core values and its fascination for neo-liberal ideology, radical individualism and the expansion of rat-race culture (Landers, Rebitzer and Taylor, 1996). Indeed, the scarf boys (*szalikowcy*) – named after scarves with their clubs' colour, which they proudly wore on match days – took full advantage of weakening social norms, social anomy and the falling authority of the state, and turned football fanatics into a subculture fascinated by physical violence (Zieliński, 1996). Neither the fall of communism nor the advent of market economy prevented further escalation of violence on the football stands. To the contrary, the early 1990s viewed the heyday of football hooliganism, which itself became a trademark of football culture in Poland for years to come.

Fragmented cohort of the youth

After 25 years the Polish socio-economic transformation is largely defined as a completed project (Frysztacki et al., 2012) and (naturally) a number of its aspects have had a profound impact on the young generation. In pluralistic, open and democratic societies it is unlikely that such a big cohort (8.5 million people aged 15–29 in Poland) can share similar characteristics and would be defined as a uniform category. Young people nowadays are rather anything but uniform – instead they are a highly heterogeneous cohort that have produced a number of various lifestyles, which metaphorically speaking can be characterised as a mosaic of separate archipelagos. Each of these archipelagos constitutes a unique *social subworld* of its own. These archipelagos exist side by side with patchy interactions between individuals from various subworlds. Furthermore, social distance between the various archipelagos is spreading due to numerous reasons such as the range of family income, growing differences in quality of education (better schools are located in affluent districts, underperforming ones in poor districts or in the countryside) or purchasing power of goods and services. Most characteristics for these archipelagos is, however, the lack of common shared cultural experience such as books, magazines, films and so on. Many young people live beside each other but in fact lead their life separately, even if they are of the same socio-economic status. In other words, what in the communist past

was seen as 'an atomised society' (see, for example, Arendt, 1951; Tischner, 1992), in post-transformation times this has transformed into a 'society of archipelagos' that consists of a number of small and hermetic subworlds. Young people have their own values, norms and customs, living in their social circles and enjoying their own company. One might have expected that the first generation of Poles born and brought up in a free and democratic environment would try to rebuild and reunite the atomised Polish society but this was not the case. Instead, they cherish individualism in professional life and socialise among similar people in their archipelagos. Therefore, we have to distinguish the term 'archipelago' from the traditional notion of 'subcultures', as defined on the basis of common values: music tastes, alternative and rebellious views in which approximately 1 per cent of the Polish youth cohort is engaged (Szafraniec, 2011). The concept of social archipelagos describes a much shallower, less engaging and softer notion of belonging, which refers to lifestyles rather than values. To cut a long story short, while traditional subcultures are built on alternative (to the mainstream culture) concepts of society, the *subworlds* in archipelagos offer only various distinctive lifestyles.

In other words, the post-transformation society gets fragmented into a wide range of social archipelagos which host hermetic subworlds, both in regard to physical and virtual access. It refers to various groups, such as alumni of elite gymnasiums, joggers, crossfitters or film buffs. While subcultures develop out of a strong criticism of society that is accompanied by a political agenda, subworlds are in a way narcissistic, inward-oriented, focused on themselves and largely ignoring other subworlds. They do not want to change society, but want society to leave them alone. They are autoreferential groups without much interest and reference to others. In some cases the social distance between various social archipelagos is so remote that they can only learn about each others' norms, rules and customs from reality TV shows, documentaries and magazines.

The fragmentation of the youth is only one side of the coin, the other – as identified by researchers – is a lack of rebellious attitudes. Young people traditionally have been seen as rebellious, as fundamentally questioning their parents' values and undermining the existing system, viewing it as an oppressive world dictated by adults. In contrast, post-socialist youth in Poland are not eager to undermine their parents' materialistic values and even seem to be holier than the Pope in cherishing their parents' hierarchic values and following established rules (Szafraniec, 2011). Recent research leaves little doubt (for example, Szlendak, 2004; Wrzesień, 2009; Szafraniec, 2011) that the vast majority feel comfortable in the consumerist culture. As Szafraniec (2002) argues, the youth appears to be completely seduced by all the glamour attached to financial success. This obsession with material possession is the only thing that the young generation seems to have in common, transferring 'consumption into a basic need which is to be

fulfilled in order to guarantee self-realization. Solicitation for consumption is not seen as a form of oppression but as a promise of happiness' (Szafraniec, 2011b, p. 16).

The conformism among the youth stems partly from their unstable and difficult economic situation. Most of the youth in Poland aged between 18 and 34 (56 per cent) still live with their families (parents): one of the highest rates in Europe (Szafraniec, 2011, p. 34). The lack of affordable social housing and good employment opportunities (the labour law favours those already employed) postpone decisions about the economic viability of living on one's own. Poland is one of the few countries in the EU in which the decision to leave the family house carries a considerable risk of falling into poverty. It is no surprise that many young people decide to stay with their parents and find no reason to revolt against those who feed them. As a result, the 'social space' has been shredded into numerous social archipelagos, 'subworlds', which leads the youth to engage in an individualistic, obsessive consumer culture.

The football stadium as a political battlefield

In a society fragmented into numerous social archipelagos, football stadiums stand out as the unique one that always has been a part of public space and accessible for members of local communities regardless of their income. Traditionally, football – as a product of the industrial revolution – reflected the socialist spirit described by Bill Shankly with regard to the legend of Liverpool FC: 'socialism I believe is everybody working for each other, everyone is having a share of the rewards. It is the way I see football, the way I see life.' In other words, football stadiums used to be a public space that attracted and accommodated various people passionate about football, who could not only seek entertainment but also build social boundaries across social strata, which was a missing factor in fast-growing urban metropolises.

Therefore, in our analysis football culture could be seen as a social archipelago with largely open access, and with rules and social norms (dos and don'ts) settled by young football fanatics who are the most active (and often radical) on the stands. Another peculiarity of Polish football consists in the fact that, unlike other spheres of social life, it remained for different reasons omitted from modernising processes. For example, the standing terraces of the industrial era have remained in Polish stadiums for much longer than in most western European countries, which have undergone substantial changes since the 1990s (Redhead, 1993; King, 2001). Hence, the stadiums became also the bastion of socio-cultural activity (Antonowicz, Kossakowski and Szlendak, 2012) of those largely excluded from modernisation processes, namely the losers of the economic and political transformation. Also, it was widely known and (to some extent) accepted that football terraces function also as a safe valve to relieve frustration for those who got lost in

a rapidly changing society and economy. The government – being under growing political pressure – undertook some measures to curb the anarchic spirit of football terraces but this met strong resistance from the so-called industrial fans (see Antonowicz, Kossakowski and Szlendak, 2011) – young males of working-class background. An important political shift occured with the announcement of Euro2012 to be co-hosted by both Ukraine and Poland. It signalled the advent of the commodification of football (Conn, 1997; Giulianotti, 1999), which brought not only a new concept of football but, more importantly, new infrastructure norms and customs of football fandom. The concept of modern sport (Walsh and Giulianotti, 2001) invaded the fans' realm with tough regulations advocated by multinational corporate managers and imposed by transnational organisations (such as UEFA or FIFA) (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007). The prevailing type of industrial fans became a problem for the football industry, which prefers to attract more affluent customers. The modernising principles stay at odds with the so called *spirit of terraces*.

The stadium has always been a place which – symbolically – belonged to the fans who develop their 'dos and don'ts of football fandom'. As stated above, stadiums used to be open spaces aimed at social integration (around the club) of various people regardless of their economic status and social background. In fact, there has been no other public space adopted by lower classes with such a strong set of institutionalised values and norms. The organisation of Euro2012, however, transformed the football stadium as a public event available to all into a commercial entertainment for the affluent. Instead of a place of social integration it created a place of social segregation. In other words, football stadiums became akin to shopping malls segmented in accordance to the type of brands and trying to avoid mixing different types of customers. They nowadays reflect and even strengthen social stratification, which is typical of late capitalism (Bell, 1976).

The rapid modernisation of Polish football caused by the organisation of Euro2012 can be interpreted as a clash between traditional football culture and transnational forces of commercialisation, which have 'colonised' football since the beginning of the 1990s. On this perspective, football 'industrial' fanatics can be seen as 'aborigines' (Antonowicz, Kossakowski and Szlendak, 2011) since they are a sort of 'natives' at football grounds, with their own rules being there long before the new legislation was set.

Football attracts huge audiences, although various spectators find completely different pleasures in going to the game. For representatives of the emerging Polish middle class – so-called new burghers (Kubicki, 2011) – to visit a football stadium this means a need for modern infrastructure, comfortable seats, private space and a prevailing atmosphere of 'law and order'. According to our research the middle-class fans are the most wanted and welcomed by club managers, stadium operators and corporate partners (Szlendak et al., 2014). By and large, they are affluent and peaceful. This

is at odds with the traditional atmosphere of football stands, produced by spontaneous crowds of football fanatics who create an egalitarian sense of togetherness (Gdula, 2011, p. 39). In many countries the traditional football audience has been priced out. This required time, affluent people and quality football, none of which could be achieved in the short term in Poland. Therefore, to accelerate this process the government prepared numerous acts of law, setting out the rights and duties of spectators at the matches. In is this political and legal context, when – as Mateusz Dróżdż (2014, p. 171) rightly notes – Polish football hooligans earned such a bad reputation in Europe after several scandalous incidents in which they were engaged.

Football fanatics versus the government

The political context of Euro2012 changed the perspective through which politicians look at safety issues in stadiums. The Act on Mass Events Security (2009) imposed harsh regulations and draconian sanctions despite serious legal objections (Dróżdż, 2014). The Polish government hoped to get rid of industrial fans at all costs who, in their view, did not suit modern football. These measures caused outrage and conflicts, which were additionally fuelled by the Polish parliamentary campaign in 2011 (autumn) that brought the issue of football fanatics (under different more obscure labels) into mainstream politics, because it was a cheap but easy way to increase the popularity in the polls.

For most of the media in Poland football fanatics started to be seen as a serious threat to the hosts of Euro2012. This sparked massive 'media panic' (Woźniak, 2013), presenting the industrial fans as a dangerous mob of mindless fanatics who should be kept in isolation. Following the introduction of new draconian regulations, the police began to identify fanatics before the kick-off of the tournament and banned them from attending football games, even for minor offences. The victims of such radical measures were not the hooligans who operated outside football grounds but mostly young people, activists of the ultras groups who were detained and penalized for setting off flares, failing to comply with detailed regulations or simply because they opposed the sanctions.

Nevertheless, the Polish government celebrated a rapidly increasing number of bans, showing statistics with a number of fans detained and penalised totally mixing the means with the ends. The nearly exclusively young football fanatics responded to these measures spectacularly – in mocking the government about its empty promises and many failures committed in preparations for Euro2012. The Polish prime minister Donald Tusk became the object of a popular chant: 'Donald, you moron, your government will be abolished by the fanatics' (Donald, matole twój rząd obalą kibole). In some cases (for example, in Białystok) police officers fined many fanatics for their lack of respect to the public authorities. In western eyes such reactions could

be regarded as ludicrous, but they indeed show in an exemplary way how irritating the football fanatics were for the authorities, whose chants and slogans were made public in the stadiums (and on television) and became popular also on social media. For a number of football fanatics the radical political measures undertaken against industrial fans were no more and no less than a political spin to divert public attention from serious economic and political issues. To describe the atmosphere of the conflict it is worth quoting one of the most spectacular banners used to reflect the fans' viewpoint on the preparation to Euro2012:

> Project Euro2012
> Stadiums – overpaid
> Highways – do not exist
> Airports – provincial
> Railway Stations – only refreshed
> Players – weak
> **The substitute topic – Football fanatics**
> The Government – satisfied

In addition, the industrial fans mocked the government for taking a tough course against them but at the same time being comically submissive to UEFA. The government denies such inconsistency but scholars underscore the asymmetrical relation between individual nation-states and transnational organisations such as UEFA or FIFA (Tomlinson, 2014). Poland is clearly such a case. As Małgorzata Włoch (2012, p. 10) notes, the Minister of Finance had to make a promise to undertake every possible step to return UEFA VAT and any other tax and, indeed, in 2011 the ministry issued an order exempting UEFA from corporate income tax and planetary interaction taxes (Huczko, 2011). The strongest manifestation of power of a transnational governing body was related to intellectual and industrial property rights, although the most awkward case concerns an 'alcohol ban' during mass events. For several moths the government was advocating the implementation of an 'alcohol ban' during the football matches as one of the measures undertaken to address the problem of football hooliganism. Basically, the message behind this policy was simply and clearly that young football fanatics are generally a mindless mob and should have no access to any alcohol during mass events such as football games. This line of argument collapsed when UEFA warned the government that such a law would harm the business of one of its corporate partners (namely, one brewery company). So, at the very last stage of the implementation process the government suddenly changed its mind and allowed low-alcohol beer to be on sale during mass sport events (Włoch, 2012, p. 11).

Last but not least, the most controversial issue – flares – became a symbol of this conflict. Until 1997 the setting off of flares was allowed in Polish stadiums (Art 14, p. 2 AMES) and, even more interestingly, both the league and football associations granted awards (weekly, monthly, seasonally) for the most spectacular choreography, of the weekend which most if not all were accompanied by flares. UEFA banned flares from international football, and so did most of the national football associations in regard to domestic leagues. Notwithstanding its radical policy, the Polish government failed to stop fanatics from setting off flares, so it decided to impose draconian sanctions for using flares. Fanatics regarded this as a political action that had nothing to do with safety issues, as what used to be widely accepted as a beauty of the stands turned between 2000 and 2011 into enough reason to end up in prison. The Act on Mass Events Security (2011) stated that a fan who sets off flares can go to prison for up to six years, which equals the penalty for involuntary manslaughter (art 155 of Criminal Code) and is twice the term for drinking and driving (Pałaszewski, 2012). The legitimacy of such draconian sanctions can be easily questioned in regard to its social harmfulness. For example, in 2013 there was not a single death or serious injury caused by flares during football matches, although there were several minor incidents that hurt only those who irresponsibly set them off.

Flaming flares as a symbol of rebellion

There is little doubt that a sharp edge of new regulation (2011) was pointed at young Polish football fanatics who defended their bastion. For many, it was gradually perceived as the Polish government's battle for popularity and political support rather than concern about the safety of football fans. Football fanatics tried to defend their rules of participation in mass sport events, which remained largely at odds with how the government saw it. Initially, their action started as an insignificant protest of a small and hermetic group that operated outside mainstream politics and concerned issues that appeared to be completely marginal. Unexpectedly, football fanatics – mostly teenagers – turned out to be a bigger, stronger and radical opposition determined to defend its bastion against new rules and regulations. What was initially broadcasted as a small clash between the government and a bunch of young criminals unintentionally evolved into a serious political conflict.

The conflict between the Polish fanatics and the government, though, was no exception in Europe. In other countries too, a number of industrial fans did not agree with the direction of changes in football and numerous times demonstrated their views. In other words, the opposition of the Polish football fanatics fits a much wider global phenomenon of a clash between corporate interests (often represented by public authorities and transnational football organisations) and traditional industrial fans.

In countries England, for example, the fanatics from lower classes were largely priced out and new more affluent fans could claim their seats. In Poland this did not happen in the same way, however, as a low quality football in the league (*Ekstraklasa*) failed to attract large crowds besides small but radical staunch supporters. Surprisingly enough, after a short period of enthusiasm (the so-called effect of Euro2012) the average attendance in *Ekstraklasa* fell, with the only exception of the sectors of football fanatics. This was particularly evident in big clubs such as Śląsk Wrocław and Lechia Gdańsk after a persistently disappointing performance of their players.

In other words, as the advent of modern football in Poland could not be achieved through market mechanisms (as in England) the government therefore stepped in and extended the list of prohibited forms of behaviour and already draconian sanctions. The new governmental policy against football fanatics who traditionally conduct their rituals (namely, singing, jumping and chanting) while standing and also often use other means (flares, flags) to demonstrate their love of clubs and support for teams on the pitch was met by tough opposition. A number of young supporters decided to boycott new legislation and continue to lead its support despite sanctions, using various techniques so as not to be caught setting off flares (covering their faces, changing their clothes, hiding behind big flags and so on).

The government responded by prohibiting the covering of faces during football games. In addition, it introduced sophisticated methods of criminal investigation with the use of applied science that involves the study of facts to identify, locate and prove the guilt of those who have set off flares, or testing DNA. The political measures as well as the scope of criminal investigations turned the flaming flares into a symbol of rebellion of young football fanatics (and also other traditional fans in other disciplines) against not only policies of the government, but also against the concept of modern sport. Moreover, because of this it seems not surprising that the number of matches with flares is still high, particularly among clubs with large fan bases. In autumn 2013, flares were set off in approximately 20 per cent of *Ekstraklasa* games.

Failing to address this problem, regional representatives of the government (voivodes) began to close parts of the stadiums to the fanatics. It received strong support from the transnational football authorities FIFA and UEFA. The latter often imposes sanctions against football clubs whose fans set off flares. Among those punished are also Polish clubs such as Legia Warszawa and Lech Poznań, which do not have many international displays but still had to accept substantial financial penalty payments. Legia had to play also behind closed doors in return for mocking UEFA with a big and spectacular ultras choreography with a number of fireworks with a big banner 'UEFA' and expansion of the abbreviation to read: *Ultra Extreme Fanatical Atmosphere*. This shows that the conflict between the government and football fanatics appeared to be a part of domestic politics but in

fact reflected a bigger and transnational clash between modern sport and traditional football fandom.

This conflict between the government and football fanatics has a cultural dimension. Football fanatics, many of whom are young people from lower social classes, represent this part of the population that might feel lost in the dynamics of transformation. For them, the new political reality was perceived as alien and hostile, likewise the new regulations for football stadiums, imposed from above by the enlightened elite, were at odds with their ideas, values and customs. The (pop-) culture of late modernity cherishes individualism, is focused on individual rights (rather than duties to society), choice and freedom of self-expression. It underscores consumer choice, flexibility and liberty from oppressive (socialist, national) society, history and tradition. The principles of pop culture, to a certain extent, conflict with traditional football fandom because the idea of fandom is collective and underscores a *sense of togetherness* which is built through common practising of rituals, namely singing, chanting and jumping with a support of some form of choreographical performance on the stands. As a result of the reform measures in preparation for the Euro2012 these different cultural and political concepts clashed, in which those who were not so enthusiastic about the changes were stigmatised – by the media – as a symbol of provincial mentality and cultural backwardness. As a consequence, many football fanatics in their rebellious nature started advocating in the name of those who were socially discriminated against, and turned the stands into a bastion against neo-liberal ideology, modern sport and the late modern concept of individualism.

Focusing on this cultural practice of resistance one has to bear in mind that industrial fans, football fanatics, ultras – whatever you name them – are in general anything but radical, which is grist to the mill for extreme political activists. Many of the active, mostly young supporters who visit stadiums at home and also on away games are particularly sensitive about values, ideas and political viewpoints. At the same time, in late modern societies which reached a certain kind of anomy, many young people desperately search for authorities and guidelines, and football fanatics offer them both. As a consequence football stands, which are often perceived as the last bastions to oppose modernisation, became attractive for a number of the most extreme (right-wing) groups who tried to enter the stadiums to propagate their xenophobic and even fascist ideology. In a number of cases they found some ground for diffusion of their radical ideologies, which even worsened the negative picture spread by the mass media about football supporters, whereas extreme right-wing organisations appreciated all kinds of radicalism. These attempts have been hardly successful, and there has not been any particular political organisation that has captured the stands – as football fanatics in general are nothing more than radical supporters mainly concerned about their clubs, spectacular performances and travel arrangements

for away games. Therefore, it is unlikely that they will sufficiently contribute to forming a national political movement although – as already shown – supporters' organisations can be important actors in their municipalities using their social capital.

Conclusions

By and large, in today's Poland, the youth are apathetic and obsessed with consumption. The concept that fits best to describe their social existence is that of numerous social archipelagos (subworlds), in which they enjoy the company of their own circle, living beside each other rather than together. While overall youth's social space is fragmented, the football stadium remains one of the few places in which many different people join together. This is one reason why they became the battlefield of a clash between young football fanatics and local and national government as well as transnational football authorities and big business. The latter want to attract more affluent fans who expect not only modern infrastructure but also consumer culture at football grounds, while the fanatics try to preserve the traditional *culture of terraces*. They do not want to give the ground to the new middle class of 'new burghers' whose interest in sport is more fashion than passion. From a distance, the clash of different cultures seems to be focused on the Act on Mass Events Security, but the closer we examine this, the broader an agenda we identify. Football fanatics, among whom the vast majority consists of young people, use football stands to demonstrate their opposition to political and economic goals of the transformation that – in their views – is symbolised by the commodification of sport. The setting of flares has grown to be a symbol of rebellion of a young generation against the government (and its policies), modern sport and the global changes characteristic for late modernity.

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8
Everything Feels Bad: Figurations of the Self in Contemporary Eastern European Literature

Matthias Schwartz

Introduction: Frustration prose and generation nothing

Several young Eastern European authors rose to international prominence around the year 2000. They were greeted enthusiastically by some parts of the literary establishment, which hailed these 'Young Wild Ones' as representatives of a 'new sincerity', merciless in their depiction of the state of the youth a decade after the end of state socialism, which they regarded as pretty dire (Kratochvil, 2006; Makarska, 2008; Stelmaszyk, 2008; Rutten, 2012):

> How many young souls are lost because they were unable to create a business plan? How many hearts has privatization policy torn apart? Wrinkles on parched faces and a yellow, metallic shimmer in the eyes, the results of fighting for survival – that is our country, that is our economy, your path and mine to immortality [...].
>
> (Zhadan, 2006, p. 7)

These lines from Zhadan's novel *Gimn demokratychnoi molodi* (Hymn of the Democratic Youth) about young souls torn apart and fighting for survival could serve as a motto for the literary work of authors discussed in this chapter. In Petersburg, Irina Denezhkina, a 20-year-old student from Ekaterinburg, published her debut, *Daj mne!* (Give me!) (2002), a collection of short stories about urban youth who lack any kind of direction (Denezhkina, 2004). The work was soon translated into German and English and its author presented as a promising talent who spoke authentically for a new generation of writers (Schillinger, 2005).

Almost simultaneously, Serhiy Zhadan, a 27-year-old Ukrainian poet from Charkiv, published his first prose work, consisting of six stories and entitled *Big mak* (Big Mac) (2003).[1] The stories all revolve around the exciting and unusual adventures of a young man travelling through Europe, and

they usually end with a hangover or a medium-sized catastrophe (Zhadan, 2003). Meanwhile, in Poland, 18-year-old Mirosław Nahacz was hailed by the author and publisher Andrzej Stasiuk as 'the chosen one' of Polish literature (Nahacz, 2003, back cover). Nahacz's first work, *Osiem cztery* (Eight Four (2003), describes a group of male teenagers living in the provinces, who perceive both school and their free time as nothing but boring and possess no expectations whatsoever for their future (Polak, 2003). A whole series of young authors entered the Eastern European literary arena in those years with prose works whose stories describe the immediate present and all revolve around the idea that 'everything feels bad'.[2]

While western reviewers were mainly interested in the 'beautiful horror' 'between the lust for love and nihilism' (Rakusa, 2003, p. 37) in these works, the wave of books by these young authors was paralleled in Eastern Europe by the development of a media debate about the subjectivities of young people in general (Yurchak, 2008; Diuk, 2012). The Ukrainian literary scholar Tamara Hundorova referred to the youth of the 2000s as a 'sick' generation, whose hero and prototype is the 'loser' who is driven by disappointment and mistrust to withdraw to the 'asocial' position of deadbeat and outsider (Hundorova, 2013, pp. 150–204).[3] Jakub Wandachowicz, the bassist of the popular Polish punk band Cool Kids of Death, provided the most radical contribution to this public interest in the younger generation. In 2002, he created a stir with 'Generacja Nic' (Generation Nothing), a manifesto he published in the largest Polish daily newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Wandachowicz, 2002). By using the term 'Generacja Nic', Wandachowicz sought to raise awareness about the situation of the cohorts born in the 1970s and 1980s, who, if they had had any experience of repression in the Republic of Poland, had witnessed it only as children. As a result, in his view, this generation put up no resistance but instead capitulated completely to the dictatorship of the market that was taking over every area of life:

> We thought that the reality of the new Poland would somehow allow us to exist in a more or less spectacular fashion. We were very wrong about that [...] This age group, which I refer to as 'Generation Nothing', is distinct insofar as the repressions that shaped the lives of other generations were linked to different forms of deprivation and oppression (war, totalitarianism), while the youth of today wastes the freedom for which previous generations fought. Today, freedom means the existence of an intellectual void among young people who don't want to participate in any kind of debate, whether about society, politics, or whatever.
>
> (Wandachowicz, 2002, p. 11)

According to Wandachowicz, this 'intellectual void' leads to each person thinking only of his or her own survival and to a descent into insignificance of all cultural values, socio-political utopias and ethical norms (ibid.).[4]

A year later, a group of young authors, critics and scholars took up this image of lost youth and published a volume of essays on it with the title *Frustracja* (Frustration) and the subtitle *Młodzi o Nowym Wspaniałym Świecie* (Adolescents on the Brave New World):

> Frustration is the voice of a group of people born in the 1970s, it is the 'manifesto of a generation' that is also known as 'Generation Nothing' that stands accused of a lack of ideas, a lack of a will to strive for anything beyond a career in an advertising agency, and its existence in a life crisis.
>
> (Marecki and Sowa, 2003, back cover)

According to the essays, this 'feeling of lack, of dissatisfaction and of incompleteness' is the reflection of all of the intellectual disappointment in light of 'Polish democracy and the free market', in which – as in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) – all personal needs and social interests are constantly being manipulated through advertising and consumption. 'This is an intellectual war. We are living under the occupation of the media' (Shuty, 2003a, p. 21). This occupying force, however, serves merely the 'highest and only temple of capitalism – the principle of financial profit maximization' (Marecki and Sowa, 2003, back cover). Yet, much like Wandachowicz, the young authors of *Frustration* applied the term 'Generation Nothing' to themselves not only as a diagnosis of a state of existence that they consider to be bad, but also as a call to the others of their generation not to remain stuck in the 'intellectual void', but to 'desert' the 'consumerist society' (Sowa, 2003, pp. 3–9).

This self-critical impetus, which formed part of both of the manifests of a 'young Polish (sub-)culture' (Marecki, 2003, pp. 99–108), for the most part went unheeded in the media's reception of the byword 'Generation Nothing'. The debate within the public arena instead focused on the 'negative' side of young people's life-words, characterised by marginalisation and a lack of prospects for the future (Schwartz, 2014a).

Within this debate, the media focused most on those authors who created a believable and captivating form for this feeling of marginalisation that supposedly applied to an entire generation. Probably the most successful author of this age cohort is Dorota Masłowska, who became the first media star of 'Generation Nothing' with her debut novel *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą biało-czerwoną* (Snow White and Russian Red) (2002). In her first work as well as in her follow-up novel, *Paw królowej* (The Queen's Peacock) (2005), for which she received the highest Polish literary prize, Masłowska managed like no other to give a voice to urban youth in Poland, who are often rather uneducated and raised on the myths of global consumer and pop cultures. It is a voice that is brutal and lacking in respect for authority while simultaneously childishly hopeless, marked by

boundless self-overestimation and the futile search for a self (Kühl, 2011; Czeczot, 2012).

If we look at this 'frustration prose' of the 'losers' in a larger socio-political context and seek to understand the draw of specifically these stories that centre on the feeling of a lack of escape and a lack of prospects in those years, what becomes apparent is a fundamental change in the understanding of youth and youthfulness in post-socialist Eastern European societies. In the real-socialist states, 'youth' was a code word for the promise of a better, communist future. All political and pedagogical work was oriented towards the young generation as a guarantee of the socialist societal project, which held true even into the 1980s, when that goal had long since been given up (Pilkington et al., 2002; Walker and Stephenson, 2012).[5]

'The youth' was an imagined collective of better people, the likes of which could not be found anywhere in the present world. By the 1950s, at the latest, young people no longer wanted anything to do with this role that was being ascribed to them. Instead, they admired and imitated western culture, particularly when it came to fashion, styles and idols (Fürst, 2010). In the post-war period, western mass culture, particularly popular music, overcame all political boundaries, especially after the de-Stalinisation of socialist societies during the Thaw period (see, for example, Taylor, 2006; Świda-Ziemba, 2010). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, blue jeans became the essence of individual liberty and a new 'jeans prose' – a term coined by Aleksandr Flaker – provided an identity-establishing literary form in almost all of Eastern Europe for this youthful attitude towards life (Flaker, 1975).

Popular youth cultures were, however, much as in the West, not only an expression of a particular attitude towards life, but also always implied a socio-political positioning. Just as alternative subcultures and independent scenes in the West opposed high-cultural norms, conservative values and reactionary worldviews, so too western jazz, rock and pop music in the East promised an alternative to the dogmatic norms of stagnating state socialism (see Troicki, 2007; Pickhan and Ritter, 2010; Zhuk, 2010).

At least since the 1960s, the official, future-oriented, utopian image of 'youth' in Eastern European societies drifted apart from the young people's actual wishes and preferences, based on completely different images created in the dream factories of the West. In the 1970s and 1980s, the socialist states of Eastern Europe reacted to this discrepancy between the ideological aspiration and the reality of young people's lives in a twofold way. On the one hand, they tried to create their own state-regulated entertainment sector with attractive leisure options for young people. As a result, the Komsomol opened its rooms for its own rock and folk music as well as for fans of science fiction and crime novels. It also worked to establish corresponding formats for literature, television and radio. In these youth cultures, ideology played at most an ornamental role. On the other hand, the communist parties sought to contain the flood of western-inspired alternative

youth and subcultures as much as possible. Aberrant behaviour was only tolerated so long as it was not deemed inimical to the system, but was otherwise suppressed, at times with massive violence (Taylor, 2006; Yurchak, 2006).

Of decisive importance in this situation was not only that the youth could and needed to mentally position themselves by establishing a border between themselves and the conservative adult world, but that this self-image was also to a great extent shaped by 'western' identity markers and simultaneously repeatedly confirmed by sometimes more, sometimes less forceful state regulation and repression. But it is precisely this identity-establishing function of the repressive state that Eastern European youth cultures lost as a result of the collapse of the socialist system: freedom, even at the smallest scale, no longer had to be fought for, and, in the words of Kuba Wandachowicz, signified nothing more than an 'intellectual void'. At the same time, the golden West, which for so long had been regarded as the essence of this freedom, turned out to be a frustrating 'Brave New World'. This double experience of loss also shaped the post-socialist literary or media debates about the youth and a supposed 'Generation Nothing'. As a result, these debates about the 'frustration' and 'lack of ideas' of Eastern European youth are not only an expression or reflection of a socio-political (capitalist) reality, but also a symptom of a general crisis in the understanding of what 'youth' means today in regard to one's own future and the social and cultural environment of the present. The literary expression of this crisis is the fact that a particular kind of music, particular kind of fashion and particular kind of speech no longer function as gestures of distinction.

Real music: 'Ten ways to kill John Lennon'

From its very beginnings, western pop culture always lived on the dream of a happy life in this world. 'Imagine all the people/ Sharing all the world', one of the most famous pop songs by John Lennon from 1971 started, continuing: 'you may say I'm a dreamer/ But I'm not the only one/ I hope someday you will join us/ And the world will live as one.' All of pop culture's sounds, styles and lyrics revolve around this dream, even if the happiness only exists for a brief moment – over the weekend, at night, in a club, on a road trip, on a drug high, while partying, in the face of inevitable catastrophe, while smoking a post-coital cigarette – the dream of finding a happy sensation for a short while. The main medium that transported this dream directly as 'true feelings' into the hearts of young people was and is music. Even the young protagonists in the works of Serhiy Zhadan, Irina Deneshkina and Mirosław Nahaczs yearn for this promise of happiness. They unquestioningly take on the role models and identification-building possibilities offered by globalised pop culture. Yet while looking to the West helped their parents

get through the drabness of everyday life under socialism, the stories about the present day revolve specifically around the fact that the youth's everyday life has nothing to do with what they had expected of a life lived in democracy and freedom. With the help of blue jeans, their parents were able to position themselves as subjects of the subcultural, alternative, independent underground. However, the youth of today fail to achieve this positioning. Serhiy Zhadan expressed this failure in his first anthology, *Big Mac*, in which he has organised the stories as the stages of a journey through the 'Golden West' of Europe during which the narrator submits the happiness promised by the American Dream to an acid test (Zhadan, 2003). Zhadan, who, aside from Lyubko Deresh (see Deresh, 2001; Lindekugel, 2014), is the young author of post-socialist Ukraine who has achieved the widest international recognition, has also been making a name for himself since 2008 as the singer of the ska band Sobaki v kosmosi (Dogs in the Cosmos), which masters and perfectly markets the euphoric promise of pop (Hofmann, 2014).

As an author, Zhadan critically engages with the identification opportunities offered by pop music. A leitmotif of his first two novels, *Depeche Mode* from 2004 and *Anarchy in the UKR* from 2005, is the discrepancy between the beautiful illusion of pop music and the boring daily life of its young consumers (see Zhadan, 2013). The main story in *Big Mac* is entitled 'Ten Ways to Kill John Lennon', from which the volume also takes its title. In it, the narrator describes getting drunk with a guy whom he meets on the streets of Vienna and who resembles the legendary singer of The Beatles (Zhadan, 2003, pp. 36–58).

Big Mac and John Winston Lennon represent the two sides of western pop culture: the musician, assassinated in 1980, stands for the promise of freedom, individuality and self-fulfilment, while the double-decker hamburger stands for a commercial consumer culture that permeates all areas of life. The symbolic promise of happiness and luxury is consistently turned into its opposite throughout the story: the narrator, who at first is enthralled by the John Lennon lookalike, attempts to realise the American dream of complete freedom through a vagabond lifestyle fuelled by permanent alcohol and drug consumption, but he is unable to attain this goal. The realisation hits him in, of all places, the toilet of a concert venue during a live gig of the aged revival group Buddy Rich Big Band, right as the musicians are playing 'Bic Mac', their legendary instrumental piece from 1973:

> You can't ruin real music through a bad interpretation, honestly, whenever they play, in whatever holes they're performing in, they start 'Bic Mac' and suddenly everything is in order, everybody understands that life is something wonderful and mysterious, and even when you're getting close to its coating, when you're almost touching its hard, cold surface,

> you still get a bit closer to that realization, because life is not there to be revealed to idiots like you, it's there so that you are happy.
>
> (ibid., p. 47)

However, the 'real music' that exists in order to make someone happy is – just like the hamburger of the same name – a commercial consumer product without any authentic charm, played not by captivating musicians like John Lennon, but by a retro orchestra that half-heartedly churns out the same programme every night. Thus their most famous piece, 'Bic Mac', is just enough 'to stop you from doing your business' in the toilets, but does not create anything 'wonderful and mysterious'. Instead, it only brings new problems: at the end of the concert, John Lennon and the narrator are thrown out of the concert hall. Similarly, the two characters' visits to other places in the demimondes of Vienna usually end with arguments and fights. When, after a long weekend of partying, his drunken friend happens to find a CD of, of all things, Buddy Rich's 'Big Mac', in a music store and is caught trying to steal it, the narrator panics and leaves his companion, cursing the loser:

> What an asshole, with what cretins God inhabited the good old European towns, what sort of people one meets and with whom one spends time, what combines me with this John Winston Lennon apart from 'Big Mac', of course, okay, 'Big Mac' does indeed combine a lot in this muddled life, actually, who may say about himself that he never fucked anything up, cunningly destiny lays its traps, be aware that you don't get trapped, you hang around, day and night, and the only thing that remains for you is to get fascinated by the odd moods of heaven, by all its tricks and actions, by all its creatures, like John Winston Lennon, not a bad guy actually, if he hadn't messed up so many things, but that's his karma, his fucking karma.
>
> (ibid., p. 55)

In this case, the phrase 'Ten Ways to Kill John Lennon' not only refers to continually carrying out the murder of an idol – a kind of therapeutic dream work – but also discusses 'ten ways' to drive the hopes and dreams, represented by pop music, out of the young protagonists: for the post-socialist youth, it means recognising the all-encompassing commercialisation of life and finally giving up the illusions and imaginings of the possibility of a different, better life in a post-socialist world, one they had hoped for in relation to the Golden West during their childhood behind the Iron Curtain. 'Real music' like 'Bic Mac' provides as little reason for dreaming or for starting a revolution as the eponymous burger. Music of this kind is available worldwide, tastes the same everywhere you go, and is not even healthy. Zhadan's narrator is left with no option but to go on another journey, to keep searching, to get the hell out.

Cheeky face: 'And I pointlessly whisper the unrealizable ideas that captivated me . . . '

Irina Denezhkina, like Serhiy Zhadan, in her first and only anthology *Daj mne!* (2003; published in English in 2004 under the title *Give Me: Songs for Lovers*)[6] describes the imagined worlds of her teenage protagonists. However, in Denezhkina's stories, it is not primarily the 'real music' that links things together, but rather cool gestures and the right style that seduces her characters into dreaming of something better than the present.

The main story of *Daj mne!* is about two students who go searching for their dream boys instead of studying for their exams. The teenagers who appear in the story hang around all day long, visit a bar or a concert, or go for a walk in their neighbourhood, without anything truly exciting ever happening. They drink, take drugs, vomit and tell each other banal things. The two female friends from whose perspective the story is told mainly focus on the latest fashion trends and cool boys they long for and whom they sleep with. Yet these boys correspond to the narrators' western role models only superficially, which leads to much excitement and despair for the girls. There is Lyapa, for example, a guy whose name literally translates to 'a slap in the face'. Externally he fulfils the aesthetic ideal of both friends – 'Pepsi, pager, MTV, spiky hair, fruit-drop lips, real cheeky face . . . Gorgeous, like a picture in a magazine' (ibid., p. 4). The narrator meets this perfectly styled punk rocker with his own band, who drinks nothing but mineral water and composes dark, romantic love songs in an internet chat room. It soon becomes apparent that, in person, he is incapable of formulating any words of personal significance and is pretty uptight and boring. Another boy, a 'tall rapper', 'jangling his chain', with 'a sharp face' and a cheeky look in his eyes, tries to be as cool as his African American heroes and therefore calls himself 'Nigger' (ibid., p. 7). He promptly impresses the narrator with his daredevil way of getting right to the point. While Lyapa cannot find any personal words, Nigger's speech consists exclusively of hip hop texts and cool phrases. In his egocentric cosmos, he does not tolerate any alternative taste that deviates from his style; everything must conform to his stereotypes (ibid., pp. 24–25).

Much as in Zhadan's texts, here 'real music' represents the promise of a little bit of happiness that shimmers brightly during a brief moment during one of Lyapa's band's concerts, when a singer with a scratchy voice belts out the title of the book, 'Give! . . . me! Give! . . . me! Give! . . . me some of that coooold water!!!'. 'The crowd began jumping up and down, the energy just pouring out of every one of them, and I nearly went mad with happiness' (ibid., p. 21). However, this 'gig happiness' that makes everything else seem unimportant does not have any positive effect; immediately afterwards, the narrator drinks to the point of unconsciousness so that she is left only with

disjointed fragments of memory of the evening (ibid., p. 22). Neither fashion nor music are able to give her that for which she longs, and so she continues her emotional odyssey of 'crazy raving' from one lover to the next: 'Nothing but brazen lies and crazy raving,/ Nothing but dust and vainest vanity,/ Nothing but a broken string still screaming./ In this world our dreams are all we see ...' (ibid., p. 14).

There is only one boy who refuses to take part in these futile attempts of the Petersburg youth to lead a life as cool and excessive as that of their pop idols from the media, and is therefore the only one who commands the true respect of the narrator. Denya, who fought in the Chechen war as a recruit, learned during that experience that wishful thinking has nothing to do with one's everyday reality:

> I was against it. I liked Denya. I don't know why. His eyes were filled with this incredible fuck-it-all disdain for everything. No matter what happened to the world, he'd just watch, stick his hands in his pocket and go about his own business. It was hard to really get through to him. Wish I could be more like that./ I tried for a whole day to adopt a fuck-it-all attitude, and I was actually very successful at it.
>
> (ibid., p. 11)

While in Zhadan's stories the failed promise of happiness of drugs and rock 'n' roll lead to the masculine teenagers' wish to kill their own idols, Denezhkina's heroines focus on sex with local copycats of their beauty ideals, knowing that the boys' 'cheeky faces' represent an 'unrealisable idea' like the 'Imagine' of 'real' pop music. Yet where Zhadan's narrator heads off to search anew, Denezhkina's narrators answer with a 'fuck-it-all attitude' of 'Give it to me anyway.' Thus the story ends with the sentence that had to come: when the 'cheeky face' Lyapa finally gets over his shyness, he does exactly what all (heterosexual) men everywhere always (want to) do: 'Suddenly his tongue was in my mouth' (ibid., p. 28).

Lacklustre talk: 'He too was probably permanently depressed ...'[7]

In Mirosław Nahacz's widely hailed first novel *Osiem cztery* (Eight Four) pointless fights 'like in films about the Wild West' (Nahacz, 2003, p. 54) are the only thing that occasionally manage to arouse excitement in the adolescent heroes: 'He punched him, I looked – and nothing [...] The guy didn't have a mark on him. In the end, it wasn't about material things. It was about nothing. Violence is sometimes meaningless' (ibid., p. 57). Indeed, Nahacz's teenagers don't cut good figures as 'Polish versions' of fighting 'saloon' heroes; rather, they appear 'like monkeys' (ibid., p. 54). They care

almost as little as Denezhkina's protagonists like to think they do, and perhaps Zhadan's Lennon-hater will give. Neither 'real music' nor cool guys are capable of truly unsettling them.

Nachacz's 18-year-old first-person narrator Olgiert and his classmate of the same age somehow have to get through the last year of high school somewhere in a provincial part of Poland. Instead of studying, they drink a lot of alcohol, take drugs and chit-chat about this and that – about their favourite bands, Hollywood stars, porn films and TV series (ibid., pp. 38–39, 41–42). In this manner they await a future that promises them nothing:

> We knew that no matter what, everything ends at one point with wife, family, house and a well-ordered white-bread vicious circle [...] We also knew that in spite of everything we are as silly as everyone else, as our whole pampered generation, that gossip alone achieves nothing. However there is nothing to achieve in any case, because we don't have anything to fight for. By the way that is better anyway as at the moment no one would like to do so.
>
> (ibid., p. 15)

The novel describes one weekend during which Olgiert celebrates a friend's 18th birthday together with the rest of their group of friends. They drink a great deal, gather hallucinogenic mushrooms in the forest and hang out at parties. The narrator increasingly loses control of his thoughts and perceptions until, after multiple lapses, the final scene finds him, exhausted, at dawn on the roof of an unfinished building still under construction, looking towards the coming day with resignation.

Parents, school and state institutions are still present within the world perceived by the teenagers, but no longer play a role in their process of self-finding or in their emotional states. By contrast, the mediatised world of global, western pop culture is omnipresent in the conversations of the friends, but barely excites any emotion in them. Here, unlike in Zhadan's works, no one feels the need to kill a pop icon out of rage at his 'fucking karma', or, as in Denezhkina's stories, to fall into bed with the mirror image of a model from a magazine cover. Spiderman or Batman as 'a modern version of God' call up nothing within the narrator but indifference; he cares about them as status symbols as little as he cares about the new status symbols of western wealth, such as the orange Peugeot or the silver Alfa Romeo, affordable to all (ibid., p. 37).

For the 'Wheel of Fortune generation' (ibid.), the pop icons and superheroes no longer serve as role models of rebellious behaviour; they are no longer idols onto which teenagers project their ambivalent feelings. Quite the contrary – whereas the youth cultures of the West previously identified with 'rebels without a cause' or glorious scoundrels, the 'Catcher in the Rye' or 'angry young men' full of unsatisfied dreams and indomitable

fears, Nahacz's novel presents a frustrated generation for whom everything feels bad and every occasion is trivial because its members are entirely uninterested in rebelling against anything.

In this regard, Nahacz's novel is more radical than the frustration prose of Zhadan and Denezhkina. In his stories, the plot is reduced to lacklustre talk. Therefore the title *Eight Four* purposefully refers not only to the author's and narrator's date of birth, but is also a direct reference to George Orwell's famous anti-utopian work *1984*. If you read Nahacz's sombre portrait of frustrated youth as an intertextual reply to Orwell's vision of a ubiquitous surveillance state in which every individual freedom is repressed, then the socio-political diagnosis of the Polish author becomes even starker. While Orwell's heroes Winston and Julia rebel against the omnipotence of the Big Brother and the norms of Newspeak, but especially against the doctrine of the 'Youth League against Sexuality', the life of Nahacz's teenage heroes is dour and dismal despite the absence of state control, ideological indoctrination or moral norms. In Orwell's tale, erotic desire is the main motif driving his lovers onwards, whereas in Nahacz's story, sexuality has become nothing but a nightmare in a bourgeois marriage. The post-communist generation born in 1984 no longer has anything for or against which it wants or could rebel or could live. It has only dilemmas that its members talk about listlessly, as Nahacz's first-person narrator concludes at the end of the novel:

> Dilemmas: You always have to explain something, develop some kind of questions about what's better, what's more important, if it's worth it, or maybe not worth it, and then pretend as if you've forgotten to answer, as if you're not even thinking about it anymore, as if you were having a good time, as if you were going to a party and none of it mattered to you anymore, as if you simply couldn't remember it and never started again, thinking of this damned shit, thinking of that fact that you have to do something, that you have to pull yourself together, that you have obligations that are getting too much for you, that dates have been set and that our names are inscribed next to the dates, so you can't sleep as late as you thought because tomorrow you have to go somewhere, you've made plans, or you have to go to school at any rate, you can't just stop giving a damn about it because that won't pay off; it's still better to give in to everything, and after all, you wouldn't want it any other way. That is the main problem. That you don't actually want it any other way.
>
> (ibid., p. 90)

Here, any and every gesture of revolt has become obsolete; the 'permanent depression' has destroyed every utopian potential. All that remains is a never-ending lament about the 'main problem' of a post-utopian youth for whom rebellion and assimilation are equally frustrating.[8]

Conclusion: The end of 'Generation Nothing'

The literary works of Zhadan, Denezhkina and Nahacz all deal in a similar way with differing levels of frustration potential in young people from Poland, Russia and Ukraine. As Nahacz's hero puts it straight at one moment: 'I no longer knew anything, but this path, this fleeing of ours became all of life, beginning, middle and end in one, there was nothing but this flight, white, and nothing more' (Nahacz, 2003, p. 28). Along these lines their works did not lead to the founding of a new genre that could be said to have established itself in the subsequent decade with recognisable prose forms. Rather, they are part of a literary movement that enjoyed several years of massive media attention before disappearing once again. At the same time, this trend bespeaks an uneasiness in culture and the present society that, like nowhere else during the first decade of the twenty-first century, was concisely expressed in the juvenile protagonists in the works of Zhadan, Denezhkina and Nahacz.

When the novels are regarded within a broader cultural-historical context of globalised life-worlds at the end of the East–West conflict, the phenomenon at the heart of their stories is by no means unique. Since the turn of the millennium, scholars on youth and youth culture have been diagnosing a general crisis in juvenile self-perception and life plans. The concepts of youth developed for wealthy western post-war societies are today only partly valid (see Blossfeld et al., 2005; Dolby and Rizvi, 2008; Heath and Walker, 2012). Youth movements are no longer political and aesthetic pioneers, and they no longer create alternative prospects for the future, but instead are immediately integrated into commercial interests and opportunities for consumption. The typical free spaces of independent subcultures are ever more submerged within the digital world of social networks (Bucher and Pohl, 1986; Greenwald, 2003; Hodkinson and Deicke, 2007). Simultaneously, 'youth' no longer functions as a habitual, social and cultural marker of distinction, seeing as the older generations, starting with the cohort of 1968, refuse to 'age' in regard to their leisure activities, their social lives or their cultural knowledge. The fact that parents are barely present within the three novels from Eastern Europe can doubtlessly be interpreted as a symptom of this shift: 'Adults' no longer serve as entities of authority against which the 'youth' can define themselves or whose example they aspire to emulate (Wyn and White, 1997).

Therefore these three works about teenagers bear great sensitivity for the 'dilemmas' that arise from the missing positive or negative identification opportunities. For the protagonists in these stories, it is not primarily 'real-socialist' or national cultural patterns that no longer serve for self-identification processes, but precisely the ideal images of youth from western pop cultures. While these images successfully continue to produce new sources of meaning through their newest trends and hypes, the Eastern European stories presented here revolve around the paling of these offers

of western popular culture. While Andy Greenwald showed in his study 'Nothing Feels Good' how punk rock and emo music gained enormous popularity among teenagers in the 1990s and early 2000s and functioned as a 'never-never land, a shield against the demands of aging and the real world' (Greenwald, 2003, p. 43), post-socialist literature instead points out that 'real music', whether jazz, hip hop or punk rock, the 'cheeky faces' and their lyrics are no longer able to cast a spell of enchantment over the everyday life of young people in Poland, Ukraine and Russia. After the gig, everything feels as bad as before the gig.

In this regard, the frustration prose also breaks with the literary genres of beat or pop literature, which still – even in hopeless coming-of-age or coming out stories, or those of people who escaped from everyday life – continued to write about the utopian moment of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. In those genres, happiness could be found within the fake life, even if only for a moment.[9] The Eastern European teenagers in the three novels partially resemble the cynical heroes of American 'blank fiction' of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Annesley, 1998). Both types of works reject all traditional career and family trajectories and indulge in a nihilistic worldview shaped by TV, film and video. However, the Eastern European characters lack the unscrupulous cold-bloodedness with which Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) or Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* (1993) mistreat and massacre the hero's own body and that of other people (see Baelo-Allué, 2011).

While the pop literature of Nick Hornby or Christian Kracht – just as that of Ellis and Welsh – is characterised by an awareness of style and brands as the central distinctive gesture through which the heroes define themselves, the teenagers in recent Eastern European present-day prose treat these globalised music, fashion and linguistic styles much the same way as a Big Mac: they consume them and adapt them, but they barely gain any personal benefit or even happiness from them.

And so the 'Generation Nothing' and its 'frustration prose' developed somewhat along the same lines as its authors. It went in very different directions – it turned to other topics, turned the frustration into an entertainment product or failed along one chosen path. Irina Denezhkina wrote no other literary works after her novel about her (fictionalised) wild youth and disappeared almost completely from public view; Serhiy Zhadan, by contrast, transformed his heroes, who had been fighting the 'fucking karma' in their environment, into Ukrainian prankster and good soldier Švejk characters. Rather than frustration and rage, these figures discover the grotesque, the absurd and the adventurous all over the wild East of Europe. Instead of describing a hopeless *Anarchy in the UKR*, Zhadan later presented variations of a commercially successfully *Hymn of the Democratic Youth* (2006) in numerous stories and novels.[10] Mirosław Nahacz, the 'voice of a generation' (Zawisłak, 2008), however, turned the post-utopian hopelessness of his first publication into his literary life project. After giving the narrator's voice in his second novel *Bombel* (2004) to a village misfit and alcoholic who

spends his life at a bus stop, philosophising and only occasionally going on forays into his surroundings, the first-person narrator in his third novel, *Bocian i Lola* (The Stork and Lola) (2005), who can barely keep his senses and thoughts together on his night-time excursions through Warsaw, once again greatly resembles the author. His last novel, in which the voice of the narrator becomes completely lost between virtual, phantasmagoric and real worlds, had not progressed beyond a draft when its author committed suicide in the summer of 2007 (Wolny-Hamkało, 2007).[11] Thus the 'Generation Nothing' and its members' figurations of a young self that is always feeling bad vanished in one way or another, whereas their frustration prose, as a symptom of cultural uneasiness, over the course of time became a pop cultural entertainment product itself that helps its readers overcome personal and societal crises in story form.

Translated by Diana Aurisch

Notes

1. Prior to this volume, Zhadan had already published several poetry books.
2. For details on the Ukrainian and Czech 'Post 90s Generation', see Kratochvil 2013, pp. 154–190.
3. See also Tamara Hundorova's chapter in this volume.
4. On the debate about the term 'Generation Nothing', see Brüggemann (2003).
5. See also the chapter by Catriona Kelly in this volume.
6. This is a literal translation of the Russian original (Denezhkina 2005, p. 61). The English translation reads, 'I whisper foolish words, a captive to my hopeless dreams...' (Denezhkina 2004, p. 21).
7. Nahacz (2002, p. 23).
8. For a more detailed analysis of Nahacz's poetics, see Schwartz 2014.
9. Nevertheless, this prose was often classified as 'pop literature', see eg. Brüggemann 2003b; Kratochvil 2006. For a detailed look at the terms pop and beat literature, see Hoffmann (2006); Kaulen (2009).
10. *Hymn of the Democratic Youth* is the title of a story collection by Zhadan. His recent collection of stories and poems, *Mesopotamiya* (2014; *Mesopotamia*), is dedicated to the urban folklore and life of his hometown Kharkiv.
11. His unfinished novel *Niezwykłe przygody Roberta Robura* (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Robert Robur*) was published posthumously in 2009. See also Schwartz 2014b.

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9

'Bright Reference Point of Our Youth': Bondy, Podsiadło and the Redefinition of the Underground

Alfrun Kliems

Polish writer Jacek Podsiadło's story of a fictitious pilgrimage to Bratislava to find Egon Bondy, the one-time guiding spirit of the Prague underground, begins in the style of an epiphany: 'And suddenly we knew that we would go to Bratislava, to Egon, the bright reference point on the gloomy firmament of our youth, who with his shiny red polka-dot tie lit up many a dark night'[1] (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 245). The story was published in 2008 and turns out to be a series of reflections about Bondy, writing, art in general, cowboys and Indians, friendship, chance and death, a neighbour with her leg in a cast, Bratislava, and the joy that can come from the unreserved admiration evoked in the story's title: *Total and realistic thanksgiving pilgrimage to the holy relics of Egon Bondy, father of our fathers and apostle of healing work, in the year of our Lord 1352 according to the Rhaeto-Romanic calendar* (Podróż dziękczynno-błagalna, totalna i realistyczna do świętych relikwii Egona Bondy'ego, Ojca Ojców naszych i apostoła uzdrawiającej pracy, roku Pańskiego 1352 według numeracji retorumuńskiej).

A meeting between the first-person narrator and the underground legend Bondy, founder of 'total realism', never comes about, however. At least not in person. As I will show in the following, it takes place as an aesthetic exchange between two poetologies, as a dialogue between two generations.

This chapter also connects, in a broader sense, to the topic of 'youth culture', understood here as 'the young' allegedly taking over the reins from 'the old'. The Polish writer Jacek Podsiadło is almost 35 years younger than Egon Bondy and stands for the East Central European underground of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Podsiadło emerged from the Polish *bruLion* formation, whose underground poetics as represented in the magazine by the same name linked to pop culture more strongly than earlier generations had done. For Podsiadło's generation, the Czech poet Bondy, whose underground activity dates back to the 1950s, was, however, still a 'shining light'. Bondy's

spell as a youth idol remains unbroken, as can be seen in the above quote from Podsiadło's story.

Podsiadło sends his first-person narrator and his friends on an imaginary literary road trip to Bratislava, where the older Bondy lives. This road story inscribes itself into the tradition of the genre that has dominated the literatures of Central Europe for two decades: around the same time as Podsiadło's story takes place, Czech writer Jáchym Topol set out for Wołowiec to visit the Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk (Topol, 2007). Stasiuk's autobiographical work *Jak zostałem pisarzem* (How I Became a Writer), in turn, is itself shot through with the narrative devices of the underground (Stasiuk, 1998).

Podsiadło, who belongs to the same generation as Topol and Stasiuk, revives the figure of Bondy as the destination of his road story in order to ask whether the latter's poetics still have something to say. He answers his own question poetologically by using mild paradox to subvert Bondy's literary methods. Podsiadło's narrative can be read as a fictionalised reflection on the continuity and discontinuity between the underground and pop culture, both of which figure here as potentially subversive forms of expression before and after the political and social upheavals after 1989.

Jacek Podsiadło, a Polish barbarian

Jacek Podsiadło was born in 1964 and rambled around Poland for years, trying his hand as a farm labourer in Masuria, as a security guard in Warsaw and as a journalist for Radio Opole. He belongs, along with Andrzej Stasiuk and Marcin Świetlicki, to the younger group of writers who published in the above-mentioned underground magazine *bruLion* founded in Cracow in 1986.

The Polish word *bruLion* means rough notebook, scribbling pad or doodle. The title *bruLion* evokes a sense of something unfinished, dashed off – aesthetic modes of production, then, that aim at authenticity and individuality. Spelling it *bruLion* also leads to associations with the French word 'brut' (raw) and the French and English word 'lion'. The magazine set out to affront the Polish public by making the case for pornography, sexual revolution and legalising drugs; by exposing anti-semitic and racist ideas; by burning books; by printing a speech by Heinrich Himmler or an interview with a porn star – all of which amounted to flinging everything that was declared marginal and intolerable into the face of normative culture. According to Przemysław Czapliński, the idea – if one wants to impute a binding programmatic idea to *bruLion* – was to confront the extreme (Czapliński, 2002, p. 55).

Thus the magazine managed, for instance, to rekindle a historical conflict, the nineteenth-century quarrel between the Classicists (*klasycyści*) and the Romantics (*romantycy*) (Klejnocki and Sosnowski, 1996, pp. 81–95). Among other reasons, the *bruLion* poets were criticised for undermining the Romantic paradigm in their poetry – in other words, for not connecting their work

with the fate of the nation; for refusing to make the ethical commitment to bear witness in their writing; and for being unwilling to write 'engaged literature'.

Karol Maliszewski, writing in the magazine *Nowy Nurt* in 1995, called the *bruLion* poets barbarians (*barbarzyńcy*), a label that quickly stuck (Maliszewski, 1999). The *bruLion* barbarians were opposed to – and loathed – what they saw as ethically and politically contaminated poetry as written by the poets of the 'New Wave' (*Nowa Fala*) surrounding Stanisław Barańczak, Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski. These poets, along with Zbigniew Herbert, Jan Polkowski and Czesław Miłosz were not spared the attacks of the *bruLions*.

One of the ways in which the poets of the Polish 'New Wave' and the *bruLion* writers differ is the function of colloquial language in their work. While the 'New Wave' still used slang to unmask the highly manipulative 'official' language of state socialism, for writers such as Marek Hłasko, Andrzej Bursa and Edward Stachura common speech already served to characterise social environments such as those of vagrants, homeless people and drunks (Warchol-Schlottmann, 1989, p. 230). The barbarians of the formation *bruLion*, on the other hand, share the language of *mowa żywa* (Jan Rozwadowski), a lively vernacular which – like its poets – strives to free itself from a lyrical service to the nation, or, to quote Świetlicki, from 'slave poetry'.

Egon Bondy, 'bright star in the sky'

Egon Bondy (1930–2007) was the leading figure of the Czech underground for decades. Born Zbyněk Fišer, Bondy and his friend Ivo Vodseďálek developed the methods of 'total realism' (*totální realismus*) and of the 'poetry of embarrassment' (*trapná poezie*) in the 1950s (Zand, 1998/Pilař, 1999). Bondy's samizdat novel *Invalidní sourozenci* (The Invalid Siblings) was considered the bible of the underground from the time of its publication in 1974. The urban apocalypse conjured here casts the underground as a people: spiritual, conspiratorially tribal, intellectually and materially unbound, drunken and dancing expressively, devoted to their own self-mystification. Bondy acquired his reputation as the guru of the underground around the time the band The Plastic People of the Universe set some of his poems to music.

Bondy came from a wealthy Prague family; his father, a general, was demoted after the 1948 Czech coup. The young man was in and out of work throughout the 1950s; from 1957 to 1961 he studied philosophy and psychology, worked at the national library and as night watchman at the national museum, and obtained his doctorate in philosophy in 1967. From that year on he collected disability benefits and in the late 1960s he spent a considerable amount of time in psychiatric hospitals. In the 1990s he was accused of having passed on information to the Czechoslovakian state

security service. Out of protest over the division of Czechoslovakia he moved to Bratislava, Slovakia in 1993, where he died in 2007.

Bondy's ideas were shaped by the poetics of the Prague surrealists, with whom he connected when he was still a teenager. His poems combine realistic details with phantasms and bursts of irrationality; he profaned, trivialised and vulgarised everyday life in socialism by incorporating quotidian activities into everything and anything in an almost manic, and certainly drastic, way. The trivial and the everyday became the systematic subject of his underground poetry. Richard Svoboda notes that the 'constant preoccupation with physiological needs' that was characteristic of the underground is connected to its 'focus on the empirical sphere of sensations'. Descriptions of the 'most diverse forms of urination and defecation, of sexual gratification' and 'incessant reminders of biological determination, of the trivial' function, Svoboda argues, as 'part of a provocative and demythologizing campaign against ideal societal as well as existential constructs' (1996, p. 17).

Podsiadło and the poetics of the underground

Podsiadło, the young writer, and Bondy, the old one, both belonged to the underground in East Central Europe. Like other undergrounds, this was neither a definable group phenomenon nor did it have an obligatory style or dominant form of expression. It was rather characterised by the congruency of the postures adopted by artists and intellectuals who showed off their independence from *any* kind of authorised expression. Therein lies its synchronous, systemic proximity to pop culture.

The underground and pop culture both exhibit ritualised anarchic gestures of rebellion that can be 'without a cause' as well as the absolutisation of the everyday and the banal, in many cases of the offensive. Furthermore, they share an ambivalent and tactical relationship to mass culture, brands and consumption, motivated by the desire to subvert High Culture with a capital H, to rase to the ground prevailing classics, educational strongholds and artistic ideals.

At the same time, there are obvious aesthetic and, particularly, contextual divergences between the two. Under socialism, the 'underground' politically and literally meant being underground, that is, prohibition, informers, imprisonment, exclusion by law. In order to claim a similar experience of repression and thus subversion, pop culture had to emphatically dramatise the exclusionary power of 'its' establishment. Nevertheless, the staging of an existential aesthetic of subversion is common to and constitutive of both.

This aesthetic is reflected, on the one hand, in a forced directness of expression and in explosive language; on the other in a tendency towards fracturing *and* merging images. Banalism, vulgarism, obscenity and

brutalism follow this ostentatiously despairing aesthetic of a will to fracture *and* totalise art – including the display of corresponding lifestyles and modes of living as authentication of an art aimed at performativity. Both pop culture and the underground deliberately provoke work-induced reactions against the respective empirical author. Conceptually, they both aim at the blurring of this difference.

Podsiadło's mystification of the figure of Bondy also makes use of an aesthetic of the seemingly unfinished, hastily scrawled. These are techniques programmatically employed by the Polish *bruLion* writers in order to create the impression of authenticity and individuality. In an equally programmatic way, Podsiadło's travel essay now has two generations of the underground miss each other for the sake of launching a poetological discussion about the underground and its absorption or destruction by pop culture.

On the road to Bratislava

In 2008, Podsiadło came out with the short-story collection *Życie, a zwłaszcza śmierć Angeliki de Sancé* (The Life and in Particular the Death of Angelique de Sancé). The title's allusion to the popular and schmaltzy historical novels that Anne Golon published between 1956 and 1985 is to be understood as programmatically ironic.

Podsiadło draws on the chronotope of wandering, where the journey itself is the goal, for the encounter, or rather non-encounter, between his characters. It is less a matter here of covering the distance between A and B than it is about a life on the road. The terms 'path' and 'journey' already had a manifest presence in Podsiadło's poetry. His globetrotters, we might say, are all anti-tourists.

The story 'Total and Realistic Thanksgiving Pilgrimage' begins with a reflection about writing novels, about the authenticity of what is written, and what it feels like to be a character in a novel. The first-person narrator wants to write a road movie, which is why he sets out on his journey in the first place. He starts out in the company of a certain Patison, who is then replaced by Młody, 'the young one', Śliwa, 'the plum' and Księżniczka Pankroka, 'Princess Punk Rock'. The group travels in an old Mitsubishi, which is given the name *Wiśniowa Rakieta* (Cherry Rocket). Cherry Rocket functions as a space and time capsule with a pile of unread books on board that are by and about Bondy, along with an adequate supply of beer.

Even the occasion for the trip is absurd: the young Poles receive a text message informing them that a friend offered his seat to Egon Bondy on the tram the day before. So the group hits the road, since it was Egon who had once inspired the *bruLion* friends 'with his mystical presence', when they were on their way to Mount Carmel, to abandon the mountain as quickly as

possible for a beer – otherwise they would likely all have become altar boys in white socks.

The Poles had wanted to visit Bondy once before; at the time they had made an appointment with him, but had ended up not going. An appointment, after all, is the 'enemy of freedom and improvisation' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 247). Bondy had waited for them with opened bottles, but: 'we failed' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 247). This time they set off without an appointment, but with the goal of 'paying their homage directly to Egon Bondy' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 244), on a pilgrimage to the 'place consecrated by Egon Bondy's presence' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 245).

In Olomouc they meet an 'interesting person' (*Ciekawy Człowiek*), a reference to a popular TV format, who initiates a further leitmotif of Podsiadło's road story: his (male) characters' enthusiasm for cowboys and indians. The former are said to sleep with their head on a cactus, while their horse serves as a blanket. And did not Old Shatterhand, lying flat on the ground with his Winchester on his knees, shoot dead many a *niewinny dzikus*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'noble savage', hidden in the bushes? As a matter of fact he did not.

Ruptures and cracks like this, unreliable narration and amalgamations – in this case of hypertrophic images of the Wild West – characterise Podsiadło's amplification of clichés. This is particularly true when he introduces a cliché patriarch like Karl May, who was one of the first to walk the line between formula fiction and self-fashioning as a pop-culture figure.

In Olomouc the narrator thus chooses an appropriately oversignified name: Dziadzia Benito, Grandpa Benito. This is followed by a longer passage on the meaning of names, which are said to make a person more than himself: 'I associate this name with the proud Benito Juárez' (Podsiadlo, 2008, p. 250). The Mexican freedom fighter again evokes a novel by Karl May – and subtly denounces its political implications. He also recalls Bondy's method of 'total realism', given that Benito Mussolini was named after Juárez. Today, of course, the narrator muses soon thereafter, he would rather be called 'Vaudeville Bill from Louisiana' or 'Winnerat' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 250). In other words, business, the market and the state run together in the same authoritarianism. Freedom always becomes perverted and every underground ends up as pop culture – while every form of pop culture has its own underground content. It is precisely Podsiadło's trivia that contains far-reaching reflections about his own methods and contexts.

The Poles on their way to 'Bondy' sit around killing time in Bratislava's cafés and beer bars. In a bar they meet Retoroman, a friend with roots in Romania who is described as a gypsy. Together they pay backhanded reverence to the hippie movement:

> We climb onto our hobby horses, each onto his own, and float in the smoky air. For a moment we are eternal hippies and their shirts made out of the flowery curtains they stole from their own mothers. I go into

> raptures, unbutton my shirt, and brandish my chest and the Young'un says I could win any folk festival just with my looks.
>
> (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 251)[2]

Soon after, they realise that they left Bondy's address behind in Poland, but then they run into his neighbour, whose leg is in a cast, on Bratislava's market square, and she takes them with her. Bondy is not at home. The group is not disappointed at all, however – on the contrary. After meeting the woman from the apartment below Bondy, they are excited to also meet his next-door neighbour, who lives wall to wall with their idol – and they use the opportunity to film Bondy's mailbox.

Looking for a place to sleep for the night, they end up at a cemetery complete with crematorium, and escape from there into the urban wilderness of East Central Europe. For lack of a cactus and a horse, Podsiadło's narrator rests his head on a mole hill and covers himself with a map of Bratislava. The next day he returns to Poland, again after a series of detours. 'The times are confused. The trails are twisted. The shadows deep' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 261).[3]

Podsiadło and Bondy: Modes and idolatry of the underground and pop culture

Podsiadło's story is highly associative, on several levels: phonetically and metaphorically, as well as in terms of content and writing strategy. It occilates between a forced banalism in imitation of Bondy's 'total realism', friendly irony and a certain religious and philosophical aura. There are allusions to war songs from the time of the Warsaw Uprising, statements about the hippie period, older Hollywood productions such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and more recent ones such as *Kill Bill* (2003/2004) and *The Olsen Gang* (1968), as well as references to the Majdanek concentration camp. Distorted proverbs and idioms, onomatopoeic combinations and language games overshadow the plot. While the text appropriates Bondy's poetic models, and puts aside its own poetics for a while, this happens so ostentatiously that the latter remains present. This literary appropriation is neither imitation nor subservience or fealty:

> If I didn't happen to be on a mystical, but also realistic trip to Bratislava, I would definitely pause in my race for nothing and write a poem, about butterflies as fibers of the sun, about silver feet, bends of fate, and blossoms of the lotus or something along those lines.
>
> (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 247)[4]

Poetic images like 'butterflies as fibers of the sun' evoke Podsiadło's own poetry. At the same time, other classical elements of the underground aesthetic are missing or are toned down. There is little of Bondy's evocation

of bodily needs in Podsiadło, and what there is is handled 'discreetly' and inoffensively.

The same is true for the universal paranoia, socialist totality and state despotism that the East Central European underground translated into an *art of totality* in reaction to the state socialist system's claim to totality. Bondy literally and programmatically parodied *everything*: the language of socialist propaganda, the sayings and slogans on demonstration banners, and politicians' speeches. He presented aspects of life in socialism in crooked metaphors, false metres and ungainly rhymes. Podsiadło turns this into a technique of mild paradoxicality, of the language game mentioned above, without a claim to comprehensiveness, let alone 'totality:'

> Of course I haven't read any of these books. I fancy I could read them somewhere along the Way. But I have read the title of the Plastic People of The Universe record many times, the title *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned*. I have to confess that I fell terribly in love with Egon Bondy on this tour. I know a lot about him already. I appreciate him and avoid him from afar. I learned a lot more about him from my own imagination than I could have from books. See for yourselves.
>
> (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 246)[5]

See for yourselves. In other words, see it in this text, which takes up Bondy's underground poetics, inscribes itself into its aesthetic tradition – and yet breaks with it. To put it emphatically: Podsiadło's road movie moves in the direction of pop culture. The underground, its practices and norms, are everywhere here – but primarily as reminiscence and ancestry.

According to a theorist like Diedrich Diederichsen, historically speaking it is precisely this that constitutes the evolutionary superiority of pop culture. This superiority means that pop culture, unlike the underground, can become dominant, established, mainstream. In a radically individualised society, the products and modes of production of the former underground become a neutralised, normative quantity. It is no longer possible to derive 'a general cultural oppositionality' from the conceptual pair mainstream/underground: 'Outwardly, formally, this distinction has lost its general meaning as a way of describing culture' (Diederichsen, 2003).

Arguing in a similar vein, the Czech writer Jáchym Topol, born in 1962, suggested that after 1989 the underground was over, having lost its *raison d'être* when the repressive apparatus was replaced by the logic and the pressures of the market. At the same time, Topol's Prague novels of the post-Velvet Revolution period, such as the road story *Sestra* (City Sister Silver) or *Anděl* (Angel), construct highly vertical urban spaces, thus allowing for the implications of 'classical' underground poetics to become visible in his work. Verticality is a key trait here, as I will show below.

Farewell to the underground

Podsiadło, however, wrote a ruggedly *horizontal* road movie. Without utopia. Without totalitarianism. Not only are there no strong vertical motifs, images or structures in the story, but the narrator rather pointedly evicts from the Cherry Rocket the only representative of the underground that he actually meets: Patison, his travelling companion at the beginning of the journey, is not allowed to come along on the trip. Identified as a 'mountain man', he is declared a 'dark character from our native soil' (Podsiadło, 2008, p. 242).

And sure enough: without Patison everything immediately becomes lighter, more easygoing and carefree. Młody, his replacement, symbolises the exchange of old (underground) for young (pop culture) not only by virtue of his name, but also because of his always available credit card and functioning mobile phone:

> As far as Patison is concerned, don't get me wrong. His heart's in the right place, his soul is below the belt, and he drags his liver two and a half meters behind him. He has a certain dark honor. We love and appreciate him very much, but we couldn't handle him anymore, that's the only reason why we had to exclude him from our group. For his own good and ours.
>
> (Podsiadło, 2008, pp. 246–247)[6]

It is here, at the latest, that we come to sense a fissure in the farewell scene, with the addendum 'for his own good' appropriating the rhetoric of modern apparatuses of repression. The group does quickly begin to miss the mountain man, his stories about underground horses and the black sky above cannot be replaced by the trivia of the road trip – and, in all of us there beats the heart of a Patison, Podsiadło writes at one point. The expulsion of the old does not take place without sorrow and commiseration, a feeling of loss – but it is done unrepentantly and brooks no alternative. Patison, whose name evokes pickled pumpkin, embodies the classical, self-chosen underground in attitude and appearance.

This observation and its implications can be explained by turning our attention again to the aesthetic practices of the underground. Its basic metaphorical system is vertical, which is already evident in the name it goes by. This name essentially posits its 'under' against an implied 'above'. Both the usage as well as the implications of such a poetics of the vertical can be traced back to Romanticism, a trail I will not follow here (Kliems and Mesenhöller, 2014).

Important in this context is that the vertical reflects the specifically modern promise of the utopia of an equal and free society – albeit in a critical way. While 'above' and 'below' were sharply defined in the estate-based societies of the early modern period and accepted as the natural order of

things, the modern imagination radically breaks with this by promising a materially egalitarian society. A society that is open for exchange and expression and hence is comprehensively inclusive – indeed one that is, in principle, horizontal.

By even just semantically presupposing a closed 'above', the sheer existence of the underground posits the failure of this promise. The underground can be understood as the performative articulation of the accusation that there continues to be something that is 'below' or 'underneath', and not just in terms of being incrementally worse off, but rather fundamentally excluded. Podsiadło's Patison embodies this accusation. In a modern society, the double gesture of being excluded and of excluding oneself, the vertical segregation that seems to me to be at the aesthetic heart of concepts of the underground, points to a scandal. To be precise, it points to *the* scandal in modern society's constitution: fracturing and alienation are not contingent to modernity, but form its ineluctable aporia.

The fact that its representative is thrown out of the car and that the pilgrims never end up meeting Bondy in Bratislava does not mean, however, that the text is dismissing the poetics of the underground. It rather stages an inevitable farewell to underground modes. The journey of the narrator to Egon Bondy does not then ultimately fail because of the latter's absence, but because 'Bondy' is no longer historically accessible to 'Podsiadło'.

By excluding Patison, Podsiadło also calls into question the pathos of the counter-culture as well as its rejection of society. Along with his sincere admiration there is also a certain indifference – and, more important yet, a genuine incomprehension of the convulsions of modernity. It may, then, not so much be global consumer capitalism as such that brings about the new framework, but rather an increasing incomprehension of the emphatically underground and heteronomous impulse to scandalise. It is this incomprehension that betrays an eroding belief in history.

In light of this, concepts of the underground could become as illegible as they would have been in the early modern period, and the term itself dwindles into a catch-all code for any manner of slightly marginal queer acts that are before their time. That would mean, however, failing to understand the underground for what it was and perhaps still is, namely part of the ruthlessly waged battle of modernity. With an equal lack of sentimentality we would also have to consider the ability of modernity to come to terms with this conflict, its capacity for absorption and integration.

But to what degree can we then speak of a conflict between generations, between young and old? Podsiadło's intertextual appropriation of the poetic method called 'Bondy' is more of an intergenerational strategy of taking something up and passing it on. This demonstrably leads Podsiadło to flee not only into escapism – understood here as an escape into the bosom of

poetry – but also into the associative web of pop culture. Once insubordinate patterns of the underground are appriopriated and attenuated as pop.

Here I would like to take a concluding look at the *bruLion* formation and its successors. In 2012, Przemysław Witkowski published a call to arms entitled 'Slay the Old Poets!' in the magazine *Przekrój* (Witkowski, 2012). Witkowski accuses the old poets – by which he means the *bruLion* writers – of having lost their anarchist attitude and of having become servile to the literary establishment. Their poems, he charges, have become hermetic and indecipherable for anyone not familiar with the 'postmodern codes'; they are caught in the 'kingdom of the private and the individual'. The young generation surrounding Konrad Góra, Szczepan Kopyt and Tomasz Pułka, Witkowski writes, represent a 'truly' left, militant demand for another society. When asked about the *bruLion* poet Marcin Świetlicki, Pułka responds indignantly that he is 'not interested in corpses' (Witkowski, 2012, p. 42). Such naively provocative desecration of the dead is a far cry from Podsiadło's strategy for detaching from the underground. His travel narrative is rather a thoughtful perspective on interlocking times, on the poetics tied to these times and their ongoing development or recoding.

Podsiadło's intergenerational continuation of the Bondy project is not an isolated case. It seems that the revolutions of the 1990s robbed the former (Eastern bloc) underground of options for radically discharging political authorities, as the latter ceased to rule in an authoritarian way and simply no longer functioned as targets – and, not least, could be voted out of office. At the same time, while the commercial sphere became formally free, society was still structured around power and exerted a considerable normalising pressure.

By the mid-1990s, oppositional pop culture around the world had reached a tipping point: instead of pop culture incorporating mass culture, everyday life was internalising pop culture. Tom Holert und Mark Terkessidis call the levelling of subversion 'the mainstream of the minorities': 'Where dissidence once availed itself of consumer culture, consumer culture now availed itself of dissidence. Anything that promised identity via difference was useful' (Holert and Terkessidis, 1996, p. 6).

From this perspective, the revolutions of 1989 can be read as part of a consumption-driven acceleration of globalisation that invalidated horizontal as well as vertical differences, cultural distinctions and gestures of defection. However, the notion that the epochal changes of 1989 rendered the underground obsolete is called into question by, for one, the underground's striking proximity to typically modern diagnoses of cultural decadence and narratives of decline. For another, the underground framework before 1989 was already undermined to the point that, by the late 1980s, it was operating in a global(ised) network of reception – just as it exhibited analogies (as well as obvious differences) to pop culture (Kliems, 2015).

A close look reveals that, certain exceptions aside, aesthetic developments in the (capitalist) West and the (socialist) East were strikingly contemporaneous with each other as well as structurally analogous. By the late 1970s, post-heroic consumer society and the conflation of mass and resistance culture were already burgeoning on both sides of the border and prompting aesthetic responses – including that of the underground.

Suffice it for now to point to the basic fact of Podsiadło's failed journey of a wild young man to a wild old man: without a utopia, without totality or realism meaning anything to him any more, the younger man seems older – more worldly wise, more cheerful, more consummate at the indifferent use of technical means and poetological set pieces. The text presents its narrator as a representative of a more calm generation, one that has grown old early. Even more: by opening up a trajectory by means of the appropriative amalgamation of historical poetics, it implies a future generation of pop writers who start out old – neither naively taken in by the great promise of modernity nor indignant about it being broken.

Translated by Millay Hyatt

Notes

1. Polish: 'I od razu wiedzieliśmy, że pojedziemy do Bratysławy, do Egona, jasnego punktu odniesienia na mrocznym firmamencie naszej młodości, który blaskiem swego krawata w czerwone groszki opromieniał niejedną noc ciemną.'
2. Polish: 'Dosiadamy ulubionego konika, każdy swojego, i bujamy w obłokach dymu. Chwilowo jesteśmy wieczni jak hipisi i ich koszule uszyte z kwiecistych zasłon skradzionych rodzonym Matkom. Rozanielam się, rozpinam sobie koszulę na piersi i Młody mówi, że wyglądam tak, że mógłbym wygrać jakiś festiwal folkowy.'
3. Polish: 'Gdybym nie był własnie na trasie mistycznej, ale i realistycznej podróży do Bratysławy, pewnie zatrzymałbym sie teraz w swej gonitwie za niczym i napisałbym wiersz, o motylach jako paździerzach słońca, o srebrnych nogach, wykresach losu i kwiatach lotosu albo coś w tym rodzaju.'
4. Polish: 'Czasy się mieszaja. Drogi są kręte. Cienie głębokie.'
5. Polish: 'Oczywiście nie przeczytałem żadnej z tych książek. Łudzę się, że zdążę je przeczytać gdzieś po Drodze. Za to wielokrotnie przeczytałem tytuł płyty "Plastic People of The Universe", tytuł "Zakazany Klub Szczęśliwych Serc Egona Bondy'ego". Muszę przyznać, że strasznie polubiłem Egona Bondy'ego podczas tej wyprawy. Sporo już o nim wiem. Szanuję go i omijam z daleka. Z własnej wyobraźni dowiedziałem się o nim wiele więcej, niż mógłbym z książek. Sami zobaczycie.'
6. Polish: 'Tylko nie zrozumcie mnie źle, jeśli chodzi o Patisona. Nie jest skąpy ani samolubny, wręcz przeciwnie. Zawsze ma serce na dłoni i dusze na ramieniu, a jego wątroba wlecze się zawsze dwa i pół metra za nim. Nie jest pozbawiony swoistego czarnego honoru. Bardzo go lubimy i szanujemy, ale już nie szło z nim wytrzymać, i tylko dlatego musieliśmy go wykluczyć z naszej grupy. Dla jego i naszego dobra.'

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Part III

Reshaping Political Activism: Between Rebellion and Adjustment

10
Fallen Vanguards and Vanished Rebels? Political Youth Involvement in Extraordinary Times

Félix Krawatzek

Introduction

When the 'Colour Revolutions' swept across some post-communist countries in the early 2000s, western commentators portrayed a new pro-European generation striving to overcome the looming Soviet legacy.[1] Nadia Diuk (2006) from the National Endowment for Democracy described youth as the vanguard for political change,[2] and academics echoed visions of radical and idealistic youth (Cheterian, 2009, p. 143; Lane, 2009, p. 129; White, 2009, p. 406). This idea about youth had travelled a long way since it became consensual in the West during the 1970s.[3] However, enthusiasm about the political implications of the 'Colour Revolutions' vanished once the ambiguity of diffusion, which ultimately contributed to democracy prevention in Russia (Horvath, 2011; Finkel and Brudny, 2012) and Belarus (Korosteleva, 2012), was realised. Analysis of Russia's current youth ought to consider this dual effect of the 'Colour Revolutions' and pay attention for the diverse and contradictory political engagements of young people.

This chapter engages with this polyphony of young voices and dismantles how the fraction of Russian youth that became politically involved made itself heard. I concentrate on two episodes of extraordinary times that different young generations experienced. I focus on the political involvement of youth in the Russian Federation from late 2004 onwards and take as comparison the perestroika period. The aim is to move beyond unifying descriptions of Russia's youth and instead to investigate youth participation during changing political conditions. I briefly contextualise the two episodes before exploring in more detail the practices of the pro-regime and oppositional youth political movements. I argue that in the episodes under consideration incumbents failed, despite significant efforts, to fully control pro-regime movements, which display more heterogeneity than political rhetoric and the media suggest. The particular intensity of

youth mobilisation in post-Soviet Russia relates to new political expectations and a sense of belonging that youth derived from participation after the tumultuous transition period of the 1990s.

Youth and extraordinary times: From perestroika to Putin

When political, social or economic conditions change fundamentally, youth is brought front and centre in political discourse. For the construction of the Bolsheviks' future Soviet society after the Civil War, youth was crucial because of its demographic weight and the revolutionary leadership framed itself as representing a new generation. Youth thereby became more than just a transitory phase between childhood and adulthood: rather, youth turned into a disputed symbolic space. This space, as Kuhr-Korolev argues, united competing visions of a socialist utopia with the radical ideas of cultural transformation that emerged in the 1920s (2005, p. 323).

Over time, however, the meaning of youth that the Bolshevik leadership tried to establish became contested. Economic inequalities disadvantaged youth (Koenker 2001, p. 807) and favoured distinct political interests (Neumann, 2012, p. 283). After Stalin's death, the heterogeneity of the meanings of youth became more pronounced (Pilkington, 1994, p. 50; Fürst, 2010, p. 343), culminating in the polemical debates about *stilyagi*, notably on the pages of the satirical magazine *Krokodil* (Edele, 2002, Litvinov, 2009). Throughout the Soviet era, tensions grew between the acclaimed revolutionary mission of youth and the social reality they faced. The freedom of expression under glasnost allowed this discrepancy to be aired.

Opening the floodgates: Perestroika and new freedoms

The political activism of youth during the perestroika years, and what this meant for the transition itself, have remained surprisingly unexplored. Most accounts remain elite-centric, which is astonishing since contemporaneous observers argued that Gorbachev's reforms reflected an emerging civic culture that grew out of the Soviet Union's modernisation (Lewin, 1988). Emphasising the role of political elites and their decisions in moments of crisis, Shlapentokh portrayed Gorbachev as the 'single motor of initial change' (2001, p. 190). Similarly, but in broader terms, Hahn depicted the reform period as revolution from 'high- and/or middle-ranking officials and bureaucrats' (2002, p. 5). However, such explanations fall short of explaining the significant changes as they deny the voice of ordinary citizens. Gorbachev explicitly demanded during the plenary session of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in January 1987 that ordinary citizens express themselves (Gorbachev, 1987b). Political leadership became responsive to the desire for political transformation voiced by citizens. Youth was at the forefront of expressing this need for change and served as its symbol.

The last years of the Soviet Union were extraordinary for youth, who were deeply affected by the resultant changes and, as this chapter aims to demonstrate, the political mobilisation of youth contributed to the unfolding of the political course. Youth was amongst the first to mobilise and began questioning the Komsomol even prior to Gorbachev's arrival in power. Success on the local level, which made involvement in the public sphere seem like a valuable means for putting the authoritarian structures under pressure, encouraged young people. They mobilised in thousands of *neformaly* all across the Soviet Union;[4] media and politicians perceived this engagement as critical for the social changes that perestroika was to imply. Moreover, this juvenile awakening accelerated the delegitimisation of the Komsomol. With Gorbachev's arrival to power, the Komsomol, a former symbol of a societal vanguard, lost its legitimacy at an ever greater speed, which went hand in hand with the dissolution of the USSR itself.

Following the Soviet Union's breakdown, youth was thrown headlong into market societies, replete with uncertainties and an abundance of opportunities, without a generational role model. The personal transitions of these individuals took place during a fundamental countrywide systemic transition. Young people were exposed to the risks and negative consequences of this period and were threatened by unemployment once education and public welfare spending crumbled (Roberts, 2000, p. 28). Russian sociologists have analysed the challenges facing this new generation with respect to adapting to new realities. Igor Il'insky, for instance, refers to problems of alcoholism and describes a general state of crisis of youth (2001). Beyond this research, however, the notion of a lost generation turned into commonly accepted knowledge, as Viktor Pelevin's novel *Generation P* (1999) illustrates. His writing bears witness to the transition period's tumult; its commodification of culture which amalgamated with advertising, leading to disaffected and sarcastic individuals. Pelevin portrays a surreal story of the generation living through the period of shock-therapy capitalism, a story that for Pelevin can only be conveyed in ironic and self-distanced comic-style language. The story also reflects the idleness of the generation, one that chooses Pepsi with as little thought as its parents chose Brezhnev.

Tightening the screws: Putin, Medvedev and the prevented 'Colour Revolution'

Roughly 15 years after the downfall of the communist regime, youth across the post-communist space challenged the political systems which the older generation had established in 'modular revolutions' (Beissinger, 2007). Indeed, the media constructed an interconnected space of countries affected by 'Colour Revolutions'. This allowed for compelling analogies that contributed to overcoming structural constraints that hitherto had hindered

protest. By 2005 some of Russia's youth also joined this colourful rhythm. The earlier song of a politically ignored and lethargic youth (Markowitz, 2000, p. 58)[5] radically changed its tune. Youth was visibly important in the 'Colour Revolutions', even more, 'young people had dominated the civil societies [...of ...] all democratic revolutions going back to the Philippines people's power protests in the mid-1980s' (Kuzio, 2006a, p. 366). However, youth was also held accountable for the failure to overthrow Russia's government within a 'Colour Revolution': 'Russian youth have followed the majority of Russian society in supporting Putin's transition towards "managed democracy," great-power nationalism, and a turn away from the West' (Kuzio, 2006b, p. 67).

To account for the effect of diffusion of 'Colour Revolutions' the domestic context must be considered. Since 2005 Russia has undergone a considerable democratic regression following the 'preventive counter-revolution' (Horvath, 2013). Beyond influencing mass media and setting up fake political parties, the regime became proactive using mobilisation techniques of the 'Colour Revolutions'. This development is striking when looking at youth movements but extends much wider into the general realm of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The Kremlin became aware that media manipulation for electoral victory was not enough to assure its stability and that an active support of the population was desirable. Political mobilisation of youth was central for this authoritarian consolidation. Pro-Kremlin movements, such as Nashi (meaning 'Ours'), loudly communicated popular support, even enthusiasm, for the political leadership, for the need to break with the embarrassing transition years that left Russia weak, and for their desire to uphold Russian sovereignty and re-erect its historical greatness. However, pro-Kremlin movements were not the only ones to become politically active: the spectrum of mobilised youth is as politically diverse as society at large.

The democratic regression is also manifest in a strengthened official ideology. The state elite – the president, the dominant party, pro-governmental consultants and think tanks – succeeded in gradually monopolising the dominant interpretation of 'sovereign democracy' and discourses on national identity and Russia's place in the world. This ideology emphasises opposition to the West and constructs the image of a Russia encircled by enemies. Youth disseminated this interpretation to the public.

A discussion of Russia's contemporary democratic breakdown would be incomplete without addressing the increase in repression. Since Putin's second term in 2004, 'the use of preventive detention and harassment to pre-empt protest actions has become extremely widespread' (Robertson, 2009, p. 531). Moreover, 'legitimate' civil society was officially institutionalised in the *obshchestvennaya palata* (public chamber) (Evans, 2008) which funds loyal NGOs generously (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss, 2008). The limitation of room for manoeuvre expresses Putin's belief that independent NGOs,

in particular those that are insultingly referred to as *inostrannyi agent* (foreign agent),[6] are a threat to Russia's stability.

Control unfeasible, outcome uncertain? Youth as political vanguard

The Soviet Union and the Putin/Medvedev leadership invested significant economic and personal resources into transmitting their political visions to the younger generation, to control youth and to align it with the political establishment. Looking beyond the rhetoric it becomes evident that it was impossible to control youth to the extent that those in power wanted, which proved fatal during the perestroika period. I argue that even within officially legitimised organisations, youth created spaces for independence and found meaning in its participation, beyond that which was foreseen by its creators.

Symbolising the disintegration of political power: Youth in the Komsomol

Cold War tensions increased with US President Reagan's administration and augmented Soviet concerns about western influences misleading youth through radio, books, magazines and music. The Komsomol-led education of the younger generation was to provide 'strong immunity against the effects of bourgeois ideology and all forms of petty bourgeois consumer psychology in addressing the challenges laid out by the party'. *Izvestiya* maintained by 1984 that the Komsomol was central 'to help young men and women form a high ideological and moral-political culture, to produce strong immunity against the influence of bourgeois ideology, and any form of petty-bourgeois consumer psychology'.[7]

On the eve of perestroika the political leadership around Konstantin Chernenko reminded the Komsomol of its historic task: 'On the shoulders of young people lies an enormous responsibility – for the country, for the fate of socialism, and for humanity's peaceful future.'[8] Indeed, the Komsomol was to 'guarantee the continuity of the revolutionary generation in a socialist society'.[9] Its political mission extended the party's influence, justified by historical references to Lenin. Until the early perestroika period the political leadership and the media coherently reproduced the rhetoric about the Komsomol. Yet these revolutionary claims had long before turned into ritualised acts without any mobilising power, as Yurchak (2005) illustrates.

Youth representations linked the Soviet past with its future, integrating for instance notions of contemporary collective identity with memory of the *velikaya otechestvennaya voina* (Great Patriotic War) and the October Revolution, as central mnemonic signifiers (Feindt et al., 2014). The decisive role played by youth underpinned the recall of these heroic memories, thereby de-temporalising them. Past, present and future collapsed when

Izvestiya underlined the Komsomol's decisive involvement in warfare: 'For all generations of Soviet people, they [*komsomol'tsy*] will always serve as inspiring example of loyalty to the patriotic, military duty. It is sacred for our Komsomol army to preserve and continue the wonderful traditions of their fathers.'[10] The nexus of 'youth–triumphant victory' and 'youth–selfless sacrifice' fostered Soviet identity and shaped the way that one could speak about youth in the early 1980s (Zinoviev, 1983).[11] Reiterated memories of economic large-scale projects linked youth throughout Soviet history with present youth.[12] The young generation was thereby sacralised and even competed with the party for the most important symbolic place.[13]

Constant literal repetition enshrined the main contours of the Soviet idea about youth in public consciousness. This turned ideology into common knowledge, which existed as truth within the authoritative discourse and was memorable for citizens once stripped of its complexity. However, these habitual revolutionary claims lost their power to mobilise well before perestroika. The everyday experience of the Komsomol was in contrast with the contours just outlined, though participation should not simply be rejected as devoid of meaning. Yurchak illustrates that the ritualistic importance in maintaining the Soviet ideology was not without significance. Moreover, perestroika-era sociologists highlighted the ritualised (and mechanical) dimension of participation (Sundiev, 1987). Given the importance of the Komsomol for the socialisation of Soviet youth, being part of it and replicating its rules represented an end in itself. Replication was, however, void of any real commitment to the broader cause and young people gradually reinterpreted the meaning of their involvement in the state-run organisation. Involvement thereby became unanchored in the official discourse (Yurchak, 2005, pp. 25–26).

The Soviet Union's leadership needed to consider the stark discordance between the idealised image of youth, and what *komsomol'tsy* experienced. The Komsomol's representatives attempted to adapt to new realities and shifted 'from tedious meetings and pointless civic projects to such matters as improving scientific and professional training, construction of youth housing complexes, and improving treatment of veterans'.[14] Furthermore, political leaders expected that bringing the organisation more in line with those *neformaly* centred on leisure activities might make it more attractive.[15]

Gorbachev himself underwent the Komsomol socialisation and fought to reverse its dispersal. In 1987 he insisted on the organisation's importance by bridging the contemporary feeling of crisis with anticipated decisive future roles (Gorbachev, 1987a). The purpose of young people's engagement was constantly placed in the future in order to compensate for the apparent lack of contemporary meaning. An attempt to align the reality of the Komsomol with the desire of young people was made via the rejuvenation of its leadership, by nominating in June 1987 Viktor Mironenko as First Secretary.

Notwithstanding such efforts, reasons for replicating those social norms no longer convinced young people. Gorbachev's speech at the XX Congress of the Komsomol in 1987 'Molodezh – tvorcheskaya sila revolyutsionnogo obnovleniya' (Youth – the creative force for revolutionary renewal) symbolises this by combining an image of past heroic youth and its new discursive and social reality:[16]

> Sometimes, in analysing the world of the Komsomol's leaders, one gets the impression that the masses of young people are moving on one side of the street and their leaders – on the other and, what is even more, in the opposition direction. I think this is largely due to the general situation and atmosphere in the country. So we shall not lay the blame for everything on the young alone.

This represented an outstanding shift: 'The Komsomol has no right to relieve itself of the responsibility for such a state of affairs.' Gorbachev's assessment illustrates how delegitimised the Komsomol became and the admitted incapacity of the political leadership to control pro-regime youth in times of regime breakdown. When youth was needed to uphold the regime's legitimacy it refused to participate any longer in these ritualised performances and accelerated the system collapse.

More than just singing from the same hymn sheet: Nashi

New possibilities for independent activities in the Komsomol undermined its social position and illustrated the delegitimisation of the Soviet Union's political leadership. The establishment of pro-Kremlin organisations such as Nashi or Molodaya Gvardiya (Young Guard) in the 2000s illustrates that the leadership drew lessons from this recent past.[17] Moreover, Russia's authorities learnt their lesson from the youth-empowered political change that coloured the post-Soviet space by 2004 and understood that it must get a stronger grip on youth. The organisational integration of youth accompanied a transformation of the public image of youth. Echoing Soviet ideas, the leadership glorified youth for assuring Russia's righteous political development. I argue, therefore, that Nashi was so successful after the Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution' because it provided new meaning to, and a sense of belonging for, a generation socialised during the tumultuous transition period after the Soviet Union's breakdown.

Prior to the 'Colour Revolutions' *molodezhnie organizatsii* (youth organisations) were merely of symbolic value. Idushchie vmeste (Walking Together) was created in 2001 just after Putin came to power, but by 2004 Vladimir Yakemenko's pro-Kremlin group had little credibility as many of its actions were considered distasteful. Its influence was limited and the organisation lost support.[18] Moreover, its ideological basis – 'Putin is our president and

he is always right' as summarised by National Strategy Institute Vice President Viktor Militarev – was deemed too narrow and weak.[19] On 1 March 2005 Nashi succeeded Idushchie vmeste and hit the ground running.[20] Yakemenko remained the uncontested leader, backed up by influential people in the Kremlin, notably Vladislav Surkov, who was at the time chief consultant to Putin. Surkov monitored this new movement, which reiterated his official description of the Russian political system as a 'sovereign democracy'.[21]

Nashi's manifesto revolves around two missions and formalised the movement's mission for the public.[22] First, preventing western powers from penetrating in Russia, and second, bringing about generational renewal. Andrei Fursenko attended the inaugural meeting and emphasised: 'You have to be competitive, to be victorious, successful people, in a successful country.'[23] Darwinist principles applied to the realm of international relations and ideas of risk and encirclement dominate the document: 'The weak should adopt the rules of the game from the strong, follow their path in world politics and culturally assimilate. You are leader, follower, or victim.' Nashi is portrayed as a legitimate response to omnipresent external and internal threats. Naturally, Nashi understands itself as potent for fighting these enemies which unite in an 'unnatural union' (a lively mixture ranging from westernisers to ultranationalists, fascists and liberals).

The idea of a generational renewal is the basis of the manifesto's second axis, 'Our Revolution', emphasising the need to replace the generation of 'bureaucratic-defeatists' from the 1980s who 'lost faith in Russia'. Central for 'the revolution in content but not in form' is the generational rhetoric which is to put an end to the shameful 1990s. Functionaries older than 30–35 years are considered to be '*porazhenets* [defeatists], who could not guarantee Russia's leadership in the world'.[24] This abuse integrates needs for political stability, which only Putin can assure, with calls for 'the energy of youth' to modernise the country and protect Putin from internal and external enemies. The manifesto therefore conveys a dual idea of revolution, navigating between the continuity of central leadership and a break with the system failures of the past.

By 2005 Nashi maintained close links with the political establishment. Putin invited representatives to the presidential residence in Zavidovo and told them that Nashi is 'a shining example of civil society'.[25] The highest political leaders also joined Nashi at its Seliger youth camps,[26] where the threat of the 'Colour Revolutions' was a leitmotif.[27] Gleb Pavlovsky most bluntly illustrated this hostility: 'If the "orange revolutionaries" stick their wet noses out of the underground in Moscow, the presidential administration will volley on these noses from all its gun barrels. A bullet will be driven into the foreheads of these rotten liberal vermin.'[28]

The main task of Nashi in these early years was to express support and add legitimacy to Putin's political project and disperse spectres of

'Orange dynamics'. Central for this were historic references. Old wine in new bottles: parades served as the main vector of commemoration, however, unlike in Soviet times, these parades were multimedia happenings. Nashi's entrance onto the public stage overwhelmingly followed this pattern. Between 50,000 and 60,000 members, in addition to around 1,000 veterans, were on Moscow's streets on 15 May 2005 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the *velikaya otechestvennaya voina*. Wartime songs set the pace for Nashi's first significant public action. The Russian tricolour and Nashi flags added colour to the march,[29] flying above the marchers' uniforms of white shirts with a red star, the dates of the *velikaya voina* (1941–1945) and the inscription *Nasha pobeda* (Our Victory) on the front, and Russia's national anthem on the back.[30] Medals in the shape of shell casings with the inscription 'Remember the war, protect the motherland!'[31] highlighted historic continuity, as veterans passed them on to the youth.[32] The event emphasised the importance of the struggle against fascism 60 years earlier, and linked it with the fight against Nashi's definition of 'contemporary fascism'. The commemoration equated current youth with those who defended the Soviet Union. 'Today we are all 18 years old,' shouted Yakemenko.[33] As a symbol of continuity and the passing on of responsibility, he stressed: 'You defended our country on the battlefield – we will save it in the classroom, workshops, and offices.'[34]

Commemorations of the war framed youth as being a permanent societal vanguard. The equalising of the fight against contemporary 'fascism' and the successful resistance to fascism 60 years earlier pulled history into the present and made its lessons applicable in 2005. Preserving the 'truthful' memory implied support for Russia's leadership. Even the progressive newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* admitted: 'it is impressive when a crowd of sixty-thousand fills a square'.[35] Attempts to oppose this dominance remained at the margins of public attention.[36] Given Nashi's display of loyalty and strength, *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* stressed: 'Supporters and manages of "orange revolutions" should think before becoming active in Russia. It seems that the revolution will not be according to the colours conceived by the distant scriptwriters. It will be red and white.'[37]

Despite enthusiastic support for the leadership, Sergey Mironov, chairman of the Federation Council, expressed worries about Nashi. In 2005 he underlined that it remains an open question what would happen to the movement's power if the country's political situation changed: 'Now it seems beyond doubt that the motives are sincere. But what if something changes? Where will this force be directed to? Against whom and for what? This is a big question.'[38] Mironov also argued that the political elite 'inflates the threat of the Orange Revolution in Russia and is simply eager to move youth on its side and to use it as cannon fodder for street fights'. He perceived Nashi as a risk that splits youth into 'nashikh' and 'ne nashikh' ('our' and 'not-our').[39]

Indeed, a number of activities obliged the Kremlin to distance itself from the organisation. Amongst them was the embarrassing display of excessive patriotism during the 2010 Seliger Camp, which the forum's business partners received with irritation.[40] As part of 'Zdes' vam ne rady' (You are not welcome here), Nashi's radical wing, Stal' (Steel), desecrated effigies of prominent opposition activists and human rights defenders with Nazi insignia.[41] These 'ocherniteli rodiny' (traitors of the motherland) included Eduard Limonov, Lyudmila Alekseeva, Boris Nemtsov and Michail Saakashvili, and they were awarded the 'falsification' prize, for their 'betrayal' of Russian interests. The control over youth was deceptive.[42]

The selling of *Kommersant* toilet rolls for 10–50 roubles represented another instance of failed control of pro-Kremlin youth – printed on them an allegedly signed editor's word and other articles. This was a demonstration of 'revenge' for the movement's negative press coverage – but with it Nashi breached several laws. The protest was larger than stated in the application, the 'Kommersant' logo was used without permission, and the articles distributed under the name of the chief editor qualified as spreading lies.[43]

These examples illustrate the extent to which Nashi activities are beyond the Kremlin's immediate control and probably also against the interest of at least some in the political establishment.[44] During Medvedev's presidency the movement became less publicly exposed and went through a number of reforms. Change accelerated in 2011, once Surkov was replaced by Vyacheslav Volodin, who took issue with the divide amongst youth that Nashi had created. His aim was to build a more inclusive umbrella organisation also by splitting Nashi into different projects. Khryushi protiv (Piglets Against),[45] Stop kham (Stop Boor)[46] and the fitness movement Begi za mnoi (Follow Me) were all explicitly concerned with different social evils and avoided the potentially dividing topic of politics.

The demonstrations against the falsified elections in December 2011 underlined that Nashi had seen its best days. Yakemenko expressed great nostalgia for the heights of mobilisation in 2005, which was a stark contrast to the small group defending the election results in 2011.[47] Volodin's reforms put an end to Nashi as Yakemenko and Surkov had conceived it and transformed the organisation into a web of activities seemingly loyal to Volodin. Youth is now less expected to loudly express its political adoration of Putin. Moreover, the Kremlin drew lessons from the problems of a centralised movement and the criticism that was made of Nashi by offering youth various skills and ways to improve their self-esteem, rather than being purely anti-western. The infiltration is subtle, with a highly captivating mix of entertainment and education, judging by recent reports about the annual Seliger camps.[48] These turned into an annual forum for assembling youth from Russia and beyond, offering education into topics as diverse as history, leadership and economics.

This analysis of pro-regime youth mobilisation emphasises that it is simplistic to conceive youth as being in exclusive support of the political system. Nashi and the Komsomol were complex and constantly evolving structures, which must be replaced in their political context. In the Soviet era, the Komsomol served as a critical symbol for the leadership's legitimacy. The official image created in political discourse differed considerably from young people's experience of it. During the Soviet Union's last years the Komsomol increasingly failed to nurture an unconditionally loyal youth. Indeed, whilst youth continued to subscribe and participate, structures inside the Komsomol itself emerged which young people could appropriate for exploring practices that appeared subversive to the leadership. Once Gorbachev attempted to revitalise the organisation, young people during glasnost publicly expressed their disapproval of participating in the relict. Nashi, to the contrary, symbolises the successful integration of young people into the official ideology, in spite of the need for the Kremlin to counteract occasional over-affirmative tendencies, which led to an unsolicited radicalisation. When it seemed credible that the political system could be under strain by political youth opposition, the Kremlin mounted a supportive organisation to publicly legitimise the regime.

Rebels with a cause? Youth in opposition

What political role did oppositional youth movements play in moments of crisis? What did they strive for? I argue that the perestroika-era *neformaly* illustrate how youth gradually left the realm of leisure activities and spoke out on an ever wider range of socio-political topics. This increased its importance in the political arena; young people were portrayed as a barometer for the general mood across society and as a vanguard for driving change. In the period since late 2004, however, oppositional youth mobilisation is extremely varied but youth fails to assume a role of societal vanguard – its activism is contingent upon external stimuli and does not express a coherent vision for Russia beyond rejecting the state of affairs.

Inspiring political change: *Neformaly*

Neformaly are those groups outside of the Komsomol which attracted many young people during perestroika (Shubin, 2006, p. 16).[49] Yet even their pursuit of personal interests, like listening to 'Western' music or using the first computers, brought these young people in conflict with the authorities (Riordan, 1988; Fain, 1990). Conservative members of the establishment interpreted such behaviour as being bourgeois and a politically motivated contestation of the Komsomol.[50] Generational tensions turned into a perestroika *leitmotif*.[51] The rapid expansion of *neformaly* encouraged

older leaders and ordinary citizens to become involved, and mobilisation subsequently lost its characteristic as a specific youth contestation.

Juris Podnieks's documentary *Legko li byt' molodym?* (Is it Easy to be Young?) expresses the extent to which the awakening of youth and the generational drifting apart preoccupied Soviet society by 1987. Though Podnieks initially wanted to make a film about the hopes and dreams of youth, he eventually captured their disillusion with socialist ideals, an expression of a sharp and polemic rejection of Soviet society. This hit the pulse of the time and spread across the USSR, and furthered the already visible generational divide.[52] *Neformaly* multiplied,[53] though many held multiple memberships and were part of the Komsomol at the same time.[54] In addition to uncountable small groups, the anarchical student union Obshchina (Community) or the nationalist movement Pamyat' (Remembering) created a substantive media echo.

In the fall of 1987 the internal structure of *neformaly* also evolved as older leaders joined in. This encouraged the groups to act more self-consciously and formulate explicit political demands and concepts in light of the changing political reality. It was the opening of a new phase of youth mobilisation, characterised by unprecedented themes, participants' fever, commitment and enthusiasm:

> Three sleepless nights were spent drawing up appeals, drafts, and petitions, and sorting through the complex twists and turns of a polemical struggle could not but have an effect. And there it was. It was Sunday, so their weary faces caused understanding smiles from subway passengers. It was all over [...] [b]ut everything was just beginning.[55]

The sociologist Kataev tried to integrate the diversity of youth gatherings around sports, heavy metal music, break dance and rock music into a Marxist analytical frame (1986). Sundiev dismissed *neformaly* as 'emotional compensation' of those who 'experience a severe lack in opportunities for interaction' (1989, p. 59). The released civil forces touched every aspect of Soviet society: culture, ecology, law and economics. Perestroika provided new opportunities for social and political activism, and what distinguished this phase from others was its being subject to press coverage. Journalists retained in particular the emerging civic debates: 'They argued everywhere. They argued in small-groups and in the general meetings. They argued in the meeting rooms and in the corridors. They argued in the cafeteria, hastily downing sandwiches to satisfy their polemical hunger.'[56]

Mobilisation did not merely reject the existing order but suggested what and where change should occur. Viktor Zolotarev, a participant at the October 1987 coordination meeting, emphasised a 'new desire to participate directly and personally in the process of social improvement'.[57] The group known as Miloserdie (Compassion) proposed for instance extended forms of

economic self-management and tried to provide material, financial and spiritual assistance to pensioners or veterans.[58] There were innumerable similar groups, and one of the first coordination meetings in Moscow was attended by representatives of 47 *molodezhnykh obedinenii*.[59]

Mobilisation was still limited, however, by the legacy of suspicion which continued to characterise relations between the state and these groups. This legacy contributed to a negative image of mobilisation, shaped by the old anxiety about 'extremism'. Gleb Pavlovsky, a member of the Council of the Klub sotsial'nykh initsiativ (*KSI*, Club of Social Initiatives), deplored the 'extremist struggle against extremism'.[60]

Some officials began to give credibility to *neformaly*, confirming that they contributed to transforming society. Yuri Lyubtsev, head of the Communist Party's propaganda department in Kazakhstan, stated:

> These youth associations [...] have a common idea – participation in the transformation of society. It is difficult to foretell which of today's young leaders will become political and state leaders. [...] Their energy makes one take an optimistic, rather than a pessimistic view of the future. Many of these youngsters are people who are potentially ready to give society new concepts and new ideas.[61]

In May 1988 Ronald Reagan visited the Soviet Union and his appearance at Moscow State University (the trip's 'centrepiece') was aimed at encouraging 'the forces of change now unleashed'.[62] He discussed the importance of freedom and democracy and illustrated the role of young people for enduring transformations: 'Your generation is living in one of the most exciting, hopeful times in Soviet history. It is a time when the first breath of freedom stirs the air and the hearts beat to the accelerated rhythm of hope, when the accumulated spiritual energies of a long silence yearn to break free' (Reagan, 1988, pp. 67–68).

The 'Moscow Spring' – as Reagan described it – was also manifest in the audience and its reactions. Though the Komsomol probably selected the audience for the event, the western press nevertheless stated: 'laughter and applause seemed heartfelt'.[63] Significantly, this visit provided new space for mobilisation. Protected by the presence of hundreds of journalists, members of *neformaly* could march along the capital's streets, and the militia let them pass. A crackdown, as had occurred during the anti-Stalin demonstrations on 5 March 1988, was too great a risk for the summit's atmosphere. This success helped to increase the degree of self-organisation within *neformaly*. Once established, the new level of organisation strengthened opportunities and structures for political mobilisation.

One of the immediate results of Reagan's visit was the emergence of a Moscow equivalent to London's Hyde Park, which the city's prosecutor Lev Baranov brought up prior to the Moscow summit:[64] 'On Pushkin Square,

which has become Moscow's equivalent of Hyde Park corner, young people are daily contesting the official Soviet version of historical events and even questioning the one-party state.'[65] Students quickly made use of this more relaxed atmosphere and staged demonstrations in front of the building of *Izvestiya* (Brovkin, 1990, p. 235).

During 1988 official attitudes towards political mobilisation changed. Moscow police officials received order neither to interfere with street demonstrations nor to detain protestors.[66] Disarray nevertheless characterised protests as the rules of the game were being renegotiated, leaving police without clear guidance as to how to react. Also the protestors were not yet certain about cleavages amongst them. The XIX Party Conference of the CPSU opened in this atmosphere of transformation driven by the engagement of young people.

When Gorbachev affirmed his desire for change, horizons of expectations of social actors widened as socio-political change seemed increasingly likely. There were good reasons to get involved in the public sphere and the leadership's responsiveness encouraged popular demands.[67] Perceived as legitimate and effective, youth-initiated mobilisation expanded beyond youth. Driven by publicly exposed figures such as the physicist Andrei Sakharov, the historian Yuri Afanasyev, the human-rights activist Lev Timofey and the *Ogonek* editor Vitali Korotich, the youth-ignited contestation was brought onto a different scale: mobilisation was no longer primarily geared towards rejecting the 'old generation' but rejecting the 'old system', which provided a trans-generational cause. Once adults began to supersede the position of youth as the driving force for political, economic and social change, youth gradually lost its position as the core subject of politics and, in the years to follow, was marginalised. The symbolic capital of youth seemed indeed exhausted after having been overstrained during the Soviet period.

The many shades of contemporary youth opposition

Following the overthrow of Yanukovich's government in Ukraine in 2004, the question arose as to what Russian youth had achieved.[68] 'A main lesson drawn from the "Orange Revolution" was for Russian politicians that the street played a decisive role when it comes to real confrontation, and not political technologists.'[69] The group Idushchie bez Putina (Walking without Putin), a distortion of the pro-Kremlin Idushchie vmeste, imported the 'orange atmosphere' in December 2004. The Petersburg-based blogger Mikhail Obozov created the movement along with one friend, though journalists claimed that they were joined by 'several hundred people', describing them as 'the Russian version of the 'Orange Revolution'.[70] Irrespective of its actual size, the Russian regime felt threatened, since a youth-led government overthrow appeared plausible given the international context. Obozov was

arrested after unfolding a 'Walking without Putin' poster in front of a rally by the group Edinaya Rossiya (United Russia) in February 2005.[71]

With some friends from the Moscow Institute of International Relations, Roman Dobrokhotov transformed Idushchie bez Putina into 'My!' (We!) in April 2005. They gained visibility trying to occupy Moscow's Red Square with orange balloons. Media described Dobrokhotov as 'official distributor of the "Orange Revolution" in Russia'.[72] Despite the group's size – by 2005 not more than 30 members – journalists granted excessive attention to its efforts to sensitise the population to the importance of democratic values.[73] Oborona (Defence) attempted to simultaneously unify the dispersed liberal movements,[74] and some media argued that Oborona could mobilise 5,000 young people in less than six months, a blatant exaggeration retrospectively, which indicates nevertheless the expectations that the movement created.[75]

Ilya Yashin, the prominent leader of Yabloko youth, reiterated the idea of a new generation which no longer conformed to the previous apathetic and disaffected one but was genuinely interested in politics.[76] This oppositional youth put itself in continuity with European traditions of youth resistance, notably the 1968 French student riots: this link amplified images of youth as a democratising and revolutionary force, which the media took up.[77] This picture of youth opposition was colourful though composed of a tiny fraction of Russia's youth. In this respect Russia is probably no exception to 'the West', with the vast majority pursuing their own interests. Those young people who try to be politically heard, reject first and foremost the political regime, which leads to the 'unnatural alliances' Nashi refers to. The democratic movements in particular suffer from the lack of elite impulses since the Russian democrats lack a credible party, a spokesperson and a specific relationship with the Russian public (Hale, 2011). The left-wing and right-wing movements are radicalised. Whereas the political left is weakened due to marginalisation by the state, the extreme right in Russia has turned into a central player with a blurred relationship to the Kremlin. Nevertheless, the need to position oneself to the state, and this is specific for the situation in Russia, is conducive to porous boundaries between all these movements (Kozhevnikova, February 2006; April 2007).[78]

The small fraction of democratic movements in Russia realised that they could best amplify their voice through mocking the authorities and in theatricised mobilising events. Whilst this ensured media attention, the carnivalesque mobilisation came at a significant cost. Current oppositional activity fails to develop an independent political agenda or to express a message beyond the simple rejection of the state of affairs. A case in point is the group My!, for example when members stood with empty white posters near Moscow's White House – a reminder of a Soviet *anekdot* about a Soviet citizen distributing white leaflets without saying anything. As a result, he

had trouble with the forces of order and so had Dobrokhotov as representative of My!.[79] Simply stating that you are against the regime might lead to short imprisonment – their opposition lacked content, as even *Kommersant* admitted, but still led to five days in prison.[80]

In a similarly ironic tone, My! reacted to Nashi's glorification of the Soviet past with a 'Back to the USSR' protest in 2010. Equipped with Soviet flags (and orange scarves), members took the conventional route to commemorate the victory in Moscow, but marched the other way around, shouting 'Give us Censorship' or 'Putin our Leader'. Under a veil of irony the movement underlined its contempt for Nashi's interpretation of the past and its activities. The humour hides frustration and anxiety about Russia's sliding back into Soviet-style leadership.[81]

At the political left, Avangard Krasnoi Molodezhi (AKM) (Vanguard of Red Youth) is the most radical group.[82] Its violent actions get media attention and therefore contribute to the way that youth is constructed as threat. Members take the risks of being beaten up by the police or fascist groups, or injury due to hazardous actions, for instance when AKM members climbed the Ivan the Great bell tower in Moscow, unfolding a banner 'Putin, pora ukhodit!' (Putin, it's time to leave!).[83] In 2005 AKM caught public attention through a number of actions related to the commemoration of the *velikaya voina*. The close surveillance of the event included 'preventive measures', that is, the prior arrest of activists. The leader Sergei Udaltsov was detained a week in advance, without any explanation. The police closely monitored the eventually authorised communist rally along Leningrad Prospekt and the nationalist Dvizhenie protiv nelegalnoy immigratsii (DPNI) (Movement against Illegal Immigration) joined the commemoration march, holding flags with swastikas near AKM flags.[84] Around 20 youths infiltrated the Nashi crowd with anti-Nashi banners, trying to embarrass the movement,[85] with a 'protest against Nashi'.[86] However, this did not amount to much since activists were quickly arrested.[87]

Amongst innumerable splinter groups, especially DPNI spreads right-wing violence (Umland, 2005; Laruelle, 2009a; 2009b). Since 2002 Aleksandr Potkin's DPNI movement has been a potent and vocal actor and the far right's central player,[88] with nationwide presence.[89] Its success draws on the lack of a well-elaborated ideology, which reduces internal tensions (Laruelle, 2009a, p. 74). It gravitates around the 'Islamist threat' or the 'Yellow peril' and a language adapted to the strong anti-immigrant views in society, less using the language of xenophobia and anti-Semitism (Kozhevnikova, February 2006). DPNI enjoys great success amongst the youth;[90] official estimates refer to 'several thousand' members and it has preserved a flexible organisational structure (Obshhestvennaya Palata, 2008, p. 53).

DPNI is not easily classified as an opposition movement. Potkin seems generally loyal to Putin and frequently presents himself as political

advisor to the Kremlin (Laruelle, 2009a, p. 77),[91] which caused tensions amongst the rank and file. Members accused him of collaboration and spreading lies about right-wing radicals. The conflict turned public in 2007 when Natsional-sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo (National Socialist Movement) leader Dmitry Rumyantsev allegedly hit Potkin and accused him of financial dishonesty. However, showing distance from the Kremlin, DPNI's leader stated in 2006 that the organisation opposed the 'caste society [that] is developing in Russia. The bureaucracy is at the top and members of this caste are connected by marriage and business dealings. Our society cannot fight illegal immigration, or anything at all, as long as this situation persists.'[92]

The movement's visibility is helped by the general presence of nationalist music, for instance 'Britogolovye idut' (Go Skinhead), which is easily available on the internet and which some shops prominently display. Most important for these young people is the *svyatoe* (sacred) homeland, though, according to liberal journalists, most have no idea what that actually means.[93] Yet they have no doubt about its implications: hatred of enemies. The absence of paperwork and boring bureaucracy help in the success of these movements to attract young people, who are often also fascinated by the possibility of realising their desire to fight (Pilkington, 2010).

In the authoritarian 'sovereign democracy' political youth beyond state-sponsored institutions became radicalised in its rejection of the status quo. Youth mobilisation has therefore been intimately interlinked with governmental policies. Some youth took up the revolutionary call of the Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution' and tried to spread liberal democratic ideas in Russia. Their adoption of new techniques of mobilisation initially captured public attention. However, with time passing and few results, mobilisation, as well as the interest of the public, shrunk to the point that 'youth movements' became largely irrelevant for Russian politics.

Young people were important during the 'Russian Winter' but they protested alongside adults who opposed Putin's system. Similarly, during the few demonstrations against Russia's 2014 interference in Ukraine, youth did not speak up distinctively as youth; rather, the absence of democratic youth movements is striking. Similarly, youth participated in demonstrations after the falsified legislative and presidential elections in 2011–2012, but movements which spoke up explicitly in the name of youth did not matter. The groups My! and Oborona vanished as their protagonists outgrew the status of 'youth'. Two of the most exposed youth leaders of 2005, Dobrokhotov and Yashin, are still opposition politicians,[94] but neither of them speaks any longer for youth, and new youth leaders have not emerged. Beyond individual transitions, this development points to a disillusion with the 'youth-driven' change of 'Colour Revolutions'. The young people who still get involved do so alongside the older generation and the discourse of generational conflict lost its currency.

Conclusion: Deceived vanguard and silenced rebels

This chapter has dismantled how the politically involved part of Russia's youth made itself heard during key episodes. In this diachronic perspective I underlined that youth is hardly accounted for by the idea of idealistic political vanguard. Instead, it is important to unravel its contradictory and complex political involvement. During the perestroika and in contemporary Russia, the engagement of young people mattered for the political course, also because youth amplified political developments on the elite level.

The fall of the vanguard of socialist progress was a striking manifestation of the country's crisis already before perestroika. The Komsomol's failures were publicly visible and discussed earlier than many other signs of disintegration. By 1988 *Argumenty i Fakty* understood western-oriented youth behaviour and its mobilisation in *neformaly* as a 'mirror for society'.[95] Such representations amplified its importance and exposed a need for reform which the youth drove. The symbolic importance of youth had vanished as the leadership failed to maintain the social importance of participating in the Komsomol. Youth as socialist vanguard disappeared which constituted a crack for the political system's legitimacy, since youth enjoyed such a prominence in the Soviet Union's symbolic space.

Reactions of the contemporary Russian leadership to the 'Colour Revolutions' underline that lessons have been learnt of the late Soviet experience. Confronted with youth-driven changes in some post-Soviet countries and the simultaneous emergence of home-grown opposition to the Kremlin, the political leadership embarked on a path which eventually consolidated the authoritarian regime. The mobilisation of Nashi translated Russia's new ideological consensus, sovereign democracy, from abstract ideology into palpable reality for citizens. Youth loudly carried this into the world, and with the achievement of political stability youth mobilisation disappeared again, from headlines and streets. At the same time, those rebels visible in the political sphere were subsequently silenced and are now confined to the margins of Russian society. Though the rebels this time do not lack a cause, their contestation is not enough to turn them into a vanguard for political and social change.

Notes

1. Amongst many: Youth movement underlies the opposition in Ukraine, *New York Times*, 28 November 2004; From west to east, rolling revolution gathers pace across the former USSR, *The Times*, 19 February 2005; Is newly liberated Kiev the next Prague? *New York Times*, 3 April 2005; Young democracy guerrillas join forces: From Belgrade to Baku, activists gather to swap notes on how to topple dictators, in: *The Guardian*, 06 June 2005.
2. In Ukraine, homegrown freedom, in: *The Washington Post*, 04 December 2004.

3. Although the idea of youth as a societal vanguard is beyond doubt older, it became the dominant interpretation in the context of the French 'May 68' triggered by contemproary sociological writings (see Joussellin, 1968; Sauvy, 1970).
4. The term *neformaly* distinguishes from the formalism of official youth groups and the lack of an official status. Alternatively, *neformal'nie ob'edineniya molodezhi* [informal associations of youth] or *samodeyatel'nie ob'edineniya molodezhi* [independent associations of youth]. A vy kto takie, in: *Pravda* 30 March 1987.
5. Low turnout rates contribute to the ignorance of youth by politicians during the 1990s (Colton, 2000, p. 118).
6. Introduced in July 2012 as draft law by *Edinaya Rossiya*, O vnesenii izmennenii v otdel'nye zakonodatel'nye akty Rossiiskoi Federatsii v chasti regulirovaniya deyatel'nosti nekommercheskikh organisatsii, vypolnyayushchikh funktsii inostrannogo agenta, http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/main.nsf/%28SpravkaNew%29?OpenAgent&RN=102766–6&02, date accessed 03 June 2014.
7. Yunost' rodiny – Komsomol, in: *Izvestiya*, 29 May 1984.
8. O dal'neishem uluchshenii partiinogo rukovodstva komsomolom i povyshenii ego roli v kommunisticheskom vospitanii molodezhi, in: *Pravda*, 07 July 1984.
9. Molodym idti dal'she, in: *Izvestiya*, 08 July 1984.
10. Vo vremya vrucheniya nagrady, in: *Izvestiya*, 29 May 1984.
11. Yunost' rodiny – Komsomol, in: *Izvestiya*, 29 May 1984.
12. Party resolution: O dal'neishem uluchshenii partiinogo rukovodstva komsomolom i povyshenii ego roli v kommunisticheskom vospitanii molodezhi, in: *Pravda*, 07 July 1984.
13. Yunost' rodiny – Komsomol, in: *Izvestiya*, 29 May 1984.
14. Soviet youth league falls on difficult times, in: *The New York Times*, 07 February 1982.
15. Russia's restless youth, in: *The New York Times*, 29 July 1987.
16. Molodezh' – tvorcheskaya sila revolyutsionnogo obnovleniya, in: *Pravda*, 17 April 1987.
17. The contemporary organisations are therefore all but reincarnations of the Komsomol, unlike what media coverage suggested, cf. Budet li v Rossii oranzhevaya revolyutsiya?, in: In Argumenty i Fakty, 16 March 2005; Vasilii Yakemenko: Ya pokhozh na Khodorkovskogo, in: *Kommersant'*, 11 July 2005; Sovetskii renessans?, in Ogonek, 01 January 2007, 'Nasha' armiya, in: *Ogonek*, 19 March 2007. An analogy also prominent in western press coverage: Preempting politics in Russia, in: *The Washington Post*, 25 July 2005; Putin: How worried; Focus, in: *The Sunday Times* 10 June 2007; Die Schreihälse des Präsidenten, in: *Financial Times Deutschland*, 14 June 2007; Putin's children Russian protests II, in: *International Herald Tribune*, 06 July 2007; Youth groups created by Kremlin serve Putin's cause in the streets, in: *The New York Times*, 08 July 2007; Cadre's campfire song to Russia, in: *Financial Times* (FT.Com), 18 July 2007; Kremljugend trifft Investoren, in: *Financial Times Deutschland*, 19 July 2011.
18. Sorokov expressed disgust about the campaign against Vladimir Sorokin's 'pornographic' novels and the destruction of his books. The diffusion of pornographic material by one of the members added to problems (Schmid, 2006, p. 71) and the movement was a public relation disaster. See: Obyknovennyi 'Nashizm', in: *Kommersant'*, 21 February 2005.
19. Cited in: Russia: 'A youth movement needs a leader', in: *Radio Free Europe*, 21 April 2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058597.html, date accessed 03 June 2014.

20. *Idushchie vmeste* was quickly forgotten: Idushchie vmeste poidut za Tarakanovym, in: *Kommersant'*, 11 May 2005.
21. For example: Vladislav Surkov razvel demokratiyu, in: *Kommersant'*, 29 June 2006, echoed in Nashi's manifesto published in: *Izvestiya*, 15 April 2005.
22. Rossiya – megaproekt nazhego poloeniya. Manifest, in: *Izvestiya*, 15 April 2005.
23. The presence of the Minister of Education and Science underlines the official backing of Nashi. Fursenko had, moreover, personal reasons to be concerned about politicised youth after having been egged by members of AKM: Novoe politicheskoe pololenie, in: *Vedemosti*, 05 April 2005.
24. Chinovnikam-porazhentsam gotovyat smenu, in: *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 27 May 2005.
25. Audientsiya: Vladimir Putin pozazhigal so svoimi, in: *Kommersant'*, 27 July 2005.
26. In 2005 the first Lake Seliger camp attracted 3,000 participants from 45 regions in Russia who got training in survival under extreme conditions and political theory. Amongst prominent speakers at the camp figured Gleb Pavlosky, Sergei Markov and Vladislav Surkov. Pavlosky underlined his vision for Nashi: 'You do not have enough stiffness. You should be able to disperse the fascist demonstrations and physically resist attempts of an anti-constitutional coup', cf. Gosti. 'Nashi' dlya putina svoi, in: *Gazeta*, 27 July 2005.
27. Komissary seligera, in: *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 15 July 2005.
28. U poslednei cherty, in: *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 12 April 2005.
29. The Nashi flag is red with the white St Andrew's cross.
30. 'Nashim' razdali gil'zy, in: *Vremya Novostei*, 16 May 2005.
31. 'Antifashistkoe' nashestvie, in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 16 May 2005.
32. Whether veterans knew what they participated in is doubtful as the Moscow Region Veterans Council branded the event as a simple meeting with the youth, cf. Triumf voli, in: *Kommersant'*, 16 May 2005.
33. 'Antifashistkoe' nashestvie, in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 16 May 2005.
34. Many rank and file internalised this discourse: 'I am a free citizen of Russia, today we (Nashi) accept to take our home out of the hands of the older generation. I swear that Russia will never accept new colonists and invaders, there is simply no space for neo-fascists and their allies.' Triumf voli, in: *Kommersant'*, 16 May 2005.
35. Denezhnaya masse, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 19 May 2005.
36. For instance, *Idushchie bez Putina* leader Mikhail Obozov reported to have thrown a Nashi T-shirt into St Petersburg's eternal flame, shouting 'Nashism is not going to pass!' Mironov nashel rabotu Putinu, in: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 March 2005.
37. Krasno-belaya revolyutsiya, in: *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 20 May 2005.
38. Mironov nashel rabotu Putinu, in: *Nezavisimaja Gazeta*, 17 March 2005.
39. Sergei Mironov pereshel v oppositsiyu 'Nashim', in: *Kommersant'*, 27 August 2005.
40. 'Seliger' ishchet sponsorov, in: *Izvestiya*, 10 April 2012.
41. Zdes' mogli by byt' vashi golovy!, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 13 September 2010.
42. Ekaterina Pol'gueva: Inkubator nenavisti, in: *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 31 July 2010.
43. 'Likuyushchaya ropota' v gostyakh u 'Kommersanta', in: *Kommersant'*, 03 May 2008.
44. Also the brutal beating of the oppositional journalist Oleg Kashin in 2010, when he almost died, stretched what the Kremlin would want the movement to do, cf. Yakemenko vs Kashin, in: *Interfax*, 25 March 2011, http://www.interfax.ru/russia/182899, date accessed 03 June 2014.

45. Its members dress up as pigs and report about food with expired shelf life in supermarkets.
46. The movement says it fights traffic-code violations and uncivilised behaviour on the roads.
47. Kreml' otkazhetsya ot 'Nashikh', in: *Vedomosti*, 05 March 2013. Yakemenko stated in 2012 that Nashi is going to be 'disbanded': 'Nashikh' zakryvayut, in: *Gazeta.ru*, 06 April 2012, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2012/04/06_a_4151693.shtml, date accessed 03 June 2014.
48. See Kristina Silvan's report: http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/kristina-silvan/seductive-power-of-seliger, date accessed 03 June 2014.
49. Cf. FN 4.
50. For instance: A vy kto takie, in: *Pravda*, 30 March 1987, similarly Pochemy timur utopil portfel?, in: *Pravda*, 14 December 1987 or Reader's request in Bol'she prav – vyshe otvetstvennost', in: *Argumenty i Fakty*, 09 December 1986.
51. Mysli lezut v golovy, in: *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 04 May 1988.
52. Razbitye stekla Jurisa Podnieksa, in: *Ogonek*, 04 April 1987.
53. In December 1987 Pravda spoke of more than 30,000: Demokratiya i initsiativa, in: *Pravda*, 27 December 1987 and in February 1989 of more than 60,000: Demokratiya ne terpit demagogii, in: *Pravda*, 10 February 1989. Most were young (Petro, 1991, p. 103).
54. Soviet youth league falls on difficult times, in: *The New York Times*, 07 February 1988.
55. Proshchanie s bazarovym, in: *Ogonek*, 05 September 1987.
56. Idem.
57. Idem.
58. Similar groups are Sotsial'nyi mir (Social World), holding events to foster social cohesion, or Grazhdanskoe dostoinstvo (Civic Virtue) assisting in the detection, elimination and publicising of bureaucratic mistakes.
59. Neformal'no o neformalakh, in: *Moskovskie novosti*, 13 September 1987.
60. Idem. KSI was amongst the most influential progressive associations, led by Pavlovsky, Boris Kagarlitsky and Michail Malyutin (Igrunov, 1988). It aimed to function as an overarching coordination body for the multiple left-wing groups, provide a coherent ideological base and conduct some research on the history of Russia's political left.
61. Neformal'no o neformalakh, in: *Moskovskie novosti*, 13 September 1987.
62. Moscow Summit: President charms students, but his ideas lack converts, in: *The New York Times*, 01 June 1988. Similarly, White House planners saw this as a most important element 'to reach out to the Soviet people' and 'encourage the forces of change unleashed by Gorbachev' (Whelan, 1990, p. 44).
63. Moscow Summit: Gorbachev voices irritation at slow pace of missile talks; Reagan impresses Soviet elite, in: *The New York Times*, 01 June 1988. Being selected was, however, disputed by some: Moscow Summit: President charms students, but his ideas lack converts, in: *The New York Times*, 01 June 1988.
64. Proposal to set up speaker's corner in Moscow, in: *Reuters News*, 23 March 1988.
65. Gorbachev greats up for his make-or-break test, in: *The Times*, 25 June 1988.
66. Yuri Mityunov, an organiser of protests, illustrates the spillover: 'At first we thought it was a show for the summer, but the summit is over and the police still leave us alone. Now we hope it is a small step toward democracy in our country.' See: In Moscow, tolerance of protests, in: *The New York Times*, 08 June 1988.

67. Without suggesting that mobilisation was generally accepted or without personal risks as western press testifies: Fledgling party struggles for a voice as official crack-down intensifies, in: *The Times*, 29 August 1988; Political groups emerge despite official repression, in: *The Times*, 21 August 1989.
68. Sodruzhestvo. Ded moroz oranzhevoi revolyutsii, in: *Novie Izvestiya*, 15 December 2004.
69. Svezhaya krov', in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 28 February 2005; Nashi idei nashli pod-derzhku v sosednei strane, in: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 December 2004; Edinrossy boyatsya 'oranzhevoi revolyutsii' i sozdadut dlya ee predotvrashcheniya 'massovoe dvizhenie', in: *Kommersant'*, 24 December 2004.
70. Politicheskaya sreda. 'Idushchie' bez Putina, in: *Rossiskie Vesti*, 19 January 2005.
71. V Sankt-Peterburge zaderzhali 'Idushchego bez Putina', in: *Izvestiya*, 14 February 2005.
72. Tema nomera. Partii zelenykh, in: *Ogonek*, 10 October 2005.
73. As stated in its manifesto which was available at the now suspended website www.wefree.ru.
74. Aktivnaya 'Oborona', in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 04 April 2005.
75. Russia: Radicalized youth on the rise Yasmann, in: *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 04 April 2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058461.html, date accessed 03 June 2014. More prudent estimates vary between several hundreds and 2,500: Tema nomera. Partii zelenykh, in: *Ogonek*, 10 October 2005.
76. V vuzakh vosrodilsya institute stukachestva, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 27 October 2005.
77. Oprichniki protiv dzhedaev, in: *Moskovskii' komsomolets*, 01 March 2005.
78. 'Derzhite lysogo!', in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 02 June 2005; Igrali v dymovye shashki, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 19 September 2005.
79. Sobytiya: Aktsiya dvizheniya 'My' u belogo doma, http://grani-tv.ru/entries/618, last accessed 03 June 2014.
80. Aktivistov dvizheniya 'My' prigovorili za chistye listy, in: *Kommersant'*, 26 July 2006.
81. Such carnivalesque happenings are, however, not unique to opposition groups, see the protest in front of the Georgian embassy by Nashi and Rossiya Molodaya: Flagovaya ataka, in: *Kommersant'*, 13 August 2008.
82. See for the manifesto: http://akm1917.su/Ustav, last accessed 03 June 2014. The website contained a lot of material until 2011 but is less regularly updated after this date.
83. V Kremle potrebovalie otstavki Putina, in: *Izvestiya*, 01 June 2005.
84. Mitingi i shestviya. Radikalov zakryli na profilaktiku, in: *Kommersant'*, 11 May 2005.
85. 'Nashim' razdali gil'zy, in: *Vremya novostei*, 16 May 2005; Aktsiya. 'Nashi' obyavili voynu 'zapadnym kolonizatoram', in: *Gazeta*, 16 May 2005.
86. Triumf voli. Moskva uznala 'Nashikh', in: *Kommersant*, 16 May 2005.
87. 'Antifashistskoe' nahsetsvie, in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 16 May 2005.
88. Svezhaya Krov', in: *Novye Izvestiya*, 28 February 2005.
89. Sego dnya. Chya Moskva, in: *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 07 November 2005.
90. The graphics of the website (http://dpni.org) clearly targets young people and is frequently updated with numerous videos, photos and reports about recent activities.
91. Regular media appearances of Belov are hardly conceivable without official support, cf. Pravaja ruka vlasti, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 19 February 2007.
92. Nadoelo boyatsya, in: *Russkii kurer*, 28 February 2005.

93. Skinam pozhelali dolgikh let, in: *Novaya Gazeta*, 17 February 2005.
94. They maintain frequently visited 'blogs': http://yashin.livejournal.com/ and dobrokhotov.livejournal.com/
95. Molodezh' kak zerkalo obshchestvo, in: *Argumenty i Fakty*, 16 July 1988.

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11
'To Serve like a Man' – Ukraine's Euromaidan and the Questions of Gender, Nationalism and Generational Change

Sabine Roßmann

On 8 March 2013, International Women's Day, with the motto 'Reforms are no women's business! Revolutions are!' a group of young feminists was making fun of (then) Prime Minister Asarov's explanation for why there were almost no women in his cabinet. Asarov had justified this fact with the first half of the statement. Less than a year later, both Asarov and Yanukovych had been toppled – but was the 'Maidan revolution' (Bartkowski, 2014, p. 11) really 'women's business'?

Many participants – especially the younger ones – saw the Euromaidan as 'a revolution against an old Ukraine, for a new Ukraine' (Shekovtsov, 2013) and used abstract concepts such as democracy, freedom, universal human rights and the European Union (EU) accession process in their discussions (see Rjabtschuk, 2014, p. 40).[1] According to various studies (Anderson, 2006, Gray et al., 2006), aspirations to join the EU create 'a favorable political context for the emergence of a strong women's movement and for increasing women's political influence' (Hrycak, 2007, p. 164). Thus, the above-mentioned young women should have played a major role in the pro-European protest movement. Instead, however, the troika Klitschko, Yatsenyuk and Tyahnybok and mostly dangerous looking men in camouflage and protective vests took centre stage in the media coverage. Was the revolution anything but women's business? Was it, on the contrary, 'made solely by men' (Shevchenko in Moskvichova, 2014)? What role did women, and especially young women, play in the protests? What did the gender order look like during the Euromaidan?

Just as nine years before, during the 'Orange Revolution' – where more than half of the protesters were under 30 (see Bredies, 2005) – so now again young people were taking on the main initiative, fulfilling their ascribed role as 'formidable agent[s] of social and political change' (Braungart, 1975,

p. 255). In contrast to the peaceful and short-lived 'Orange Revolution', however, the three-month Euromaidan movement was soon mainly composed of 30–54-year-olds, making up between 49 per cent and 56 per cent of the total number of protesters.[2] Another thing that 'Orange Revolution' and Euromaidan have in common is that patriotism and nationalism were on the rise since the protests started. Because of the gendered nature of nationalism this creates 'a particularly difficult situation for women' (Evangelista, 2011, p. 101). Regardless of whether the nationalism is more civic or more ethnic, it tends 'to embrace tradition as a legitimating basis for nation-building and cultural renewal' – and this (whether real or invented) tradition is 'often patriarchal' (Nagel, 1998, p. 254). This can lead to a maternalistic–nationalist discourse and, through it, to a 'retraditionalization of gender ideals' (Males in Phillips, 2014, p. 416) and a rejection of gender equality and feminism (see Shevchenko, 2014). According to polls conducted on 7 and 8 December 2013, 57.2 per cent of protesters in Kiev were male; on 20 December their number on the barricades had risen to 85–88 per cent.[3] After the first violent riots women were only admitted in exceptional cases to the barricades at night and, in mid-February, as the situation was getting out of control, 'womenandchildren' (Enloe, 1990) were called upon to leave the fighting zone for good. Did the pro-European Euromaidan movement nevertheless manage to challenge existing gender relations and stereotypes? Did it contribute to the strengthening of a new feminist generation? Or did the new national revival, on the contrary, have an opposite and regressive influence on gender concepts in Ukraine? These questions will be touched on in this chapter.

(Classic) gender concepts in Ukrainian society

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union one can – alongside economic and political change – observe a newly strengthened turn towards 'traditional' gender roles in many former socialist states of Eastern Europe. The male is to be responsible for public space, the woman is to 'return [. . .] to the family' (Pavlychko, 1997, p. 222), to take on her role as caring mother and housewife. This 'return to traditional patriarchal values of motherhood, sacrifice and submission' (Bracewell, 1996, p. 29) appears to both the political elite and a majority of the population to be a welcome solution for 'women's distraction from the "natural" roles' (ibid., p. 29) – and the ensuing problem of a low birthrate and a threatened nuclear family. This also applies to Ukraine, whose society can be described as being 'characterized by gender roles that persist in traditional stereotypes' (Gerasymenko, 2006, p. 383). Even though in the schooling and education sector there seem to be no or only minor differences related to gender, just as there is no discriminating legislation in place, 'a comparison of women's and men's real opportunities and achievements in all spheres of public life shows significant gender problems' (ibid.,

p. 383). This discrepancy also shows up in the results of the Global Gender Gap Index: in 2013 Ukraine was placed 27th and 30th respectively (of 136 participating countries) in the categories 'education' and 'economic participation and equality', but scored a surprisingly low (even in comparison to its neighbouring countries) 119th in the category 'political engagement and participation' (see World Economic Forum, 2013).[4] Women's representation in the parliament during Soviet rule was relatively high: they had a claim to one-third of the seats. After the first democratic elections took place in Ukraine, however, their share dropped to 3 per cent in the Verkhovna Rada (see Apatenko, 2002). This percentage did go up a bit since then – at the time of Yanukovych's fall there was a 9 per cent share and four women ministers – top positions in various parties rarely are taken up by women, though. Many seem to believe that 'politics are not for women, that they are better off not occupying top government positions' (ibid., p. 71). Not only top (male) politicians, but many women also are convinced that 'when a woman enters politics, she leaves behind her womanhood' (Dmytro Vydrin in Rubchak, 2011, p. 2).[5]

Womanhood is what determines public discourse on how women are viewed since the 1990s: mostly they are linked to 'family, motherhood, domesticity' (Taran, 2011, p. 201). Moreover, women's organisations that have sprung up since perestroika do not seem to question the concept of women as mothers. 'Most women's groups work primarily on issues related to family or children and view women's activism as an extension of maternal nurturing' and 'do not wish to challenge the local gender system', attaching instead 'a positive value to motherhood, femininity, and what they view as "traditional" gender relations' (Hrycak, 2006, p. 74). The majority of members of these 'traditional' women's organisations consists 'almost without exception of middle-aged if not elderly [women] and often housewives' (Gerasymenko, 2006, p. 392). The few women's groups that do reject this maternalistic discourse and describe themselves as feminist are mostly composed of young women (see also Phillips, 2014). Even though one of these groups – 'Femen', founded in 2008 – excites international attention, their impact on society has to be regarded as minimal, not least because feminism still is for a majority of Ukrainian society an 'alien Western product' (Zhurzhenko, 2011, p. 175), 'which seeks to drive women and men apart' (Hrycak, 2006, p. 75) and a 'dirty word' (Pavlychko, 1996, p. 306). Feminists are considered to be aggressive, non-feminine, masculinised women. That is an image that only few women are willing to take on, since it goes against the celebrated ideal of femininity – which is why few have the courage to come out as feminists (see Svitlana Oksmanytha in Taran, 2011).

Though ideals of equality – especially with regard to education – were set down early in the territory of present-day Ukraine (see Marth and Priebe, 2010), for the nineteenth-century Ukrainian women's movement 'emancipation was secondary to national liberation endeavors' (Smolyar, 2006,

p. 410) and 'less important than national emancipation' (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1988, p. 87). Though women contributed to women's emancipation by their social and political activities and played an active role in founding organisations and political parties, they did not have the goal 'to change gender roles and social relations' (Gerasymenko, 2006, p. 378). This so-called national feminism or pragmatic feminism focused on patriotism, self-sacrifice, the family 'as the stronghold for society' (Smolyar, 2006, p. 410f.) and 'the importance of defending national tradition' (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1988, p. 97).

The independence movement of the 1990s also embraced this concept of 'the utter superiority of national interests' (Kis', 2012, p. 166). Both the intelligentsia and society as a whole agreed that 'the urgency of state-building compels the Ukrainian people to subordinate such movements as women's liberation to the task of constructing a fully modern, fully independent country' (Rubchak, 1996, p. 317) – a task that has not been fulfilled to this day and that seems more pressing than ever before.

The myth of Berehynia, created by the independence movement, plays a major role in this issue. It originates from Slavic folklore and initially meant an ill-tempered, tempting as well as dangerous river ghost like Rusalka, but then in the transformation period mutated into the 'hearth-mother' of the Ukrainian nation itself. Berehynia, who is celebrated as the 'perfect Ukrainian woman, the spirit of the Ukrainian home, the ideal mother' (Pavlychko, 1996, p. 311), thus contributes to a view that restricts women to the household. The media representation of the Euromaidan proves how powerful this image still is today.

Images of women in the Euromaidan protest movement

It is not only that up until now most documentaries have told the story of the Euromaidan protests from the male perspective – even movies that explicitly concern themselves with the female participation in the movement reproduce solely the 'traditional' image of women: women who support men or are protected by them. Even more clearly than in the documentary *The Female Faces of Revolution*, this impression emerges from the (not yet finished) film *Women Faces of Maidan*, by Olha Onyshko – who describes it with the following words: 'men stand up for the principles of a civil society because women will not allow them to back down' (Pankieiev, 2014). She describes women's roles as follows: 'women mobilized from all over Ukraine coming to Kiev so that the men at the barricades are taken care of with food, clean clothing and medical attention' (ibid.).

The propagation of this 'traditional' image of women is also apparent in two exhibitions that were shown on Kiev's Independence Square in 2014. The exhibition 'Women of Maidan' – organised and funded by Fulbright Ukraine, the Ukrainian Women Foundation and the Olha Kobylianska

Women's Hundred – consists of about 40 photos that portray 'the image of Ukrainian womanhood – mothers, sisters, wives, daughters – who consciously and unselfishly protected at Maidan the right of Ukrainian people for a better life' (Ukrainian Women's Fund, 2014). The photos show scenes from life on the Maidan: young and aged women holding Ukrainian flags and posters on demonstrations, singing, playing piano, working in kitchens or as medics, filling bags, collecting paving stones, standing alone or as human chains in front of soldiers or so-called Titushki troops. Only two pictures show women near barricades – in one the shown woman wears a flower wreath instead of a helmet and the other picture was obviously taken during a more or less peaceful time. Overall, the image that is being evoked and propagated here is that of the (pretty) female supporter of a man-made revolution instead of an active female participant. A press release underscores that impression: 'women supported the spirit of the Maidan and gracefully, with belief in victory, passed through all Maidan's seconds-minutes-hours-days' (Ukrainian Women's Fund, 2014). The exhibition was first viewed at the Fulbright Office in Kiev. It then moved around different Ukrainian regions and was finally put onto the Maidan, where it was attacked and partly destroyed in mid-August 2014 by unknown people, pushed to the side and in the end totally removed in order to make room for a new exhibition that opened on Independence Day. This second exhibition consists of about 80 large photographs that show different scenes from the Euromaidan protests. Of the 15 photographs that show single persons or small groups, 12 show only males. It is interesting that the pictures that do show women invariably portray them as dressed-in-blue-and-yellow patriots in a peaceful surrounding. Most men are, in contrast, shown masked, armed or fighting.

This same portrayal was also apparent in both Ukrainian and international media coverage of the Euromaidan: if women were mentioned at all, then it was as working in kitchens, as medics or in communication centres. Women were portrayed as helping men but staying in the background, behind the scenes. According to this image, men are the real revolutionaries while women provide only material and moral support. In what ways does this portrayal match reality? Did protest participants see themselves or their female counterparts first and foremost as 'smiling girls that [...] give out tea and sandwiches' (Vesti.Reporter 2014, p. 12)?

New gender concepts in the Euromaidan protest movement?

To find an answer to the above question, about 22 focused interviews with participants of the Euromaidan protests were carried out between April and August 2014 in Kiev.[6] The following analysis concentrates mainly on the 12 interviews with young female protesters.[7]

Asked directly about the role of women during the protests, most participants mentioned Ruslana – a Ukrainian singer who was already involved in

the 2004 protests and who won the Eurovision Song Contest in the same year. She is remembered as ‘the most significant person who talked from the stage’ (O26), especially by many non-party protesters. Most also mention that on 30 November Berkut soldiers ‘beat even girls, even though the guys obviously tried protecting them and had formed a cordon around them’ (L20). This type of cordon was supposedly also formed in December 2013, when a new violent clearance of the square was expected. ‘When the Berkut were doing troop movements, which was the sign for a coming attack, the girls assembled around the stage and the men – strongest on the edges – made a circle around them. We sang and danced all along to encourage the men standing on the edges’ (I22). Yet women did not encourage through song and dance alone. Racing driver Oleksiy Mochanov states in the documentary *Revolution of Dignity*: ‘On February 18th half of the square were women. They were hauling stones in shopping bags, some even managed to haul tyres. I was stunned seeing that. Guess every man asked himself: “It's scary here so maybe it's time to get away?” I heard one man telling another: “Those girlies are here and you want to go and sleep? Are you a coward?” ’.[8] This illustrates the fact that there was not only one concept of femininity predominant during the Euromaidan protests. Emerging out of the interviews are three ideal types, which can be placed onto different points on a continuum that would range from ‘traditional’ to ‘emancipated’. The first and most ‘traditional’ type did not take part directly at the Euromaidan, but only through the support of a husband: ‘I always say: one active member of the family is enough. I freed my husband of any family obligations. That was my contribution’ (N40). Women like N40 accept the dominant idea of the man being involved in public life and the woman supporting her husband and taking care of her children. All women of this type were older than 30, married and had children.

The other two types had actively taken part at the Euromaidan, though in very different ways. The second type, which is made up of women of all ages, only took part in the demonstrations and in actions such as collecting donations or working in ‘typically feminine’ branches, such as the communication headquarters or the kitchen. This is what D25 says about why she worked in the kitchen: ‘Me and my friends tried to help everywhere where it was possible for us. I helped mostly in the kitchen. I did that because [when] we came I saw people giving food, I know it's a hard task and there's lots of people so there's lots of work, so I asked if they need help in this – they said yes.’ It doesn't matter to her that she is doing a ‘typical woman's’ job: ‘It was not a matter of deciding. I cannot explain why [...] You know what is happening in your country and you just go, you do not think or analyse.’ She insists – like L27: ‘The men and women on Maidan were equal. No gender discrimination’ – that division of labour on Maidan was not based on gender: ‘For me the issue of gender equality or not equality during the protests is not an important one. Many women were making

Molotov cocktails, others were helping in the kitchen, as nurses – so were men. Due to our physical constitution we didn't do some of the tasks, it was a kind of natural division of tasks – everyone knew what he could do and he was just doing it' (D25). Some also take that 'differing physical nature' to explain why the majority of people living in the tent city were men: 'Maybe the majority was men. But that's because of the physical nature of their bodies. Generally, men are stronger physically, that is as regards the biological quality of the human body' (J22). Most interviewed women and all interviewed men, though, talk about a gender-specific division of labour, but do not render this problematic. Many women share O26's point of view: 'Women participated in demonstrations, they helped to cook, they took care of injured people.' Men confirm this picture by describing women's activities as follows: 'Women bake the bread for the fighters' (A33); 'Women mostly cooked, worked as medics and collected stones. They were great! I told all my guy friends to come out and marry one of our many good girls' (O45). This is a topic that comes up all the time when talking to male protesters. One of them in fact mentions only this aspect when asked about women on the Maidan: 'I can't say anything about it [women on the Maidan]. I never thought about it. I just saw human beings, I wasn't looking for men or for women [...] Honestly, there were good girls on Maidan. A lot of girls [in Ukraine] are sly. There were no sly girls on Maidan. I was thinking to myself all the time: you can find a good girl out here' (E26). Young women seem to have used the Euromaidan as a sort of dating platform, too: on social networks there was a veritable flood of pictures of cute young women holding up posters with 'I'm looking for a Banderovtsi' or 'I want a hero'.[9]

The third and most progressive type of woman protesters were those women who were not satisfied with the 'traditional' concepts of femininity, choosing instead to stand in a row next to the men. According to the research, almost entirely all women of the third type are under 30. These women did not want to comply with their role as only being supporters to the men: 'I was getting sick of just making tea for the "heroes" and standing in second line all the time' (Y25).

From the above it is clear that the Euromaidan was not an 'almost [...] perfect case of horizontal forms of organization' (Shekovtsov, 2013). Instead, some women perceived a clear hierarchy of assignments in the public discourse. Furthermore, many did not want to be protected and looked after all the time: 'While I was in my city's tent, I was getting treated very differently from the rest, since I was the only woman. I got the best place to sleep; I was excluded from the activities of the men. Honestly speaking, I was just making tea and sandwiches. They didn't want to ask more of me' (A20). This third type of women consciously distanced themselves from the 'other' women who are 'just sitting in the kitchen, crying and praying for the men' (R19). Instead, they want to fight 'like a man' – a phrase often repeated in the interviews with these young women. 'I came to Kiev to fight. To fight in

the front line like all the men. Women don't just sit in kitchens, smiling, giving out soup' (Y25). The interviewed women that corresponded to this type were all part of a women's unit or women's hundred that had either been founded at the beginning of the protests or after the escalation in February.

The women's unit of the 16th self-defence division originated right after the first violent clearance of Independence Square on 30 November 2013. This unit consisted mostly of students. They had a tent from the beginning of the 'tent city' – later a wooden log cabin which was built 'with the help of the guys' (L20) from their division. Their tasks are described by one of the activists as follows: 'We distributed leaflets, helped in the kitchen, accompanied accused protesters to court, kept watch on the barricades along with the men. Most importantly, we were constantly talking to Berkut and soldiers, making contacts with them, doing agitation work' (A20). The two women's hundreds that were founded in February in Kiev got more media attention, however.[10] One newspaper even called them 'one of the most discussed trends in revolutionary Kiev' (Apostolov, 2014). Some women had been angered at the fact that they were excluded from the barricades after the protest escalated. Men seemed to view them as immature – they felt that their freedom of movement was being restricted. Out of that feeling they formed their own self-defence divisions. One of the leading activists of one of these women's hundreds, Olena Shevchenko, explains their motivation as follows: 'Sadly a sort of traditionalism dominates our society. Heroes are always men. Women are just their aids. We don't agree with that. We want to show that women can act in various sectors, that women are active and strong' (Video in Moskvichova, 2014). In public statements the activists of this women's hundred repeatedly stressed the fact that there were alternatives for women to 'going to the kitchen' or to 'putting on a helmet and going on the barricades' (Apostolov, 2014) – and that those alternatives were being offered by the women's hundred to all those women who had until now 'not found a place for themselves' (Moskvichova, 2014). These places, activist Ruslana Panuhnik stated: 'can be the medical sector, or helping in the library or translating, [...] though of course there are some among us that want to serve like a man – on the barricades' (Apostolov, 2014). This makes clear that at least this women's hundred didn't view itself primarily as a battle or self-defence division. Though activists did participate in all necessary tasks, their mission, as expressed by their founders, was based primarily 'on educational feminism' (Shevchenko, 2014), for example, lectures about the history of the Ukrainian women's movement. The obligatory self-defence training also primarily served the purpose of making sure that 'women understand they can do the same things as men' (Trach, 2014) and not actually fighting against the government troops.

So even though this third type of women really wanted to take part in the protests 'like men', for most of them it was not about women's rights, challenging gender stereotypes or propagating feminism. As Olena Shevchenko

justly remarks – even for the majority of the participants in the women's units feminism is 'still a bad word' (Shevchenko in Phillips, 2014, p. 421). They just felt that it was necessary to participate more actively than it was possible for them in the 'typically feminine' field of action. 'In this state of emergency everyone is needed. We fought for our nation, our liberty. That's not the time to ask for men or for women' (A20). 'I went to the women's unit after my brother was arrested. I just couldn't stand it any longer. I had the feeling that I had to fight somewhere' (R19). Even though women who are members of these units are challenging 'traditional' gender stereotypes just by being members, it was still important to them to be viewed as women by others: 'I didn't want to be a man-woman. I did try to dress nice [...] sort of, to the degree that was possible. We often put flower wreaths into our hair, when we kept guard' (Y25). They also didn't have a problem with men helping them, as is obvious from L20's statement above about the log cabin, or the general idea that men's units have slightly different fields of operation than do women's. On the one hand, even tasks not 'typical' of women were thus used to confirm the existing gender categories – on the other hand, the above scenes also show what a challenge it was for the young women to find a balance between doing and undoing gender (see West and Zimmermann, 1987).

How did men and other women perceive this third type of women? Whether Oleksiy Mochanov (cited above) was stunned by the presence of women or by the fact that some even managed to haul tyres, doesn't become clear in his statement, but it is probable that a majority of men were surprised on both counts. Many of these young women experienced being unwanted at the barricades – 'The men didn't want us there. Many said: "Go home, this is too dangerous for you. We don't need you here"' (A20). Carrying tyres was also seen as men's business – by both female and male protesters: 'We [women] picked up paving stones, putting them into bags – and the men carried both bags and tyres to the barricades. A lot of tyres' (R19). Or a male protester: 'Did you ever carry one of those tyres? They are goddamn heavy. Nothing for women' (S29). Concerning the violent clashes themselves there are very different opinions about the role played by women. In February, Maidan commander Andriy Parubiy made clear that the help of women was welcome, though he had very specific ideas about what that help should be: 'They [women] fulfil their function: they work as medics, they help the self-defence troops, as far as possible; though there are girls in the self-defence itself, too. We never send these units to the very front lines – to the clashes. But they find other ways to help the self-defence troops protecting the Maidan' (Parubiy in Moskvichova, 2014). Notwithstanding this statement that once again restricts women's field of operation to the supporter role, there definitely were some women who actively participated in the fighting: 'I saw women throwing paving stones at soldiers. How could that be? I don't get it! Women! How? [...] Women are mothers! How can a

woman do something like that? We, men are used to fighting in wars, but women are mothers!' (A40).[11] The presence of women was also confirmed by some of the female interviewees: 'Actually politicians ask women to be at the rear. But nevertheless you could find some of us in the front' (L27). Opinions differ among the women about these fighting females: 'No one was surprised about women on the barricades – because it was kind of a special situation, a kind of emergency situation where you don't analyse and don't think with the brain – you just react. It was a time when it didn't matter if you were a man or a woman – you were just a human being trying to support others, help others and fight to be treated like a human being' (Y25). I25 has a different point of view: 'Women were not welcome on the barricades – but they were accepted when they were serious about it. Those were some really feminist women. I don't think that it makes sense for physically inferior women to fight against Berkut.' This latter position is also embraced by men who were mostly against women's participation in the fighting: 'It was dangerous to stay there' (O28); 'Girls shouldn't fight' (F25); 'This was no women's business' (A35).

On the other hand, all interviewed men emphasise the important, paramount role women played during the protests: 'Girls were crucial. Without the women, men wouldn't have made a revolution. Their agreement and their support were decisive' (D42); 'Ukrainian girls were the engine of the revolution' (N30); 'Without their [women's] support we would be nothing. Their support is the most important' (M23). Dmitry Yarosh, leader of the Right Sector made a similar statement in February 2014: 'Our girls are great, simply great; they've done so much good already. They even took away the wounded during the fighting, and they help us here all the time' (Yarosh in Naiem and Kovalenko, 2014). Women were therefore not regarded as partners with equal rights in the protest by the majority of men, but rather as supporters, inspiration and as a sort of backbone of a revolution run by men. These repeatedly offered salutations to women were just another factor that added to traditionalising the existing gender ideology in this context. The interviews with men confirm Phillips's assessment that, until now, there are no signs 'that men have been encouraged to confront and reject patriarchy' (Phillips, 2014, p. 422) during the Euromaidan.

(Anti)feminism in the Euromaidan protest movement

The protest movement's stance as a whole on issues such as feminism and women's rights can perhaps be best illustrated by the anti-feminist graffiti, persistent in dominant positions over months – seemingly without disturbing anyone – until they were removed when the Maidan was cleaned up for Independence Day, 24 August 2014.[12] These graffiti are based on originally feminist statements: 'Motherhood is an Opportunity' was replaced with 'Motherhood is an Obligatory'; 'For Gender Equality' made way for

'For Gender Inequality'. A statement that was speaking out 'Against Gender Stereotypes' was simply crossed out and painted over – apparently they didn't come up with any more creative idea. However, feminism was visible not only through (anti)feminist statements – young feminists were also doing campaigns (big and small) themselves. The international press only talked about an action by 'Femen' on 1 December 2013 – where a 'death angel' in hot pants, with 'Death to Dictatorship' painted on her bare chest, protested against the clearance of Independence Square the day before.[13] Yet from the beginning of the protests, groups and single feminists were active in the Euromaidan protest movement with posters like 'EU means equality for everyone'. From the beginning, however, there was also opposition to these endeavours: On 26 November a peaceful demonstration by feminists and independent trade unionists was attacked by alleged ultra-nationalists;[14] on another day a single attacker grabbed a young feminist's poster, saying that with her demands she is 'compromising the pro-European movement' (Gabrielian, 2013). Overall it was noticeable that 'the initial desire to enter the EU does not imply commitment to ensure protection and fulfillment of human rights' and 'that the Euromaidan is not a safe space to talk about LGBT rights and feminism' (Shevchenko, 2014), although there were also campaigns that did not cause any (open) negative reactions, such as the 'Night of Women's Solidarity' on 24 January. Its impact – like the visibility in general of the third type of women discussed in this chapter – remained trifling. Many of the interviewed young women had never heard about women's units or feminist campaigns: 'I haven't heard about it [the women's hundred]. I do not know if I would have joined or not. I think we had more important problems on Maidan' (D22); 'Feminism is not really popular now, and they aren't active on Maidan now. It seems to me that Ukrainians even forget about them' (L27). As in the statement of D22, many women seemed to view this issue (when compared to others) as unimportant: 'There were a couple of feminist actions, but they didn't interest anybody. Once they were walking across the square beating drums and we were just thinking: "Please be quiet! We want to hear this lecture [by the open university]!"' (I22).

Conclusion

To what extent were women in Ukraine energised by the example of the young women who challenged established gender stereotypes during the protests? And was this behaviour directly or indirectly linked to a generational change? Did the questioning of gender stereotypes inspire predominantly younger women or women of all age groups? Did the women's hundred succeed in introducing 'a new generation to human rights discourse, including women's rights and sexual rights' (Phillips, 2014, p. 420f.)? Based on the above-mentioned interviews it is impossible to share Martsenyuk's optimistic view that 'via their critical contribution to the Maidan women

became visible not as mere helpers, but as full participants in the revolution in a manner that contributed to overturning patriarchal discourses' (ibid., p. 417). As was shown above in the media portrayal of women in the Euromaidan protest movement as well as by the perception of women from a male perspective, women only partially succeeded to appear as full members and participants. Furthermore apart from a minority of young women, women did not challenge their 'traditional' role as men's helpmates but participated on the basis of gendered social roles. Moreover even those who participated in the women's units and hundreds were mostly afraid of being seen as unfeminine and did not want to challenge 'traditional' gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, participating next to the men in the protests definitely was a transformative experience for those younger women on an individual level. Collective action can lead to a 'new sense of empowerment and to the strengthening of the self' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006 p. 91). One can assume that many of those young women are likely to have gained self-respect and willpower during this period and want to continue to participate actively in public and political life. It is not yet clear in what ways this experience will lead to a reinforced participation of women in political life and the wish to further challenge gender inequality. It seems that up until now no generational change has taken place: only two middle-aged women candidates presented themselves at the presidential elections in April 2014: Yulia Tymoshenko and the famous Euromaidan doctor Olha Bohomolez. Though compared to the previous parliamentary elections 4 per cent more – and younger – women ran for a seat in the Verkhovna Rada in October 2014,[15] the share of women in the new parliament increased only by 1.5 per cent in comparison to the previous one. This is anything but a landslide.

The few younger women who were not satisfied with the 'traditional' concepts of femininity seem to have been a marginal phenomenon and did not reach public discourse. Although the maternalistic ideal has begun to lose its ground among younger women, traditional gender roles, which support the view that women's civic roles should focus on the welfare of children and family and on the restoration of Ukraine's tradition (Hrycak, 2006, p. 75), are still dominant. Taking into account the apparent lack of interest of many protesters regarding the feminist issue, a revival of 'national feminism' that emphasises 'extreme patriotism, self-sacrifice and unconditional devotion to the nation' as well as 'the superiority of national interests' (Kis', 2012, p. 166), instead of emancipation, seems to be not unlikely, also among the younger generation. As is proven by other decolonising national struggles in the second half of the twentieth century (for example, Algeria, South Africa), many women are not ready to fight against patriarchal impositions while their national communities are under siege, putting off questions of emancipation up till after liberation. It looks like the young women of Ukraine have chosen this way too.

Notes

1. The protests that later became known as the Euromaidan started on 21 November 2013. About 1,000–2,000 students and young people gathered spontaneously, rallied through social networks, on Kiev's Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti), protesting president Yanukovych's decision to suspend accession talks with the European Union. The demonstration kept going on for several days, until special police forces brutally dispersed the protesters on the night of 30 November. That dispersion initiated the mass protests that were to follow. On the days after, 500,000–800,000 people gathered despite the assembly ban, also creating the first so called 'self-defence units', occupying the Kiev city hall and the trade union headquarters and building a tent city. On 16 January the government issued decrees that sharply reduced protesters' rights, leading to heavy riots that cost the lives of more than 100 people. On 22 February Yanukovych fled to Eastern Ukraine and from there to Russia. Parliament decided to depose him, making Turchynov interim president and forming an interim government soon after.
2. Polls taken by the Fond 'Democratic Initiatives', together with the Kiev International Institute of Sociology on 7–8 December 2013, 20 December 2013 and 3 February 2014.
3. Polls taken by the Fond 'Democratic Initiatives', together with the Kiev International Institute of Sociology on 7–8 December 2013, 20 December 2013 and 3 February 2014.
4. Except for Hungary (ranked 120), all neighbouring states placed better in the category 'political participation': Poland (ranked 49), Slovakia (ranked 77), Moldova (ranked 87), Romania (ranked 91) and Russia (ranked 94).
5. Tymoshenko proves what kinds of efforts have been made by women in politics to prove their femininity despite their political commitment.
6. Interviewees were found through already existing contacts, chance encounters and visits to the tent city in Kiev that remained in place until August. They represent different social groups with regard to age, gender, place of origin/residence and professional activities. Interviewees are identified by an abbreviation of their first name and their age.
7. Interviews were carried out in English, Ukrainian and Russian. Russian and Ukrainian interviews were translated into English for this chapter.
8. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= HBiWnIYemag, date accessed 30 October 2014.
9. To these there later were added pictures of masked women or women in uniforms – but with very similar posters. The 'hero' was automatically a man to them. When the situation in Eastern Ukraine escalated after the Euromaidan, pictures of young women at paramilitary training camps started to pour in, but most interviewed women see these as a 'cheap fake': 'Right now [May 2014] some of my friends are going to these paramilitary training facilities. One of them – a real girlie – is posting pictures of herself in uniform. But I really think she just thinks that she'll get a boyfriend easier that way. She's not really serious about it' (I25).
10. Women's units and women's hundreds were created not only in Kiev, but also in other cities in Ukraine.
11. From this it is clear that women are still perceived as (future) mothers. This is also apparent from the many pictures that circulated during the Euromaidan, depicting women as nurturing mothers of the nation and Bereyhnia who had to be

defended. But this was not the only type of depiction: there were pictures of militarised (albeit still feminine) women, for instance, throwing Molotov cocktails. The sexualisation of these women was much weaker than that in later depictions of women-fighters in the war in Eastern Ukraine (see Phillips, 2014). It did not seem necessary to use women's bodies as 'an organizational recruitment tool' (Sperling, 2012, p. 241) during Euromaidan on a large scale.

12. At Ljadski Gate on Independence Square and on a building fence on Mikhailovskij Street, which connects Independence Square with Mikhailovskij Monastery.
13. http://obozrevatel.com/politics/92786-feministka-razdelas-v-znak-protesta-protiv-razgona-evromajdana.htm, last accessed 30 October 2014.
14. http://lb.ua/news/2013/11/27/242906_provokatori_napali_feministok.html, date accessed 30 October 2014. One of the groups that were attacked, the so-called Feminist Offensive, was dissolved during Euromaidan since its members had very diverging opinions on the issue of participation at the protests.
15. Among others, one of the leading members of one of the women's hundreds.

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12
The Conception of Revolutionary Youth in Maksim Gor'kii's *The Mother* and Zakhar Prilepin's *San'kia*

Matthias Meindl

Zakhar Prilepin's novel *San'kia* promises to become somewhat of a modern classic of Russian literature. Originally published in 2006 by the once vanguard post-modern publisher Ad Marginem press, *San'kia* has since seen several re-editions, summing up to more than 25,000 copies.[1] This is a considerable amount in Russia where most readers (assumably especially in Prilepin's case) lack the means to buy the print edition, but prefer to read the pirate editions available on the internet. In spring 2014, the novel appeared in English translation.[2]

San'kia portrays the life and fate of a twentysomething provincial, an activist of the 'Soiuz Sozidaiushchikh' (The Union of Creators), a radical nationalist party, or rather a youth movement, a model for which clearly served the National-Bolshevist Party, founded at the beginning of the 1990s by the enfant terrible of Soviet émigré writers, Eduard Limonov, upon his homecoming to Russia. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Ad Marginem's mastermind Aleksandr Ivanov, a publisher known for his ingenious and controversial aesthetic cum politics, would be interested in Prilepin's novel. *San'kia* seemingly alludes to the novel of Social Realism, namely its prototype, Maksim Gor'kii's *The Mother*, and it has been accused of reviving its aesthetics under different ideological circumstances, that of a growing aggressive Russian nationalism.

San'kia has evoked radically different opinions since its publication in 2006. Many have viewed the novel to be politically motivated or have even seen it as propagating revolution. This supposed auctorial intention was either condemned and ridiculed (see Lur'e, 2006; Shevtsov, 2006) or applauded (see Prokhanov, 2006). Others, however, have praised the realist and authentic style of Prilepin's prose (see Gorlova, 2006).[3] Unsurprisingly, the assertion that Prilepin strives for partiality in his representation of reality, and wants to fit up the reader with a revolutionary role model, was prevailing especially on 'both sides of the isle' – politically like-minded,

nationalist commentators on the one hand, and representatives of the liberal intelligentsia on the other, concurred in this claim, they differed only in its moral valuation. Vladimir Bondarenko (2006), a well-known nationalist cultural spin doctor, was able to welcome *San'kia* – at last – as a new party literature in the tradition of Gor'kii and Nikolai Ostrovskii. Mikhail Lipovetskii (2012), clearly a proponent of the other side of the isle, has seen Prilepin in the tradition of Socialist Realism as well (Aleksandr Fadeev's *The Young Guard*), and at the same time has diagnosed the writer Prilepin within Umberto Eco's symptomatology 'Ur-Fascism'. Eco's (1995) identifiers for 'Ur-Fascism' are the assumption of contradictions in thought, irrationalism, the cult of action, of the heroic and of death, furthermore a cult of tradition, xenophobia, misogyny and homophobia. Lipovetskii finds all of these criteria in Prilepin's writing.[4]

Yet if we take a closer look at this link to Socialist Realism it turns out that *San'kia*, unlike Gorky's prototype, is not one of revolutionary agitation but puts into question if revolution is, under the current historical circumstances, feasible or even desirable. The novel reflects the seemingly almost insurmountable difficulties of growing up in post-Soviet Russia, which are of a broader significance if we take into account that youth is generally supposed to play a major role in the transformation of a society.

To develop this argument, in the first part of this chapter I introduce some of Prilepin's and Limonov's rhetorical and political strategies, before discussing in the second part the conception of youth in its relation to political resistance in *San'kia* in view of the novel's clearly most important intertext: Maksim Gor'kii's novel *Mat'* (The Mother). In doing so the chapter deliberately mixes two questions, one about the actual situation of youth in contemporary Russia and the other about the means of its literary representation: 'What does *San'kia* tell us about the situation of youths *in contemporary Russia* and the circumstances of its political fight?' as opposed to 'By which means does *San'kia* tell us about the situation of youths in contemporary Russia and the circumstances of its political fight?' Clearly, a novel of realist intent like *San'kia* will bear witness to a certain moment in a people's history, but at the same time the novel's conception of youth, moreover its strategies of *artistic mimesis* in relation to social reality, have to be understood as well. This will lead into questions in the second part of this chapter concerning the functioning of the novel.

After *Stiob*: Prilepin's rhetorical strategy of popular sentiment

Prilepin became a member of the National-Bolshevik Party (NBP) 1999, after his second military employment in Chechnya. He clearly belongs to the 'second generation' of the NBP. Its activists were a far cry from the metropolitan bohemian founding fathers of the NBP, held to be a tasteless art project at first. These were angry provincial youths, born in the first half of the 1970s,

typically journalists, who spread the NBP's party structures all over Russia. Prilepin lives in a small village near Nizhnii Novgorod, where *San'kia* also, most likely, takes place.

While the peak of public attention for the NBP was reached when Limonov was arrested in 2001 and put on trial for (among other things) being a threat to the constitutional order of the Russian Federation, the publication of Prilepin's novel *San'kia* falls into the subsequent period of the final criminalisation and wiping out of the party. The party was banned as extremist in 2007 and its personal networks have partly flown into the non-parliamentarian oppositional movement Drugaia Rossiia, a notable figurehead of which is Zakhar Prilepin. There is a certain irony to the portraying of the NBP in the novel. *San'kia* clearly references the major events in NBP's history (its 'CV', one might say), such as the occupation of the bell tower of St Peter in November 2000 in Riga in protest against the conviction of Russian war veterans for crimes against humanity, but at the same time shows the 'The Union of Creators' not merely to be on a slippery slope, but on a decisive move towards full-blown terrorism. To prove such an imminent violent development of the party was exactly the aim of the prosecution in the trial against Limonov, yet though he and his comrades were convicted of the illegal purchase of weaponry, overall this attempt failed miserably.[5] The judges more or less believed the version of the accused writer who, threatened with a 15-year prison sentence, was in the awkward position of pointing out the merely rhetorical character of the party's call for violent upheaval (see Limonov, 2003a, p. 406; cf. Meindl, 2011). Sociologist Mikhail Sokolov (2006) has put forth an excellent analysis of the NBP's 'style' comparing it with another nationalist movement, which has also been illegalised in the meantime – Russian National Unity (Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo). While the latter, recruiting its members largely from the military, was 'civic' in tone but violent and criminal in its activities, the NBP, rather rich in cultural capital because of its attractiveness for writers, artists and journalists, was violent in its rhetoric, although its 'velvet terrorism' of 'priamoe deistvie' ('direct action') complied with the non-violent, 'martyrial' tradition of the dissidents' resistance to an all-powerful Soviet state.[6] It may be a proof for President Yeltsin's grip on mass media (underestimated in its firmness), that not one of the major literary critics has recognised that Limonov's character in *San'kia* is actually called 'Kostenko' after the 1990s notorious anarchist leader and glorifier of violence, Dmitry Kostenko, and that the opening scene of the novel, in which San'kia and his comrades create chaos and destruction at a rally in Moscow, are much more reminiscent of the hushed up and forgotten anarchist marches of 1994–1995 (see Tarasov, 1997, pp. 41 ff.) than of the rigidly contained NBP manifestations in the reign of Vladimir Putin.

The overexaggeration of the violent potential of the NBP – if its novelistic 'depiction' can be called such – may very well serve the reader's enjoyment of a more dramatic plot. Nevertheless, the problem of violence is taken

seriously by Prilepin, so seriously that, while in the above-mentioned violent rhetorical strategies of the NBP the culture of *stiob* played an important role, in his novel the author wholly ignores it. The anthropologist Aleksei Yurchak has described *stiob*:

> as a peculiar form of irony that differed from sarcasm, cynicism, derision, or any of the more familiar genres of absurd humor. It required such a degree of *overidentification* with the object, person, or idea at which this *stiob* was directed that it was often impossible to tell whether it was a form of sincere support, subtle ridicule, or a peculiar mixture of both.
>
> (Yurchak, 2006, p. 250)

The magazine *Limonka*, which Eduard Limonov founded parallel to NBP, was, with its absurd ballet of dictators, serial killers and avant-garde artists, a major representative of *stiob* culture, its editor in chief Aleksei Tsvetkov was its master (see Tarasov, 1997, p. 58; cf. Gabowitsch, 2009). Yet although Prilepin even became the magazine's chief editor in the year 2000, after having returned from his second Chechnya tour as a member of the special forces OMON, and *stiob* did not vanish from the pages of *Limonka*, I would argue that he is a proponent of a different rhetorical style. Even when Prilepin clearly overstates his case with provocative intention, like in his somewhat anti-Semitic pamphlet against the liberal intelligentsia 'Pis'mo tovarishchu Stalinu' ('A letter to Comrade Stalin'),[7] he does not aim at extravagancy (like Limonov always has) but at popular sentiment. As an author Prilepin has been put into the framework of post-post-modern tendencies like New Realism and New Sincerity (see Kurchatova, 2005). There is no doubt that *San'kia* was not intended simply to shock, but sincerely to say something about contemporary Russian society and the problem of violence. As the violence in the novel was the aspect that was most bragged about, I will come back to this subject when I discuss the functioning of the novel in the third part of this chapter.

The transformation of a revolutionary martyr into an apocalyptic 'rebel without a cause'

In *San'kia* there are obvious references to Gor'kii's *The Mother* and these will be pointed out in the following. Pavel, the son of Gor'kii's heroine, Pelageia Nilovna Vlasova, is fatherless – San'kia is also. Both these young men have lost their fathers to drinking. This loss of the father symbolically marks a gap in the passing-on of tradition. Moreover, the loss of the father leaves the sons without authority figures.[8]

In Gor'kii's novel this breach in generational relations furthermore enables the dawn of a 'New Man' – a symbolic device, which has been used at

least since Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (Schümann, 2001, p. 13). Furthermore, at least in the case of *The Mother*, the relation between the two aspects – the death of the father and Pavel's new ways – indeed seems to be a merely symbolic one, that is, Pavel's character is not delineated in terms of a psychological narrative. We learn that Pavel's father is a drunkard and abusive, and Pavel at first takes after his father and starts drinking heavily. He luckily then is saved, as he gains access to a socialist circle, the new breed of enlightened people. Yet this development is antecedent to the novel's plot. Pavel, who Katerina Clark in her classic study of the Socialist Realist novel has called 'a saintlike version of the medieval prince' (Clark, 2000, p. 59), has from the beginning of the novel a fully developed character without any psychological barriers. Everything that follows is only of 'ritualistic' significance in the sense that Pavel 'fulfils the duty' of a saint. Inner conflicts – like a conceivable wish on Pavel's side to start a family with his revolutionary comrade Sasha – are merely hinted at. In no way do they endanger Pavel's path to martyrdom in the name of socialist revolution.[9]

San'kia, however, is not a developed character at all at the beginning of Prilepin's novel. He too adopts his father's habit of drinking heavily, yet unfortunately he does not overcome it. A lot of the rampage behaviour – such as San'kia's and his comrades' raid of a local branch of McDonald's (serving as a smokescreen for the arson at the local branch of the president's party) – is catalysed by their alcohol abuse. Yet, in another case – Sasha's mission to kill the Latvian judge who has convicted his comrades mercilessly – vodka clearly hinders him in living up to the destined terrorist persona. While Pavel in *The Mother* reproduces his class but moreover symbolises the worker's class gaining of consciousness, San'kia, on the contrary, symbolises the proletarianisation of parts of the Soviet intelligentsia in the 1990s as his father was a teacher, whereas he is unsteadily employed in several blue-collar jobs. Sasha, however, is not predestined to become a rascal, he is somewhat reflective and, unlike his comrades is willing to confront the arguments set forth by Aleksei Bezletov, a former colleague of his father, a possible supplementary father figure for San'kia, who ultimately fails this task.

Even if, as Andrei Siniavskii (1988, pp. 35ff.) has remarked critically, in perestroika times Gor'kii's novel does not tell much about factory life and work relations, nevertheless the May Day demonstration, especially where Pavel bears the red banner and gets himself arrested, clearly enough designates him as the spearhead of the local worker's movement. Ironically, Prilepin's hero San'kia also represents a vanguard, not the vanguard of a socialist worker's movement but that of a precariously employed youth who does not have the traditional means of working-class politics at his disposal. Kenneth Robert's (2009, p. 171) study of a 'youth in transition' gives ground to the fear that, overall, youths in Eastern Europe are not experiencing a transformation process, in which an Eastern European country's

social system adopts the social achievements of the West, much rather the precarious experience of eastern youths now becomes part of the western experience. Along the lines of Kenneth's argument, San'kia's and his comrade's style of political participation could be characterised as 'spasmodic', its vision as rather 'apocalyptical' rather than truly 'revolutionary'. Prilepin obviously aims for tragic irony, in portraying a movement which is not at all able to exert influence on society and calling it the 'Union of the Creators'. The coup d'état in the finale is surely the least believable part of the realist novel, because even a doomed-to-fail uprising, as depicted, is unthinkable under the given circumstances in contemporary Russia. Still it is very telling. While working-class politics had set out to transform the workers' consciousness and create a new hegemonic political subject, the direct actions of the 'Union of Creators' are a far cry from this – they are *far cries into* an atomised, overall disinterested media public. Intentionally or not on Prilepin's side, it is a strike of genius that when San'kia and his co-revolutionaries, after having seized the local governor's office, the first thing they do is to turn on the TV to learn the outcome of their revolution. Not only do they seem to be a little overconfident about the truthfulness of news reports in the mass media during an ongoing coup d'état. Moreover, the outcomes of judgement day can *only* be mediated by television, because this political struggle is 'virtual' in the first place, it merely rivals and attacks the government's self-representation.

The most important parallel between Gor'kii's and Prilepin's novel, as well as the latter's most obvious point of departure from its model, is the relationship of the young hero to his mother. In *The Mother*, Pelageia Nilovna is transformed by her son's teaching and her bearing witness to his Passion, his *imitatio christi* (Esaulov, 1998, p. 61). In *San'kia*, on the contrary, San'kia's mother, a hard-working nurse, is completely unsympathetic to her son's cause and ways. A very concrete intertextual reference makes this difference clear. When Pelageia Nilovna is ashamed after the police search their home for illegal literature, Pavel explains to her that it is not she who should be ashamed of herself but the grown men in boots and armed with sabres hunting for books (see Gor'kii, 1950, p. 229). San'kia sets forth the same argument after his mother has received a visit from the police, but she is completely unmoved by it (see Prilepin, 2007, p. 214). Moreover, Sasha feels guilty towards her. While in Gor'kii's case motherly love – as in religion, or rather along the lines of Christian myth – is elevated and distanced from its biological and familial functions, to found (communist) spirituality, it is set apart in *San'kia*. Familial cohesion, in Sasha's case, cannot be transformed into intellectual community.

Katerina Clark (2000, pp. 65–66) has pointed out that although *The Mother* did serve as a prototype for the Socialist Realist model, its reversing of generational relations, the teaching of the mother by her son (though having a heart-breaking effect), had to be supplanted by the conventional

mentor–disciple, father–son relationship. The myth of the 'Great Family' (with Stalin as Super-Father in High Stalinism) emulates the family, while at the same time devaluating blood relations for spiritual kinship (see Clark 2000, pp. 65–66). Considering for a moment *San'kia*'s references not only to Gor'kii's novel but to Socialist Realism in broader terms, it has to be stated that no such father-figure is available for San'kia. At his grandparents' house in a laid-back village Sasha meditates in front of a picture of their wedding: he feels sorry that with the old people's death the memory of the 'Great Family' during Stalinism will be irretrievably lost – at the same time his nostalgia is merely a post-Soviet projection and not the result of an intergenerational passing-on of memories.

The text even states the fact that no mentor is available. After having been involved in the occupation of St Peter's bell tower in Riga, Sasha is beaten up by the humiliated and furious FSB-officers, who were unable to prevent the action, and thus Sasha reaches the stature of a martyr among his comrades. In the hospital he meets Leva, whose physiognomy and theory of Russian history – Russian history as an endless circle of tyranny and revolutionary bloodshed – reveal him to be modelled after the popular writer Dmitrii Bykov. To Leva, Sasha explains that 'intellectual mentorship' (*intellektual'noe mentorstvo*, Prilepin, 2007, p. 196)[10] has left for good. Indeed, when Sasha does not live up to the task of killing the Latvian judge, and the latter is finished off by killers apparently more professional, he is left in the dark as to what has happened. Not only is the party leadership not trustworthy, much less it is a source of ideological orientation. Peculiarly, the Union of Creators is depicted as a place completely devoid of political discussion, and in that sense it is much worse than NBP, its model, was (in reality).[11]

The only time that Sasha and his comrades gather to have a discussion is when Bezletov invites them to discuss their beliefs with him. Sasha will be the only one to respond to Bezletov, still it is clear from the first moment on that Bezletov is clearly no mentor to Sasha. Even more, when the young hero meets his 'anti-mentor', who has nothing to offer but an 'anti-ideology' – that Russia is an 'empty space' (Prilepin, 2014, p. 64) – and who inimically supposes that his unruly disciple still wants a 'national idea' (ibid., p. 63), Sasha, in turn, dismisses this ascription – he is not begging for a national idea, because he simply *is* Russian. Sasha wants to act; Bezletov wants Sasha to let it go. Later, when Bezletov becomes the local governor's assistant, he does in some sense reveal his 'real face', not because he is so evil, but because his esoteric nihilism makes him fit to serve the ruling class. Thus, Bezletov is a representative of a different part of post-Soviet intelligence, the winning, not the losing 'proletarianised' side.[12] His telling name ('bez let') marks him as being 'without age', that is, not being a force of generational and political change, but merely continuing the Russian/Soviet tradition of seeking proximity to the people in power. In spite of this, Bezletov is clearly displaying 'fatherly affection' for Sasha, but he does not dispose of any ideas worthy of

being passed on. Bezletov's familial soliciting is as devoid of 'consciousness' as Sasha's 'elective affinity' towards his 'new family' (the party).

This generational breach between the activist on the one hand and his mother and his father's substitute on the other is symptomatic. It brings us to a more profound aspect of my comparison of Gor'kii's and Prilepin's novels: the concept of 'rodstvo' (kinship), which is prominent in both cases. In the above-mentioned discussion between Sasha and Leva, the young activist states that it is 'rodstvo' that makes an ideology superfluous:

> Well, the fact is, what matters is blood [*rodstvo*] and nothing else [...] If you feel that Russia, like in Blok's poetry, is a wife, then you should treat her like a wife. A wife in the Biblical sense, to whom you shall be loyal, to whom you are wed, and with whom you'll live until death do you part. With a mother it's different – we leave our mothers.
>
> (Prilepin, 2014, p. 180)[13]

Mother Russia, which Limonov (2003) has denounced wittingly as a national symbol for an oppressed people (only soldiers and detainees love their mothers more than anything else), is not a mother at all in Sasha's imagination. Russia is not a nurturing mother but a lover, an idealised object. That is why Sasha's relation to Iana, the woman he loves, is key to the interpretation of the whole novel – and I will come back to this.

The word '*rodstvo*' (here translated as 'blood') is used at the most prominent place in Gor'kii's novel as well, immediately before Pelageia Nilovna's martyr's death. Before she is beaten and stomped into the ground by the spy and the gendarmes, she seeks with her eyes those of the bystanders, the seditious peasants. They look at her with 'rodnym ee sertsu ognem' (a fire akin to her heart) (Gor'kii, 1950, p. 516).[14] In the described scene Pelageia is literally 'carrying her son's word', because she is returning from his trial when she is mistaken for a thief. She then herself reveals the volatile content of the case. By means of her martyr's death Pavel's word thus becomes flesh, which is the novel's final proof that it is Nilovna's love that fortifies the socialist group's communal spirit. '*Rodstvo*' is thus one of Gor'kii's words for the religious feeling of togetherness that is complementary to the scientific grounding of socialism. Reason and sensibility have to be in accord in Gor'kii's God-building version of socialism (see Sesterhenn 1982, pp. 152–153). The revolutionaries cherish this sensibility by speaking highly of each other's human, or rather superhuman, qualities. For her great gain in class consciousness Pavel pets his mother with the words: 'Man is of rare luck when he can call his mother akin to his spirit too' (Gor'kii, 1950, p. 294); and Nilovna Pelageia fondles her children with these words: 'All of you are kin to each other, all of you are worthy! And who will pity you but me?' (ibid., p. 302). In Gor'kii's secularisation of the Passion of Christ, Pelageia picks up the role of the mater dolorosa, to create compassion, a task for which

ethereal Pavel is not fit for – even more so, as she becomes a martyr herself (cf. Sesterhenn, 1982, p. 255). In Prilepin the feeling of kinship has lost its rational counterpart: a binding 'spiritual' idea or ideology. The feeling thus has become somewhat uncanny and is even under suspicion to be wholly misleading. Thus, unlike Pavel, Saša Tišin (derived from 'tišina', silence) is not a communal spirit but rather a 'rebel without a cause', lamenting Russia's state of void.

The chronotopic construction of a controversial novel

Not only does the symbolic construction of the young rebel heroes, their 'fatherlessness' and their relationship towards their biological mothers – which (would) have to be won over so a communal spirit may evolve – differ substantially in Gor'kii's and Prilepin's novel, at the level of plot construction, *San'kia* shows fundamental differences from his Socialist Realist precursor as well. This may also explain why the critical reception of *San'kia*, while acknowledging Prilepin's link to Socialist Realism, was so controversial.

Prilepin himself has given a strong argument for a reading which considers poetological aspects instead of just focusing on the reception of the novel. His argument follows a rather dreadful parallel story when, after a xenophobic bomb attack against Cherkizovskii market on 21 August 2006 the home search at one of the assassins allegedly produced a copy of *San'kia*. There were speculations that the novel – in which Sasha and his comrades provoke a beating with employees of the market of Caucasian origin – had incited the criminal offence. In an essay Prilepin has dismissed this suspicion with an interesting comparison. While learning to drive he had been told that he should 'do the thinking for the fool!' (Prilepin, 2008, p. 115: 'Dumai za duraka!'). If this maxim is hard to realise even in the case of driving, Prilepin holds it to be impossible in the case of writing. 'But literature altogether lives only at mad speeds, and only those think about fools who write for fools' (ibid., p. 115).[15] Prilepin here seems to suggest that he has not thought too much about the effect the novel might have on the reader. But if we look at the passage of the violent beating and its aftermath more closely, it is important to note that Sasha and the other 'boitsy' (soldiers) (Prilepin, 2007, p. 93), when released from detention, are encouraged by the police sergeant to keep on chasing the 'chernozadykh gnid' (black-ass bugs) (ibid., p. 92) and that Sasha is very much annoyed by the familiarity with which the representative of the abhorrent state treats them. One could read into this the NBP's party line, according to which party members should abstain from xenophobic acts as they would be a deviation in the party's fight against the ruling class. Albeit plausible, this interpretation still misses the point – Prilepin abstains from a didactic exegesis of the narrative by the narrator. A reader who might share the 'tough guys' resentment against

migrant workers is merely 'bopped' into thinking about the complementary police treatment of the heroes after their 'heroic deed'.[16]

So, when focusing on the novel's structure rather than on its supposed effects, a generic comparison between Gor'kii's *Mother* and Prilepin's *San'kia* becomes relevant. In Paul D. Morris's essay 'Gorkii's *Mother* and the Paradigm of the Socialist Realist Novel' (2002) he has demonstrated, referring to the Bakhtinian dichotomy of 'novel' and 'epic', how 'the dynamic, representational potential of the novel form' (ibid., p. 15) is subjugated in Gor'kii's novel by the ideologically prescribed outcome. This holds for every constituent element of the novel form (time, place, plot, character and language). Morris's approach can of course be traced back partly to Katerina Clark's description of the ritual, 'mythic' function of the Soviet novel (cf. Morris, 2002, p. 21). The ritual resolving of the divide between spontaneity and consciousness in the Soviet novel's master plot led to the sacrifice of novelistic openness for 'epic's closedness' (Clark, 2000, p. 38).[17]

According to Morris, Gor'kii's novel does not capture truly unforeseeable historical time, which is open to changes. An age of oppression, in which time is of cyclical character and the lifetime of the workers is merely sucked up by machines, is replaced by a time of progress and the rise of working-class consciousness. Time in the novel is not 'experienced' (Morris, 2002, p. 20) as 'duration' (ibid., p. 16), as a process of transformation, but rather is an external agent of change. Similarly *places* are not sources of surprise, but exist in crystal-clear polarity. The factory remains a completely abstract space of oppression, while the enclosed spaces – home but also jail – are spaces of ideological regeneration (cf. ibid., pp. 20–21). Ideology is not challenged at the workplace, it is rehearsed in 'mutual self-praise' around the samovar.

The plot of Gor'kii's novel is based on a true story involving the May Day demonstrations of 1902 in a settlement near Nizhnii Novgorod. Nevertheless, the story is stripped of historical circumstance. The plot as an ethical transformation respectively a ritual transformation from spontaneity to consciousness does not – and in this way it is indeed very non-Marxist and non-materialist – give insight into the events that lead to a change in values and a gaining in class consciousness (ibid., pp. 21ff.). As already said, characters are not at all developed in *The Mother*. Especially Pavel's path resembles hagiography, whereas Pelageia Nilovna performs her task of martyrdom (ibid., pp. 24f.). The language is completely on the side of the oppressed. The socialists are not challenged in any way on an ideological, symbolic level (ibid., pp. 26–27), and violence seems to be the only thing to which the oppressors can resort.

In contrast to this ritualistic, cyclical, anti-psychological, hagiographic epic composition of *The Mother*, which allows an unambiguous, ideological and pre-Socialist Realist positioning of its heroes and messages, the formal constituents of *San'kia* are not subordinated in a similarly coherent fashion; although the central issue of Prilepin's novel also is centred around the

question of how its protagonist turns into a revolutionary, still the plot is not a succession of rituals within a transformation embodying an ideologically prescribed historical myth. Sasha very much experiences time, his experiences are quite contradictory and are open to interpretation. It is a rite of passage of some sort when Sasha goes to the Soviet Union's headquarters in Moscow and has an affair with Iana, the detained party leader Kostenko's girlfriend. After an intense sexual experience, Sasha feels something 'like an absolute and almost divine kinship' between Iana and him.[18] Mikhail Lipovetskii has criticised a the insertion of pictures of the later brutal torturing of Sasha's into his experience of the fellatio Iana performs on him, as eroticising violence, manifesting its 'vital'nost' (vitality) (Lipovetskii, 2012, p. 177). I do not want to rule out this interpretation but there is a lot more to this scene. Not only can one Sasha's and Iana's one-night-stand be viewed as a modern version of an abstinent sacrifice of erotic love (Clark, 2000, p. 185) for revolutionary ethics, when it is sublimated into a revolutionary bond ultimately leading into martyrdom. When Sasha later, lying in hospital after his torture, explains to Leva that Russianness is a feeling of kinship, a love of one's wife in the biblical sense, the reader can very much doubt that this '*rodstvo*' is a meaningful sublimation of erotic love, or rather a displacement of Sasha's overwhelming desire for Iana, who has immediately turned a cold shoulder to him. Sasha even calls this into question himself after his talk with Leva: 'Is she a kin to you? Is she your wife?'[19] Furthermore, during their act of love, Iana is said to move quickly as a lizard – in Slavic mythology this being a devilish, evil animal. Is Sasha not mislead by Iana? Has she not indeed bought his submissiveness towards the party with her body? As mentioned above, '*rodstvo*' becomes something uncanny, missing its dialectical counterpart, the idea. It becomes merely a feeling – or merely an idea in itself.

The development of 'place' in *San'kia* is at the same time connected to the plot's developments as well as to Sasha's experience. When his and his mother's home loses more and more of its homely qualities in the moment when the relationship to his mother deteriorates and he increasingly becomes a target of police persecution, his laid-back grandparent's home grows ever more important as a refuge. Firstly, this is the place of his childhood, and thus a symbol for his refusal to grow up and find a place in the outside world. Secondly, it is a place of an imagined youth of the Russian people (symbolised in the picture of his optimistic grandparents as young adults in the kolkhoz). Thirdly, it is a place of rampant death, a cemetery, the grave site of the forefathers and to which his father's coffin has to be brought, even if it means pulling it through the snow for miles with his own hands. This place is an ingenious literary invention holding two contradictory and yet corresponding symbolic connotations. It is an accusation against a state which has lost its ability to develop its territory, and at the same time it is a refuge for a young man who has lost the ability to develop himself. There is no clear-cut divide between the exterior space of oppression

and the interior of resistance as in *The Mother* (factory versus the motherly sphere of the samovar). The chronotopic construction of the novel is thus polysemic. The novel can be read as merely a depiction of Russia's social and political crisis, but it can be read as well as a *roman-à-lettre* against a headless revolution. Thus, an identification with the youthful heroes – these rebels without a cause – will in most cases not take place on an ideological basis, but rather on the basis of a popular sentiment, a sympathy towards a tragic act of violence, which is as utterly senseless as it is understandable.

Conclusion

So to come to the initial question of how youth in contemporary Russia is constructed in the novel *San'kia* and if this plot construction has a prescribed ideological meaning, we can draw the following preliminary conclusions. Interpretations of the novel along the lines of Lipovetskii's, ascribing to the novel a Ur-Fascist cult of violence, are counter-intuitive. Even an apocalyptic interpretation along the lines of Dostoevsky's *Besy* (Demons) (Artemoff, 2002) would seem more likely to me. Most probably the novel is a double warning: for the (then still existing) NBP that a 'spasmodic' form of resistance will not lead to true power, and a warning for the government that reacting violently to protest will lead to chaos. That is to say, in the end, that the novel is open to not one, but to all sorts of moralising interpretations, and thus, as reception has confirmed, was suited to create a discussion about a social phenomenon (the resistance of the NBP's and others) that state propaganda wanted to portray as fascism. The plot's openness to several interpretations also encompasses the valuation of the development that Sasha's character undergoes. Given the prevalence of fantasies of violence against officials and public servants in Russia (Gabowitsch, 2013, pp. 267–290) a reader does not at all need to be a fascist to enjoy the toughening up of the martyr Sasha and the decisiveness with which he storms the governor's building (it is the more agreeable as it is described as violent but not death-bringing). Still, Sasha's treating of his little fan Verochka, who he very much despises, but uses to fulfil his bodily and narcissistic needs (rejected by Iana), might very much put into doubt the 'positive trend' of his character's development. Sasha's putting an end to the philosophical discussion in which he had been ready to partake, suggests that his taking action might be seen as a confirmation of his belief that ideology is superfluous nowadays. As he points out to Leva:

> [...] all ideology is long gone. In our time, the ideologies are ... instincts! Action! The handing down of intellectual ideas is outdated, has disappeared forever [...] Land, honour, victory, justice – none of this requires evidence and justification.
>
> (Prilepin, 2014, p. 178)

We can also find passages in Prilepin's essays where the author picks up blood-and-soil rhetoric (Prilepin, 2008a) and where he states that having no ideology is not helping in resisting the Putin regime, which will co-opt all available ideologies (Prilepin, 2008c). Thus one might – like Lipovetskii (2012, p. 176) – to see epitomised in Prilepin's novel a deep suspicion towards the symbolical and *language* and an embracing of violence as a universal language. I do, however, think that this interpretation is one-sided. Philosophical discussions make up a crucial part of Prilepin's novel, and precisely in leading nowhere these discussions demonstrate how the references to a pre-symbolic sphere cancel each other out. Prilepin's novel is very different from *The Mother*: ideology is not a safe haven here. Sasha's 'ideological rejection of ideology' is matched with equally esoteric views by his opponents (Bezletov and Leva). Surely the novel shows a symbolic order in crisis – a wholehearted embracing of violence cannot be deduced from this fact.

Lipovetskii's polemic against Prilepin's alleged 'Ur-Fascism', in my opinion, stems from an all-too-quick conflating of a literary hero and his creator due to punctual concordances in habitus. If Bourdieu (1995), whose theory of mimesis in *The Rules of Art* seems to me to be very compatible with the Bakhtinian conception of the novel, is right, writing lends itself to a certain type of social recognition. All lives can be lived in literature, precisely because not one life has to be lived in reality. While Frédéric, the hero of Gustave Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education* (1869), the novel on which Bourdieu bases his analysis, is torn between the opposition of symbolic and economic capital (art and business), and thus becomes a failure, Flaubert can overcome this dichotomy by *representing* this conflictual experience in his novel on a structural level. Similarly, a fortysomething Zakhar Prilepin, who confesses that to the present day he hates 'Liberalism like the pest',[20] has created a twentysomething Sasha and has sublimated his hostility by representing it. The outcome of this process is a position of high sovereignty: 'Zakhar' is no longer a fascist blockhead, but a 'fascinating annoyance' (Schmid, 2012), manifold in thousands of media images. Prilepin's *image* is not only a conflation of the biographical persona of Prilepin (whose civil name is actually Evgenii Lavlinskii) and his literary heroes, but also of the author's persona in his essays, in his journalist pieces and activist statements. Surely this image serves as a kind of 'gatekeeper' to the literary works. His novels are read 'with regard to' their author. This leads to a paradox of praxis: a literary scholar, undertaking to prove that reading 'ideology' into *San'kia* is simply a misunderstanding, is inevitably entering the fight for the 'right use' of the novel. His 'educated view' attempts to supplant the 'wrong use' of the literary work. Bearing this paradox in mind I thus do not want to come to the overoptimistic conclusion that *San'kia* is merely a tool for a useful self-analysis of society. Prilepin's writing does pose the danger of making nationalism fashionable, still *San'kia* tells us a lot about the experience of youth in post-Soviet Russia (and beyond Russia) if analysed 'rightly'. In the

end, the polysemic character of such literature, to which the reception bears witness, is not independent from a public that is able to discuss it freely.

Notes

1. The first edition of *San'kia* at Ad Marginem had been published together with the rather obscure Moscow publishing house Andreevskii flag, new editions of *San'kia* have subsequently appeared at Ast/Astrel, which also fulfils the readers' demand for fantasy superstar Sergei Lukianenko's books. Lukianenko's bestseller *Nochnoi dozor* (Night Watch), for comparison, has so far a run of 150,000 copies.
2. A Polish translation and a Chinese edition were published in 2008, the French translation in 2009 and the Italian in 2011. The German translation followed in 2012. It has also been published in Turkey, another 'Emerging and Developing Economy' (according to the IMF) with strongman-style leadership, and even more prone to violent youth protest than Russia.
3. Then again there were a lot of critiques where it is hard to figure out if their rejection of the novel really pertains to Prilepin's novel or rather the reality it represents (see Ramoziva 2006).
4. A fitting albeit rather silly episode in the novel's reception was a debate kicked of by an article by banker Petr Aven (2008) for the magazine *Russkii Pioner*. Criticising the novel from the standpoint of entrepreneurial ethics, Aven quite naively condemns it as a manifesto for a destructive and lazy youth.
5. We have to bear in mind though that the trial's outcome is hard to comment on. Most likely the weaponry had been sold to the NBP activists by agent provocateurs on behalf of the FSB, a subject the court did not get into. We cannot tell the level of autonomy the court had. Overall, the verdict reads as reasonable in comparison with the likes of Marija Syrova's verdict against *Pussy Riot*.
6. 'Priamoe deistvie' as a concept has been decisively influenced by NBP. It is the translation of 'direct action', which is a concept rooted deeply in the history of the anarcho-syndicalistic movement, but was given something of a fresh start within the reclaim-the-city and the anti-globalisation movements. Today's proponents of direct action stress the need of creative forms of resistance, engendering techniques of estrangement. The hope is to change the individual consciousness of the thus exposed bystander or even opponent instead of appealing to state agency (as in targeted workers' strikes) (see Direct Action Reader, 2008, pp. 9ff.). Although NBP's actions have often been called artistic and have even been seen on some ground as hereditary to 1990's Moscow Actionism (see Medvedev, 2012, 241; Urickii 2003), the so-called Radical Art, it can be said that these actions are artistically *less* ambitious than western street theatre.

   I have elsewhere analysed – inspired by Olga Matich (2005) and Dmitry Golynko-Volfson (2003) – the NBP's ambivalent stance towards the figure of the violent father and authoritarian rule (see Meindl, 2011, pp. 71–72). Needless to say, that calls for totalitarian rule do not comply with the 'direct action' agenda of questioning the hierarchical power structure on a daily basis at every given opportunity.
7. In this bogus open letter to the Generalissimo, written in the name of the Russian intelligentsia, Prilepin 'reveals' that its hatred towards Stalin is denying the fact that it owes its life, education and (stolen) riches to the dictator's cruel modernisation project. Less polemic and without the anti-Semitic identification of the liberal intelligentsia as Jewish, New Marxist Philosopher Boris Kagarlitskii (2002,

p. 53) has raised a related point of criticism – that Russian intelligentsia as a class merely sees itself as the victim of Stalinism, not as its outcome and benefactor.

8. Esaulov (1998, p. 62) has noted that most of Gor'kii's young heroes have either lost their fathers or have renounced them. However, he ascribes this to the fact that in *Mat'* 'the place of God-Father [...] is vacant for the time being' (translated by the author).
9. In a peculiar way, Gor'kii's hero as a representative of a principally new generation fallen from a dawning sky, embodying a 'fully developed' superhuman, very much reminds us of the indeed anti-socialist Nietzschean vision of Mikhail Artsybashev (cf. Schümann, 2001, pp. 100ff.), whose scandalous novel *Sanin* Gor'kii had defended against persecution (ibid., p. 33). Then again, it should be conceded that the hero to be transformed in *The Mother* is, of course, Pelageia Nilovna, and not Pavel.
10. Unfortunately this detail, the specific reference to the mentor, is lost in the English translation (Prilepin, 2014, p. 178: 'The handing down of intellectual ideas is outdated, has disappeared forever').
11. Surely, as we can study in *Limonka*, totalitarian ideology and *stiob* prevailed most of the time in Limonov's party, still there was an undercurrent of 'peer-to-peer' political discussion where youths challenged each other's (sometimes quite pathological) beliefs.
12. For a critique of the decline of the Soviet intelligentsia in post-Soviet times, its inability to become a class of intellectuals, see Kirill Medvedev's (2012a) essay 'My Fascism'.
13. I want to leave aside here the question of the *best* interpretation of '*rodstvo*'. I don't think 'blood' is a very appropriate one, because it points to racism, which is overall not very typical of NBP's nationalism. Yet more importantly 'blood' would disguise the reference to Gor'kii's *The Mother*, where '*rodstvo*' seems to be a very important term and obviously 'blood' does not at all fit the common bond that the socialist writer was trying to grasp and create. I would prefer 'kinship'.
14. Here and in the following are my own translations, as I have not found the existing ones to pay attention to the word '*rodstvo*' respectively '*rodnoi*'.
15. 'А литература вообще живёт на бешеных скоростях, и о дураках там думают только те, кто пишет для дураков'.
16. Prilepin (2014, p. 83): translation for the above-mentioned 'boitsy'.
17. The basic schizophrenia of Socialist Realism, stemming from its mission to present in a Realist style 'what ought to be' – which has to result in a literature which is hagiographical and thus in style antecedent to Realism – had of course already been identified in Andrei Siniavskii's most prominent essay 'What is Socialist Realism?'
18. Prilepin (2007, p. 136): [...] как абсолютное и почти божественное родство.
19. Prilepin (2007, p. 201): Она родная? Жена тебе?
20. Prilepin (2008d, p. 28): При том, что либерализм ненавижу по сей день как чуму.

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13
'Polittusovka' – An Alternative Public Space of Young Politicians in Contemporary Russia

Anna Zhelnina

Introduction

The active participation of young people in the political protest of 2011–2012 happened to be surprising for many:[1] just before the events the media as well as some experts reported on the passivity of the youth, describing young people as not having any interest for politics nor any kind of collective actions, and being mere consumers or careerists. However, the active presence of young people in the streets during the protest actions after the parliamentary and presidential elections has shown that the mobilisation potential is very high. Therefore it is important to reflect on the political mobilisation of youth and the specific forms of public space that promote the mobilisation. In this chapter the focus is not on the protesting youth of 2011–2012. The text represents data collected before the protests and it is a post-protest reflection on the political socialisation of young people, as well as on the peculiarities of the politicised public space in St Petersburg.

This chapter is based on the results of the project 'Youth solidarities in local and global context: economics, politics, and culture' that focused on diverse forms of solidarisation among young people and on youth initiatives in diverse spheres of society. Analysis of one such initiative is presented in this chapter, aiming to show how ideological, spatial and lifestyle components intertwine in the process of solidarisation. The goal of this paper is to describe the sphere of youth politics in St Petersburg as a space of formation of new youth solidarity, as well as of professional and civic socialisation.

The subject of the research is the project 'Polit-gramota' (Political Literacy). It is a communication space, which has no specific geographical location, but is moving from one place to another. 'Polit-gramota' (PG) has created a new format of communication, shifting the political debates from the 'official' space into the informal spaces of youth, thus attracting new activists. For this research I spoke to six persons from the PG network

and project organisers, conducted participant observation during the public debates, and analysed the representation of the PG on its website as well as in social networks. The selection of different respondents allows us to see both the process of the space production from the point of view of the organisers and the perspective of the participants.[2] The project leaders uncovered the mechanisms and the internal process of the PG, while the participants were less involved in the creation and support of the project, but could compare their PG experience with other spaces they encounter. The organisers of the project helped in selecting participants for the interviews, but the main criteria were to ensure the diversity of political views; thus the interviewees represent parties from different parts of the political spectrum.

'Polit-gramota': The 'alternative' and the 'official' space

Public space is an essential part of young people's socialisation (Herlyn, 2003); it helps in developing skills of communication, including the skills necessary for political and social activities. In this chapter, by public space I mean a space of exchange and conflict of different opinions (Habermas, 1991), localised in the urban space (Habermas, 1991). It means that young people need specific urban places where this exchange can take place, where they can interact with each other and the world. This is similar to the understanding of public space by Hannah Arendt: she emphasised that people involved in meaningful communication need to see each other, and meet in urban space face-to-face (Arendt, 1998).

An important criticism of the Habermasian concept of the bourgeois public sphere has been formulated by Nancy Fraser who claimed it was never possible to speak of a unified public sphere and homogenous public. As Fraser puts it, Habermasian analysis was limited to the bourgeois public sphere and ignored the alternative public spheres (Fraser, 1990). In this chapter this criticism is taken into consideration to observe the alternative public sphere created by an alternative public, which took shape literally before our eyes: young journalists and politicians of St Petersburg.

Due to the fact that this new public has been undergoing its formations in the alternative spaces hidden from the eyes of political analysts and journalists, the voice of these young people as well as their political views stayed out of the dominant discourse. In this sense one can call the politicised youth an 'alternative public' (Nancy Fraser's 'counterpublic').[3]

According to Fraser, the alternative publics create their alternative public spaces, which sooner or later invade and transform the dominant discourse (Fraser, 1992). One can assume that for many young people the virtual space of the social networks becomes such an alternative (however, the results of its 'invasion' into the dominant discourse and its transforming influence remains questionable, as I will attempt to show further). In this chapter, however, I focus on an example of a face-to-face public space which was

created by young activists to discuss political issues in an alternative environment. The creators of the space emphasised that this space was breaking the 'standards' of the political communication, but it was this experience that helped some participants to start their professional activities in politics or political journalism.

The youth debate project 'Polit-gramota' first appeared in 2006. The organisers of the project, students of journalism at one of St Petersburg's universities, set a goal to establish a platform for young people to exchange their opinions on what was going on in the political sphere.

The main activities of the project are maintaining a website and organising public debates. The website publishes opinions on the political issues in the country and in the region as well as analytical papers by young politicians and journalists. The debates take place in night clubs and bars, and welcome politicians, activists and anyone else interested. The debates happened to be a very successful format: after the PG started doing it, many youth organisations and unions set up their own public discussion clubs.

The scope of the topics addressed by PG is very wide: the articles on the website are dedicated to current events such as elections, street actions, diverse activities by different political and civic initiatives, discussions, and legal innovations on both regional and national level. The most important parties and political organisations publish their news and analytics on the website, and even have separate sections on the top of the site to make browsing easier and equal. Due to the fact that the website welcomes authors and publications with different political and civic backgrounds, the diversity of topics and views is ensured. The topics of the debates, as well as the speakers invited, are decided upon by three main organisers. Debates have focused, for instance, on national-level issues such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights (a burning and highly contested issue in contemporary Russia); adoption of Russian children by foreign citizens (following the very politicised and widely discussed 'Dima Yakovlev Law' that prohibited international adoption); the Pussy Riot case; as well as on regional-level events (such as the placing of the Ivan the Terrible monument in Vologda) and so on. The speakers also vary in status and skill: along with young politicians and activists, also established political figures take part such as party leaders and parliament deputies.

According to the authors of the project, the debates were necessary in order to get young people involved in politics and civic activities, and to help their professional development. On the other hand, the plan was to make politics interesting for those who had never had any interest in it:

> [...] on one hand, it's like a proving ground for them. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for the youth which is interested to see, what kind of movements exist, what they want, who participates in them, maybe, they can learn something from it. I mean, they can find out, what kind

> of views they can share, what they don't share, who is sympathetic, during this kind of events, they can get an idea of the political, ideological matrix. (01)

'Alternative' and the specificities of youth

The format itself as well as the places selected to host the debates are pronouncedly alternative: these are youth bars and clubs, where the public can drink beer and be more relaxed than in study rooms and conference halls. The alternative to the traditional discussion spaces (universities and other formal institutions) became a principle and a main feature of the PG debates. The respondents would describe their first experience of conducting debates as unsuccessful and not much different from the usual discussions (at the formal educational and political institutions) due to the fact that these first debates took place generally in a university conference hall (02). The new format is about more freedom in expression, emotional reactions, 'uncovering' of the participants. The debates turn formal, adult politics upside down:

> Politics for the youth must be interesting. No one must fall asleep on the third minute of the discussion, people can be in the atmosphere of a bar, a pub, drink beer, smoke, yell 'fool' if there's a fool on stage. Well, it's about feeling more free. (03)

The next quote shows how the attention in this alternative format is switching from the politicians to the youth. The usual youth leisure places are the places where young people feel they belong, to be 'insiders', 'not afraid to express their opinion' (01). These places, however, are alien to formal politicians, who are forced to take an unusual role:

> So it happens, that not the young people come to the politicians and hang upon their lips, but the politicians come to the young people and must somehow present themselves and adopt to this public, to show themselves (or not to), well, to set themselves up somehow. (01)

The framework of 'youth politics' allows a more relaxed behaviour, and the personal co-presence of the participants makes the contact more lively and trustworthy than if it were communication mediated via the internet. As one of the organisers put it, such a face-to-face communication lets people see what is the politics 'without a mask' (02).

The features of the alternative space, its specific organisation and rules of behaviour change even those participants who have been professionally involved in formal politics for a long time. There have been several stories told during the interviews of how some politicians lost their patience and

had to show their real face under pressure by the public. For instance, one of the politicians was described as a 'trained speaker' able to find something in common with every discussion partner, even with the opponents. On the 'alien territory', however, this person could not cope with the unusual rules of the game and 'uncovered' himself:

> In our debates people just threw him off balance. He started running across the stage nervously, making rounds, calling on the phone, yelling at the audience, because people interrupted him [...] Well, the person opened himself a little more. (01)

Along with breaking the standards of the formal politics, the new public space offered a right to speak to those who never had such an opportunity before. For the organisers, the debates set an alternative to the standard media sphere, too. As well as the formal politics, the formal media are described as closed and conservative, as opposed to the fresh and dynamic space of the PG. The television is described as a conservative field inaccessible to the new political actors. At the same time, the PG offers a stage to 'absolutely new faces. Some of them are just as good as those on television, I mean the quality of the content they offer the audience, the professionalism they show in their argumentation. And they are not as narrow-minded' (02).

The image of the traditional institutions (politics, education, media)

The PG builds its uniqueness opposing the traditional institutions: 'adult' politics and the education system. Adult politics is perceived as a space where real debate and clash of opinions are no longer taking place, it is seen as a sphere of consensus, where the ideological differences are rather an element of decoration rather than something meaningful. The 'trained' mainstream politician should act as follows:

> no matter what audience is there, he just agrees with anyone, he takes such a position – 'well, you're right, too', and then he just explains his position. (01)

The 'academic format' taking place in universities is also different from what PG is striving for. The main difference is the absence of emotions and real interest: 'The academic format assumes restraint, moderation, everything is calm, regular, the discussion is very meaningful, issue-related' (01).

Interest and emotions are connected in the youth discussions: 'caps-lock voice' and personal confrontation are an essential element of the discussion,

which is absent in the adult, depersonalised politics. Even the word 'debates' has lost its original meaning in the formal politics:

> The word 'debates' itself has become, I don't know, vulgar. Debates means just controversy. But for us it was important that it should be interesting, that there should be an atmosphere of a discussion, maybe with caps-lock voice, maybe, the opponents would interrupt each other. (03)

It is exactly the fact of personally 'being there', seeing 'with one's own eyes' that is essential to this youth politics project. The interviewees repeat the expressions 'to see with one's own eyes', 'personally'. They use metaphors of exposure, uncovering ('when someone comes to the stage of the debates, he's like naked, with all his interests and contradictions' (02)); it is mentioned that often one has to sit at the same table with someone whose views are 'disgusting' and whom you would not like to contact because of 'reasons of hygiene' (01). The experience of bodily co-presence and emotional co-participation, and not just exchange of ideological arguments, creates an effect of full participation, inclusion, belonging to the community, which is impossible in case of only mediated communication: 'and in the media sphere there is a picture, well, I want to say it's a lie, but it is a corrected picture. It is tweaked by the professionals, who work with the media and want to create a positive image' (02).

The opposition of the 'live' and 'mediated' communication was mentioned by most of the interviewees. The live participation in the community requires much more emotional and intellectual effort, this is why it is so hard to make people participate in it: 'There are of course lots of people writing and commenting online. But coming out physically – well, there is a problem' (06).

The activists see the face-to-face communication as important not only in the case of the debates, but in professional political activities. The significance of personal contact increases when, due to the media and the internet, the political forces can easily create 'masks' and nice images for themselves. Interestingly, the representatives of both pro-Kremlin and oppositional political movements are sceptical towards the media and the internet. A member of the United Russia Party mentioned how important it was for him to be able to observe immediately the actions of the opponents, to evaluate their real numbers and possibilities. This refers to the debates as well as to other offline forms of participation, such as rallies and street protests:

> One has to see with one's own eyes, to understand your opponents [...] It is enough just to come to their rallies, there has been one yesterday, for the unregistered parties; there are just 100 people for three parties, and they claim they have like 50,000 members, or 45,000. And it gets clear

> that, speaking in the name of the people, they actually speak only for their small group. (05)

The PG builds up its uniqueness and alternative nature in opposition to the traditional media. It is interesting that some of the participants are early career journalists themselves. They are therefore interested in integrating into this sphere, and the analytical website of the PG is important. However, the debates are emotionally much more significant for the participants, as the face-to-face interaction is the most unusual part of the project and this is what makes it different from anything else.

It is important to mention that 'traditional' politicians also take part in the project, though they are not always ready to support the change of the rules. One of the favourite stories of the project leaders is the behaviour during the debates of one of the speakers, a deputy at the regional parliament, who deliberately broke all the rules of the discussion club. He invited a group of loyal old women to support him, tried to prohibit beer drinking, brought an assistant to carry his coat: generally, he tried to establish the traditional hierarchy that was not working in this alternative public space. As a result, the speaker 'escaped' and called the police, but the debates still took place – the wretched deputy was replaced with a friendly young member of the 'United Russia'.

Professional socialisation

The history of the project is strongly connected to the professional development of its members, organisers as well as ordinary participants, speakers, journalists and the audience: 'We were just a zero, we grew altogether' (02); 'There are people who grew before us, who started participating in our events' (01).

The unusual for the 'adult politics' form of public debate appeared to be very useful as a training space for the beginning politicians:

> I know people, who are now leaders in organisations, who came to our debates for the first time. Well, just to understand it for themselves, what do they want in politics. If they want to do it, or not. I mean, they came to the debates, they liked the speaker, they joined the movement, and then – bang! – in half a year you see them on top. (02)

The PG has its own success stories. For instance, a leader of one of the social movements in St Petersburg, who started his public career in the debates, gradually improved his speaker skills: 'NN became one of the most high-quality speakers in St Petersburg [...] it's us who blew the coals' (02).

Apart from the politicians it is a useful socialisation space for journalists, who start writing news and analyses for the website polit-gramota.ru. The

project leaders work with them as editors, and feel proud of several success stories where the PG authors became 'leading political observers' (01).

The skills of political debate acquired during participation in the PG do not necessarily lead to a career as a professional politician. The participants value these skills even if they decide to take up some other career. The experience in pro-Kremlin movements is seen by some young people as a way to get employed by the state institutions, but the experience of the informal and independent PG is seen as more meaningful and useful due to the contacts network:

> Many people find some other sphere to work in after this youth paddling pool. And many become big men, but not in politics, in other spheres. But I don't really know anyone who made a career as a politician after it. (04)

The organisers of the project are journalists, and they emphasise their own professional development and gradual inclusion into the professional community, and growth of their own social capital due to their participation in the project: 'I mean, once we were afraid to approach Reznik [regional politician] for an interview. And now it's no problem, we've got all the contacts in case we need a comment for the website [...] We can ask the "Youth Guard" [Molodaya Gvardiya, youth branch of the United Russia] on Vkontakte [popular social network] for their opinions – and they will answer, because they know, it will be published, it will be on the website and it won't be screwed up' (03).

Community/solidarity/public – '*Polittusovka*'

PG has become one of the nodes in the new network of young politics and the new youth solidarity, gradually accumulating social and symbolic capital, strengthening its image of a trustworthy and independent project.

As the project organisers put it, in the early stage of the PG development there did not really exist a youth political community, since many youth organisations and party divisions existed in an atomised way, having no space for communication and even 'not knowing about one another' (01), 'they didn't interact with each other, only communicating within the movement' (02). When the PG came into being, the diverse initiatives received a chance to interact, co-operate and conflict with each other. The debate participants from diverse parties and movements now had an opportunity to 'interact, find things in common, get to know each other, establish contacts for professional co-operation, or vice versa, started an active conflict' (02). Knowing the opponents personally happened to be very useful both for the 'oppositioners' and those who were much closer to the formal politics: 'We know our people, we're on the same events, we work together, but this arena helps you to get to know your opponents personally' (05).

The gradual formation of a community of personally acquainted and trusting people is one of the results of the PG debates. We can thus speak of a new solidarity building around the active position and non-indifferent attitude towards public issues. Apart from new personal networks of the participants and a specific internal solidarity, the community of young politicians has received some media attention and got access to a wider public. However, the definition 'alternative' still remains central to the self-identification of the participants even within this broader field:

> [...] after some time even the local TV channels started reporting about us. Well, it just became a phenomenon in the city. Something interesting. The local press also wrote about our events, which means we really shaped that alternative political media pool (01).

The 'alternativity' of the project can be understood as a description of its position in both political alignment and the manner of managing the information. The project claims to be unusually inclusive, inviting all the political views to be presented on the website and during the debates, as opposed to the generally very ideologically homogenous spaces of parties, ideologies and interest groups. The second aspect is only understandable in the context of perception of politics in Russia (before the protest wave and massive youth politicisation of 2011–2012). Politics has been conceived as a cleaned-up space where no deviations from the prepared script are welcome, no improvising and fresh developments take place. PG started positioning itself as an interesting and youth-friendly politicised space, making real discussions and clash of opinion possible. In this sense, this project can be seen as a herald of the youths' influx to the political scene.

Such a development can be interpreted as a career growth for the whole community, and not only for its individual participants:

> Really, nobody was interested in young politicians. We started writing about them, then they started writing for us, and then you see – in a while a half of the political media in the city is writing about them. (01)

Not only the attention by the media dignifies the development and professionalisation of the milieu, but also the fact that young politicians have gained respect within their 'adult' parties. Due to the growing reputation of the PG part of its symbolic capital is spreading on to the participants, who are able to use it for their personal benefit: 'Our debates have become a gateway into politics' (02). Together with the increasing professionalism of the organisers and the reputation of the project in general, each individual activist could also develop: 'the guys that participated regularly in our events, they grew. But in the beginning there were different things [...] the level was primitive' (01).

In this sense one could detect a pragmatic, or instrumental, element of the 'alternative space' as a mobility strategy for the participants. Yet though this element clearly existed, one should not overestimate it: even after the main organisers achieved some success in their personal professional careers they did not leave the project; they supported and developed it as an important space allowing communication and activities that are not possible elsewhere in the regular media.

However, I cannot claim that PG was the only reason that this new public appeared. The young politicians' community was undergoing its formation and was in search of an appropriated public space, which was found in PG. Before the PG debates some of the youth parties had experimented with the format of debates, but PG was the first non-partisan independent discussion club, which happened to become the most popular.

Participants

The PG managed to involve young people in its discussions; however, it did not succeed in attracting a wider public. Attempts to become known beyond the community have been made regularly, but PG still remained rather a club for a social group with an interest in politics: 'Well, gradually a grouping has formed, they always come to the debates. Only if there's some hot topic new people show up. But there's definitely some skeleton staff' (03).

The audience of the debates is people connected by weak social ties: they are not close friends, but this network of acquaintances allows them to get access to important information and resources (Granovetter, 1983). An excerpt from a field diary illustrates this specificity of social networking in the PG:

> You can't really remember them all! This one – he even was a speaker in the debates. Well, he [...] is an oppositionist. There was an interesting case. He was working as a teacher in school, where he invited us, the Polit-gramota, we had our classes, read texts, it was interesting. But then they fired him because of his political views. We even wrote about it on Polit-gramota.
>
> (transcript of a talk, Field Diary, 14 July 2011)

Thus, one can say that a public space for a specific social group has been formed: a group of young people involved in political and civic activities, who interact face-to-face, encounter each other on the debates and are included into networks of information, one of the nodes in the network being the debates and the website of the PG. This group has a kind of self-designation: 'polittusovka' (political clubbish set) or 'polit-community' (political community) or a name 'polit-tusovshiki' (political 'party people') for individual members:

> polit-tusovshiki, those who are involved in it, it's like a kind of leisure for them [...] Well, the members of the political community, young people mostly, activists of youth movements, party members [...] communists, liberals, even some mentally competent nationalists, maybe. History lovers. Antifa. Well, whoever – they are all polit-tusovshiki. (02)

Interestingly, the audience of the debates does not consist of young people exclusively. Yet it is young people who are perceived as legitimate members, insiders, who are recognised. One of the field diaries describes a situation when one of the organisers was surprised to see a middle-aged person, whom he didn't recognise as a usual visitor to the debates: 'Surprisingly, sometimes you see that kind of guy. They come to the youth debates' (Field diary).

There are almost all parts of the political spectrum of St Petersburg represented in the audience of the debates: left-wing, liberals, nationalists, representatives of the ruling party. All the interviewees mentioned such an ideological equilibrium as one of the advantages of the project, which even ensures the calm relation to the PG from the side of the law-enforcement authorities. The presence of the representatives of the United Russia and the Young Guards allows the project not to be associated with protest activities or events by the opposition, which also means fewer problems with the authorities:

> And even if the United Russia didn't participate in the debates as speakers, the guys from the United Russia and the Young Guards would still come to the debates. Well, like this it is simply impossible to see the event as something revolutionary, like a demonstration. (03)

The specificity of the PG's political profile (the inclusivity, freedom of speech and the absence of the unified ideology) faced an interesting challenge during the protest wave of 2011–2012, which followed the electoral fraud on the parliamentary and presidential elections. The events literally forced every political actor to express its position towards the existing regime. The PG, however, kept its neutrality perfectly untouched: though the individual members, of course, would express their opinions quite clearly, go to the protest rallies or organise the pro-Kremlin political campaigns, the project as such would not publicly have any position. The comments on the political events in the country would appear on the website, including the editorials, but would not receive an individual tag for it. The project managed to avoid extreme politicisation of the period, but still kept on commenting and following the events and multiplying opinions about them. Both pro-Kremlin and extremely anti-Kremlin comments appeared on the PG website equally.

The community has an identity, an internal network of communication, its own arena for interaction. The ideological diversity does not harm the communication, and there are some shared ideas of the 'outsiders'. The basis

for the formation of solidarity in *polittusovka* is not in some common political ideological views, but an interest in politics and society as such, and the active civic position. One of the interviewees described this common value as 'concerns about the country's future' (05). Another mentioned that some of the members of the community 'can hate each other in a way', like members of the pro-Kremlin youth movement 'Nashi' and the radicals from Eduard Limonov's 'The Other Russia' movement, but:

> [...] they are still closer, because they reflect on what's going on, they try to change something, thus they are closer to each other than to the people who are absolutely apolitical, and say this famous phrase – 'Politics is a dirty thing' or just say 'It's not my cup of tea.' (01)

The interviewee (02) described the same idea of solidarity:

> [...] it's not who activates just when it's elections. These are people who do something during the four-year period between elections, too. They organise actions, rallies, they have their ideals, goals in politics, they want to achieve something, some changes, or even something just for themselves. (02)

The always active people thus are opposed not only to the apolitical citizens, but also to the political forces only interested in the elections results.

The 'insiders' are described as people who are interested in the debates and in the political issues in general, whereby the political views are not as important. Among these people there are almost no open conflicts, and the atmosphere is described as cosy and friendly: 'well, it's like, I don't know, like a kindergarten, they come in with their flags, they sit down, they discuss things, they socialise, and the atmosphere is not negative at all' (03).

The environment is characterised by a certain level of trust; most of the members know each other but can also be called 'closed' – most of the members are part of one social network:

> They co-operate with us, and we personally are friends with members of Jabloko, of Oborona, of Pravoe Delo, with the left-wing, with United Russia. They all write for our website, participate in the events. And this is what has ensured us trust in this tusovka, because people know they all can get published with us. (01)

For those members of PG professionally involved in political activities it becomes a space where one can encounter alternative points of view, learn the opponents – but these opponent never become enemies, or aliens. They are good guys, but with different views.

Aliens

The community has its oddballs, whom everybody knows, but who are still part of the community. People are attuned to their favoured topics and behaviour:

> There's a couple of annoying people, they come every time, they say the same things, we try to limit them, but we always let them speak. Many people criticise us for it, they say, how can you let this person speak. (01)

However, there are also certain persons who are unanimously rejected by all the insiders, and this also helps to create solidarity. Apolitical people who think politics is a dirty word are among the rejected, as well as ultra-rights: 'We have a consensus about it. People who are fixated on ideas of violence, hatred to anyone, they don't deserve to be heard' (01–02).

All of the participants were clearly speaking out against fascist ideologies and its adherents, and there were situations described when these sorts of ideas still were brought up during the debates. One of the most striking episodes took place during a debate on LGBT rights: a neo-Nazi crowd appeared in the room:

> It was scary, uncomfortable. Because all these guys, who call themselves the future of the Russian state, they were very hostile, and they thought they were the smartest, and that it's only them who know what's right. It was quite disgusting, I should say. (06)

The organisers had to call the police, but although the neo-Nazis continued to disturb the discussion by being noisy, the speakers carried on.

The rejection of fascist ideology is a commonplace for the professional youth politics. One of the organisers of a similar discussion project by United Russia, 'Polit-boi' (Political fight), and at the same time a PG activist, said the same about his project attitude: 'Well these fascists [...] they'll never be allowed to speak' (05).

The development of the public space

The success of the PG made this format very popular, and other youth organisations started to conduct their own debates. The United Russia organised 'Polit-boi', 'Jabloko' and 'Pravoe Delo' as well as some universities also adopting the format. The competition ('When they started, they even chose the same dates as us, to tackle our audience' (02)) influenced the quality of the debates in a positive way, though the independence and non-partisan nature of the PG still ensured its central position in the new public sphere of *polittusovka*.

However, the debates of the PG are not as regular any more, in 2011 there were only two sets organised. On the wave of interest for politics raised after the protests in 2012 there were a few more events, although the decrease of the number of meetings is clear. It can be partly explained by the fact that there is a lot of similar events organised in the city, as well as by the new career developments among the organisers: they became professionals and lost their interest for the training platform of the PG.

One of the interviewees assumed that the sphere of youth politics has run dry:

> Everybody knows each other already. And knows what will be said by whom. You cannot convince your opponent of anything, and you don't really need to. And the problem is that there is no new audience. The same people involved in this sphere keep coming [...] But it didn't work to attract some new people. (06)

The debates have taken a new shape in a more traditional media: on an independent TV channel, Vashe obshestvennoe televidenie (VOT) (Your Social Television) there is a show with the same name, but with no audience. The VOT is a cable channel only broadcasted in St Petersburg, therefore its audience is limited in comparison to the main federal and regional channels. However, this broadcasting limitation allows the channel to have live broadcasts, and more independence in choice of topics and guests. The alternative public space is, however, expanding: the PG debates now take place in several regions of the north-west, most successfully in Petrozavodsk. The debates take place also in Pskov, Vologda, Archangelsk, Novgorod (all these cities belonging to the North-Western Federal district of Russia) and, since 2012, in Volgograd (Central Federal district).

Due to its regional expansion the PG became an even more useful resource for its participants:

> We had a project of liberal clubs in Petersburg. And we were considering going to the regions. I went to Pskov, a colleague of mine went to Karelia. And then we were in touch with Polit-gramota. Because it was when they also went to the regions. And we had kind of informational and organisational partnership. They advertised our events, and they visited, helped us to find rooms. (06)

The debates run with different levels of success and sustainability in these locations, depending on the local teams as well as on the general condition of the political sphere in the region. The PG website, though, remains important and regularly updated: news, analytics and reports on all regional debates are being published here, as well as information from the parties and movements.

Public space as a resource centre: In place of a conclusion

Many participants of the PG can implement their project using the resources of the network. Usually the PG works as a space to spread information, but it is not the only resource it can offer. It is used as a well-known trustworthy umbrella 'brand' to organise diverse events. For instance, one of the interviewees, at that time member of the Pravoe delo, mentioned: 'in this project I am a kind of person who appears to introduce some ideas, and then guys from the PG and I, we do it' (04).

'Polit-gramota' is also a network of contacts and resources which allow participants implementing their own projects. One participant used it to work on an international youth parliament project as an informational and organising partner. The project helped to bring in different parties and organisations. Thus, the PG worked as a channel to find useful social networks.

The study of a youth discussion project has shown that it helped to establish an alternative public space in St Petersburg, which in its turn promoted the formation of a new public and helped this public to be heard. By providing a space for communication and face-to-face interaction, a new environment for identification and socialisation was created. The core of the new solidarity is the value of civic and political participation, and interest in public issues, as opposed to the widespread individualism and escape from the collective action. This solidarity goes beyond political ideologies and traditional boundaries between left and right, opposition and ruling party. All participants share the rejection of the ultra-right movements and ideologies, and perceive them as not even political but criminal.

The participation in the project has become a collective strategy of social mobility: each individual member would experience much more difficulties in making his or her way into politics or journalism. PG helped in collectively acquiring social and symbolic capital in St Petersburg's public sphere, which could be used for individual professional growth. Over time, the alternative has become mainstream and its leaders have become professionals.

The network of 'Polit-gramota' is a public space for a specific selected public connected by weak social ties, which allows access to be gained to information and other resources. Participation in this kind of public activism provides young people with resources for their own professional development and for implementation of their own projects. The social environment is, however, limited and does not grow wider, it has stabilised and become partly integrated into 'big' politics.

The interesting feature of the project is that it is not promoting certain ideas or political programmes, but rather providing the necessary skills and resources for persons willing to engage in politics. In the situation of extreme politicisation during the anti-electoral protests (December 2011–May 2012)

the project kept its neutrality, managing again to keep the balance between ideological extremes.

In this form it is attractive to lots of different activist groups and is not subject to threats from the authoritarian political environment. It provides a space and publicity for alternative opinions without being labelled as an 'oppositional' initiative – and thus avoiding the risks that dissenters face under authoritarian regimes. This smart position can be interpreted as conformist (since the project does not try in any way to publicly and directly oppose the state), but the impact of such a (on first glance) neutral initiative should not be underestimated: it does give voice and chances for development and professional growth for those interest groups deprived of publicity.

Notes

1. The chapter is based on the results of the project 'Youth solidarities in local and global contexts: economics, politics, culture' supported by Basic research programme in 2011.
2. In the text I use numbers from 01 to 06 to refer to the respondents. In some cases there was more than one interview conducted with the same person, in those cases the interview is referred to as 01–02. The respondents 01, 02 and 03 are the project leaders, website editors and moderators of the public debates. The respondents 04, 05 and 06 are participants of the PG, young politicians, members of different political parties (Pravoe delo [The Right Thing], Edinaya Rossiya [United Russia] and Yabloko [The Apple]).
3. I should add that the public on the street protests of 2011–2012 and the subject of this chapter are different publics, and they cannot speak for one another, though many of the PG members have individually joined the street protests.

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Part IV

Contested Agency: Civic Engagement and Everyday Practices

14
Youth Cultures in Contemporary Russia: Memory, Politics, Solidarities

Elena Omelchenko and Guzel Sabirova

Introduction

The studies of youth cultural practices in Russia, which we have been conducting since 2000, indicate that it is essential to understand the complexity of uniting global and local tendencies, the Soviet legacy and the impact of political discourses. We have been observing how these contexts define the shape of youth cultural scenes, while changing and sometimes breaking cultural boundaries and distorting authentic meanings.[1] As a result, a unique Russian youth cultural space has emerged. The central thesis of this chapter is that the concept of solidarities is the most pertinent and productive means of describing modern Russian youth cultures. The use of this approach makes it possible to enter: (1) post-subcultural disputes about which social meanings youth cultural formations transmit and what material resources of their group identities exist today; (2) which social contexts influence youth cultural space and how they do it. In this chapter we focus on key aspects of the youth cultural scene, addressing: (1) the actualisation and meaning of the Soviet past; (2) the influence of political discourses and state youth 'education' policies, in particular, regarding patriotic education; (3) youth participation in global contexts and their Russian interpretation.

Russian youth has a special experience of Soviet sociality, which passes through generations, family upbringing and the system of secondary and high education in complex ways. Despite the common, to a certain extent, 'Soviet' past, we would like to show how Russian youth experience is different not only from that of their western peers but also from the experience of youth from Eastern Europe and all former Soviet republics. These differences are connected with a bigger and partially forced immersing in the Soviet reality, not only as a historical period when their parents and ancestors lived but also as a symbolic presence of this Soviet reality in contemporary life. The analysis of changes in youth cultural scenes undertaken in our studies during the past 15 years helps to understand how, why and in what form the Soviet reality has not only 'survived' but is also going through a kind

of revival. We focus on the experience of both subcultural and mainstream youth.

Sub/cultural youth groups had extremely few members during the 70 years of the Soviet regime, and hardly ever made public appearances (Pilkington, 1994). They chose basements, garages and half-closed cafés as places to hang out. Being extraordinary was not welcomed and was persecuted as a manifestation of dissent. Moral panicking over the first 'stilyagi' (hipsters) in the 1960s or the first punks and hippies in the 1970s was paired with political programmes of 'fighting the corrupting influence of the West'. Such means as Komsomol brigades and Communist Party raids, backed by legal regulations, were used for example to fight social parasitism, which was incompatible with the Soviet lifestyle.[2] Unlike 'traditional' subcultures, which appeared one after another in the middle of the twentieth century in the western world, in societies of the Soviet type the role of social inequality as the basis for creating new cultural identities which challenge everything standard, prescribed by class origin, was virtually low. Several generations of Soviet youth were brought up and socialised in a country of state socialism. Young people carefully went through institutionalised stages that provided more or less equal access to social resources (education, culture, mobility) and positions in the labour market. In the post-socialist period, sky-rocketing inequality along with the recent Soviet past created a special social base of structural and cultural conditions for the formation of youth group identities. It was rather painful to adapt to the reality of market economy; not all young people had a possibility to use resources of consumer society. Informal youth activity was booming during the first post-Soviet decade (perestroika); club infrastructure started to develop rapidly in major cities; new sub/cultural scenes were formed; cities and towns visually reflected youth cultures (Pilkington et al., 2002; Omelchenko, 2004). Russian youth began to participate in global cultural scenes both through exploring locally adapted traditional subcultural public images and styles, and through mixed cultural practices. The large-scale development of new cultural practices at the end of the twentieth century in western and post-Soviet countries made social scientists renew (and overcome) the rigid conceptual framework of subcultural theories and their criticism.

The political agenda of the 'youth issues' in the post-Soviet period contained a range of topics that focused on systemic objectification, victimisation and problematisation of youth. In particular, it included the following discourses: (1) youth as a threat, as a population group mostly prone to alcohol abuse, drug use and criminal activity. In the early 2000s the list also included being a member of subcultural and extremist communities; (2) youth as a victim, deprived of social benefits that were guaranteed by the Soviet state (housing, education, leisure and so on). A new trend appeared a little bit later – youth as a victim of western influence; (3) youth as hope – the discourse which was positioned as a positive one, although it had

limits. Young people ensured the nation's literal and political reproduction through projects which called for implementing one's reproductive function and maintaining the patriotic sentiment. Russian modern political history is most likely to have begun in the second decade of the twenty-first century, after protests during the State Duma election. At this period, youth discourses not only remained dynamic but also became more radicalised.

Conceptualisation of the youth issues: (Post)-Soviet discourse

The development of the Soviet and Russian sociological approach to youth and youth cultures is directly related to the fact that maturing was politically controlled through 'socialist views' on the youth's role and place in society. This approach developed not so much within the academic debate as in accordance with ideological, political and bureaucratic educational discourse with minor influence of the scientific methodology of Marxist political philosophy in its Bolshevik interpretation. 'Socialist' youth was constructed within the Party and state discourses as *builders of communism*, *the messiahs* and *the hope of all progressive mankind*, whose life goal had to be the liberation of workers from capitalist exploitation all over the world. Existing deviations from the prescribed male and female social roles in a developing socialist society were explained through 'the corrupting influence of the West' and the desire of the capitalist world to destroy the Soviet system from within by affecting the minds and souls of young people. In the context of the single-party system and Socialist Realism in culture, all signs of pluralism were considered to be social deviations; separate subcultural and countercultural groups were scarce, they were persecuted and could exist only in the underground (Lukov, 2002; Omelchenko, 2005a). In the late Soviet period, youth studies were developing within the framework of extremely politicised youth policy, which focused on raising loyalty and dedication to 'the Party's cause' and offered only one approved way of political socialisation and activity through joining the youth union Komsomol, entirely controlled by the Communist Party of the USSR. Russian studies in the field of actual youth sociology started in the 1960s (I. Ilyinsky, A. Kovaleva, I. Kon, V. Lisovsky, V. Lukov, V. Rodionov, B. Ruchkin, V. Chuprov). Youth studies mainly paid attention to values and ideological issues: young people's spirituality as the basis for transforming the material world; value hierarchy was studied, as well as personality structures, attitude to work and studying, and evaluation of political and ideological 'maturity'. This is when large-scale surveys began to be conducted among young people (schoolchildren, university students and workers). The results were analysed in the context of solving major political and state tasks. We have already done a profound analysis of those new research trends and political contexts in another work (Omelchenko and Pilkington, 2013). Here is its synopsis.

The collapse of the Soviet regime, the dissolution of the USSR and the socialist bloc had a crucial impact not only on youth but also on the specific ways of constructing their group identities during perestroika. At the end of the 1980s, informal youth movements developed rapidly both in the USSR and other socialist countries (Semenova, 1988; Topalov, 1988; Omelchenko, 2000), new economic capitalist entities appeared, and young people began to be involved in market economy.

In the 1990s, researchers mostly focused, on the one hand, on separate, mainly subcultural (provocative) youth group identities, which were often considered to be marginal and deviant (Kostyushev, 1999; Kozlov, 2000; Gromov, 2009), and on the other hand, on theoretical reflections about the place of Russian youth in the transitional society and about the ways of their integration in social institutions; young people were regarded as a risk group, while new transitional processes among them were interpreted in the context of 'functional deformation, exclusion, marginalisation of young people, which was becoming a risk factor in the country' (Chuprov, Zubok and Williams, 2001, pp. 79–80). A new wave of youth studies started in the mid-1990s; they focused on absorbing, local processing of and reassessing western experience.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, when the social and political reality had changed, a certain confrontation was formed between the active pro-Soviet (nostalgic) construct of youth issues,[3] and a new, fresh view that had been developing on the basis of (but not through direct following or copying of) the strong western academic tradition of studying youth cultures.

In the western academic discourse, youth cultures of the socialist period were the area of interest among 'regionalists'; the focus was on studying non-conformism (Kassoff, 1965; Riordan, 1988, 1989); alternative scenes of ('informal') youth and popular music were interpreted in the political context and in the context of the role they played in the collapse of socialist regimes (Ryback, 1990). Along with the access of western scientists to field empirical work, researchers began to use scientific paradigms and traditions of studying youth cultural practices and identities (Pilkington, 1994), youth transition (Roberts, 2008; Walker, 2010), social capital and inclusion/exclusion (Stephenson, 2001; Pilkington and Sharifullina, 2009), sociology of individualisation and risk (Williams et al., 2003; Omelchenko, 2004), globalisation and national identity (Pilkington and Omelchenko, 2002, 2012; Blum, 2007), civic engagement (Wallace, 2003; Tereshchenko, 2010) and generation theory (Fürst, 2010). It was the beginning of a new wave of youth studies, which were based on adapted and processed paradigms of world academic science (Islamshina, 1997; Salagaev, 1997; Yurchak, 1999; Omelchenko, 2000, 2004, 2005b; Levikova, 2002). Hilary Pilkington notices, however, that power relations, typical for local (national) sociological fields, resulted in the fact that integration processes were primarily

directed towards the development and adaptation of western concepts and not towards independent theoretical intervention in the current debate (Pilkington, 2012, pp. 44–45).

Current agenda of western subcultural/postsubcultural debate and Russian youth experience

The position of Russian cultural youth experience in global contexts is especially interesting if we consider it to be a part of a broad popular debate on criticising class roots of subcultural theories, which developed in post-subcultural concepts within the Western European (English-speaking) tradition.

The body of academic works which focus on a wide debate about the relation between various subcultures and post-subcultures and, therefore, their analytical constructs is extremely large and bright (Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 2000, 2005; Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2004; Garifzianova et al., 2010; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006). The debate itself and the topics which started it remained virtually closed for the Russian context until recently, which had to do not only with censorship or the lack of literature but also with the lack of interest due to the specifics of Russian youth sociology as an extremely politicised and biased discipline.

Among other approaches to forms of youth sociality, which are broadly discussed in western academic literature, special attention is drawn to researchers focusing on youth transition, who study structural conditions of maturing and their connection with youth cultures (Pilkington et al., 2002; Shildrick, 2002; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). To understand the modern Russian context it is essential to analyse the studies which focus on specifics of location and on how territories and real-time environment influence youth life trajectories and cultural practices; this is especially important for marginal and peripheral locations, groups and practices (Pilkington and Johnson, 2003; Shildrick et al., 2009).

Since 2005, the studies conducted by the Centre for Youth Studies have been using the concept of 'youth solidarities', which we view as a logical step forward to continue and develop the current debate on forms of youth sociality and constructive use of reasons and discoveries made by advocates of subcultural and post-subcultural approaches.

By solidarity we mean a special form of sociality which is formed in a social group around their key values and ideological trends and opposes itself to other groups with a symbolic (or real) fight for cultural, political and ideological dominance. Today the major value oppositions around which solidarities are formed are the following: consumerism and anti-capitalism, anti-fascism and nationalism, collectivism and individualism, pacifism and militarism, patriarchy and gender equality, and loyalty to the government and anarchy. However, the question remains: which side of the opposition

is in the majority at a certain moment. Youth solidarities can be temporary and permanent, fluid or stable, can gravitate towards mobility or protect their local position, can be distinct or a part of global youth trends. For identities which have such a basis 'the most important thing is their current lifestyle (including but not limited to consumption), as well as a common perception of opposite groups' (Omelchenko and Sabirova, 2011, p. 13).

This approach implies paying certain attention to communication practices and to how they help implement various cultural strategies ('progressive, advanced' ones and 'normal, ordinary' ones), which was analysed within the study of how Russian youth perceive the West (Pilkington et al., 2002). This approach allows avoidance of a rigid distinction between *subcultures* and youth *mainstream*, because it is based on understanding cultural positions in the context of *the whole life*, which is always limited by a social structure. The use of the category of 'substance' (Hodkinson, 2004, 2012) as a central element of group adherence and identity which cements interpersonal relationships and emotional connections helps to understand how inclusion in cultural practices makes it possible to form direct and mediated *solidarities*. These communication relations are not strongly connected to certain styles and group standards; they develop around cultural innovations and practices and can relate stylistically, symbolically or ideologically to different youth groups through adhesion to some common points and values (Omelchenko and Pilkington, 2013).

Note that various forms of youth experience cannot be reduced to only youth solidarities. On the whole, generalising youth and seeing it as a homogeneous sociality, as well as the bio-political approach (in the context of 'alarming' demographic and (a)political trends), continue to exist but are losing the battle. Today, as well as in the past, provocative, avant-garde and radical youth groups are in the minority, but they are not isolated from the processes that are going on in the youth mainstream; they relate to them through cultural exchange practices, borrowing and quoting. In reality, there is not a boundary either between the cultural majority and minorities or between different subcultures and youth groups; considerable buffer zones provide for a smooth transition, enriching and diversifying youth cultural space and disproving the possibility to 'put a tag' on young people or classify them.

The reset of youth scenes: Discourse contexts of modern youth solidarities

The reality of the modern Russian context – including the crisis of subcultural markets, legal restrictions to freely choose one's identity and display one's selfhood,[4] the lack of clear and stable class guidelines, weak local traditions and trends of religious (Russian Orthodox) and ethnic homogeneity – creates a controversial image of youth life. We can see a range of

bright youth solidarities, from anarchists to pro-Kremlin movements, which respond differently to political and economic transformations in Russia.

The development and access to information about various cultures all over the world and the increase in the number of internet resources that promote certain political and style trends helped to form new types of networks and connections among people who share these trends. Both online and offline youth cultural scenes became more diversified by participating in new debates, exploring and introducing new (sub)cultural findings, new styles and musical discoveries. Today, global cultural influence is not limited to the West, as it used to be at the end of the twentieth century; the East has become a major resource of developing new solidarities, along with the rise of animé popularity or, since the middle 2000s, the rise of Korean youth culture – K-pop, whose impact is particularly visible in the East-Asian part of Russia. Both progressive and mainstream young people search for their identity within a cultural group/solidarity/scene whose values and goals they share. The range of potential global cultural choice and supply is remarkably vast. It is still very difficult to understand what place political projects and discourse practices occupy, how they work in this context and to what extent they participate in developing and deforming local Russian youth scenes.

One of the strongest and most powerful discourses that to some extent re/structure youth cultures and solidarities is the Soviet discourse; it is a blend of values and standards of the Soviet lifestyle and political regime together with the cult of collectivism, sacrifice and the leading role of the majority.

It is hard to regard 'the memory of socialism' or socialist legacy as a common feature of young people 'born in the USSR', but we can distinguish certain characteristics that more or less pass through generations.

One of the distinctive features is that Soviet patterns are reproduced when 'the youth issues' are used for various political and state purposes. In particular, this takes place in a form of politicisation of the 'alternative' scene from top-down and vice versa. At the same time, the discourse pressure of the 'Soviet type' is becoming stronger and stronger, which restructures youth solidarities. Attitude to the gender issue is beginning to play a notable part in the opposition between the alternative (progressive) urban youth scene and mainstream (especially its extreme wing – gopniks). Solidarities and oppositions in youth scenes develop particularly aggressively around the issue of respecting gender roles, especially in relation to homosexuality (in particular, male homosexuality) and among young men. Ceremonial debates about showing 'right' masculinity can take extremely aggressive forms: for example, skinheads and goths explained that fights between them in the early 2000s in Moscow were a kind of a public statement of protecting their right to be 'real' men. Another example is tough fights between boneheads and anti-fascists in St Petersburg in the mid-2000s, which had to do, although

not directly, with their assertion of the right to present a local (nationalist) or a pro-western/global type of masculinity. Besides, there were instances when some nationalist-oriented youth groups took hostile action against young people who supported the opposition. Politicisation of such confrontation is particularly vivid in regard to youth cultural scenes with a special gender regime, such as feminist solidarities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) projects.

A part of the Soviet legacy that is equally important is the low level of tolerance among the population on the whole and the youth mainstream in particular; this contributes to the isolation of certain youth solidarities that have a closer connection with subcultural styles. When social controllers notice youth cultural groups that manifest their peculiar identity, these groups become an object of political 'correction'. Practices of 'correcting' abnormal young people, which are supported by governmental and official political discourses, remain a feature of youth space in Russia and, to a certain degree, in Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics. To some extent, the government's aggressive 'participation' in youth cultural education and in developing the 'right' identity in them led to a crisis of several of the subcultural-style scenes, such as goths, emo and animé; a range of educators (police, teachers, psychologists) began to pay careful attention to them, because they were said to have tendencies of suicidal behaviour, afterlife cult and gender experiments.

The memory of Soviet state socialism with its distribution system, its deficit policy, its stigma of 'consumerism' as a marker of having no spirituality, its promotion of the idea of 'equality' and lack of variety also proves to be important. It is reflected in the relatively low level of subculture market development, in subculture resourcing and, as a consequence, in the relatively low level of commercialisation of alternative scenes, including music-related. Alternative identities are being driven out from the media space, which is supported by the aggressive policy of Russian showbusiness and the pop-music market, the latter being promoted at concert halls and, most importantly, by ambitious TV projects. In its turn, this may partly stimulate the development of informal (semi- and illegal) economy and DIY practices (Pilkington and Sharifullina, 2009).

The Soviet reality ('the Soviet') presents itself in everyday life through popular media projects, such as '1970s, 1980s, 1990s discos', the musical show *Forgotten Songs About What's Important*, through the 'nostalgia' for the Soviet used in both direct and inverted senses through bricolage – in public image, citations and ideological explanations (Oushakine, 2009). Remixes of Soviet songs, Soviet films broadcast on TV and Soviet-themed vintage cafés are all part of modern mainstream culture, the environment in which young people are growing up. Young people utilise and actualise this cultural baggage in different ways. In the pro-hipster scene, it is common to frequent flea markets, digging for pins and clothes with Soviet symbols, while glamorised

teenagers and young people who reproduce the style of the globalised pop culture would not do that.

Another key feature of youth cultural space in Russia is actualising the Soviet as a historical family context, social references, a resource for the production of national superiority ideology, for cultural portrayals and vintage. In our studies of the importance and the position of historical memory in intergenerational communication and in the civic and political engagement of young people, we have come to conclusions that confirm the thesis that the Soviet plays an important role for the social and cultural identity of young people (Omelchenko and Sabirova, 2011).

In 2015, despite the fact that a certain period of time has already passed since the time of the Soviet Union, the current generation of 20-year-olds reproduce and broadcast its memory. This memory is idealistic, sketchy and contradictory. They focus on the heroic past of the country and heroic deeds of both political leaders and ordinary people. Hardships and a more complicated past remain in the shadows, hence young people's uncritical acceptance of certain periods or events of the Soviet past. This is not only happening because of the state policy on patriotic education, but also because of certain patterns of interfamilial and intergenerational communication of the past. Grandparents, proud of their post-war experience of overcoming hardships, are the main agents of forming the image of the past, while parents, who were growing up during the 'turbulent' 1990s, are less willing to reproduce the historical memory of their experience and of the generation which did nothing heroic as compared to their parents.

Young people have their own memory of the 1990s; it can be defined as 'hungry' times and the period of unregulated market. They compare the present with what it was like before the 1990s, when education was more accessible, and medical care was free. This is another reason for the past to be romanticised, and it complements the global trend of youth losing interest in historical factual knowledge, another reason for that being the popularisation of online reference systems, which play an important role in the formation of civil and political ideals of today's youth.

Practices of *patriotic education* have become one of the most powerful discursive influences. They have been in the foundation of Russian youth policy ideology since the 2000s, supplemented by modestly funded projects to involve young people in all sorts of activities (sports, volunteering, self-government and so on). The patriotic idea was based on the exaltation of the technical and military might of the Soviet Union (the former was symbolically backed by the figure of Gagarin, and the latter by the victory in the Second World War), and it was formed around the idea of being Russian, the importance of the state-forming function of Russian ethnicity, as well as around the Russian Orthodox Church as a consolidating religion.[5] This emphasis is by no means accidental. The 'young' Russian state needed a new

national idea. This need was especially relevant in a society which used to have rigid ideological grounds for more than 70 years. In addition, the first generation of post-Soviet youth was growing up in the atmosphere of criticism of the recent past and was witness to conflicts, including armed ones (primarily, the Chechen conflict). On the other hand, it was the time of discovery and fascination with the western consumer society, which suddenly became available to former Soviet citizens. This fascination with the West is reflected in our study *Looking West?*[6]

The idea of rehabilitating Russia's image in the minds of the younger generation was, to some extent, understandable; youth were experiencing a certain set of feelings that we named 'offended patriotism', meaning that the formation of a positive image of the country is based on a kind of national inferiority complex. Therefore, patriotic programmes gained popularity. (Post)adolescence is the time when it is especially important to have positive preconditions for self-identification. In another study of ours we have observed a high level of patriotism and pride for the country, its history and achievements amid rising grass-roots xenophobia and trivial nationalism.[7]

A project of the Nashi youth movement, created at the beginning of the 2000s and completed by 2005, became one of the key elements in educating patriotic young people who would be loyal to the state. Seliger summer camp and its events attracted thousands of young people. It has now evolved into a number of new initiatives, some of which have already gained grass-roots support. To what extent was this project successful and what effect did it have? Obviously, the result proved to be different from what the organisers had in mind. If we set aside the activist core, 'ordinary' members were motivated by more than ideological factors alone. Nevertheless, the project did have certain effects. For example, it should be noted that the Nashi patriotic slogans based on national (state and ethnic) superiority are now supported not only by the majority of mainstream youth but also by some progressive youth. Political opposition and value-related opposition to the West with its tolerance towards sexual minorities, which became a symbol of its foreignness, are perhaps the most tangible effects of patriotic education. However, despite the declared opposition to the West,[8] Russian youth space remains highly internationalised and globalised, partly because of widespread internet availability.

Active youth party-building and mobilisation projects that are funded by the state and financed by Russian large businesses stimulate the emergence of grass-roots youth activity where 'self-organisation' is closely connected with state political projects. For example, the practice of creating youth governments in urban administrative structures develops and becomes popular; there are annual festivals promoting political initiatives, both national and local ones. Certain urban civic-oriented initiatives are created, such as VseDoma or various training programmes for youth entrepreneurship and

innovation, which, like Seliger, now take place close to major Russian cities. Research suggests that former commissioners of the Nashi movement often are among the leaders of these local initiatives.[9] Moreover, followers of the most radical initiatives are united by the Stal' (Steel) movement, which describes its members as openly and aggressively loyal defenders of the existing order, morality and authority. They are openly involved in Russian marches, they fight with 'Russia's enemies' and demonstrate their readiness to crack down on any sign of dissent in a tough and aggressive way. Such 'voluntary' initiatives as StopHam, Shield, Narcostop and others have also emerged and are now becoming more and more popular. Their members claim to be fighting against various social issues such as illegal parking, stores selling expired goods, illegal immigration and even drug trafficking. Most of these initiatives are characterised by toughness, sometimes even open aggression, against those found guilty. They make video recordings of their raids and upload them on the internet. Visualisation and the public character of this 'Russian city cleaning' help to increase the popularityof the initiatives and the recruiting of new members. In general, radicalisation of civic activism is also typical for a variety of new urban sport practices, such as Russian Run, with their public promotion of imperial ideas, the idea of 'Russianness', aggressive nationalist-oriented promotion of the importance of a healthy lifestyle of a 'real Russian' (complete abstinence from alcohol, smoking, drugs) and undisguised anti-western orientation (Omelchenko and Zhelnina, 2014).

What has happened to the progressive minority – the informal, alternative, subcultural Russian youth scene – in the last 15 years?

Firstly, the subcultural scene has also been affected by politicisation. In the early 2000s, the popularity of the skinhead movement was growing (Garifzianova et al., 2010); politicised punks, street anti-fascists and anarchists emerged in response to nationalistic anti-migrant aggression of boneheads, the gopnik wing of the skinhead movement. As a result, youth involved in the cultural scene split up by the mid-2000s; the divide between them was their attitudes towards nationality and the state. This took the form of both symbolic and real subcultural wars and by 2012 resulted in an open opposition between pro-Kremlin and middle-class youth (hipsters) during the mass unrest after the State Duma election and Putin's inauguration in Moscow.

Secondly, in the late 2000s there was a significant reduction in (sub)cultural scenes. Starting in 2007 the emo subculture began to gradually fade; the recently popular ravers and goths had disappeared even earlier. Specialised bars, clubs and shops were closed. Along with the *tusovka* (the definitive term to describe youth socialities at the end of the twentieth century) reduction, the remaining members of once mainstream subcultures gradually abandoned their symbolic struggle for authenticity and names. Anti-fascists and skinheads also started to withdraw into the shadows.

'Pure' subcultures became reserved; they briefly gave way to post-subcultures, and then gradually dissolved into them. While at the end of the 1990s young people's fascination with the West was easy to guess by their musical tastes, clothing and lifestyles, which gave birth to 'pure' subcultures (goths, skinheads, rappers, emo), the end of the 2000s left few post-subcultural images.

The 2010s have brought political elections, mass protests, high-profile criminal cases, mega-events and geopolitical decisions that clearly highlight the main points of tension/conflict in youth cultural scenes.[10] Solidarities are beginning to develop along such vectors as different understanding of ideas and ethnicity symbols, migration, ethnic issues, gender relations, the West and the East, religion, loyalty to the government and various forms of radicalism.

Thirdly, *tusovka* was replaced by solidarities, which, directly or indirectly, had evolved into new ways of engagement and communication. Despite the fact that *tusovka* is still a relevant analytical concept and is still observed in everyday communication among young people,[11] the transformations of youth scenes in the beginning of 2010s require a new conceptual apparatus to describe group youth identities that have experienced significant changes. *Tusovka* (with global trends and complex identity variations) passed its peak in the 2000s. The increasing politicisation split up youth, forcing it to choose and join one solidarity or another.

Evidently, post-Soviet transformations have long-term consequences. The Soviet past caught up with the above-mentioned period in the form of discursive pressure. After a leap forward it went backwards, through the criticism of Yeltsin and abandoning the ideas of perestroika – to Putin's stability and the revival of imperial ambitions. More or less, switching from patriotism based on civic consciousness to patriotism based on nationality is a feature of both progressive and mainstream youth. Consequently, specific cultural elements are included in the concept of civic consciousness, such as: patriarchy, religion, spirituality, opposition to the West, ideas of a special Russian path, imperial ambitions and pride for the country.

However, a certain restriction of sub/cultural youth activity that we see today does not mean that Russian youth refuse to fight the pressure of discursive state policies and thoughtlessly join the ranks of the loyal and flag-waving patriotic mass. For instance, our research of anarchists, animal rights activists, volunteers and agents of new creative urban spaces indicates transformation of public political protests and confrontations through individualised everyday protest practices.

Conclusion

In our review of the key features of Russian youth cultural practices in the twenty-first century, we addressed the following characteristics:

- peculiarity of Russian youth experience that has to do with continuing involvement of the Soviet sociality both in the current Russian political climate and regime, as well as in everyday life;
- interdependence and intersection of global trends available to young people, due to the fact that internet communications and local group identities (both mixed and authentic) are deeply engaged in social networks;
- large-scale launch of discursive projects aimed at political and ideological mobilisation of young people, typical for the last decade in Russia, and practices of responding to various youth cultural groups (from involvement and symbolic resistance to going underground).

What youth cultural space in Russia is, and the way it is structured, in many ways reflects features of post-Soviet changes in Russia and the turbulence of the current socio-political state. On the one hand, cultural practices of young people are embedded in broader trends of social dynamics, and on the other hand, cultural activity of young people has always been a special object of government control. The unique history of Soviet underground youth continued in the 1990s youth subcultures, which were a mix of authentic and borrowed western forms. However, they never fully realised their potential, and in the early 2000s they became an object of supervision and evaluation in terms of social utility or threats. Post-Soviet legacy, which did not encourage development of individualised forms of cultural protest, also took its toll. The first post-Soviet generation of young people was partly brought up in a society of socialist morale; to stand out or to have a different opinion was not considered a virtue there. Although the young generation of the 2000s – post-Soviet successors – did master the patterns of the consumer society, entered the space of the global cultural market and no longer recognised collectivist ideals, it also did not have the skills to articulate and defend its social and political stance. Therefore, although the death scenario of Russian youth subcultures was somewhat similar to the West, it was still significantly different from it. Youth subcultures faded into the background before they had a chance to come into play. As to cultural preferences of youth, they were being realised in the context of solidarities, temporary or permanent, but, unlike subcultural scenes, more open and undemanding. Solidarities replaced subcultures and post-subcultures — markers of their fragmented time. Solidarities help to blur the line between the real and the virtual, between countries, communities, ages, sometimes even between different identities, including subcultural or mainstream, even if they have different value systems. The decisive condition for reformatting youth cultural scenes is the growing division of the society in relation to the basic values, which leads to the emergence of a serious conflict and tough confrontation. This conflict of values proves to be more important than, for example, subcultural affiliation. For instance, the idea of gender equality can unite the anime

community, hipsters, anarchists, but it can also divide anarcha-feminists or anarchist straight-edgers.

As of 2015 recent studies and observations, including ours, show that today we are witnessing a major transformation of what we traditionally call ‘youth cultural space’. As recently as 10–15 years ago, we talked about the death of youth subcultures, about them being glamourised and dissolved in games, and about style-related borrowings in mainstream. However, the socio-political changes in Russia exposed processes that had been going on latently and led to the creation of completely new contextual conditions of youth cultural-activity formatting. Prerequisites for change have different roots; some stem from the Soviet past, some are associated with painful experiences of the 1990s, while others are the result of deliberate policies of various agents. The years 2011–2014 have turned out to be decisive, from the first protests during the State Duma election, including the Pussy Riot protest and subsequent adoption of a series of new prohibitive laws, to the latest developments in Ukraine.

For these four years, we have seen a gradual formation of the ideology and practice of the majority. It can be seen in average figures of the results of public opinion polls.[12] However, this majority consists of very different kinds of people from different social strata, different backgrounds and positions. The youth component of this ‘majority’ is also diverse. It would seem that the emergence of a new ‘majority’ returns and re-legitimises the grand narrative, as well as more clearly delineates social boundaries of marginality, of what this majority finds unacceptable. Defining these boundaries in Russian society activates such dichotomies as patriarchal – liberal, Russia and the West, ‘krymnash’ (‘Crimea is ours’) – ‘krymnenash’ (‘Crimea is not ours’) and so on. Yet despite the fact that discussions both in virtual spaces and offline (publicly and privately) are, in one way or another, formed around these dichotomies, which become the divide, our studies show that in the post-ideological era new political grand narratives do not lead to the formation of standardised and uniform positions, which would consistently reflect one of the concepts of a dichotomy. No matter what sources they are based on or how much they are included in the information flow, positions of young people are (self)categorised in complex ways. Nevertheless, the political reality has become an increasingly significant part of both identification and everyday life, in one form or another. It is being interpreted, appropriated and individualised by young people; sometimes, to such extent that the political meaning is lost. There are a number of parallel worlds where different individualised concepts of the political reality are being implemented, even within the same life project. The political can also be determined through the maintenance of cleanliness in public places, through social and economic success, through education of children and so on. The state’s patriotic and reproductive expectations of youth highlight what it considers to be the key points and classify youth cultural practices and projects. However,

we should mention that the general radicalisation of society can lead to the disintegration of solidarities and to formation of small homogeneous communities, groups, companies of 'insiders'. The same trends are observed in youth cultural communities. Some remain in the area of further commercialisation, some choose to be embedded in public cultural projects, and others drop out of the game. It is premature to talk about it yet, but maybe the creation of new underground spaces and subcultural communities could become the way out of the game?

Notes

1. This chapter is an output of research projects 'Work and Consumption in Russian Youth Life: Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban Experiences' (2015), 'Youth Solidarities and Generations of XXI century: The meaning of Labor and Consumption' (2014) implemented by Centre for youth studies (HSE) as part of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE). Since then it has conducted more than 20 projects concerning various youth communities http://sh.spb.hse.ru/youth/.
2. For exampleJoseph Brodsky, now a world-famous poet of the Soviet era, was prosecuted for 'social parasitism'. On 13 March 1964 the People's court of Dzerzhinsky district in Leningrad convicted Joseph Brodsky of social parasitism and sentenced him to exile from Leningrad for five years. Verifications about contracts with publishing houses and petitions written by members of the Union of Soviet Writers did not help. Testimonies that Brodsky's poetry had bad influence on young people contributed to the verdict (most of the witnesses did not know the poet and were not familiar with his literary works).
3. This approach retained its dominating role for quite a long time as an ideology-driven view on youth and the subject of youth studies (Ilyinksky, 1988); within it, emerging subcultural groups continued to be analysed in the context of deviations and western influence (Mukhamedzhanov, 1988, p. 21).
4. For example, in 2013 several regions of the Russian Federation passed an administrative law against public actions aimed at 'sodomy, lesbian, bisexual and transgender propaganda'; in 2012 a preventive operation 'Neformal' (Informal) was held; it was at the same time that the law 'On Non-profit Organisations' was amended; as a result, the Prosecutor's Office demanded a number of non-profit organisations to take the status of a foreign agent, which restricted their activity; in recent years human rights to freedom of gathering, speech and so on have been systematically infringed during peaceful protests.
5. As in other religions, there is a dual policy of support-control-limitations; this also applies to Muslim youth (Sabirova, 2011).
6. *Looking West?: The Acceptance of and Resistance to Western Images by Russian Youth* (Leverhulm Trust, 1996–1999), led by H. Pilkington. In the opinion of Russian youth, as demonstrated by our study in the late 1990s, the focus on 'local/global' was consistent with the dichotomy of 'normal/progressive'. The quintessence of 'normal young people' were *gopniks*, who were not just focused on the culture of their country, but on both real and symbolic defence of their city, district and neighbourhood from strangers. 'Progressive' youth, however, were centre-focused, interested in the culture of big Russian and western cities and eager to imitate it. These young people are characterised by mobility, the desire to be

on top of things, to share their experiences with young people in Russia and abroad. The 'core' of this group were (in their own terminology) 'informals' and 'subkulturschiki' ('subculture members').

7. *National Identities in Russia from 1961: Traditions and De-territorialization* (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2007–2010).
8. MYPLACE project (2011–2015, EC FP7 project, principal applicant Prof. H. Pilkington).
9. A sociological film *Our former Nashi* was made as a part of MYPLACE project, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1jHgJg9ZGQ, date accessed 15 July 2015.
10. Bolotnaya Square, Pussy Riot, Crimea, the Olympics, the elections.
11. The concept of *tusovka* as a solid emotional community was actively used by late and post-Soviet alternative youth scenes and was a significant marker of special communication. It included special verbal and nonverbal practices of 'the inner circle', close body contact, common meeting places closely related to music, dance, style, play and conversation, as well as a special sense of humour. Group communication with its meanings, codes, rules and boundaries of general separability and membership as a base substance becomes a significant marker for the determination of in- and outsiders, an anchor for a kind of mapping of youth cultural scenes.
12. So in November 2014 various media publications were discussing the results of a public opinion poll according to which 84 per cent of Russians trust, and therefore approve of, the actions of the president of Russia.

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15

Public Discourse and Volunteer Militias in Post-Soviet Russia

Gleb Tsipursky

Public discourse and volunteer militias in post-Soviet Russia

Volunteer militias of young people wearing red armbands have grown into an increasingly common sight in Russia during the last five years. They patrol the streets for what they consider violations of public order, persecuting the transgressors. The militias emerged from a combination of central, regional and local government support, and from grass-roots activism. This chapter uses newspapers, television broadcasts, legal documents, political statements, legislation and digital media such as websites to examine the public discourse about these volunteer patrols. I focus in particular on youth engagement in militia activities, and do not discuss the special cases of Orthodox Church and Cossack patrol groups.

Russian government and police officials generally express strong support for volunteer militias. Most news stories, in part owing to the powerful state influence on the media, provide a positive depiction of patrols. Advocates commend militias for helping to survey the population. Patrols also receive plaudits for imposing social controls through the use of direct force. At the same time, the militias spring from the grass-roots enthusiasm of their members for voluntary patrolling. These groups thus constitute an example of what I term state-sponsored civic life, namely collaborative efforts between government officials and ordinary citizens to fix what both perceive as social problems. My findings question the sharp lines frequently drawn between the authorities, especially regarding policing, and the rest of Russian society (see Shlapentokh, 1989, pp. 3–18; Davies, 1997, pp. 124–146; Kharkhordin, 1999, pp. 279–302; Siegelbaum, 2006, pp. 1–21; Field, 2007; Tromly, 2007, pp. 94–150). The many people participating in such patrols spotlight what I term ‘conformist agency’, the conscious and willing decision, stemming primarily from one’s internal motivations as opposed to state pressure, to act in ways that follow closely government guidelines and intentions (see Prakash, 1994, pp. 1475–1490; Appadurai, 1996, pp. 5–11; Søland, 2000, pp. 3–18; Tomoff, 2006, pp. 1–10; Krylova, 2010, pp. 20–26).

Not all news media give volunteer militias exclusively positive coverage, especially more independent newspapers. The growth of websites likewise has provided room for critical voices, although with a lesser reach than traditional media. Such condemnation illustrates the difficulties in using youth patrolling for managing the population, underscoring the challenges to the ideas of a cohesive ‘youth’ and ‘generation’ by those who endorsed volunteer militias.

History and context for Russian militias

The late imperial Russian period witnessed the emergence of volunteer militias that patrolled the streets to maintain public order, especially during major celebrations. Such groups mostly functioned as part of right-wing nationalist movements, especially the well-known ‘black hundred’ (*chernosotentsy*) paramilitary groups that not only fought against crime, but also attacked those who nationalists deemed unworthy of participating in Russia’s future: Jews, Roma, socialists and others.[1] During the revolutionary years and the subsequent civil war, local worker committees established Red Guard militias to defend working-class interests, which generally fit well with Bolshevik Party goals (Wade, 1984, p. 9). Other local militias meant to maintain order also sprang up during this turbulent period. Shifting to a peacetime footing in the early 1920s, the Soviet state centralised control over grass-roots patrols, utilising them to combat crime and other activities considered to undermine the construction of communism. However, from the early 1930s Joseph Stalin began to discourage the use of volunteer militias, preferring to rely instead on state policing organs staffed by professional officers. Faced with the centre’s disapproval, grass-roots patrol groups mostly atrophied (Shelley, 1996; Solomon Jr., 1996; Hagenloh, 2009, pp. 76–79; Shearer, 2009). Some small-scale local initiatives continued in places with supportive local cadres; these militias, known as ‘brigades of police assistance’ (*brigady pomoshchi militsii*) operated under direct police control and participated in minor, secondary activities such as traffic control (Berman, 1966, pp. 285–288).

The situation changed dramatically after Stalin’s death and the coming to power of the new leadership after 1953. The post-Stalin government, led by Nikita Khrushchev from 1955 to 1964, called for mass popular participation in policing the streets to ensure law and order fitting for a country transitioning to communism. With top-level endorsement, many youth militias sprang up. The number of and participation in brigades of police assistance increased rapidly. Moreover, a multitude of more independent groups emerged under the aegis of the Komsomol, the mass Soviet youth organization (Kassof, 1965, pp. 14–18). Plenty of young people who felt enthusiastic over maintaining public order joined these collectives. Youth communal policing rose in weight and stature, with ordinary citizens

engaging in core policing activities such as combatting public violence and drunkenness, protecting clubs and dance halls, and catching thieves and swindlers. Besides this, lacking the restraints associated with professional government-employed police officers, militia members could and did enforce officially prescribed normative morals that the state did not explicitly enshrine in its legal code. This included persecuting western-style fashion and music, sexual behaviour deemed inappropriate, political opposition to the authorities, and other conduct perceived as unbefitting true Soviet citizens (Kharkhordin, 1999, pp. 279–302; Mitrokhin, 2003, pp. 236–300; Fitzpatrock, 2006, pp. 377–408; LaPierre, 2006, pp. 235–296; Dobson, 2009, pp. 133–155; Fürst, 2010, pp. 167–199).

The Khrushchev administration considered the mid-1950s youth militias so successful that it launched a new programme at the end of the 1950s to expand patrolling to all segments of the population. It directed all enterprises and other organisations to create 'people's patrols' (*narodnye druzhiny*), volunteer militias with members from all age groups that went out to sweep the local streets once or twice a month. Such people's patrols constituted semi-obligatory activities, inspiring substantially less zeal among participants than the youth patrol groups of the mid-1950s; however, true young enthusiasts of patrolling had the opportunity to join more active militias, most notably Komsomol operational brigades (*Komsomol'skie operativnye brigady*) that functioned under the oversight of district and city-level Komsomol branches, with members who dedicated significant resources, time and energy to this activity. The system of patrolling established in the mid- and late 1950s persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By 1971, 173,000 militias had about 7 million members.[2] In 1985, the Soviet Union had 282,000 official collectives dedicated to patrolling, with over 13 million participants.[3]

However, from perestroika onwards, the patrols underwent a steep decline. This constituted part of a broader turn away from methods and practices associated with coercion and surveillance. The Gorbachev administration distanced itself from volunteer patrols, for instance by stripping them of special privileges, such as an additional three-day vacation. The number of militias and their respective participants decreased sharply in the late 1980s. This process escalated throughout the early 1990s owing to the chaos associated with the USSR's demise, the lack of government resources to support civic activities and the rejection of many Soviet-era forms. The vast majority of militias disappeared and former patrol members focused on reconstructing their own lives in the midst of the post-Soviet transformations.[4]

At the same time, early 1990s Russia experienced a wide-scale deterioration of law and order. The terrible economic situation in the country caused a far-reaching decline in everyday living conditions. Many elements of the Soviet-era's moral and normative regime collapsed, with no clear substitute

taking their place. With the weakening of and resource deficit in local government organs, the police grew frailer and simultaneously more corrupt (Zubkova, 1998; Filtzer, 2010).[5] All this stimulated quickly rising crime rates. The reality of growing crime, combined with sensationalised accounts of law-breaking in the much-freer and entertainment-oriented post-Soviet media, inspired broad anxieties among the population and government officials alike, a phenomenon that scholars term a 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1987; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Springhall, 1998; Thompson, 1998).

Issues surrounding the young also led to worries. Certainly, juvenile delinquency constituted one important area of concern. Along with other age groups, youth engaged in a higher degree of misconduct than in Soviet times. Juvenile males in particular committed many violent crimes. More broadly, the future prospects of the young generation as a whole inspired much hand-wringing. Many commentators perceived the collapse of the Soviet system of youth upbringing and Soviet-era morals and norms as having a pernicious effect on the young, undermining Russia's ability to build a post-socialist future (Pilkington et al., 2002; Roberts, 2009).

Overarching developments in Russian militias

The deteriorating public order and perception of youth waywardness inspired a search for ways to address these issues. Moreover, the economic, political, ideological, social and cultural dislocations following the end of the USSR made many long for a return to the Soviet past and to look among pre-1991 practices and forms for a solution to post-1991 problems. This proved particularly so since the vast majority of authority figures developed their ruling style in the USSR and had wide familiarity and comfort with Soviet-style practices and strategies of governance.

Such factors explain government efforts to revive volunteer militias, as evinced by legislation and decrees promoting people's patrols in post-Soviet Russia. One of the pioneering endeavours came from Moscow mayor Jurii Luzhkov, who already in July 1992 enacted a decree meant to reorganise the structure of Soviet-era people's patrols to fit the new conditions. In March 1993, the Moscow government created an administrative organ, the Moscow city people's patrol base (*Moskovskii gorodskoj shtab narodnykh druzhin*). This body, financed by the city budget and staffed by city employees, bore the responsibility for directing the activities of Moscow people's patrols.[6] The Moscow city duma, the Russian term for a legislative body, took further steps to encourage volunteer militias in new legislation in 1995. Patrol members acquired the right to use physical force, inspect documents and search personal belongings; they also acquired privileges, such as additional vacation days, salary increases, the status of a government employee and free rides on public transport.[7] The Moscow duma undertook further legislative actions in 1999 on behalf of militia members.[8]

While the Moscow mayoralty proved a particular enthusiast of volunteer militias, similar legislation passed in many Russian regions. St Petersburg passed a law in 2001 that formed the basis for the formation of people's patrols.[9] In 2002, Perm province (*oblast'*, also *krai*) approved similar legislation.[10] In 2003, the Chuvash republic did so as well.[11] The Leningrad province legislature joined these regions, as did many others.[12]

Such legislation enabled a broad revival of patrol activities. The Moscow city administration's promotion of people's patrols enabled rapid growth. From a state of near-total collapse in 1992, the militias reached 8,000 participants in February 1998, and 10,000 in August. During that six-month period, patrol members detained 606 people who committed serious crimes, 6,000 for hooliganism and 39,000 for drunkenness, 20,000 for breaking registration rules and 83,000 for violations relating to cars and traffic.[13] By September 1999, Moscow people's patrols had 12,000 people.[14] A rare exception to the general trend, the people's patrol of the Moscow metro continued to exist across the 1991 divide; it went from 4,707 participants in 1978, its highest point, to 2,700 in 1988. Its near-collapse is illustrated by the fact that in 2000 it only had 417 members. However, by 2004 it had 731, 1,009 in 2007 and 1,241 in 2008. Its members went out to patrol the metro 11,967 times in 1995, 34,841 times in 2004 and 55,756 times in 2008.[15] Patrol activities increased quickly in other Russian regions as well, if somewhat later than in Moscow. For instance, following legislation endorsing militias in 2003 and 2004, the Tsivil'skii district (*rayon*) of the Chuvash republic had 360 patrol members in 2004.[16] By 2009, Russia had over 34,000 volunteer militias, with over 363,000 members. About 40,000 crimes and over 400,000 administrative violations were solved with patrol participation.[17] Even if somewhat exaggerated by militia boosters seeking to convey a positive image, a frequent issue in evaluating Russian government statistics, these numbers still impress.

Militia participants usually received no or minor financial benefits. Some served with no material incentives at all.[18] The most common subsidy consisted of free rides on public transport, which helped patrol members to monitor this sphere.[19] Some groups received free access to the gym, fitting for the government's goal of forging healthy and fit citizens.[20] Local government organs in some cases supplied militias with uniforms.[21] More rarely, patrol participants received extra vacation days, cash bonuses as awards for extraordinary work, and, especially for patrol leaders, small additions to their salaries.[22] In several places, governments offered militia members social protection and health care in case of injury.[23] Overall, the limited range of material benefits hardly compensated for the time and energy devoted to patrolling or the potential risk to life and limb.

Though no comprehensive statistics exist on the demographics of patrol members, reports on individual regions indicate that young males constituted the majority of militia participants across Russia. In the city of

Murmansk, patrols consisted primarily of college students.[24] A story about Moscow presented twentysomething men as the archetype of militia participants.[25] According to an article in the official newspaper of the Russian federal legislature, people's patrols prefer to take in young males who went through the army. However, in rural settings that have few such males, women and pensioners go out on patrols.[26]

Furthermore, specifically youth-oriented militias sprang up. 'Nashi', the mass pro-Kremlin youth movement, promoted militias composed of young people at its July 2009 conference in Seliger.[27] To unite and guide Nashi youth patrols, the movement established a centralised association, the 'All-Russian Association of People's Patrols' (*Vserosiiskaya assotsiaciya druzhin*), in December 2009.[28] Another pro-Kremlin youth movement, 'Rossiya molodaya', already in 2007 established youth militias.[29] However, some patrols staffed exclusively by young people lacked affiliation with central movements. For instance, in February 2009 youth people's patrol (*dobrovol'naya molodezhnaya druzhina*) appeared in Nizhny Novgorod, with no record of any explicit relationship with Nashi or Rossiya molodaya.[30] Krasnoyarsk province legislators took actions to establish youth people's patrols as part of a broader anti-crime programme, which included establishing video surveillance, providing the police with special equipment and organising athletic activities.[31]

Volunteer militias: External benefits

A wide variety of authority figures endorsed people's patrols. This included central, regional and local politicians and police officers, officials from social organisations friendly to the government and patrol activists. They presented a range of motivations for their support, most frequently focusing on the external benefits of patrols, meaning the impact of these collectives on the rest of Russian society.

Patrol boosters frequently cited the positive impact of volunteer militia surveillance. In a 2009 interview, the Russian Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs underscored that a primary benefit of patrol activities consisted of 'inspiring people to report suspicious individuals in a timely manner' to police organs.[32] Perm city duma legislation spotlighted the importance of militia members informing the police of any crimes and potential crimes, as well as finding out those who use drugs, and those who try to involve youth in illegal activities.[33] In Khabarovsk, a people's patrol received acclaim from law enforcement organs for its monitoring of road and traffic violations.[34] Militia members in Nizhny Novgorod specifically checked up on troubled families, people previously arrested and those freed on parole, and minors registered by the police for delinquency.[35] Accompanying police officers, patrol participants could serve as witnesses in court cases, providing testimony about what they observed.[36]

Simultaneously, militias helped to monitor law enforcement agents as well. A journalist noted that a positive benefit of people's patrols in Khanty-Mansiysk consisted of helping to ensure that the police do not abuse their powers.[37] Members of the Khabarovsk militia group monitoring road and traffic related that a key concern for them consisted of checking up on law enforcement officers dedicated to this sphere.[38] Such activities aimed to increase the population's trust in and reliance on the police, while helping the struggle against police corruption, a serious problem in Russia to which political higher-ups frequently draw attention.[39] Even the Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs stressed the benefit of volunteer militias as a form of 'people's control' that 'would have a disciplinary effect on police themselves', preventing the latter from taking bribes and 'not noticing' a group of drunks.[40]

People's patrols spread information about the law to the rest of the citizenry. In a television news segment, a police official commended militias for this aspect of their activity.[41] Moscow city legislation related that a key function of patrols involved propagandising legal knowledge and the norms of public behaviour.[42] A Perm province law conveyed similar points.[43]

Besides these surveillance and enlightenment functions, patrols acted directly to prevent crimes and to locate and detain lawbreakers using physical force, endeavours applauded by supporters. A Nizhny Novgorod newspaper deemed the establishment of people's patrols an important activity; there, volunteer militias patrolled the streets, clubs and drinking establishments, detaining and delivering to the police any lawbreakers, mostly those engaging in minor hooliganism and public drunkenness.[44] Khanty-Mansiysk patrol members also detained those who violated the law.[45] The website of a Moscow people's patrols listed as key functions the 'taking of measures to prevent and stop criminal activities, and guard crime scenes'.[46] A high-level official in Dagestan underscored that militia members need to patrol the streets and protect public order.[47] Rostov-on-Don legislators wanted people's patrols to protect the streets and apartment complexes.[48]

Militia sponsors ascribed such benefits both to mixed-age patrols, which mostly had young males, and to youth-only groups. However, the latter had some additional characteristics. For instance, college student militias received praise from a Nizhny Novgorod newspaper for monitoring their dormitories and the areas surrounding them.[49] Some youth militia collectives focused in particular on combatting drug use. Rossiya molodaya has an ongoing anti-drug campaign, which it motivates by the particularly large problem of drugs among the young. This initiative involves helping the police to arrest drug dealers; it also includes vigilante-like tactics, where an undercover youth purchases illegal drugs from street stalls, and then a youth group sprays paint on it and covers it with large stickers saying: 'They trade in death here!'[50] Young patrol members also engage in similar actions targeted at stall vendors who sell alcohol and tobacco to minors. A sting

operation involved an underage youth purchasing alcohol and tobacco, and then a people's patrol and a law enforcement officer descended on the stall, the latter writing out a summons to the sales person. This apparently proved insufficient to the patrol, who wrapped the stall with packing tape and placed stickers saying 'They sell alcohol and tobacco to children here!'. Although the stall's owner protested, the police watched without interfering.[51]

This range of militia activities contributed directly to the intentions of authority figures at the central, regional and local levels, aimed at having patrols survey, discipline and impose social controls on ordinary citizens and law enforcement agents alike in the sense of a Foucauldian disciplinary power. As Michel Foucault pointed out, knowledge is required in order to impose power on others. The patrols monitored the streets, acquiring information that they and police organs alike used to combat misbehaviour. Moreover, the very nature of volunteer militia surveillance itself contributed to normative behaviour without direct imposition of force. It did so through what Foucault termed the power of the gaze, namely via creating the knowledge of being observed among the subjects of surveillance and the awareness of the potential consequences of any observed misdeeds (Foucault, 1979, pp. 27, 174–182). Patrols vastly multiplied the opportunities for the imposition of such an authoritative gaze, both through the large numbers of militia participants and also because they stood out less than police officers; the latter made it riskier to misbehave as one did not know whether one was subjected to surveillance. Patrols backed up such measures with the use of physical violence, making their social control function even more potent. This combination placed such militias within a broader historical context of Soviet use of government surveillance and forceful coercion as a tool for population management.[52]

Indeed, many patrol proponents explicitly linked contemporary Russian patrols with their Soviet ancestors, indicative of a degree of nostalgia and a search for functional models within the previously disregarded Soviet past (Kenez, 2003, in Kritika 4:2, pp. 369–97). A district-level police official wrote an essay praising militias with the title of 'People's Patrols – A Forgotten Traditional Form'. He directly linked volunteer militias created in 2003 and 2004 with their Soviet precedents, making the point that the seemingly novel post-Soviet collectives actually represented a well-established tradition as opposed to an innovation.[53] A typical positive television account related the appearance of people's patrols in the Kirov district of St Petersburg as a 'rebirth,' similarly connecting these collectives to Soviet forms.[54] The head of the Moscow metro people's patrol explicitly traced the history of his own group to its Soviet ancestor.[55]

Authority figures listed other perceived external benefits, ones less overtly related to social control, gained from organising volunteer militias. Owing to the worsening financial situation following the 2008 economic crisis, many

Russian local governments reduced their police forces. In some cases, the establishment of patrols aimed to make up for this problem, for instance in Leningrad province in 2011, where police officials directly tied the decrease in the numbers of regular law enforcement agents to the push for volunteer patrols.[56] Police officers in the city of Khanty-Mansiysk made similar claims in early 2012.[57] So did the ones in Moscow.[58]

Official initiatives to create militias occasionally resulted from major crimes in the area. Deterioration in public order, capped by a mass brawl in December 2010, caused the administration in Don province to promote the creation of people's patrols.[59] In late August 2012, a suicide bombing in Dagestan spurred the republic's governor to sign a decree establishing volunteer militias less than two weeks later.[60] Both in the cases of budget cuts and spectacular crimes, forming people's patrols enabled political and police officials both to deal with the problem of defending order and to represent themselves to the public as taking active measures to protect their safety and welfare.

An additional motive related more directly to politics, namely having volunteer militias, especially youth people's patrols, assist in dealing with protesters. Already in December 2006, Rossiya molodaya began to create elite youth patrol groups. A key goal of this programme consisted of preparing for the December 2007 Russian legislative elections and March 2008 presidential elections.[61] Indeed, in the days after the December 2007 elections, thousands of young people patrolled the streets of Moscow, with the goal of 'occupying as much space as possible and preventing representatives of the opposition from going out on the streets', according to a news report.[62] The Nashi project of establishing an All-Russian Association of Patrols, in the words of two news articles, aimed to put 100,000 youth to patrol the streets during the March 2012 presidential elections.[63]

Volunteer militias: Internal benefits

Patrol sponsors also spoke of the internal benefits of patrolling, citing the positive impact of this activity on militia members themselves. Contemporary Russian volunteer militia groups, just like Soviet-era collectives, received acclaim for contributing to reconstructing the subjectivities of patrol participants into those of model citizens, for instance by making sure that members knew about the law and followed it fully. Perm city legislation directed those who joined a people's patrol to learn about the current system of laws and directives, and to 'strictly obey the law and show vigilance in conducting activities to defend public order'.[64] In Nizhny Novgorod, police forces provided student volunteer militia members with legal training.[65] The St Petersburg city legislature in 2001 directed militia participants to undertake training in legal knowledge. It also excluded from patrol activities anyone who had a court case against them.[66] Other regions had comparable

limitations.[67] Similarly, a typical statement from a people's patrol website indicated unambiguously that those who underwent a trial in the past for deliberately breaking the law could not join the group, and called on members to 'constantly improve their legal knowledge'.[68]

Participation in militia activities helped create the type of physically fit and martially trained citizen desired by the authorities. Rossiya molodaya patrol members passed through a course of hand-to-hand combat.[69] Joining the Perm city volunteer militias meant learning self-defence methods and basic first aid.[70] The Nizhny Novgorod student volunteer militia received training in self-defence as well.[71]

Even more importantly, politicians and police officials commended militias for making those who joined into well-disciplined subjects who obey and collaborate with government organs. The Russian Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs in 2009 underlined what he termed the 'upbringing' (*vospitatel'nyi*) element of people's patrols, stating that 'the main thing for us is the participation of ordinary people in defending public order,' in other words getting the populace engaged in this work.[72] Federal-level legislators underlined the importance of 'the involvement of citizens in maintaining calm' in public settings.[73] Perm city legislation included the following as the first priority of people's patrols: 'providing assistance to law enforcement and other government organs in their defence of public order'.[74] The St Petersburg and Moscow city legislatures expressed parallel messages.[75] A Rostov-on-Don city legislator who proposed a local law to create volunteer militias underscored that 'we need to give people more opportunities to participate in the activities of the government, including through maintaining order on the streets'.[76]

People's patrols themselves agreed. Characteristic language from the website of a Moscow patrol listed one of its primary functions as helping out government organs in keeping order and preventing crime.[77] A patrol head explicitly underscored that 'people's patrols cannot be self-managing institutions, as they need to be directed by government organs', and they are created 'for solving a government problem – getting citizens involved in assisting law enforcement organs'.[78]

This applied even more so to the creation of the Nashi youth people's patrol project, the All-Russian Association of People's Patrols. As related by Sergey Bokhan, the leader of this Nashi programme, youth people's patrols 'took troubled adolescents and worked with them, mentored them and then got them to go patrol the streets themselves. At a minimum, these youth did not break the law, and at the maximum they helped the government.'[79] In another interview, Bokhan underlined that 'we pull those youth off the streets who potentially may violate public order, who sit and drink beer on benches', providing them 'with some sort of alternative. Through sport training, through discipline, they grow into better citizens.'[80] The Russian central government provided funding for this new entity.[81] Pro-Kremlin

youth organisations intended to get 100,000 participants in such youth people's patrols within three years.[82]

The evidence adduced above illustrates that supporters extolled what they saw as both the external benefits of militias, namely ensuring public order through disciplining the populace, and internal ones, reforging the subjectivity of those who joined militias into model citizens. Combining these two aspects of patrols – the external function of surveillance and disciplining and the internal function of reconstructing patrol member self-identities – indicates that post-Soviet Russia in this regard can be characterised – in Zygmunt Bauman's sense – as a modern government that undertakes extensive measures to transform their population into an ordered society that fits the leadership's needs and ideals (Bauman, 1991, p. 20).

Russia as a whole, however, did not necessarily constitute such an ordered state. After all, only certain areas established patrols, mostly urban ones. As of 2015 the federal legislature did not pass an explicit law outlining the rights, duties and privileges of volunteer militias, despite several efforts by prominent federal-level politicians to do so, most recently in 2009 and 2010.[83] This indicates the need to add complexity to Bauman's notion in order to deploy it to help understand contemporary Russia. Measures aiming at transforming populations were applied only in certain regions, bringing out how local authority figures sought to cultivate the residents of those areas to fit the local government's desires and intentions. Such findings suggest the danger of relying on sources only from the capital, illustrating the necessity of local studies to fully comprehend historical reality in Russia and elsewhere, as Donald Raleigh pointed out (see Raleigh, 2001, pp. 1–14). Further research is required on patrolling and other aspects of Russian governance in order to evaluate to what extent Russia constituted a modern 'ordered' state. After all, state officials who did not promote militias may have been entirely willing to undertake massive government intervention in order to socially engineer the population to their needs, but have disagreed on whether volunteer militias constitute the best tool for this goal.

News reports frequently underscored the extensive popular support for people's patrols. In Leningrad's Kirov district, ordinary citizens asked by television journalists about patrolling, especially those who recalled Soviet-era volunteer militias, expressed unreserved relief and satisfaction over the revival of such collectives, saying that they are greatly needed.[84] In another example, passers-by applauded the actions of patrol members who taped shut a stall selling drugs and tobacco to minors.[85] Moreover, popular endorsement for patrolling expressed itself in the grass-roots efforts to create militias in response to major crimes in local areas.[86] Besides such backing from the populace, the very fact of mass involvement in patrols, with 100,000 taking part in 2009, suggests extensive support from below for these institutions.

Consequently, this chapter proposes that militias constitute an example of state-sponsored civic life. In these volunteer institutions, ordinary citizens, mostly young, came together with each other and co-operated with law enforcement organs in combatting what both the populace and the state considered a serious problem. People willingly engaged in a range of activities meant to maintain public order, under the direct or indirect supervision of police officers. Those who joined patrols did so primarily based on their own initiative and internal motivations, not state pressure or incentives. Their choice to join patrols exemplifies conformist agency, as such individuals voluntarily take part in an officially prescribed activity that received strong endorsement from and resulted from the initiative of authority figures.

My evidence complicates the traditional assumptions of a sharp divide between the citizenry and the government, especially law enforcement bodies; in fact, central, regional and local officials intended patrols to act as a form of public control over police, at once acknowledging the extant issues with Russian law enforcement and getting citizen co-operation in helping to deal with this problem. The Russian case study casts light on a non-western public sphere, one with much greater collaboration between the population and the governing structures (Hohendahl, 1979, pp. 89–119). Similarly, the revival of people's patrols speaks to a growth in a non-western version of civil society. The Russian model, as revealed by militias, does not fit the traditional image that draws a bright line between state organs and grassroots organisations, but does involve citizens voluntarily uniting together into government-sponsored collective associations designed to deal with mutually agreed-upon social challenges. Such co-operation likewise sheds light on the deep roots of support for the Putin administration in Russian society.

Militias: Topic of debate

Within public discourse, some discordant notes emerged. When pressed to create people's patrols by higher-ups, some local officials in Leningrad province attributed their lack of progress to inadequate laws and guidelines outlining militia activities.[87] The leader of the Moscow metro people's patrol decried the lack of clear federal legislation on this sphere of activities.[88]

Likewise, some political and police cadres criticised militias for competing with police organs. Given that people's patrols bore a patent association with the Soviet past, it is ironic that opposition politicians from the Communist Party disparaged suggested Rostov-on-Don city legislation reviving these institutions. Communist Party figures panned militias as unnecessary, given what these politicians depicted as the 'quite adequate' number of law enforcement agents.[89] The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs occupied a nuanced position in early September 2012: while articulating its readiness to

work with these groups, it did not want militias to carry weapons or acquire the status of a government organ.[90]

Some censure from analysts, commentators and human rights activists sounded related notes, namely condemning the amateur status of militias as opposed to professional law enforcement agents and the lack of responsibility for the actions of patrol members. A Moscow lawyer pointed out that Nashi youth patrols represented amateur crime-fighters who may find it difficult to determine what constitutes breaking the law, and what does not. Furthermore, a patrol member 'may twist someone's arm unprofessionally, breaking it, or hit someone, causing a concussion. Who will be responsible for this harm to heal?'[91] A critical news story about the drive to pass federal legislation on militias also highlighted the issue of amateurism. Additionally, it pointed out that patrols lacked clearly defined limitations on their activities, presenting the likelihood of abuses.[92] One essay posted on a website dedicated to public commentary claimed that 'it is unclear who will bear responsibility for the inevitable physical and moral damage to citizens' that the militias would bring.[93]

The financial burden of people's patrols drew attention. One newspaper analysis of the 2009 federal-level initiative to create these institutions pointed out that the financial burden would lie on the regions, not the centre. It also expressed scepticism of the idea of granting time off from work for patrolling, stating that businesses would be reluctant to waste money by letting their employees walk the streets.[94] Other journalists also drew attention to the financial costs of establishing and maintaining patrols.[95]

A number of commentators questioned the use of patrols for political purposes. The website essay mentioned above argued that the principal goal of these Nashi youth patrols consisted of using these collectives against 'participants in mass actions of social protest, the most "troublesome" members of ecological, human rights and similar organizations, social activists, journalists'.[96] The Moscow lawyer who criticised the amateur aspects of militias added a further point. He termed the Nashi youth patrols 'semi-military units who may at some point support one or another political party. Clearly, we need to keep in mind the concern among the authorities for the possibility of social instability in the country', a reference to the post-2008 worsening economic situation in Russia and globally.[97] A 2007 newspaper story on the Rossiya molodaya groupings sought to expose their politicised aspects, focusing a great deal of attention on this issue. It also drew clear links between these collectives and Kremlin officials, most notably Vladislav Surkov, a former Nashi activist and at that time a political operative close to the president. The journalist reported that, in a secretly taped conversation, Surkov expressed great interest when he found out that Rossiya molodaya youth militias learned 'how to use smoke bombs and exploding packets in controlling public masses and "chasing away crowds"'.[98] In fact, many patrol boosters prohibited these collectives from outright political activities. The

Moscow city legislature expressly forbids militias to act in the interests of political parties and movements.[99] In St Petersburg, the legislature banned political organisations from participating in patrolling.[100]

The presence of such critical voices evinces the challenges experienced by authority figures supportive of patrolling. Plenty among central, regional and local political figures, government bureaucrats, police officials and pro-Kremlin youth organisation leaders wanted to use patrols to control the population, especially the young, to fit their perception of Russian government needs; plenty among the citizenry agreed with this official image of the ideal Russian society. Yet, these individuals faced many obstacles in implementing their vision, as outlined by those sceptical of patrolling. Some among officialdom and public commentators disagreed that volunteer militias represented the best instrument for achieving the government's range of goals, namely maintaining order via imposing social control and reforming the identities of young patrol members into model citizens; this helps explain why federal-level legislation did not pass as yet. Furthermore, those in opposition to the Putin–Medvedev administration openly disparaged the use of militia to achieve an important government goal, namely suppressing political protest. Such denigration of these collectives within public discourse illustrates the difficulties in using youth patrolling to socially engineer the population. This bore many similarities to the problems faced by many other modern government-social-engineering schemes identified by James Scott, indicating the flaws inherent within such strategies of rule (Scott, 1998, p. 108).

Patrol boosters envisioned these institutions playing a central part in forging a homogeneous image of the ideal youth and consequently a cohesive young generation in the sense of Karl Mannheim (Mannheim and Kecskemeti, 1952, pp. 276–280; Wade, 2005, pp. 125–141; Lovell, 2007, pp. 1–18). As the criticism of volunteer militias indicates, those who endorsed such collectives did not succeed as of yet in constructing a commonly held public vision of using patrolling as a tool to construct model youth identities or a unified young generation.

Conclusion

Much of Russian public rhetoric highlighted the benefits of volunteer militias, to a significant extent because many politicians and police officials endorsed their establishment. Patrol advocates praised these institutions for surveilling the population and thus disciplining it through the Foucauldian power of the gaze. Strengthening their social control function further, the patrols deployed physical force extensively in their activities, mostly focusing on fighting crime, but also targeting political protestors.

Promoters also underscored the internal benefits of participation in militias as reforging the subjectivity of their mostly young participants into ideal

citizens. Through them, regional and local-level authority figures sought to remake the population into well-ordered communities that fit the government's needs. This finding indicates the desirability of adapting broad theories to particular historical conditions and focusing on the local level in considering the diverse day-to-day experience and nature of Russian governance.

People's patrols embody what this chapter terms state-sponsored civic life. Combining grass-roots activism with official endorsement, militias featured ordinary citizens enthusiastically joining together and collaborating with government organs in order to solve the social problem of maintaining public order. The voluntary decision of hundreds of thousands, mostly young, to do so casts light on the extent of conformist agency and support for the Putin administration among the population. Challenging the traditional historiographic presumption of a bright line between state and society, my findings demonstrate the existence of a non-western version of a public sphere and civil society in Russia, ones that contain a far larger degree of co-operation between the populace and the government than their western equivalents.

Nonetheless, the institution of militias also faced some harsh evaluations, for their amateurism, competition with police, financial cost, inadequate guidelines, human-rights violations and political engagement. Patrol advocates have so far proved unable to use patrols in order to forge a commonly accepted image of model youth and a unified young generation.

Notes

1. V. Iu. Badyuk. Istoriya druzhiny, http://mosmetro.ru/documents/11416/narodnaya_drugina.pdf, date accessed 30 September 2012.
2. Istoriya obrazovaniya narodnykh druzhin, http://www.dnd-ulianka.okis.ru/servis.html, date accessed 30 September 2012.
3. Ikh nynche rat', a zvat' eë – narodnaya druzhina, in ANN News – 10/2007; http://www.annews.ru/news/detail.php?ID= 135234, date accessed 30 September 2012.
4. Dobrovol'nye pomoshchniki militsii ukreplyayut pozitsii: moskovskoi narodnoi druzhine ispolnilos' 5 Let, in Nezavisimaya Gazeta – 12 August 1998 – Narodnye druzhiny vozvrashchayutsya, in Parlamentskaya Gazeta – 26 March 2012.
5. Donald Filtzer: The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia: Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards, 1943–1953. New York 2010 – Elena Zubkova: Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957. Armonk 1998.
6. V. Iu. Badyuk, Istoriya druzhiny, http://mosmetro.ru/documents/11416/narodnaya_drugina.pdf, date accessed 30 September 2012.
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16

Battlefield Internet: Young Russian SNS Users and New-Media State Propaganda

Vera Zvereva

Introduction

Every means of communication in a given culture accrues values relating to its prestige, the prevalence of its use within society, and its ability to answer the needs of the moment, and in this way becomes associated with a particular group of consumers (Goggin, 2006). Certain political, social and cultural responsibilities attach themselves to communication technologies and, in some cases, these challenges exceed the capabilities of the medium itself; if a means of communication is recognised as having great political and social potential, a struggle may develop within a society for its appropriation and control. As a result, researchers will need to reexamine their views on the role and function of that communication technology.[1]

In the Russian culture of the 2000s, the Russian-speaking section of the internet, Runet, was entrusted with the responsibility not only of developing new socio-cultural structures, but also with compensating for certain limitations in the offline culture. This was related to the shortage of social space outside state control, a lack of awareness among Russian citizens regarding the complexity and variety of Russian society, its values and ways of life, and the absence of strong horizontal links and social trust (Zvereva, 2012). As Runet attempted to meet these challenges, it came to be linked with movements opposed to state power, seen as a space of freedom without the taboos and prohibitions of quasi-governmental culture and as an alternative sphere of public activity, and associated with a more active ideological stance (Schmidt et al., 2009).

Although Runet has typically always attracted a greater number of midlife and older users than its equivalent in Europe and America, the internet – and digital media in general – is generally regarded as an attractive environment for young users (Livingstone, 2009; Tapscott, 2008). Schoolchildren and students are dynamic participants in net communication, open to

technological change, at the forefront of fashion and gaming, and thus quick to assimilate new gadgets, services and mobile applications. About 75 per cent of Russian 14–18-year-olds use the internet. There is heavy media consumption and production: 'the involvement of young people in the social medium is so great that they cannot be considered/studied separately from that environment' (Zhilavskaya, 2013, p. 65). Throughout the history of Runet, there have been significant innovations in language and internet culture associated with the online communication practices of young users (for example, the mass popularity of the so-called language of scumbags (*iasyk padonkov*), 'gurlie' ('devachkovyi') slang, numerous memes, experiments with net literature ('neterature'), videopoetry and so on). The activities of the so-called 'Generation Zero' (those Russians aged between 14 and 25, who had no experience of living in the Soviet Union) played a role in the surge of online activism in 2010–2012 and in the political protests which spread from online to offline society (Petukhov, 2014).

In the early 2010s, in the context of the Arab Spring, many Runet users believed that the growth of new forms of civic engagement on the platforms of digital media would lead to a significant transformation in Russian society, and that democratically-minded youth would play an important role in this process. The political protests that took place in winter 2011 and spring 2012, associated with the social activist movement on Runet, appeared to confirm those expectations.

However, the landscape of social networking websites in 2013–2014 differs significantly from the pattern that we would expect following the line of reasoning outlined above. An examination of online publications and discussion forums reveals that 'statist' political views are rather widespread among adolescents and young people (Kryshtanovskaya, 2013). Thus, it appears, the combination of certain factors alone – youth and active use of digital media – does not automatically lead to the fulfillment of the forecasts of cyberoptimists. In 2014, conservative, 'patriotic' discourse, either deliberate or unthinking – on the level of everyday internet conversations – has become a notable factor affecting Runet's image as a medium of dominantly liberal communication, and this, in turn, has had an impact on the implicit image of Runet's top users: teenagers and young adults. How, then, has this happened?

This chapter discusses issues relating to the consolidation of 'pro-state' positions on Runet, hitherto regarded as initially being a space of 'alternative freedom' in Russia, during the course of the information wars of 2013–2014, and looks at how 'Generation Zero' became the top object of contention within these battles. These questions will be considered in more detail using the example of one case – the campaign in support of the accession of Crimea to Russia in the spring of 2014 – and how this was reflected in the social networks and blogs of Runet.

At the heart of this study lies the supposition that following the rise of the protest movement in Russia and the heightened interest in that movement

shown by young users of new media (an interest that confirmed the predictions of experts in digital communication technologies, who argued that the spread of new forms of media interaction would enhance political activism), the Russian authorities made deliberate efforts to 'retake' Runet as policy space. This work by the authorities on Runet began to bear fruit in 2013–2014, a fact seen most clearly in the (re)orientation of young users. The 're-capture' of a section of the public was achieved by recruiting users who were students during the mid-2000s, and became involved in the pro-governmental, offline youth movements popular among 'Generation Zero', but who grew up in the digital media environment and had acquired an excellent specific knowledge of that environment. As a result, the campaign that emerged on Runet was much more complex and diverse than the more straightforward propaganda on television. This chapter examines how the pro-governmental ideological message has been disseminated through social networks and blogs.

Description of the study

In order to explore the dissemination of pro-governmental 'patriotic' views among the young Runet users we have studied texts published on VKontakte by users aged between 14 and 25. (VKontakte is a Russian analogue of Facebook; it is the second largest social network popular among Russian-speaking users with more than 239 million accounts). The chronological scope of research includes a period from February to June 2014, for example the time of annexation of Crimea and of the subsequent reaction of Runet users. In this period, the slowly accumulating changes in the Russian media system bore fruit in the form of an unprecedented rise of propaganda in digital media.

Applying a demographic filtering and a keyword search, we studied about 200 VKontakte accounts. For this research, we have chosen 50 accounts whose owners expressed their approval of Russia's policy in Crimea. Approval is not the only position represented in social networks. Most of the young VKontakte users have not reacted to the Crimean events at all: this is hardly surprising, taking into account the low political involvement of the Russian youth (Gudkov et al., 2011). A small number responded critically. Approval of the Russian authorities' actions is a widespread position, and this correlates with the total support of the Crimean campaign in Russian society. The owners of the selected accounts (36 males and 14 females) come from different Russian cities, capitals and small towns. For ethical reasons, we do not give links to the accounts from which we quote and do not provide Russian originals of the quotations.

Analysing VKontakte entries, we posed questions about the attitudes of young users towards the Crimean campaign. Our attention was drawn to discursive forms of expression of these views as well as the specifics of digital mediation of cultural meanings. In addition, we studied the

LiveJournal blogs of the two leading pro-Kremlin new media propagandists who actively spread their messages among the Runet youth across web platforms – Kristina Potupchik ('Krispotupchik') and Oleg Makarenko ('Fritsmorgen'). Kristina Potupchik (b. 1986) is ex-commissar of the pro-governmental youth movement 'Nashi', press-secretary of the Federal Youth Agency 'Rosmolodezh' and a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Oleg Makarenko (b. 1978) is a paid blogger supporting Putin's politics; he publishes texts daily and spreads them across the internet. These blogs shed light on strategies and technologies of the digital media propaganda, designed for 'Generation Zero'.

The battle for Runet

There is good reason to suppose that the practice of communication in online network communities can affect civil and political behaviour. Patterns of behaviour developed among Runet users during the 2000s are not at all typical of the 'ordinary' Soviet (and post-Soviet) individual: they were focused on attempts to find practical solutions to individual problems, non-paternalistic attitudes, and mutual aid not restricted to a narrow circle of friends and so on (compare with Levada, 1993; Ries, 1997). For users who, to all intents and purposes, live on social networks, that is, who absorb various information mediated by friends and are in constant communication with close and distant contacts, active participation is becoming an increasingly common life-choice.

The structure of Web2.0 with its principle of 'mash up' implies a constant mixing of different types of information: through feeds, users of social network receive an assortment of information such as fashion and cinema news, commercial offers, reports of military activity, sports forecasts and pleas for help. Serious and responsible decisions are interwoven with gaming configurations and the 'skimming' of information, comic poetry flash mobs and comments on witty pictures with detailed discussions of psychological, social or political issues. At the same time, the very logic of networks implies that the acquisition of interesting information and participation in communication – even at the lowest level of 'liking' (which amounts to demonstrating one's own existence in a virtual environment) – are effected by means of a whole set of user actions. Most online communities are focused on practical action, ranging from the most simple (such as the exchange of views, advice or recommendations) to the most complex, requiring the co-ordination of many people.

In 2010, when certain regions of Russia were devastated by forest fires, Runet communities became a base for the volunteer movement. They were used to raise money, clothing, food and medicine for the victims, and to organise independent groups of firefighters – that is, Runet was used to carry out tasks which government agencies were failing to tackle effectively. The

first campaigns by social activists showed the strength and significance of offline action co-ordinated through networking sites. Following this, many influential groups of civil activity sprang up on Runet: groups concerned with the protection of civil rights (for drivers on the roads, or those suffering from the high-handedness of bureaucrats), aid (fundraising for the sick and the homeless, care for the elderly, searching for missing people), co-operative environmental initiatives and so on. For many people, participation in such groups has become a way of life. Users produce and act out an online identity which is short-term, intensive, associated with 'positive' action, and not focused on the past but on arranging the present based on 'connective' experience (Hoskins, 2011). From late 2011 to early 2012 Runet witnessed a campaign of protest activity unprecedented for the last decade, associated with the opposition movement 'for fair elections' which manifested itself outside virtual space – on the streets in rallies attended by thousands of people.

For a long time, the Russian authorities paid little attention to the internet. The first internet conferences of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev (following the pattern of their press conferences on television and dialogue with TV viewers) were held in 2006 and 2007, that is, more than ten years after the Runet culture began to appear. Perhaps it was due to this non-interference that Runet was able to emerge as a diverse environment reflecting the complex and contradictory nature of Russian society. From the early 2000s onwards the Kremlin initiated a new youth policy, not directly related to digital media. This was about the creation of 'managed' youth movements, which would foster a generation of patriotic young Russians loyal to the country's authorities, with a negative attitude not only towards 'western liberalism' but, following the events in Ukraine in 2004–2005, towards the prospect of an 'Orange Revolution'.[2]

In 2000, the youth movement Idushchie vmeste (Marching Together) was created by the Kremlin; and in 2005 the youth movement Nashi (Ours) was founded on its basis. During the period of the existence of these movements (until 2012) their activities ranged from the implementation of official projects (youth forums, patriotic demonstrations, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, campaigning for public support for government decisions, and so on) to covert work within the opposition. Various materials would appear in the media from time to time suggesting that Nashi had managed to install its own agents in the ranks of opposition movements and youth organisations.[3] Their purpose in doing this was to gather compromising material and to provoke opposition leaders by publishing revelations in the media. One aspect of these activities was the spread of commissioned information on Runet, and the purchase of publications in popular blogs on LiveJournal. Some young bloggers, whose subscribers numbered in their thousands, either declared that they were working for the movement, or were suspected of doing so.

By the end of the 2000s, the systematic publication of specially commissioned posts and comments had become a permanent and regular feature of Runet blogs and social networks. This, in turn, led to increased mutual mistrust, producing a great deal of suspicion and speculation as to who was actually being commissioned to produce material, and leading to questions about the financing behind certain anonymous users who were able to manoeuvre particular posts into top position by posting hundreds of favourable comments and re-postings, and about the amount earned by celebrated Runet authors. Since the rise of protest movements in 2011, techniques designed to promote the required ideological position in social networks and Runet blogs have been developed. There is little publicly available information about how the system works, but isolated publications confirm what can be gleaned from informal sources (Turovskij, 2014). In particular, they support the view that companies employing 'dummy' bloggers with fake accounts have been set up in order to distribute essential information sent down 'from the top' and to post ideologically 'correct' comments on the blogs of opposition representatives.

In practice, most of such publications are easily recognised: they contain one and the same text with a link to another user; this user, in turn, refers the reader on to a third party, and so on. Typically, these blogs do not contain personal information about the blogger. The information is reposted on pro-government publications. It is possible for a single piece of material to be published thousands of times over the course of a couple of days. Thus, users who look at a number of websites will acquire a certain amount of background knowledge about a particular subject and its interpretation (although the news may be fully or partially falsified).

Due to improvements in technology designed to capture information space, the army of live bloggers is gradually being replaced by web bots (programmes which automatically send out material from fake accounts to wherever it is needed, according to the logic of advertising spam) (Turovskij, 2014). For example, in our study of how Twitter was used in the urban protest rallies of 2012, we came across the phenomenon of 'hashtag clogging': whenever the opposition made prominent use of a particular hashtag, it would immediately be swamped with empty information using bots (Paulsen and Zvereva, 2014).

This blow aimed by the authorities at the communication platforms and networks has resulted not only in the dissemination of required views, but has led to compromising Runet as a source of information. In the words of one of the combatants in the information war, 'whereas in the past, before mid-2013, we were losing the battle on the internet, now we have learned to work well. We have learnt everything ourselves: the experts did not come to us as they regarded it as a disgrace not to be in favour of the opposition. In the year 2013 in the information wars we beat the opposition [...] As for our success in 2014, it goes without saying. If Putin continues to be this

successful, we will soon be out of work' (Turovskij, 2014). However, in 2013–2014, the Russian authorities decided on a new strategy in dealing with the internet: the use of direct prohibition.

Between 2012 and 2014 the Russian State Duma passed a number of laws (including the law on 'foreign agents' for non-commercial organisations,[4] laws on demonstrations, a broader definition of the concept of 'state treason', a ban on 'homosexual propaganda' in the media, laws on causing offence to believers, and several others). These laws set different groups within Russian society against one another and asserted the image of a unified 'mass public', a conservative majority on behalf of whom these new restrictive initiatives were supposedly being put in place. At the time, a number of harsh legal decisions were passed against opposition activists (for example, the case of Pussy Riot and that of the protests on Bolotnaya Square).

At this time, the Russian authorities began to regard the internet as a highly dangerous influence on young people. This argument was enhanced by sociologists studying the political views among that section of the population. For instance, in a report published under the leadership of the one of the leading Russian sociologists, Olga Kryshtanovskaya, we find the following:

> Nowadays, a tendency to reject television completely is emerging in the youth subculture. The state authorities are losing its influence over people's thinking, as greater and greater numbers of viewers turn away from television. A multitude of different communities have sprung up on social networks, bringing together oppositionists, fanatics, social activists and so on. These represent a distinct threat to stability, as they have large human resources at their disposal and are able to rapidly mobilize supporters. Thanks to the Internet, young Russians are becoming increasingly focused on the West and increasingly liberal in outlook. The Internet and social networks have become places in which opposition activists are concentrated, and have contributed to the new youth trend of 'volunteerism', or social activism, which has the potential to merge with political opposition. Youth internet communities could pose a threat to stability and could be used by various political powers.
>
> (Kryshtanovskaya, 2013)

It is in this context that we should view those laws which are intended to bring the dissemination of information on the internet under state control: blacklists of internet sites, arbitrary blocking of websites, the law which equates the activity of any blogger with more than 3,000 subscribers as equivalent to the activity of a mass medium, and the laws passed as part of the campaign against extremism on the internet (according to which, Russian internet providers are required to equip their websites with facilities

for recording and storing information on internet traffic and are obliged to present this information to the security services) (Bocharova, 2014; Gosudarstvennyj kontrol', 2013). In 2014, either through direct decision or indirect influence of the government, the most important information portals on the Runet, RIA Novosti and Lenta.ru, were restructured; and certain 'dangerous' opposition sites and communities were banned (Gazeta.ru, Alexei Navalny's blog and so on). According to a number of media reports, the task of researching internet communication and developing methods by which to influence it had to become one of the Kremlin's top priorities in 2015 (Pushkarskaya, 2014).

Nowadays a sense of disillusionment with the results of the protest movement and the potential for opposition in general can be felt among young people who communicate with one another over social networks. Most young users present themselves as far removed from politics. Active consumers of media feeds, these users declare that their intensive participation in social networks is purely for the purpose of communicating with relatives, friends and acquaintances (Petukhov, 2014). At the same time, it could be argued that these 'depoliticised' users of Runet have, unbeknown to themselves, been exposed to a powerful wave of state propaganda. Those to whom this campaign is addressed see themselves as free from ideological influence, as they do not watch television. But this is a new type of propaganda, very different from that which was played out over the central Russian TV channels in connection with the revolution in the Ukraine of 2013–2014.

In the next sections of this chapter we would like to look at the techniques used by the state in order to exercise an influence over the social networks on Runet. While we do not have reason to suppose that this propaganda work within the new media led to the creation of any radically new views among Russian young people, it nevertheless changed the emphasis and strengthened certain latent attitudes within society which had not hitherto been regarded as so useful to the government.

The case of 'Crimea Is Ours'

The reaction to events in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 (the mass protests of the Maidan, and the ousting of President Yanukovich; Russian political pressure and intervention in internal events in Ukraine; the split within the nation; the referendum in Crimea and its unification with Russia) can be regarded as an important milestone in the transformation of the post-Soviet identity of the Russian people. Russian citizens showed exceptional unanimity in their support of Putin's actions at this time. As Levinson argues:

> At the moment there is a very heightened state of public awareness. According to data from the end of May, Putin's popularity is now at

> 83% and has been steadily growing over the last few months. This extraordinary situation suggests, in the first place that people have forgotten those difficulties and problems which they hitherto regarded as important and which hitherto affected their attitude to the government and to Putin. In second place, we have seen a quite extraordinary euphoria – a euphoria which would appear to require the vocabulary of other disciplines – such as psychology, psychiatry, etc, – in any attempt to explain it.
>
> (Asmolov et al., 2014)

The basis of this upsurge in emotion was not the annexation of Crimea with Russia per se, but rather the feeling that Russia had once again become a great nation, unified in its opinions, and a force to be reckoned with by the USA and the European Union. From the point of view of Russian collective identity, this shows how consistently certain attitudes had been perpetuated at all levels of Russian society during the first decade of the twenty-first century: humiliation at the 'lack of respect' accorded Russia by other nations; dissatisfaction at being obliged to observe rules 'imposed' on Russia from the West; a belief in Russia's special destiny; and a belief that western rules were inapplicable to Russia. It should be emphasised that we are not talking about some emotional stress or suffering which has continued over a period of two decades, so much as the deliberate construction of a particular cultural and psychological complex. This is demonstrated by the fact that such ideas and attitudes can be found without difficulty in the internet publications of young people who have never actually experienced life in the USSR. Invented transgenerational memory plays an important role in adaptation of young people in Russian society to nostalgic interpretations of the Soviet past. Relevant in this case is Edward Said's description of the phenomenon of invented memory as a social effort 'premised on the need to construct a desirable loyalty to and insider's understanding of one's country, tradition and faith' (Said, 2002, p. 242).

By way of example, Ivan, a 15-year-old internet user from Moscow, regularly publishes on his VKontakte page comic pictures borrowed from elsewhere relating to the events in Ukraine. One shows a bear against the background of the Russian tricolour (on the stripes of which are depicted marching soldiers from the Second World War and Orthodox saints from the pictures by the Russian artist Glazunov). The caption to the picture is 'For many years, people thought Russia was on her knees, but she was only tying up the laces of her army boots.' The same user also writes: 'Whoever isn't afraid of the USA or Ukraine and respects Russia and Putin, like this' and recommends a video: 'YOU MUST SEE THIS!!! LONG AWAITED REBIRTH OF THE GREAT RUSSIAN NATION!!!' This recently produced video was published on the pages of dozens of young users over a few days, and the quote below comes from this video:

> Do you remember? [. . .] Our sense of ourselves was literally smothered by the black night of Yeltsin's 1990s. The best minds in the West were put to work to devise how best to throw Russia onto the historical garbage heap. But [. . .] in the early twenty-first century, that dawn has come. Modest and unremarkable, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin walks through the splendid corridors and halls of the Kremlin Palace to his new office, and soon a new sense of pride begins to stir in the hearts of millions of Russians. Now it is the year of 2014 and already Russia has cocked a snook at the Americans with the Dima Yakovlev Bill[5] [. . .] Behind us is the glittering triumph of the Sochi Winter Olympics, the Crimea, together with its jewel in the crown – Sevastopol, have once again become a part of Russia [. . .] We ourselves have begun to notice a burning flame in the eyes of passers-by on the streets of our cities – a genuine Russian belief in the future. We [. . .] smile good-naturedly at all the futile efforts of the Americans and the Europeans to sabotage our country in whatever way they can.

Some of those users who posted this video were born in the late 1990s and can hardly be said to 'remember' the Yeltsin period. However, convinced by this kind of argument, they post texts with titles such as 'the death throes of the American dream' along with lovely pictures and sentimental poems, which one expects to find on teenagers' accounts.

Working with the language of description

The reactions of VKontakte users aged 14–25 can be read in the context of a broad propaganda campaign which sought to provide 'correct' (statist, patriotic) interpretations of the events in Ukraine as they unfolded across old and new media. Using the techniques mentioned above (that is, publishing commissioned material on the web; clogging the information platform of the opposition, and posting large quantities of falsified materials) created the conditions for a discursive battle for certain keywords used to describe reality.

In propaganda texts, the proper meanings of words shift. A fundamental inaccuracy in the language of description can be seen as one object is substituted for another. A case in point is the use of the word 'fascists', used in relation to events in Ukraine. This word refers to a symbolic resource of the Russians' self-identification – the Second World War. The struggle against the fascists is sacred; and those who deny its importance are traitors. From the time when the former president of Ukraine, Yushchenko, proposed that Stephan Bandera and members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (which fought on the side of Hitler) be considered Ukrainian national heroes, pro-Russian users have described western Ukrainians using the metaphor of 'Banderists'. As the Banderists were considered to be 'fascists', the word 'fascist', now used as an offensive term, has been used to label Ukrainian

nationalists. The new semantic shift has cancelled out the idea that the word is being used only metaphorically. 'Fascists' are expected to 'commit atrocities' and, unsurprisingly, the Central TV channels have engaged in producing shocking (and not infrequently completely falsified) materials about atrocities of Ukrainian military forces to confirm this point (Kashin, 2014). In blogs and social networks, users now talk about supporters of the Ukrainian revolution as if they were real fascists modelled after the Nazis in the Second World War:

> There is no point in denying the obvious. If people proclaim fascist slogans, put those slogans into practice and consider Stephan Bandera their ideological leader, then they are fascists.
>
> (Fritzmorgen, 25 February 2014)

According to this point of view, Russia, which stands for the ideals of humanism, peace and friendship between nations, and the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine are under attack from Ukrainian fascists and their western supporters. This idea, presented as a self-evident truth, is now in circulation among both adult users of Runet, and teenagers. A particular contrast can be seen between the type of posts usually found on accounts of young people (witty comments, demotivators, selfies, pet photos and so on), and phrases taken from the political discourse which construct a reality in which Russia is at war with fascists.

An example of this is Sergei, a 14-year-old resident of the Siberian city of Chita, far away from Ukraine. His Facebook page features quizzes on topics seen as important by teenagers, such as 'How do you feel about me?' and a funny picture with the title 'The Incredible Adventures of a Cat'. Next to it, the following entry appears: 'Smash the Banderist buggers: Yatseniuk, Turchynov, Yarosh! Glory to the DONBASS!!! To the HEROES Of DONBASS Glory!!! Hold on, boys, we're right behind you!'

The basic elements of this online political discourse indicate a shift in the political and legal languages of description at the time of the Crimean campaign. The substitution of meanings, deliberate uncertainty and active use of empty formulas are important tools in working with ideological messages on the Runet. For example, according to the pro-Kremlin bloggers, there were two main ways of describing the danger from which Russia attempted to defend the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Crimea. On one hand, there were the terms bandits, rebels or criminals; on the other, Nazis, fascists and collaborators. The question is who was to be called 'the people'?

> Yesterday in Simferopol, the *people* tried to get members of the Supreme Council of Crimea to hold a referendum on the fate of the Republic: Tatar radicals and supporters of the militants decided to interfere, and organized a rally near the Supreme Council — two hours before the people's

> referendum. The pro-Western television channels showed Tatar flags constantly, so that it appeared that the defenders of the *junta* were in the great majority. In fact, there were only about 4 thousand *collaborationists,* whereas about 15 thousand Crimeans (*Krymchane*) had assembled.
>
> (Fritzmorgen, 27 February 2014)

Ukrainian developments are being incorporated into the model of the 'Orange Revolution' (that is, a revolution engineered by America and 'Eurofascists' in order to bring about the collapse and the subordination of Ukraine, and to weaken Russia). Such an interpretation is being put forward and accepted on social networks.

During the Ukrainian crisis and the run-up to the referendum on the accession of the Crimea to Russia, it became clear that the Russian media worked out a certain language to interpret what was taking place in the two countries. Russia's reaction to the change of power in Kiev and the threat of troops in Ukraine was more frequently described in the Russian media not using the language of international law, but using the language of the street. On Runet, the role of common-sense explanations that can be understood from a psychological point of view has increased dramatically. The most popular way to describe Russia's actions at the time was to talk of Vladimir Putin being 'offended' or 'insulted' by Yanukovich, the USA and the European Union. For example, a Russian political analyst, Belkovsky, writes:

> Putin has always behaved decently. 'Decency' is a key concept for him [...] Putin was never been opposed to the West, it is travesties (*bespredel*) of justice that he has actually been opposed to [...] The West, as the Russian President sees it, has considered itself above all possible rules, both formal and informal. Putin wanted to be a good westernizer and for many years, he was. The trouble is that the West did not appreciate him. As Putin saw it, the West consistently duped him [...] Now, actually, Putin has made the West to respect him [...] And what else could he have done, apart from to teach a lesson to those arrogant people – the Western elite – who think that they are allowed to do everything, and that second class peoples (which is what they consider to be Russians, as well as many others) are not allowed to do anything?.
>
> (Belkovsky, 2014)

Alexander Morozov interprets the willingness to give up the concepts of 'sovereignty' and 'international borders' as a simplification of the civil and political culture (Morozov, 2014). All kinds of relationships – from international relations to the relationship between citizen and state – become personalised: this means that they are regulated not by the law, but by personal attitudes. In bloggers' texts, the view that justice and Russia's moral rectitude take precedence over international law is clearly discernable.

At the same time, metaphors stand in for other explanations. It is precisely the simplicity and clarity of these explanatory schemes (for example, 'The strong guys insulted us and did not respect us, but we showed them who is stronger'), which are, in our view, beginning to work effectively among adolescents and students, especially those who do not have a background in the humanities. For example, VKontakte users share their ideas on the current political situation:

Kirill (age 19, Moscow): 'Once again it has been proved to me that there is no stronger nation than the Russians! We are independent from everyone else and prepared to tell the West and Europe where to go!'

Constantine (age 24, St Petersburg): 'Prime Minister Vladimir Putin always manages to wrap Washington round his little finger, making the US plan work in favour of Russia – here's a piece of analysis for those who can and want to think, and are not afraid to read [...] from here on in, things will be perfect for Russia and catastrophic for the United States and the EU [...] in around the winter of the year 2015, what is left of the Ukrainian State will experience terrible poverty, hunger, cold, ruin, corruption, anarchy, local wars and a battle for food, petrol and social influence. [...] then, the remainder of the Ukrainian people, brought to a state of desperation by the present pro-American authorities in Kiev, will rise up in a revolution against the United States, the EU and Kiev.'

Another example can also be given. In March, military installations and administrative buildings in Crimea were seized by mysterious military men wearing green uniforms without insignia. These people purported to have no relationship to the Russian Army. As Alexei Yurchak describes it: 'What we witnessed in Crimea is a curious new political technique – that of a military occupation staged as a non-occupation. These curious troops were designed to fulfil several contradictory things at once – to be anonymous and yet recognized by all, to be polite and yet frightening, to be identified with the Russian Army and yet, be different from the Russian Army [...] Crimea was occupied without being occupied [...] this technique is not only openly cynical, it is also designed to function as a cynical joke' (Yurchak, 2014).

This new political technique was immediately reflected in the language. In response to the confusion of traditional media (which was not sure whether to refer to these people as 'self-defence forces of Crimea' or 'the Russian military'?) various terms appeared on the internet: 'polite people' and 'little green men', which not only played ironically with the situation but stylised the reality of the situation, making it lighter and more innocuous. Formulae of this kind suggest not only a naturally occurring crisis in the language (an inability to describe some new aspect of reality), but conditions in which a 'gap' or absence in the language is precisely what is demanded:

a ban on exact description of the phenomenon in the official media is combined with efforts in the new web-based propaganda to replace political and legal definitions with playful or everyday definitions.

According to one of the participants of the information war on Runet (whose remarks, regrettably, cannot be verified owing to the nature of anonymous interviews), the term 'polite people' is an outcome of a backstage work of the pro-governmental internet propagandists, rather than a spontaneous coinage (Turovskij, 2014). Be that as it may, the users were delighted to play with this formula, placing it in the form of a caption to montages and drawings: regardless of their political outlook, they have adopted the logic of indirect references and pseudo-Aesopian language in a situation where this was avoidable.

Aggression and humour

In examining postings made by young people concerning Crimea two aspects of a single socio-psychological complex are particularly apparent. These factors are linguistic aggression, which is very prevalent, and the use of humour to emphasise the power and 'positive attitude' of Russia in the conflict.

From the excessively harsh statements of propaganda appearing both on television and online in 2014, it is clear that not only is verbal aggression not seen as reprehensible, but that it is seen as a means by which to show support for the Russian side and display patriotic spirit. Wherever young users, especially teenagers, express interest in events in Ukraine, their postings incorporate without any difficulty threats, taboo language and insults addressed to faraway Americans, 'Banderites', the Ukrainian 'junta' and other 'enemies'.

Though there were no military actions in Crimea, the language of war was widely applied in the pro-governmental blogs. According to these, during wartime the Russian citizens struggle with two sorts of enemies: foreign ones and those inside Russia – hidden enemies, 'the fifth column', liberals, the pro-western media and a variety of traitors. Readers of such blogs were presented with a simple, black-and-white division between friends and enemies, a game of 'hunt the traitor'.

For example, a website named 'predatel.net' collects names and quotations of 'traitors' – public figures – who condemn the Kremlin's policy in Ukraine. Any user can 'offer up a traitor' simply by filling out a form provided on the site. However, it is not clear whether this website will eventually also be used for non-symbolic purposes. In naming traitors, users remain within the limits of a game of denunciation but this might change at any time:

> We believe that Russia must help the Ukraine, which has ended up under the rule of the pro-Fascist politicians [...] We believe that citizens of Russia

who offend our soldiers and call into question the need to fight neo-Nazis are traitors.

(Predateli, 2014)

Who does more harm [...]: a thief or a traitor? A traitor of course [...] in Russia right now, there are two types of corruptionists. The first type simply steals. Of course, we must do our best to fight them. However, thieves can't begin to do as much harm to the country as saboteurs. Saboteurs who are financed by grants from the United States are far more dangerous corruptionists [...] Journalists are openly lying, encouraging Russophobia, agents of the United States and not hiding the fact that they are dreaming of Russia's downfall.

(Fritzmorgen, 08 March 2014)

Why does it happen so, that when you need to find a traitor to the interests of our country, it will turn out to be a number of famous personalities, each one of them associated with the unsystematic opposition movement and every last one of them, moreover linked personally to Alexei Navalny?

(Krispotupchik, 21 March 2014)

It is not surprising, therefore, that the comments 'DEATH to TRAITORS!!!!! !!!!!!' appear on the social network pages of students and schoolchildren. At the same time, the discourse of war implies a boundless confidence in one owns righteousness, strength, power and victory. Very often, bloggers' texts consist of affirmations of the 'confidence and adequacy' of the Russian state and its leader. In the blogs and profiles of young users this message is converted into numerous jokes, anecdotes and pictures.

Earlier we talked about cases where young people have shown their interest in the Crimean events. More often, however, users receive information about the prescribed position on Crimea from communities devoted to 'positive vibes', good mood and humour. Such groups attract huge number of subscribers. For example, the group 'Fun it! – Select Humour' (948,081 participants) regularly posts material on this subject which is full of irony and paternalistic benevolence. The community 'Positive Youth' on the 'VKontakte' site, with 52,878 subscribers, published a joke which was reposted tens of thousands of times on Runet (a literal quote on Google search provided more than 58,000 records):

– So, Benya, what's up in Ukraine?

– Ukraine is at war with Russia.

– And so how is it going?

– Well, Ukraine has lost two million of its citizens, the Crimea peninsula, a few helicopters, a couple of dozen armored personnel carriers. Lots of

> soldiers have been killed and two large areas in the East are about to become part of Russia.
>
> – What about the Russians?
>
> – You wouldn't believe it, they haven't even turned out to fight.
>
> (V Israile, 03 June 2014)

This way of spreading ideological position is very effective in relation to the target audience under consideration. Adolescents and young people are often convinced that they are not interested in politics. But political attitudes infiltrate their daily lives in the form of witty images, songs, funny videos and jokes that users like to send to friends as an added extra to daily communication. For example, Dmitry (18 years old):

> 'Neat!')))) PS: the text isn't mine, found on the Internet. 'We are jumping we are jumping, half the country's in the shit, granny, grandad, worker, student, like a bunch of silly gits. Klichko's jumping up the wall, like a great big rubber ball.[6] Look at Petya Poroshenko and that crazy Timoshenko. Crimea's not jumping – what a shame! only Russians spoil the game. Senya Yatsenyuk is jumping too – We've all got the orange flu!-...'

Visuals and videos, or texts made in the form of pictures with commentary, demotivators or cartoons have a significant advantage over texts on social networks. Images replace arguments, and the most successful are those in which the ideological message is communicated to the viewer using a minimum of resources, so as to be immediately obvious.

Propaganda in new media

It appears that in social networks and blogs on Runet we are dealing with a new kind of propaganda work, built on the model of advertising in digital media. Propaganda as advertising is a strategy directed at 'Generation Zero', media consumers who see themselves as sophisticated people who can defend themselves against any attempts to impose information on them, unlike their parents.

Propaganda using new media tried-and-tested advertising strategies, together with new techniques, adapted to social media. Classic techniques include appeals to the emotions rather than to logic; playing on the idea of belonging to attractive groups (successful people and saviours of the Crimea). The challenge is to present an attractive image with which users would wish to associate themselves. It is no accident that the material we have studied, which promotes Russian politics in relation to Ukraine, tallies

well with the demand among young people for positivity, ebullience and humour:

> We really are a great country, and now, yet again, we have convinced the world of it. The reunification of Crimea with [Russia] represents the restoration of historical justice, the consolidation of the power of the now fully legitimate of the Black Sea Fleet and proof of the failure of the Ukrainian revolution [...] Without a single shot being fired, Putin has acquired the very important territory of the Crimea for us. Can anybody really say after this that he is not a great politician, that he is not the most powerful man in the world?
>
> (Krispotupchik, 06 March 2014)

Promotion of an ideological product, in a manner which offers solidarity around joyful and even great events, is enthusiastically received by young users of social networks. It is noteworthy that many users, while congratulating each other on the return of Crimea to Russia, embed the event not within a series of political developments, but within sporting victories which provide a similar emotion and sense of solidarity.

Alexei (16 years old):

> ...... we've won the Olympics!!!!!
>
> ...... Crimea has been returned!!!!!!!!
>
> ...... The World Ice Hockey Championship is ours!!!!!!
>
> ...... I think Russia's had a good year!!!

Also, Maksim (25 years): 'Crimea is ours, the Olympics are ours, the ice hockey world championships are ours. Putin, what are you doing? Stop it!'

As we noted above, this advertising uses new techniques: it involves the viral distribution of materials that give the sender of the message social capital among his/her followers. Users actively share material on their pages. The verbal or visual texts in question must be bright and eye-catching. Therefore, the 'polite people', and other memes associated with Crimea, have already entered this network of voluntary dissemination of ideological messages.

To conclude this discussion, we would like to use the example of viral spreading of 'Poklonskaya/NiashMiash' meme on the internet. In March 2014, after several resignations of candidates to the position, a new Prosecutor General of the Republic of Crimea was appointed. It was the 34-year-old Natalia Poklonskaya, who had abandoned her position in the Ukrainian General Prosecutor's Office because of her disagreement with the new Kiev authorities. After her first press conference, Poklonskaya became an internet

star: her appearance together with an unusual way of presenting information attracted millions of users, and many pictures figuring the brave, young and good-looking prosecutor in the anime/manga style spread across the global internet. On 16 April the Russian YouTube user Enjoykin uploaded a clip entitled 'Nyash Myash', where digitally modified fragments of the interview with Poklonskaya, combined with music, were arranged as a song with the words 'the Power... the Blood... /Niash-Miash/the Blood... the Power.../ Crimea is ours'. More than 1 million users watched this video within one day of its publication; within two months, the number of views was more than 12 million. This video has increased the popularity of 'Poklonskaya/ NiashMiash' meme. Answering an unarticulated request, some commercial companies started using this image and/or slogan. For example, the company Nival – producer of a popular Russian online game, 'Prime World' – introduced a new character based on the Poklonskaya image, Obvinjashka, a fighter with evil forces.[7]

Noticeable is the immediate commodification of the internet meme: it allows turning a set of signs endowed with ideological meanings ('Crimea is ours') into a commercial product and a quasi-neutral part of the popular culture, regardless of place and way of its consumption. Similarly, with the case of commertial advertising, the new media propaganda results not in a form of a deep belief, but in a sense of consumer's emotional connection with a product, in a brand loyalty and self-identification with an attractive fashionable brand. 'Crimea is ours' is a brand that attracts Runet users while it gives positive emotions and broadcasts a success.

Conclusion

In this chapter, our discussion has proceeded from two presumptions – about the 'emancipatory force of new media' and the 'rebellious youth that seeks to overthrow values of establishment'. However, the young Runet users' debates about the Crimea have shown that both hypotheses have not proved themselves. Though our study does not refute these assumptions in general, it demonstrates how certain political, social and cultural contexts can influence the situation, and how contextualised reality differs from researchers' expectations.

The idea of a 'patriotic youth internet' in Russia seemed unrealistic in the early 2010s, given the traditions of the Russian internet, expectations of the same and theories regarding digital media. While it is still early to talk of a fully fledged phenomenon of this sort, a number of trends over recent years give reason to suppose that it may indeed appear in the future. Though in the early 2000s many intellectuals hoped that the internet as a socio-cultural technology would serve for spreading democratic values and attitudes in Russian society, the internet has gone beyond its early 'romanticised' stage. Now, like any other medium of communication, it is actively used by the

Russian state authorities as an instrument of influence, not least on young people.

In the 2010s, the state authorities have employed all means of establishing ideological control over the Runet, from use of innovative technologies of regulation of information flows to legislative bans. This activity has led to the fact that Runet has ceased to function as an alternative media space. Moreover, a specific kind of cultural experience has emerged in the social networks: it is the experience of new media users, who benefit from social and cognitive innovations brought by digital media and at the same time who are open to perceive the state's propagandistic messages. The image of certain means of communication and the tasks entrusted to it are undergoing a process of change. Thus, our study leads into a more general question: the need to update media theory in relation to digital revolutions. Media theory cannot be static: societies keep a careful eye on its predictions and change accordingly, and theory itself must also take into account changing socio-cultural contexts.

In turn, the idea of a rebellious youth is based on the assumption that often young people define their identity and their own reality, values, ideals and heroes in opposition to those of their parents and the social environment in which they live. However, as we have seen, political and cultural contexts shape the process of young peoples' self-identification. In particular, this applies to authoritarian regimes, where concepts of power and influence are linked with the state authorities. To identify oneself with the most powerful ones is a widely spread strategy of self-identification. In contrast, a rebellion against the strongest (those who are publicly endorsed, praised and persumed to be the most successful) is a radical non-conformist way, especially when the alternative characters and scenarios (for example, political opposition, subcultures and minorities of any kind) are deliberately denigrated and marginalised in the authoritarian state's media. In this case, many young people choose to adapt themselves to 'mainstream' values (and consequently to identify themselves with their fathers' generation), and to accept dominating narratives as natural and self-evident. The Crimea case tells about the desire of the young internet users to join the majority, once it looks appealing in media.

In the 2000s, the Russian authorities attempted to bring up conformist-minded youth, whose rebellion and aggression were redirected against enemies and opponents: the USA and the European Union presumably interested in weakening Russia; their supporters – pro-western post-Soviet goverments; and the Russian 'liberals' seeking to spread the 'Orange Revolution' and destabilise the Russian state in favour of their 'western patrons'. Though in this chapter we have focused on the conformist reading of these messages and have not discussed opposional – liberal or ultra-patriotic – interpretations, the popularity of the patriotic discourse among young Runet users proves that these govermental efforts have been at least partly

successful. At the same time, it is worth noting that in many ways the discursive manifestations of 'patriotism' are superficial and comparable with the internet rhetorics and emotional behaviour of online sports gloryhunters, and fans building and maitaining solidarity against a 'hostile team'.

Another point can be made here regarding the problem of post-Soviet identity of young Runet users. The conservative patriotic enthusiasm in Russian society today indicates certain enduring attitudes of post-Soviet culture – nostalgia for the 'greatness of the nation', imperial sensibilities and the importance of negative collective identification (Gudkov, 2004). Yet how does this relate to the self-awareness of a generation which never experienced life in the Soviet Union? It is fair to assume that young users, in their discursive online practices, are replicating attitudes of 'invented transgenerational memory', which, while similar to those expressed by members of older generations, are informed by a different set of feelings and values. At the same time, the persistent efforts by the state authorities to simplify the values required for Russian society to make sense of itself have not been in vain, and are starting to be effective in new contexts, such as, for instance, social networks and blogs, spaces used by younger users to communicate with one another.

In this process, an important place belongs to adaptation of technologies of dissemination of ideological messages to digital media. Ideas designed for young users are being distributed among them from the inside, from the social networks, which users presume to be an informal and non-institutionalised space. When the voice of the state is not marked as a distinctive source of speech (as it happens, for example, on television), young users not only fail to resist, but also cannot see themselves as an object of the state propaganda. Spreading of ideological meanings in social networks relies on the model of new media advertising, that is, it constructs its addressee as a media consumer. This sort of propaganda implies a user's emotional involvement and a short-term but intense brand loyalty. Using humour, visual codes, and generating a range of feelings from 'positive' happiness to anger and negative consolidation against enemies, new media propaganda activates a mechanism of viral spread, when young Runet users themselves start broadcasting ideological messages.

Young users rely on new media, and their experience to a great extent is built on digital mediation of cultural meanings. Though the media culture is global, and though Russian teenagers consume transnational media stories and meanings, it appears that connectedness with the global digital environment does not provide emancipatory solutions per se, and does not neutralise the power of the state ideology and propaganda. Popular culture is flexible, inclusive and able to combine contradictory elements whilst obliterating the very idea of contradictions. Thus, a young Runet user can be a fan of 'World of Warcraft' or 'Games of Thrones', and selectively privilege

meanings from these texts that go together well with the superheroes and values of the Russian state ideology.

Notes

1. As seen, for example, in the polemic between 'cyberoptimists' and 'cyberpessimists' on the ability of digital media to contribute to the revolutionary transformations of political systems (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2011; Castells, 2012).
2. The 'Orange Revolution', a campaign of mass protests in 2004–2005 in Ukraine, which emerged on the basis of the presidential elections, and brought Yushchenko to power. In Russian pro-government political discourse 'Orange Revolution' has consistently been presented as the main threat to the stability of the State, originating with the West, whose goal is to weaken the post-Soviet states and subject them to the influence of the USA and the European Union.
3. 'According to persons claiming that they were the agents, paid informants "worked" in several cities of Russia. For gathering information ordinary agents received a monthly salary of 20,000 rubles, and key workers received a salary of 40,000, and the information collected was sent to the Deputy Head of the presidential administration of Russia' (ZakS, 2009).
4. This law required non-commercial organisations involved in political activities to declare themselves foreign agents if they accepted financial support from abroad.
5. A law made in 2012 in response to the death of an adopted Russian boy due to neglect by his American parents, which banned the adoption of Russian children by US citizens.
6. Vitaly Klichko is the mayor of Kiev and leader of the west-oriented liberal-democratic party UDAR.
7. A word play based on the combination of the word 'prosecutor' and 'niashka', that is, 'cute, in the anime style'.

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17

'Flashy' Pictures: Social Activist Comics and Russian Youth

José Alaniz

Launched at the 2011 KomMissia comics festival in Moscow, with support from a European Union grant,[1] the Goethe-Institut Moscow, National Center of Contemporary Art Yekaterinburg, the Center of Contemporary Art Vinzavod, the British Council and others, the social activist project 'Respect: Comics from Around the World' addressed intolerance, racism and neo-fascism in Russia through a medium its practitioners considered tailor-made to reach today's youth: comic books. The comic books produced for the project, small chapbooks with red covers, were distributed free to young people in physical form as well as online, and were designed to reach a population presumed unresponsive to traditional text-heavy formats. As explained by Khikhus:

> Why is 'Respect,' a project about respect, in the form of comics? We wanted to talk with young people and adolescents especially, because they are at risk. And, in my very considered opinion, today's youth simply don't want to take in text-based messages, since they're used to flashy visual images.[2] So a story in the form of comics, invested with some meaning, works considerably better and attracts a lot more attention than a simple and boring message about how, you know, we should respect each other – which nobody is going to read. But comics they will read.
>
> (EAN, 2011)

Khikhus added: '[C]omics is the best, most appropriate language for talking to young people' (ibid.). With an initial print run of 60,000 booklets produced by several artists (they would eventually total over 22 artists, from nine European countries), a series of workshops with the artists and public,[3] and more than a dozen presentations and exhibitions (in Moscow, St Petersburg, Voronezh, Yekaterinburg, Perm and elsewhere), Respect represented the most concerted and wide-ranging effort to make non-commercial comics relevant to Russian youth – to speak with them in their language about substantial issues of the day.

Organisers formally launched the project on 29 May 2011, during KomMissia, with a roundtable on social activism in comics which included artists, publishers and comics journalists such as Ville Hänninen (Finland), Jana Fantová (Komiksfest, Czech Republic), Bodo Birk (Erlangen Festival, Germany), Caroline Brasseur (Angoulême Festival, France) and Paul Gravett (Comica Festival, UK). In the course of exchanging views, the discussion identified 'social comics' as 'primarily educational [...] the most common in Europe. But the term can also refer to a statement about crucial political or social issues (drug addiction, xenophobia, etc.) expressed in the form of comics' (Project Respect, 2011a).

The project identified its core principles and message in a manifesto, excerpted below:

> *Our planet's population is rapidly mixing*. Individuals and whole peoples have become migrants. The cultures and nationalities mixed together by migration can never be redivided. So whether we like it or not, we have to learn to live in a world where everyone interacts with people of different cultures, religions, and traditions on a daily basis. Unfortunately, a multi-ethnic culture isn't created easily. If we don't do anything, bloody ethnic and religious conflicts will occur. This is a critical issue for Russia, as for the rest of the world.[4] Security forces think that ethnic problems can be solved with tanks. Nationalists think there is one 'right' nation, and all others must be destroyed. The concept of tolerance seems too vague to us. It looks like it's time to create a new concept. It seems to us, the founders of this project, that *Respect* is one of the key issues in this difficult question. A person who respects himself will treat other people and cultures with respect, whether it's a neighbor, a street vendor, or migrants as a worldwide phenomenon. You don't have to *love* your neighbor, but you must respect him.
>
> (Project Respect, 2011b, emphasis in original)

In the Putin era the use of graphic narrative for serious expression and critical inquiry,[5] to say nothing of oppositional politics (what Sidonie Smith calls 'crisis comics'), has been dilatory[6] – particularly in the mainstream.[7] If in other parts of the world '[r]ights advocates exploit the apparent simplicity and easy accessibility of the comic form to make rights discourse and politics legible to large and diverse audiences' as a 'mod[e] of witness to radical injury and harm' (Smith, 2011, p. 62),[8] in post-Soviet Russia such applications have proven exceedingly rare.[9]

Despite significant, even remarkable strides since the waning years of the USSR, comics in contemporary Russia remain an art form without an industry: a marginalised subcultural phenomenon, confined to a handful of festivals, sporadic publications and the internet.[10] In particular, the rarity of the indigenous graphic novel in this market (at a time when it has

become the predominant format in Europe and, more recently, America) argues against a full-fledged, mature comics culture. As noted by the journalist Natalia Babintseva, in the country's bookshops 'the ratio of foreign translations to Russian [comics] works is about 30:1 – on the most optimistic account'.[11]

Since the establishment of the first comics studios in the late Soviet era and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, unusual examples of Russian comics on serious socio-political themes have included Askold Akishin's *A Chronicle of Military Actions* (1990, unpublished);[12] *Red Blood* by writer Igor Ermakov and artist Igor Kozhevnikov (published in *Veles*, 1992–1995); the autobiographical comics of Nikolai Maslov (though published only abroad, starting in 2004);[13] and the works of Aleksei Iorsh and Viktoria Lomasko (addressed below). In general, conventional wisdom had it that Russian comics readers (a tiny subset, presumably made up of young people of the national publishing market) craved mere diversion. *Komiksisty* (Russian comics artists) aiming for themes more 'adult' than fantasy or humour have thus primarily been relegated to the relatively free space of the internet.

Before Putin's 2012 re-election to the presidency, the comics market's ideologically 'neutral' stance was seen as good business sense – though one could also read it as another manifestation of political apathy among many artists and the young. Note how Khikhus (Pavel Sukhikh), one of the most important artists, publishers and impresarios of post-Soviet Russian comics,[14] justified his lack of engagement in 2011:

> At this stage of my creative journey I try not to get involved with politics for one simple reason: I don't believe in it. It seems to me that this is a sort of insular mafia which carries on its own insular gang wars [*razborki*], and for them to deal with you on an equal footing, you have to become a part of this mafia – and I have absolutely no interest in that. Unfortunately, I've observed that a lot of people don't want to be connected to politics, because they don't see any possibility to change anything. I haven't come up with any ways [to do that] either, that's why I don't do any political stories or take on any political projects.
>
> (EAN, 2011)

For all that, it was Khikhus himself who would prove to be a driving force behind Respect,[15] an ambitious international comics project to engage Russian youth in some of the most consequential socio-political problems of the day: intolerance; xenophobia, right-wing violence and chauvinism. The moment seemed opportune for an intervention.

Russian youth extremism

As underscored by events such as the killings in Moscow's Cherkizovskiy Market on 21 August 2006,[16] anti-immigrant attacks – many of them carried

out by youths – have proliferated since the economic tumult of the 1990s and into the Putin era. Scholars have linked this sort of violence to the formation of new Russian identities after the break-up of the USSR (Dubas, 2008, p. 27), along with a host of other causes. Sociologist F. E. Sheregi's predominantly Marxist view attributes youth alienation and xenophobia to the influence of mass culture; the growing divide between rich and poor; the collapse of the education system; and a drastic fall in patriotic sentiment (though in the Putin era this seems outdated). She concludes with a troubling line: '[T]he rich soil for youth extremism is created by society itself' (Sheregi, 2005, p. 448). Whatever the reasons, xenophobia and intolerance of 'others' (variously defined) took root especially among 16–29-year-olds (Dubas, 2008, p. 30), with 15–17-year-olds the most active in the skinhead subculture (ibid., pp. 32–33).[17]

The rise in Russian youth extremism and anti-ethnic sentiment is happening, paradoxically, at a time of unprecedented openness to the outside world, facilitated by the economic reforms of the 1990s and expedited by the internet. As Mary Bucholtz explains: 'While youths' relationships to popular media are often associated with unattainable images and capitalist urgings towards consumption, media representations may also be a source of knowledge and agency' – though she warns: 'In any case, the relationship between resistance, authenticity and cultural appropriation can be extremely complex' (Bucholtz, 2002, p. 542).

As argued by Omel'chenko and Bliudina, the internet accelerated the integration of mass audiences into global-youth cultural contexts, fostering the notion of the West as 'normal' (Omel'chenko and Bliudina, 2002, p. 41) – as well as provoking a backlash.[18] Pilkington and Bliudina note, however, that often '[t]he objection voiced is not to an "alien" culture invading Russian cultural space, but the "crude" form and ideological content of the cultural products produced by the West' (Pilkington and Bliudina, 2002, p. 6). Thus, of critical importance to the successful 'formation of microgroups' is what Pilkington terms *obobshchenie* ('specific practices of communication'), which serves as:

> not only a structural precondition for the coming and being together of young people, but . . . a set of verbal and embodied practices constitutive of the group. When 'communication' breaks down, either because trust of commitment is lost, or because individuals seek new forms of communication through different styles, types of music, sports, stimulants, etc., the group is redefined and reconstituted, or disbands.
>
> (ibid., pp. 135–136)

Comic books, a communications medium readily accepted in most of the world but coolly received in post-Soviet Russia,[19] figure among the 'novel' technologies often cited at the intersection of global/local youth cultural

practice (Pilkington and Bliudina, p. 15). In addition to their aforementioned ease of use, comics reflect a post-modern moment characterised by the eradication of canons and the demolishing of borders between high and low culture (Omel'chenko and Bliudina, 2002, p. 24), making them an appealing vehicle for what Pilkington calls Russian post-*tusovka* youth's 'openness to new – global, national and local – flows of information' (ibid., p. 137).[20]

The challenge, though, remains: how to parlay a form often dismissed in Russia as (at best) 'not serious' to address topics of weighty socio-political import?[21] As John Lent explains: 'The most common use of comic art is to entertain. That function is germane to cartoons even when they are employed for serious purposes – such as propagandistic, social consciousness raising (conscientization), educational, and development' (Lent, 2008, p. 353). Nonetheless, Lent argues, 'cartoonists have attempted to shed light on situations that dehumanize people and set back society and culture' in the USA, the Philippines, India and throughout Africa (ibid., p. 360).[22] These artists have known success in these efforts, as described by Smith and Lent, in part due to what Chute calls comics' unique 'idiom of witness': 'a manner of testifying that sets a visual language in motion with and against the verbal order to embody individual and collective experience, to put contingent selves and histories into form' (Chute, 2010, p. 3).

Two decades after communism, Russian soil would seem a shaky foundation for socially activist comics. In order to succeed in its goal of engagement, any such project would need to answer some critical questions: what comics would young people both want to read and learn from? What format – physical, digital – would these comics take on, and how would they be distributed? What presumptions about Russian youth would they advance? What limits – aesthetic, political, age-appropriate – would such comics be subject to?

Comics from around the world for respect and props

As envisioned, Respect brought together artists from different countries as a reflection of the very multiculturalism it sought to promote in its booklets' young readers – bypassing the need for government action in favour of person-to-person connection (through workshops, presentations, a website, as well as its comics). As Khikhus told a reporter: '[R]espect is a social project, not a political one. We're not calling on people to vote for a particular party and we don't deal with the government; we're trying to resolve these problems between people themselves' (EAN, 2011). Or, as Respect's promotional materials put it, 'The project's mission is to speak of topical social problems and tolerance through the accessible and flashy language of drawing.'[23]

Figure 17.1 Strip from Aleksei Iorsh, *The True History of Skinheads* (2011)

By that measure, Aleksei Iorsh's *The True History of Skinheads*, one of the first ten Respect comic books, succeeds admirably. A veteran of KOM, Russia's first comics studio (founded during perestroika), Iorsh remains one of the most prolific, eclectic and provocative of *komiksisty*; in this work he provides a needed history lesson in economical, expressionistic drawings accompanied by captions. He starts by pointing out how the skinhead movement began in 1960s England among working-class youth, many of whom were black (the cover in fact depicts black and white skinheads smiling together at the reader). Only later, Iorsh shows, were some skinheads co-opted by far-right politicians, their exploits much ballyhooed and exaggerated by the press, so that '[N]ow any asshole in whatever end of the earth who's decided he's found simple answers to complex questions would know: before anything else, for toughness' sake, he's got to shave clean his noggin' (Iorsh, 2011, p. 12) (Figure 17.1).

The author completes his 14-page gem of revisionist history with a drawing of two modern-day skinheads (the tolerant, humane sort) walking peacefully through the city, as the captions intone:

> Maybe it's worth remembering about respect. About respect first and foremost for yourself. Stop being marionettes in the hands of politicians or clowns for the press. It's worth it to occupy yourself building your life on

> the basis of real values: a sense of your own personal dignity and respect towards those like you.
>
> When you start living your life, then you won't need to find some guilty party; instead, you'll seek out a way to move forward along your own path.
>
> And when I meet someone else like me, who's tossed the hatred out of his head and stay true to himself, I say to him:
>
> 'Respect, brother!'.
>
> (ibid., p. 14)

The True History of Skinheads works brilliantly as young adult non-fiction, a short piece of historically-based graphic narrative that neither talks down to its reader nor merely 'entertains' them. It instead uses the techniques of cartooning and sequential imagery to bring complexity to a topic 'everybody knows', revealing the actual three-dimensionality behind a much-caricatured subculture. Moreover, it allows a *komiksist* best known for his erotic ('Faggot'), coarse ('Shitmonster'), ardently leftist material to demonstrate a softer, more didactic tone that never slips into outright sermon. *History* represented what the Respect project could achieve at its best.

Complications

From its beginnings, Khikhus and his co-organisers' project had to contend with some realities of publishing, politics and the youth market in contemporary Russia. First and foremost: the negative connotations associated with the foreign-sounding term 'tolerance' (*tolerantnost'*),[24] which they initially considered promoting. However, as Maria Isova reported:

> In the course of work it became clear that young people don't like the word 'tolerance,' and the very concept of 'toleration' (terpenie) of other cultures practically doesn't work, so the decision was taken to put forth the idea of mutual respect. That's why the name too was broadened and now sounds like this: 'Respect: comics from different countries for respect and props (respekt i uvazhukhu)'.
>
> (Isova, 2012)

The at times convoluted moves to adapt notions of tolerance and multiculturalism into a Russian youth context – for example, the slang term '*uvazhukha*'[25] – only cast into relief the 'foreignness' of the concepts themselves. Another problem involved, broadly speaking, the limits on mainstream expression (not only in comics!) in this culture. Such was made clear in an interim report that Respect filed with the EU-Russia Cultural

Co-operation Initiatives Programme, the agency that provided more than 80 per cent of the project's funds. In addition to documenting successes and troubles in fitting the message to the target audience, the report noted:

> Another important dilemma for us in the project was the question of how free we and the artists could feel with regard to the production of these comics in terms of choice of expressions, themes and protagonists. On the one hand, the RESPECT team could not and did not want to control and limit the artists in their work (although of course the comic should fit the project). On the other hand, our goal to disseminate the outcomes of the project within a young audience in Russia in collaboration with schools, universities and other educational and state organizations required a certain compromise towards the current political situation in Russia and the use of obscene language, even though this is common in reality. First of all, the problem concerned the Russian artists – the genre of social comics is close to reality, everyday language and a critical way of thinking. The comics provided by the Russian artists were particularly about the Russia of today, with original protagonists and language. The final *solution was to very gently adjust the comics and to leave as much as possible as it was*. But for example, themes concerning the church were completely cut out.
>
> (Vostretsova, 2012; emphasis in original)[26]

We see here how carefully Respect had to tread. On the one hand: the imperative to speak painful truths about Russian society in order to engage substantively and 'honestly' with young people. On the other: the need to not chafe the sensitivities of parents, teachers and guardians of youth, many of them predisposed to view initiatives financed by – and featuring a large contingent of – foreigners as a vague threat to Russian national identity; to say nothing of not triggering Russian legal statutes against 'incitement of national, racial, or religious enmity'.[27] In practice, Respect's stance led to a degree of self-censorship by its artists that to a considerable extent compromised its mission. In at least one sobering case, it led to outright censorship.

Alim Velitov's *The Escape*, another of Respect's inaugural works, represents modern-day Moscow as a nightmarish dystopia of rampant violence and chaos. On a walk through the burning capital, its unnamed young protagonist encounters fascist rallies; Stalinists; gay-bashers; clashes between anarchists and their right-wing foes; folk singers advocating murder and suicide; even dinosaurs. Velitov, another KOM veteran, paints a surreal picture of Russia in his trademark pop-absurdist style, though its over-the-top madness is balanced by a tranquil ending: our man manages to 'knock out' all the negative energy of the insane city out of his head, as if emptying a garbage can, and sits morosely by a calm stream. 'Think for yourself', a caption instructs. 'Keep your head clean!' (Velitov, 2011, p. 15) (Figure 17.2).

Figure 17.2 Strip from Alim Velitov, *The Escape*

The story, innocuous and well-meaning enough, is perhaps most notable for a change that Velitov was compelled to make. In his original story, he depicted members of the Union of Russian Orthodox Banner-Bearers (*khorugvenostsy*), a far-right organisation loosely affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church (identifiable by their distinctive black dress and crosses) chasing after some 'faggots' on the street. At the urging of Respect editors, the artist replaced these figures with skinheads. The bowdlerisation prompts some questions: how effective can a social activist project aimed at relieving intolerance in a society be when it so resolutely avoids critiquing one of the most blatant culprits of such reactionary hate? How well are artists connecting with their young readers when they have to pull so many punches?[28]

Another of Respect's initial offerings, by an artist of the post-KOM generation, manages to walk the narrow path between offence and engagement by resorting to fable. The St Petersburg artist Roman Sokolov's *What?!* (at 34 pages among the largest stories – practically a novella) tracks the travails of an unnamed narrator who, after the total loss of his hair, falls victim to the persecution of his hirsute former friends (they want nothing more to do with a 'baldy'). Despite several attempts to hide his 'deformity', our hero is violently driven off by his hairy former soccer buddies – a pointed comment on how arbitrary differences lead to senseless conflict.

Still wearing a broom brush 'wig' on his head, the alienated young man meets a tram conductor, who tells him the parable of a circle driven to near-suicide by his inability to fit in in a country of squares. The circle strikes upon the idea of taping carton 'corners' to his body, thus fooling the squares into thinking he is one of them. But the compromises, lies and falsity of this life erode his soul; with the help of a sunflower, the circle sees the error of

his inauthentic life and consigns his 'corners' to the flames. 'That night, basically,' says a caption, 'the circle learned quite a bit about himself' (Sokolov, 2011, p. 24).

When our narrator reacts to this parable only with befuddlement (the story's title an oft-repeated motif), the tram conductor introduces him to the driver – a man with no arms and legs. There follows this exchange:

Narrator: You poor guy. How can you live like this?
Driver: How?
N: Well . . . you know . . . strange.
D: You should see how you look! (ibid., p. 28)[29]

What?!'s many fictional levels – main story, parable, repetitions of lines and situations between the two – make it an engrossing meditation on the epistemology of otherness, on how bigotry stems from ignorance and, most critically, a failure of the imagination. The moral – delivered through surreal, 'cartoony' art that resembles an animated film[30] – holds that, whether prematurely bald, a circle in a world of squares or a disabled tram driver, to thine own self be true.

All the same – despite the power of fables like *What?!* and *The Escape*, and non-fiction like *The True History of Skinheads* – the sensationalistic, often humorous treatment of themes related to racism, xenophobia and intolerance underscores the presumed limits that many of these artists placed on comics as a medium, to say nothing of their preconceptions of what young people will and will not read. Worse, for some, form overwhelms function.

Writing in 1992 on social comics devoted to HIV/AIDS, Matthew McAlister praises the medium's appealing, 'non-threatening' aspects as advantageous for reaching a mass audience. On the other hand, he cautioned that comics on HIV/AIDS might trivialise or minimise the message by turning it into a mere plot device, using dangerously imprecise language, or avoiding a fully frank discussion of the topic due to its associations with sex, morality and drug use. He goes so far as to say that comics may not be a proper vehicle for such propaganda because of their lightweight image:

> Although there are many outstanding adult-oriented comic books produced today, still the primary connotation of the comic book is that it is a medium for children [. . .] Many readers may not treat comic books seriously enough to read them or to earnestly consider their message. After all, they are 'only comic books' to many adults.
>
> (McAlister, 1992, p. 21)

While I certainly do not go so far as to advise against the use of comics for social activist ends, nonetheless it remains a truism that 20 years after

communism the Russian public continues to regard the medium with a jaundiced eye, often dismissing it as a children's diversion, as sub-literature and almost always as 'foreign'. While post-Soviet Russian young people do not share such attitudes wholeheartedly, there is no evidence that youth has embraced comics, certainly not in sufficient numbers to sustain a domestic market (as is the case in other countries). When they do turn to comics, they still expect to be entertained. Such an attitude colours the reception of comics on serious themes, predisposing the Respect artists to tailor their messages to fit preconceived notions of comics as 'silly', exciting and fun.

Social activist comics in Russia run into another problem: after decades of Socialist Realism, the view of art that tries to teach is often sceptically received – even by young people who did not grow up with Pavka Korchagin, the hero of Nikolai Ostrovski's canonic Socialist Realist novel *How the Steal Was Tempered* (Ostrovski, 1932/1934). Hence the need to disguise the 'medicine' of Respect's positive lessons about tolerance with the 'sweetener' of laughs, action, cartoonish depictions and absurd shenanigans – in a word, Khikhus's 'flashy' pictures. Such realities, together with the (self-)censorship already mentioned, cast some serious doubts on the Respect project's efficacy to make as large an impact on Russian youth as it otherwise might. (A more generous reading would see the many compromises as preconditions for a minimal penetration into a resistant cultural context.) How far Respect falls short in its stated goals of youth engagement with the real problems of Russian society, in fact, is best demonstrated through a comparison with the nascent genre of social-activist comics in the country, which I briefly examine in my conclusion.

Social activism in Russian comics

By the time of Respect's launching, the use of pictorial narrative for social activist ends had already entered a new and unprecedented phase. 'Case Studies', Pavel Shevelev's courtroom sketches from the 2005 trial of oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky,[31] and projects such as 'Drawing the Court' (Risuem Sud),[32] many of them internet-based, made such material much more prominent in Russian visual culture. The 2011 publication of *Forbidden Art* by Viktoria Lomasko and Anton Nikolaev (based in part on material which had appeared on their blog and other outlets)[33] demonstrated the viability – and in the right hands, virtuosity – of a long-form approach to such subject matter.

The text, mostly written by Nikolaev, and drawings, by Lomasko, recount the 2008–2010 trial of curator Andrei Erofeev and director Yuriy Samodurov under Article 282 for inciting religious discord in their 2006 'Forbidden Art' exhibition at Moscow's Sakharov Museum and Community Centre. The images and text cover the court proceedings (farcical enough) as well as the circus atmosphere outside the courtroom, with academics, religious zealots, protesters, performance artists and ultra-nationalists weighing in.

'Forbidden Art' fuses courtroom sketches, journalism, diary, surrealism, prose and comics for a remarkable act of reporting, witness and polemic. 'This is not just sketches [. . .] but a whole comics reportage', said Lomasko. '[It is] as it were a unique "documentary film" about the trial' (quoted in Frimmel, 2011).

Since the book's publication (and following a messy personal and professional break with Nikolaev in 2012), Lomasko emerged as the leading representative of 'graphic reportage' (*graficheskiy reportazh*), a genre re-emergent in Russia only since about 2005. A 2003 graduate of the Moscow University of Printing Arts, Lomasko sees graphic art as a cudgel for progressive oppositional politics. She uses the internet, including her 'Live Journal' blog, for socially activist causes that include curating exhibits (for example, 'Feminist Pencil') and posting her multifarious work: courtroom reportage; 'Chronicles of Resistance', covering the massive anti-Putin street protests of 2011 and 2012; and investigative journalism projects (including reporting on sex workers in Nizhny Novgorod) for leftist journals.

By the second decade of the twenty-first century, Lomasko had become the best-known Russian comics artist, with work appearing in France, Germany and other countries. Despite that notoriety, she remains committed to working with society's most marginalised groups. For example, in co-operation with the Moscow Centre for Prison Reform she volunteers to teach drawing to adolescent inmates at penal colonies in Ryazan, Mozhaisk and other provincial cities.

Such activities have made Lomasko an important figure among artists, human-rights activists and feminists, and have brought her the attention of many Russians who otherwise would not read comics (though as often as not she eschews describing her oeuvre as comics). Igor Gulin captures Lomasko's mercurial appeal and 'interstitial' poetics better than most:

> Practically all her works – drawings from political legal proceedings, housing developments of working-class migrants, penal colonies for juveniles – raise the issue of the nature of reportorial graphics. An ordinary reporter could as a rule find his way into these zones of social injustice, but the testimonial of an artist is of another sort entirely. A notebook and felt pen are less marked than a camera as the implements of a journalist; they allow one to remain within the situation, to forge complex, nearly intimate connections with the subjects. The phenomenon of Lomasko lies very much in her odd liminal footing between the worlds of activist contemporary art, the culture of socially-conscious comics and the seriously-received tradition of modern graphics.

All this makes the very sober Lomasko's work the polar opposite of Respect's 'flashy' pictures. And, indeed, she had doubts when the project's organisers asked her to join.[34] Though at first sceptical, Lomasko participated in Respect

comics workshops. However, stark differences of opinion ultimately led her to pull her contribution. As she explained:

> They invited me, as I understood it, to lend some legitimacy to their social project, since the majority of Respect's Russian participants had never before made comics on social themes, while I have a reputation as a social activist artist. What's more, at this time I was putting together a series of reports on the lives of migrants for the leftist newspaper 'What Is To Be Done?', and Respect's organizers were expecting from me some such tear-jerking sketches on the hard life of migrant laborers. However, this time I didn't want to limit myself to sketches about the horrible existence of migrants, but carry out an independent investigation – precisely because it was so horrible.
>
> (Lomasko, 2012a)

Lomasko worked with the NGO Civil Assistance, which helps refugees and migrants, in order to learn more about the topic. Much of what she discovered cast the Russian authorities and what she called the 'fascist' persecutors of Civil Assistance in a bad light. Once she submitted her work to Respect, the organisers demanded changes:

> [They] told me that they really liked my reportage, but I had to take out all the parts that were even minimally critical of the government. And they found that kind of criticism in every paragraph. In short, I would have had to change it all. I would have had to show only how bad it is for migrants, but not speak at all about the reasons why it's so bad.
>
> (ibid.)[35]

She refused, and the matter ended there – with no booklet.

Lomasko and Respect's dealings with each other – and the latter's ultimate failure to publish her work under its aegis – made plain the limits of Respect's model to combine a 'flashy' presentation with weighty subject matter and produce, as Khikhus insisted, serious comics that young people would actually want to read (a tall order under the best of circumstances). Given the very slide into xenophobia and chauvinism in Russia with which it sought to contend, as well as many readers' enduring reflexive disdain for the format, Respect's mission was always going to be a difficult one; its self-imposed constraints (whether necessary or not to get the project airborne) only made it harder. For some young people the booklets did not go far enough, for others even their mild approach went too far, while for still others the format itself was beneath contempt. As Lomasko opined: 'It's hard to criticize Respect, which even with its censored comics met up with some harsh censorship in trying to distribute its booklets in schools, institutes and kindergartens' (Lomasko, 2012b).

In closing, I would like to point out an alternative youth-friendly model of social activist comics production already extant in Russia – one with no need for a European Union grant, nor Lomasko's extraordinary drivenness, and with a lot fewer compromises. The Izhevsk artist Tatyana Faskhutdinova's 21-page 'Unknown Stories from the Life of Lyonya Rodin', a highlight of the first 'Feminist Pencil' exhibit in 2012, is both more modest in its aims than much of Lomasko's work, as well as in some ways more accessible to younger readers – first and foremost because of its unflinching honesty.

The titular Rodin, a 24-year-old friend of Faskhutdinova, is an invalid who uses a wheelchair – in a city which, like all cities in Russia, makes a woefully unwelcoming environment for the disabled. But Rodin must deal with more than broken lifts, inaccessible trams, hard-to-navigate sidewalks and the threat of homelessness. The prejudice, ignorance and gawking stares of ordinary citizens take if anything a greater toll on his psyche. In one drawing, a 'hysterical' landlady stares aghast at Rodin, who has come to inquire about renting an apartment. 'Aah! It talks, too!' she exclaims. 'People often take me for an extraterrestrial', Rodin's wry commentary declares.

For all that, the young man manages to live a fulfilling life on his terms – no thanks to his social and physical surroundings – as a DJ and in-demand tattoo artist. Faskhutdinova presents Rodin's life in a series of expressionist images that blend photorealism with the hand-made aesthetic of woodcuts for an effect both intimate and disorienting. The final panel depicts Rodin, in an upside-down portrait, contemplating his future in an accompanying monologue.

'Unknown Stories from the Life of Lyonya Rodin' renders a dignified vision of its subject, without shying from a critique of the social conditions – endemic to ableist Russian culture – which needlessly complicate his everyday existence. Faskhutdinova celebrates an unusual life, but she also points fingers where they need to be pointed. Moreover, she respects her subject enough to work closely with him to produce what is in essence a co-authored mini-autobiography (the two in fact share the byline). Unfettered work like this has no 'flashy' pictures – and no need of them.

In addition to the important tasks of exhibiting, teaching and promoting comics for social aims, the Respect project might have better mobilised its resources towards work like Faskhutdinova's, produced collaboratively with real subjects, rather than seeking to entertain an imagined demographic for fear of getting 'too political'.

After all, as a sign held by a young man in one of Lomasko's street rally drawings announces: 'Politics is how you live, not how you vote'.

Notes

1. The project received the support of the EU-Russia Cultural Co-operation Initiatives Programme, to the tune of €260,000.

2. 'Privykla k iarkim vizual'nym obrazam' (EAN).
3. The first workshop's participants included artists Igor Baranko (Ukraine); José Antonio Bernal (Spain); Alexander Gellner, Gerhard Seyfried and Ziska Riemann (Germany); William Goldsmith (UK); Erdil Yaşaroğlu (Turkey); Alim Velitov, Roman Sokolov and Aleksei Iorsh (Russia). Human-rights activists, including from organisations such as SOVA, the Sakharov Centre and Youth Human Rights Movement, also took part.
4. Khikhus, in characteristically colourful language, put it rather differently to another reporter: 'Contemporary culture is like stuffing, which you can't divide back up into ham, beef and mutton – it's impossible. That means that, like it or not, we have to learn to live in a world where every day we will run into people of another culture, religion or tradition' (Rokossovskaia, 2011).
5. Hillary Chute defines graphic narrative as 'a book-length work composed in the medium of comics' (2010, p. 3).
6. In contrast, *Russian Notebooks: The Forgotten War in the Caucasus* (Quaderni russi: La guerra dimenticata del Caucaso) by the Italian comics artist Igort (Igor Tuveri), saw release in Western Europe in 2011. Needless to say, this documentary graphic narrative – based on two years that the author spent in Ukraine and Russia, working with human-rights groups including Amnesty International, Memorial and the Friends of Anna Politkovskaya to depict Russian atrocities against civilians in the Chechen conflict; inadequate health care for war veterans; and the atmosphere of lawlessness that led to the murder of Politkovskaya in 2006 – did not appear on Russian bookshelves. Nor likely would it any time soon. The release followed that of a companion volume, *Ukrainian Notebooks* (Quaderni Ucraini, 2010), based on the same research trip and dealing with the harrowing subject of the 1930s Ukrainian famine, the Holodomor. Igort pointedly mentioned at the 2012 Komiksfest in Prague, which I attended, that a group of Russian émigrés excoriated him at a public presentation of *Russian Notebooks* in Paris. The protesters in particular seemed incensed at the book's format: comics. Igort has pledged not to return to Russia as long as Putin remains in office.
7. See Alaniz (2010), ch. 4, for a discussion of the term 'mainstream' in Russian comics, which have no developed national industry. As colourfully described by *komiksist* Aleksei Iorsh: 'We can't speak about a mainstream here, because there's not even a stream' (Kunin, 2012).
8. Among the examples Smith cites: the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Health Organization (WHO) comics on AIDS; NGOs' use of comics for education and prison reform; government application of the form for human-rights propaganda, anti-war agitation and to combat sex-trafficking (Smith, 2011, p. 63). She does, however, put forth a post-colonial critique of some of the models employed (see Lent, 2008).
9. The situation has meant that for the first two decades after communism, most non-fiction and/or social-activist comics devoted to the former Soviet region were produced by foreigners, for example the French artist Chantal Montellier's *Tchernobyl Mon Amour* (2006) and the Maltese-American Joe Sacco's 'Chechen War, Chechen Women' (2009) on refugees in Ingushetia, first published in the Amnesty International anthology *I Live Here*. See the conclusion of Alaniz (2010) for more on the relative paucity of 'serious' subject matter in post-Soviet Russian comics.
10. For a fuller picture of the post-Soviet Russian comics scene and its travails, see Alaniz (2010), especially ch. 4.

11. Among the significant Russian translations of foreign works in the last decade: Alan Moore/Dave Gibbons *Watchmen* (Amfora, 2009), Charles Burns's *Black Hole* (Fabrika Komiksov, 2010), David B.'s *Epileptic* (L'Ascension du Haut Mal, Boomkniga, 2011) and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (Boomkniga, 2013). See Prorokov (2011) for an overview of komiks publishing in Russia.
12. See Alaniz (2011).
13. See Alaniz (2010), ch. 7.
14. Khikhus co-founded the first comics festival in Russia, the Moscow-based KomMissia, in 2002 and served as director of the comics studio People of the Dead Fish. Mass media figured his dreadlocked, 'hip' personage as the face of contemporary comics; see Alaniz (2010), pp. 114–115.
15. Along with Khikhus, the project's co-founders were Nastya Galashina, Wolf Iro, Anna Voronkova and Olga Vostretsova.
16. A bomb planted by the ultra-nationalist organisation 'Spas' killed 14 and injured dozens (see Dubas, 2008, pp. 28, 31).
17. Dubas (2008) notes that in the wake of the second Chechen War launched in 1999, Roma and Chechens provoke the strongest anti-ethnic reactions among the young (p. 31); Zeimer (2011) investigates the 'everyday racism' directed against minority youth and violence against Armenians in Krasnodar (p. 238); Nikolayenko (2007) reports on youth political activism in Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia; while Varga (2008) tracks the number of people killed and injured by far-right militancy (p. 561) and delves into the 'skinhead industry' in Russia (p. 565).
18. See Pilkington and Bliudina (2002) for more on the 'contemporary global interaction [...] conducted primarily through the media of Western popular culture and business communication' (p. 1). As they argue, youth are the most open to the consumption of popular culture (p. 14) and a concomitant organisation of a 'youth global culture'.
19. See Alaniz (2010), chs. 4 and 5 for some of the reasons for this chilly reception.
20. Pilkington compares Russian young people's *tusovki* to Japanese otaku or anime fans (2002, pp. 137–138) – fittingly, as some to this day dismiss the Russian comics commnunity as a 'mere' *tusovka*.
21. Russians' dismissive attitudes to comics, at least in the Soviet era, did not extend to animated film, which included 'serious' works such as those of Yurii Norstein. Single-panel cartoons and caricature also for the most part developed along a diffferent path. See Alaniz (2010), ch. 2.
22. See, for example, the site of World Comics, a highly-regarded Finnish NGO that uses comics for social causes, at http://www.worldcomics.fi/
23. This language appears in many announcements to Respect events and promotions. See, for example: http://loftprojectetagi.ru/events/respect/
24. Even among Respect's founders, the term rankled. As Khikus said in an interview: 'Tolerance is a really strange thing. The idea that you have to accept everything just as it is for me and for the other organisers of our project seemed kind of dim (*tumannoj*). I myself, maybe, am not very tolerant, since some things I like and some things I don't like, and I don't get why I should accept them. This is why we decided to propose to the comic artists that they find some other idea' (EAN). The artist Viktoria Lomasko also reacted negatively: 'At first I thought [Respect] was about tolerance, that's why I absolutely didn't like it' (Bashkirtseva, 2011).
25. The term *uvazhukha* may grate on non-adolescent ears, recalling similar-sounding negatively charged words such as 'pornukha' and 'chernukha'.

26. The report also documented a great demand for Respect booklets in the provinces, for which the initial print run came up drastically short.
27. See Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code, on 'Incitement of National, Racial, or Religious Enmity' (http://russian-criminal-code.com/PartII/SectionX/Chapter29.html).
28. A Respect story by the Finnish artist Tiitu Takalo, on a homoerotic theme, was also censored (Lomasko, 2012b).
29. The circle and the sunflower in the fable exchange practically the same lines when they first meet (Sokolov, 2011, p. 20), part of Sokolov's strategy to blur the boundaries between fictional 'layers'.
30. Sokolov is a well-known animator who has directed episodes of the series *GoGoRiki*.
31. See Alaniz (2010, pp. 216–217).
32. A competition in which contestants submit courtroom sketches from politically and socially significant trials in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. See http://risuemsud.ru/en/about/. Lomasko served as a curator.
33. See, for example http://bg.ru/society/ostorozhno_sud-8532/
34. She described to me her misgivings:

    > I immediately criticised the project for their intention to distribute the same booklets in schools and in institutes. Maybe children need stories about fish, hedgehogs and little rabbits who don't respect each other, but for adolescents, and even more so for young people it would have been good to show real conflicts and the reasons for them.

    But Respect didn't have any such works at all (Lomasko, 2012a).
35. Lomasko put it a bit more acerbically in her own article on the experience of working with Respect:

    > When my graphic reportage was almost ready, it became clear that the project's sponsors were not about to pay for its publication because of censorship. While other project participants' comics had had discreet sections censored [...] in my case it would have been necessary to cut just about everything out: the parts on Russian laws and the courts; on the killings of human-rights activists; on political refugees; on the fate of Stasya Denisova – leaving only the tear-filled stories about the hard lot of refugees and migrants. I refused to change a thing. (2012b)

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18
Youth in the Post-Soviet Space: Is the Central Asian Case Really So Different?

Stefan B. Kirmse

Most investigations of post-Soviet youth concentrate on specific countries, periods of time and groups of youth. This is understandable not only because researchers tend to have limited time and resources for completing fieldwork at their disposal but also because much research on young people in the post-Soviet space is carried out by social anthropologists and area specialists, who both tend to emphasise the specificity of their regions and respondents. Indeed, case studies are important and necessary because the trajectories of youth are specific to particular times, places, and social and cultural contexts. Some may consider the very term 'post-Soviet youth' to be an unacceptable essentialisation since it lumps together too many people whose lives have developed in very different ways. Significantly, there may also be political resistance against comparisons within the former Eastern bloc. Which countries do you choose to compare and on what grounds? To some, comparability may sound too much like similarity and, since many states now seek to distance themselves from their socialist pasts, suggestions of similarity are unwelcome. Scholars and policy-makers from Central Asia and parts of the Caucasus, for example, now often prefer to discuss their regions as part of a wider Islamic world, whereas the Baltic and other new Eastern European states emphasise their European identity and seek to avoid juxtaposition to anything Soviet or post-Soviet.

However, despite considerable differences and diversity, in many respects young people's experiences have also been remarkably similar across the former Soviet Union. The aim of this chapter is therefore to offer a more nuanced discussion that acknowledges the similarities as much as the differences. After a short discussion of young people's everyday lives in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan, where I conducted most of my field research, the chapter zooms out, taking a broader look at key developments affecting youth across the globe. While charting the specificity of young people in

Osh and the Central Asian region, it highlights important commonalities across the former Soviet Union and beyond. The basic line of argument is that while there are substantial differences in the ways that local youth experience globalisation within Central Asia and across the post-Soviet space, many of these are in degree, rather than in kind.

To begin with, we need to remind ourselves that youth is much more than a specific age cohort, say the 14–21-year-olds. Definitions of this age cohort differ considerably (Ansell, 2005, pp. 1–7). More importantly, biological and legal definitions of youth are insufficient to capture young people's widely diverging experiences. Youth is a social construct that is not only understood and experienced differently in different regional and cultural contexts, but also subject to constant change. Ideas of youth have changed across different historical periods; they differ across the globe, and they are shaped by factors such as ethnicity, religion, socio-economic conditions and gender (Levi and Schmitt, 1997, pp. 9–20). To scholars who work in cultural studies, sociology and social anthropology, the idea that youth is experienced and reproduced differently in different contexts may now seem almost trivial. Yet, it is a relatively recent academic insight. For many years, studies clung to an ideal image of youth, an image that was basically white, male, western, middle-class and heterosexual (Ariès, 1962). It was only thanks to feminist, post-modern and post-colonialist critiques that we are now aware of the fact that this image ignored the majority of young people (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Griffin, 1985; McRobbie, 1993). Since then, a comparative, cross-cultural analysis of youth has emerged (Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995; Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Brown et al., 2002; Hansen et al., 2008). Increasingly, this analysis is taking the post-Soviet space into consideration (Blum, 2007; Roberts, 2008; Kirmse, 2011b).

Drawing on my work on youth and globalisation, I look at two dimensions of the concept of youth in this chapter. First I address youth as a life stage, as a particular phase that precedes entry into the professional world and the foundation of a family. This is the way in which sociology and social psychology tend to use the concept. Understood in this sense, youth can both expand and contract: a state's decision to extend compulsory schooling, or increasing peer group interaction, mobility and media use, can contribute to an expansion of youth. On a more basic level, such developments can encourage people to think that youth is indeed a distinct life stage (a perception that has emerged in much of the Middle East, for instance, only since the 1950s) (Davis and Davis, 1989, pp. 42–64; Fernea, 1995, pp. 3–13; Booth, 2002, pp. 210–213). At the same time, there are shortcuts to adulthood. Labour migration, for example – or, more dramatically, war – can force young people out of the sheltered environments inhabited and monitored by families and friends.

Second, the chapter explores youth as an everyday experience. Social anthropology, in particular, is increasingly discussing youth as the

'here-and-now of young people's experiences', because young people's lives differ enormously not only from place to place but also within the same cultural context (consider, for example, the different trajectories of first-born and second-born children) (Hansen et al., 2008, p. 8). Sociologists of youth working in western countries have also cast doubt on the idea of youth as a life stage, pointing to the prolongation, complication and individualisation of youth biographies in recent decades. While many of these sociologists now view the 'transition' from childhood to adulthood as an open-ended, self-reflexive process based upon individual choice, they concede that the ability to choose a biography is distributed unequally across the globe; young people continue to act within structures that they did not create themselves (Chisholm and Bois-Reymond, 1993; Beck et al., 1994; Roberts, 2008, pp. 72–95, 202–204).

Since the late 1980s, young people's lives across the former Soviet Union have changed massively. One of the most striking developments in this context is globalisation in all its facets (Pilkington et al., 2002; Bloom, 2007). As my ethnographic study of youth in Osh documents, the expectations, life options and self-identifications of the young generation are now shaped by a plethora of transnational connections, images and actors (Kirmse, 2013). This is, of course, equally true of young people elsewhere in the region, the post-socialist space as a whole, and beyond, and so in what follows, I attempt to map out some of the commonalities and differences in greater detail.

Introducing Osh

Osh is the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan, located in the southern part of the country, and promoted by the authorities as the 'southern capital' (*iuzhnaia stolitsa*). The city nestles in the foothills of the Ferghana Valley, a territory now shared by the independent states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Starr, 2011). It lies directly on the border with Uzbekistan, which facilitates transnational economic, cultural and demographic flows (even if the Uzbek government occasionally closes the border). According to different estimates, between 300,000 and 400,000 people live in the city. For most of the post-Soviet period, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks each made up about 40 per cent of the population, with Uighurs, Tajiks, Tatars and Russians accounting for most of the rest. While there are few reliable data on the demographic development since 2010, observations on the ground suggest that the number of Uzbeks has dwindled as a result of out-migration.

The entire Ferghana Valley is shaped by low incomes, social inequality and various forms of Islamic activism, which account for some of the region's specificity. In addition, it has witnessed a number of political and interethnic conflicts since the late Soviet period. Mass protests that began in and around Osh in the spring of 2005 ultimately led to the overthrow of the president in Kyrgyzstan, shortly before hundreds of demonstrators were killed by

Uzbek security forces in the neighbouring city of Andijan/Uzbekistan. Mass violence in Osh in June 2010, which resulted from yet another governmental crisis in Kyrgyzstan, represents the culmination of local instability and ongoing power struggles thus far.

When you look at these characteristics, you cannot help concluding that Osh is a rather special place. And yet, after I spent a year participating in the lives of local youth (mainly in 2004 and 2005), joining them in their homes, in the street, at the school or university, during various leisure activities, and in religious and civil society gatherings, I also realised that Osh was not only a city with a high potential for violence – it was also an incredibly vibrant and young city in which everyday life was not only about conflict and crime, but also about new hopes and opportunities. This is, admittedly, a story that, despite local idiosyncrasies, could be told across Central Asia and beyond, and so this opening observation already suggests that young people in the alleged powder-keg Ferghana Valley have far more in common with young people elsewhere than we might think (Lubin and Rubin, 1999; Rumer, 2002).

New opportunities abounded in the lives of university students, in particular. These were not an exotic, privileged minority in Osh. On the contrary, they formed a very large and diverse group. What did the lives of these students look like?

Everyday life in the city

Perhaps the most common and striking everyday activity was *guliat'*. This verb can refer to a whole range of activities, but usually it means to 'go out', 'go for a walk' and stay out with your friends, without necessarily consuming alcohol (Pilkington, 1996, p. 211; Pilkington, 2002, pp. 151–152). Every day you would see large numbers of young people in Osh, perching on benches in parks or yards, or walking in groups down the leafy avenues. When asked what they were doing, they would usually answer 'guliaem' ('we're taking a walk', 'we're chillin').

In order to understand why *guliat'* has become such a popular activity, we need to consider the broader socio-economic context. In large measure, roaming the streets is a response to post-Soviet economic developments and, by extension, changing familial expectations. In the early 1990s, the government of newly independent Kyrgyzstan passed far-reaching market reforms. Kyrgyzstan was the first (and perhaps the only) Central Asian state that embraced IMF-sponsored economic liberalisation with real enthusiasm. As in many other former socialist republics, privatisation and price liberalisation, however, also led to hyperinflation, massive labour retrenchment and a declining social security system. By 1995, the industrial sector's output had plummeted to less than one-third of its value in 1990 (Zhukov, 2000, p. 58). Those who retained their positions in the public sector no longer

earned enough to feed their families. How did ordinary people cope with this situation?

Families had to develop new livelihood strategies. Many turned to agriculture (Mikhalev and Heinrich, 1999, p. 11; Kirmse, 2013, pp. 51–54).[1] Others focused on household-based production, which turned them into highly cohesive, income-pooling units (Howell, 1996; Falkingham et al., 1997; Kuehnast, 1998). In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan similar developments occurred, even if economic reforms were more gradual here (Kandiyoti, 1998; Nazpary, 2002; Werner, 2004; Harris, 2006). As Nazpary observed in Kazakhstan at the time, 'what was once called society has disintegrated into a set of networks' (Nazpary, 2002, p. 179). For older children and youth, in particular, a new need to help out at home or in the family business emerged. The decision not to contribute to the family income became unacceptable (Rigi, 2003, pp. 42–44). Without a doubt, young people in Osh met and stayed out with their friends partly to avoid the increased work obligations (Kirmse, 2013, p. 67).

However, *guliat'* was also important for other reasons. Under the new economic conditions, the importance of and dependence on networks grew markedly. The need to display 'virtuous' behaviour in public increased as young people wanted to be considered worthy of financial support. Such support became crucial not only because of the general economic slump, but also because the deepening of globalisation and capitalist market conditions facilitated labour migration and increased the appeal of ostentatious life-cycle events. Permanent and temporary migration for work has become the central livelihood strategy for young people in southern Kyrgyzstan, while weddings and other life-cycle events are more important than ever as status symbols. Given the need to display 'correct' behaviour, young people's homes and neighbourhoods are now subject to constant surveillance and control by family and neighbours. The central avenues and parks of the city, by contrast, offer anonymous spaces and a respite from family control, spaces where young people can engage in activities that are frowned upon in their neighbourhood, such as the consumption of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks, or meetings in mixed-sex groups. The current appeal of *guliat'* must therefore also be seen against the background of increased and closely monitored familial expectations.

The ways in which young people made use of public space differed considerably by gender. These differences reflected several post-Soviet developments, some of which can be found all over the post-socialist space. Among these, a massive increase in conservative gender ideologies stands out (Watson, 1993; Attwood, 1996; Stephan, 2011). These ideologies do not only affect high politics but also people's everyday expectations. As religious and nationalist voices are among the loudest in the current debate on 'correct' behaviour, they exert an important influence on the ways in which families and neighbourhoods judge young people's actions. The public

display of morally sound behaviour has become social capital (Omel'chenko and Sabirova, 2003, pp. 197, 207). Put differently, the costs for violating the new code of behaviour have increased enormously.

In Osh, the public display of virtuous behaviour proved to be extremely important (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 168–193). In the case of girls, virginity, domestic work and obedience to parents and older kin and neighbours were considered crucial. Spending too much time in the streets and parks tarnished a girl's reputation. That said, some developments specific to the case of Kyrgyzstan highlight that parental worries about their daughter's absences were not unfounded: these include disproportionately high crime rates and the resurgence of 'bride kidnapping', which is now praised as 'traditional' among Kyrgyz politicians and elders after it was temporarily forbidden and prosecuted under Soviet rule (Handrahan, 2004; Kleinbach et al., 2005).[2] Admittedly, the intensity of social control is not necessarily higher in Osh than elsewhere in Central Asia. The crux was usually how far young people were away from their close kin: students from other towns in Kyrgyzstan and from neighbouring countries, for example, often felt less constrained than their classmates whose families were based in Osh.

Everyday life and cultural globalisation

One of the findings of my study was that globalisation in its various manifestations gives shape to young people's everyday lives in Osh. This is important insofar as studies of everyday life in Central Asia have largely ignored the global dimension (Sahadeo and Zanca, 2007). Admittedly, transregional exchange has always been a distinctive feature of life along the Silk Road. Yet, the exchange of goods, money, media, organisations and people, brought about by the opening up of Kyrgyzstan (and some other former Soviet republics) in the 1990s, has reached an unprecedented scale.

Local youth now consume, reproduce and adapt globally circulating media, identities and gender-specific forms of behaviour. They do so in new commercial institutions including nightclubs, internet cafés and martial-arts centres; in transnationally operating religious circles and movements; and in organisations and institutions funded by international donors that focus on human rights, drug abuse or health and sexuality (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 220–232). As a centre of international work and funding in the fields of democracy-assistance and conflict prevention, the city of Osh displays an unusually high density of international organisations and donor-supported clubs and initiatives that either deliberately or unwittingly offer young people meeting space and activities (Kirmse, 2009).

Taken together, these 'sites' of globalisation constitute a 'marketplace for styles and identities' where young people simultaneously play on different cultural registers (Kirmse, 2010). This new global interconnectedness is not a one-way street, however, 'from the West to the rest', since young people

actively participate in the exchange. In Osh, in 2005 – when I conducted most of my fieldwork – they used the internet for fundraising and to prepare for labour migration. They produced Russian-language hip hop in order to market and sell it elsewhere in the post-Soviet space, and they used the meetings and premises offered by donor-funded institutions to play sports, have parties and simply spend time with each other far away from parental control. Crucially, however, as in many other parts of the world, experiences of globalisation were shaped by local conditions. It is a process I call 'nested globalisation': local experiences of globalisation are locally 'nested' insofar as they are heavily constrained at the macro and micro levels. They are shaped not only by local, regional and state regulations, but also by the aforementioned new communal expectations (Kirmse, 2011a).

Locally circulating goods and ideas were often related to globalised Islam, or they were references to the language and images of Hollywood or Bollywood productions, Turkish pop music and Russian youth cultures. These were often adaptations of media images from the globalising world themselves. Russian-speaking media, in particular, often served as a filter for images, texts and role models; music tended to reach Kyrgyzstan after it had been adapted and translated by markets in Russia or Ukraine (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 158–163), and so it was mainly Russian-speaking rappers like Seryoga that blared out of the speakers at clubs, cafés and student parties.

Despite these globalising youth cultures, local feelings of belonging played a central role in Osh. Young people did not discard their ethnic identities by listening to Russian-speaking rap, going to a martial-arts studio or surfing the internet. Soviet nationality policy had institutionalised ethnicity at individual and group levels and thus created and perpetuated ethnic fault lines (Zaslavsky, 1993; Slezkine, 1994). The violent ethno-political conflicts of 1990 (Tishkov, 1995, pp. 133–149) had left such deep wounds that ethnic stereotypes still abounded in 2005. Kyrgyz students repeatedly made fun of the country's multi-ethnic concept (Kyrgyzstan – *nash obshchii dom* ['Kyrgyzstan – our common home']) and presented local Uzbeks as profit-oriented and cunning, the 'Jews of Central Asia', as one student put it in rather anti-Semitic terms. Young Uzbeks, for their part, made jokes about the patchy religious knowledge of the Kyrgyz and branded them as simple, aggressive and without individuality (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 196–199).

What is more, Uzbek youth in Osh often expressed a feeling of disadvantage and direct or indirect discrimination – be it with regard to job prospects or treatment by state authorities. At the same time, most students had concentric groups of friends – namely, a group of best friends, the *kompaniia* of the yard or school and, thirdly, a more fluid group of acquaintances who joined them for *guliat'*. While best-friend relationships tended to be mono-ethnic, there was a lot of interethnic mixing in the other groups (ibid., pp. 202–203). Ethnic divides have certainly increased since the violence of

2010; for most of the earlier post-Soviet period, however, such divides were porous, at least among the student population.

Experiences of youth: Towards global convergence?

The discussion of young people's daily lives in Osh has helped to illustrate that experiences of youth differ by gender, socio-economic and ethnic background. Other factors, including rural or urban origin, education, age (for 'youth' is a broad category) and sexuality did not receive much attention in the analysis, but are equally important. All of these factors can make young people experience youth as a life stage in very specific ways. Let us take the example of socio-economic background. More young Central Asians than ever are now in full-time education, thus extending their adolescence (seen here as a period of continued economic dependence and limited social responsibility) right into their mid-twenties. At the same time, market conditions and mass impoverishment have led to a considerable increase in child and youth labour, especially (but not exclusively) among low-income families. For these young people, youth as a life stage, if anything, has contracted.

Gender is an equally crucial category. Boys and young men in Osh were in an ambiguous position. Given the difficult economic conditions and lack of job prospects, they were often not pushed to get married and find a family at a young age; instead, they were expected to either complete their studies and thus improve their career prospects, or engage in labour migration to accumulate capital. The degree to which they remained economically dependent and under the control of relatives therefore varied considerably. Whereas some enrolled at an institution of higher education and spent much time with peers, others went abroad and entered the adult world to earn money (on their own initiative or, more commonly, under the supervision of relatives and friends).

For girls, choice was more restricted. While labour migration among young women is significant in some parts of northern Kyrgyzstan (Ilibezova, 2008, p. 299), it is much rarer in the south. Concerned with matters of reputation, many southern families sought to restrict their daughters' leisure activities, peer group encounters, and opportunities for work and education (on the same phenomenon in Tajikistan, see Harris, 2006, pp. 63–102). A large percentage of those who entered third-level education in Osh were married off during their degrees, moved in with their husband's parents, and took on domestic chores, rather than finish their education. In rural locations, girls ended their 'youth' even earlier. In some villages of the district surrounding Osh, underage marriage had become such a common phenomenon that local authorities and international donors ran joint programmes to raise awareness of the difficulties associated with it (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 119–120). Girls from privileged backgrounds had more choice, and young (usually

Kyrgyz) businesswomen were a small, but notable group in Osh. Factors such as ethnicity, gender and economic background thus intersected and influenced each other in complex ways.

That experiences of youth are shaped by these factors is, of course, not specific to Osh. Structural conditions and their local interpretations give shape to human choice all over the world, but they can differ substantially. In some contexts, structural conditions such as communal expectations have weakened. The costs of defying them are not the same everywhere. The ways in which conditions are distributed within and between societies also have an impact on young people's options and expectations: where societies are highly polarised, social origin and family income have a more divisive effect on youth than in relatively equal ones. However, most importantly perhaps, different experiences of youth are closely linked to culturally situated meanings, for similar class, family, gender and other structures can have very different implications.

What is special about Central Asian youth then? In fact, do categories such as 'Central Asian' or 'post-Soviet' offer any analytical benefits? The answer is yes and no. Social anthropologists, in particular, point to the gradations and differences glossed over by broad generalisations and draw our attention to the fact that qualities often attributed to youth – for example, a turn towards westernised youth culture and an ongoing battle for autonomy – reflect rather parochial, Eurocentric views of young people that are rarely backed up by data from other parts of the world (Brown and Larson, 2002, pp. 1–3). They agree that there are comparable themes in young people's lives around the globe but argue that youth is best explored in terms of kaleidoscopic variations since commonalities are always adapted to the needs of particular societies and given different meaning in distinctive cultural systems.

Undoubtedly, the local interpretation of global developments in young people's lives is crucial. Despite all the 'kaleidoscopic variations', however, analysts have identified trends specific to wider regions, such as Central Asia or the post-socialist space as a whole, and to individual countries within these regions. Sociologists, moreover, have begun to examine even broader developments affecting youth across the globe. In what follows, I discuss these observations about different categories of youth while relating them to my own findings about Osh. As it turns out, many of the processes experienced by youth in this southern Kyrgyzstani city are variations of broader developments.

In recent years, elements of a global convergence of young people's experiences have been identified. Since the late 1980s, many countries, including highly industrialised ones in Europe and North America, have turned into 'risk societies' (Beck, 1986; Giddens, 1991). Experiences of relative social, political, legal and economic stability, common in young people's lives from the 1950s to the mid-1980s, have given way to high levels of uncertainty. As young people grow up with increased risks of losing their career, family

and security, and are forced to rely more than ever on their families as a source of income, they no longer complete a swift transition from childhood to adulthood. The same sociological research points out that an extended period of youth, and life in a risk society in general, do not only have drawbacks. Some people perceive greater personal control over their lives as a benefit. Either way, risks vary by country, social position and other factors. Class and family ties, for example, have disintegrated in some countries more than in others.

Family relationships represent one area of young people's lives that show relatively little global convergence, except for the fact that family forms have diversified across the globe, now including more divorced families, single-parent families, remarried families, multi-residence families and, in some places, lesbian and gay families (Brown and Larson, 2002, p. 7). Both broader comparative studies and more specific works on youth in different parts of Asia and Africa also agree that the nuclear family has become the normal residential unit (Davis and Davis, 1989, p. 67; Schade-Poulsen, 1995, p. 82; Ansell, 2005, p. 75; Roberts, 2008, p. 201). Substantial inter-country and intra-country differences emerge, however: for example, when young people leave the parental home, which roles they play within the family, and whether it is acceptable for them to engage in premarital sex and mixed-sex cohabitation.

In education, employment and public activism, the trend towards global convergence is striking. Underemployment has become the norm for youth around the world, with very few exceptions: young people tend to work on a non-permanent, less than full-time basis and do not receive adult salaries; they also usually accept jobs beneath the level for which they are qualified.[3] Youth underemployment, common among youth in the global South for a long time, has now also become widespread in the European Union. Even in the most prosperous societies, the transition from secondary or higher education to paid employment has become rocky and uncertain. Since the mid-1990s, many educated young people have been forced to complete a seemingly endless series of unpaid internships that, perhaps, at some future point could lead to salaried employment. In Germany, the age cohort affected by this phenomenon is now commonly referred to as *Generation Praktikum* ('generation internship').[4] Admittedly, in comparison with Eastern Europe and the wider world, youth unemployment in Germany, Britain and the Scandinavian countries remains low, but these countries are the exception in what is otherwise a global trend towards greater risk and uncertainty in the lives of youth.

That young people are encountering more similarities than perhaps ever before is also visible in the global expansion of education (leading to a greater supply of skilled workers competing for a diminishing number of good jobs), disengagement from politics, and converging leisure activities (that admittedly always retain a local flavour) (Roberts, 2008, pp. 196–211).

Shared experiences of globalisation are equally striking, and the Central Asian case illustrates quite nicely why these tend to be understudied. As I indicated in the previous section, the city of Osh proved to be full of vibrant youth cultures. When I discussed this with local respondents, many of them found it rather obvious and wondered why anyone would assume the opposite. Yet, certain assumptions about Central Asia are firmly rooted in the literature. For different reasons, western and Soviet scholars both contributed to the cliché of Central Asia as a special, 'traditional' space: stressing the assumed effects of Islam and the inherent 'backwardness' of predominantly rural and nomadic societies, for decades they argued that the region was different from the rest of an increasingly secularised and urbanised Soviet Union (for a critical analysis, see Kandiyoti, 1996; Tishkov, 1997, pp. 1–43; Myer, 2002). The western eagerness to portray Muslim Central Asia as an alien region under Soviet 'colonial rule' reinforced this trend.

While post-Soviet analyses have moved beyond such accounts steeped in both modernisation theory and cultural essentialism, much work still discusses Central Asians as predominantly ethnic and religious *persona*s. That local society continues to be analysed mainly by anthropologists, who concentrate on specific cultural meanings and practices, helps to sustain the image of the region as an exotic place. Against this background, the observation that leisure practices, political and religious views and activities, and sartorial and musical styles among young people in Osh were just as diverse, complex and integrated in global cultural flows as they are in many western and non-western cities, is an important conclusion in its own right. Urban Central Asia is undergoing many of the globalising processes that can now be observed from Latin America to South-East Asia. That said, cities account for just over one-third of the population in Kyrgyzstan (and even less in some other parts of the region). In matters of global integration as much as for other social, economic and cultural phenomena, the main divide is *within* countries and regions, rather than between them.

Globalisation also shows, regardless of elements of global convergence, that experiences of youth are still very much shaped at the macro level. Experiences of globalisation are highly country-specific. In Kyrgyzstan, global media and foreign organisations, including religious ones, can operate without much interference. In Osh, as well as in other Kyrgyzstani cities, the notion of a 'marketplace for styles and identities' helps us to understand local interaction with global goods and ideas; and while there are some differences in the regulation of the internet, foreign organisations and religious communities, this notion may also capture elements of young people's daily lives in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Georgia. However, it will be of limited use in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and, increasingly, Azerbaijan, where religious activism, donor activity and media are tightly controlled from above, and state-regulated official culture leaves little space for autonomous cultural activity.

Experiences of globalisation also capture only a specific moment in time. In the case of my own research, it was a time of relative openness to outside influences, of transnational religious mobilisation and substantial labour migration across Eurasia. The increasing tightening of control over international organisations, media and religious movements in Kyrgyzstan, however, already suggests that this period of time will not last indefinitely.

The category of 'post-socialist youth' and the case of Osh

While some areas of global convergence are undeniable, then, much specificity remains. At an intermediate level, scholars have focused on shared experiences of youth in different subregions of the globe. Observers of the post-socialist space, for example, have addressed global convergence while trying to identify local idiosyncrasies. Some conclude that it is not in the existence of risk, but in the level and duration of risk (along with the perceived benefits and problems of risk) that Russian and western societies differ (Williams et al., 2003, p. 77). Others offer an even wider perspective, comparing key aspects of young people's lives across the former socialist bloc with youth in 'the West' (Roberts, 2008).

Before discussing the findings of this research, let us consider the criticisms that social anthropologists, sociologists and human geographers have levelled against the category of 'post-socialism' (Hann, 2002; Flynn and Oldfield, 2006). While acknowledging that comparisons may offer some useful insights, scholars working in these fields warn that the homogenising discourse of post-socialism and 'transition', along with the highly artificial division between 'East' and 'West', run the danger of playing down or even ignoring the heterogeneity of the region's past and present. There was no such thing as a uniform socialist experience; and similarly, interpretations and uses of the past have become increasingly diverse. These scholars therefore argue that socialist legacies should not be invoked by analysts who do not make efforts to unravel the continuities and discontinuities of today's practices with those of the past. They also insist that greater attention be paid to the diversity of lived experiences of change. Among other things, they have identified people's references to the socialist experience in daily life and the effects of the transition discourse on people's current expectations as promising fields of inquiry.

Those interested in broader comparisons are less concerned with unravelling local meanings. Roberts defends the use of the term 'post-communist', emphasising the 'commonalities in the countries' experiences of the transition, including how their young people have fared and how they have responded' (Roberts, 2008, p. 10). While he explains that some developments affecting youth in the post-socialist space exist in some shape or form across the globe, he argues that young people from Poland to Kazakhstan now stand out in several respects. On several scores, he argues, post-socialist

youth have become 'hyper-modern world leaders', largely thanks to late-development effects that have allowed the last countries to arrive to catapult to the front of the line (ibid., pp. 10–12). First, since the early 1990s, enrolments in universities have risen disproportionately across the former communist bloc. The prolongation of education and the subsequent expansion of youth as a life stage are global phenomena, and within the post-socialist space they differ from country to country. Yet, these phenomena have affected unusually large proportions of youth in Eastern Europe. Some survey-based studies found that up to 80 per cent of Russian adolescents in the 1990s continued to study after graduating from secondary school (Stetsenko, 2002, p. 261). The importance of education, in fact, increased in the course of the decade, perhaps because it was seen as a potential escape route from economic hardship: from fourth place in young people's priorities in 1990, education climbed the ladder to second place in 1999 (Williams et al., 2003, p. 86).

The situation is broadly similar in Kyrgyzstan. Being enrolled in a course of study has become the rule, rather than the exception (and the same applies to Kazakhstan and many other post-Soviet states) (Roberts, 2011, p. 161). University entry is no longer limited to a small part of Kyrgyz youth: between 40 and 55 per cent of all school leavers now register for higher education (DeYoung, 2011, p. 43). It is partly the deregulation of higher education that has led to a massive increase in university entry. State universities now compete with private universities and universities funded from abroad. During my fieldwork, I came across about a dozen university-like institutions in Osh with over 100,000 students in total, almost one-third of the city's population. While 'being a student' does not necessarily mean class attendance, it is now more of a protracted life phase than during the Soviet period, not least because jobs for young people are scarce and the education system has yet to meet the new needs of the labour market.

Second, and subsequently, underemployment after leaving full-time education has grown enormously in the post-socialist world and surpassed comparable developments in the West. Youth from Poland to Kazakhstan experienced a slump in their socio-economic status in a very short period of time. Despite massive price increases in the early and mid-1990s, by the end of the decade young people's wages in Russia still lingered at the level of 1977 (Williams et al., 2003, p. 84). Job security did not just decrease; it virtually collapsed. Employment in the previously secure state sector fell from over 50 per cent to a mere quarter of young people (ibid., pp. 82–83). This shift created a new social gulf: the main difference was no longer whether someone had a good education, but whether someone worked for the troubled state or in the private sector, where profits could be made (Adelman, 1994, pp. 303–307). Comparable changes in employment patterns took place across the post-socialist space, but since the countries in question began to pursue different economic, social and educational policies, young people

also came to experience post-socialist change in different ways. Domanski's comparative research, for example, shows that occupational mobility (that is, the share of people changing occupation) proved considerably lower in Russia than anywhere else in post-socialist East-Central Europe, conceivably due to the different pace of privatisation and reforms in the education and vocational training sectors (Domanski, 2000, pp. 25–43).

In much of Central Asia, the public sector also shrank dramatically. By the mid-1990s, 55 per cent of the population in Kyrgyzstan had fallen under the poverty line; Ilkhamov, 2001 (Bauer et al., 1997, p. 10; Falkingham et al., 1997, p. 13). Social and economic polarisation became particularly striking in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as market reforms went much deeper in these countries and led to the rise of both a new economic elite and large numbers of impoverished rural and urban residents. While massive student populations have emerged in Osh and neighbouring cities such as Jalalabad, a significant share of children and youth have been forced by economic necessity to find jobs on the street (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 48–50). Those who complete their education usually have two options for entering the job market: to enlist the support of an influential relative (either to get a job locally or to move abroad for work), or to join a family enterprise. Young law graduates, for example, try to set up their own work initiatives and support networks, but many of them face long periods of underemployment since every year Kyrgyzstan's law faculties release tens of thousands of graduates onto an already saturated market (ibid., p. 221).

Third, the post-Soviet space has witnessed the emergence of a post-adolescent life stage with particular features. These include very low levels of consumer spending, temporary labour migration and a new economic dependence on families. Indeed, today's youth in Osh engage in leisure activities that are largely cost-free while maximising the time they spend with peers in yards, parks and in the street, and enjoying different inexpensive youth cultures (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 64–68, 128–132, 191–193, 238–239). In this, they are no different from youth elsewhere in the post-Soviet space, partly because leisure activity under Soviet rule was never as monetarised as in the West (Roberts et al., 2000, pp. 114–115). That said, the relocation of youth, particularly male youth, into public spaces is striking in Osh and elsewhere in Central Asia, especially when compared with developments in western societies, where studies have documented the exact opposite: that young people increasingly move back into the private sphere, mainly to enjoy home entertainment media (McNamee, 1998). In parts of the former Soviet Union, scholars have also observed a partial relocation of youth into the home; they note, however, that levels of sports participation, out-of-home entertainment and membership in leisure-based clubs used to be unusually high under socialism and have simply gone down to western levels since then (Roberts et al., 2000, pp. 128–130). In post-Soviet Russia, public spaces continue to be important meeting sites for young people because few

of them have private space at their disposal (such as their own rooms or cars) (Pilkington, 2002, p. 142). The same is certainly true for Central Asia; in addition, the new emphasis on virtuous behaviour has increased the perceived benefits of spending time in the anonymous space of the city (at least for boys and young men).

Labour migration and networks have grown in importance all across the post-socialist space, yet they have acquired a particular salience in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Entering the local labour market or migrating for work are not only difficult but almost impossible without the support of personal networks in these regions. Corruption is endemic in the local education systems, the private and public employment sectors, and state institutions (including border posts) (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 72–87). In a context in which success and failure depend on money and connections, personal initiative can achieve much less than further north or west (though there are parallels with similar levels of corruption in the Global South).

In addition, lifecycle celebrations, and weddings in particular, are far more significant in southern than in northern regions of the former Soviet Union (or in much of Western Europe). Along with other life-cycle events, they are status symbols and investments in networks of reciprocity. As few families can afford to bear the costs of a lavish wedding on their own, they rely on the financial aid of close kin and neighbours, who expect the favour to be returned in the future. It is both a virtuous and a vicious circle. In order to improve your standing in the community and boost your career prospects, you need to invest in an ostentatious wedding, which, in turn, increases your debt and obligations to the community but ultimately also expands and reinforces your networks. Young people in Osh cannot bear the costs for such events on their own, and very few choose to marry in secret in order to reduce the cost of the wedding. The current importance of extravagant life-cycle celebrations, moreover, has less to do with a renewed traditionalism than with economic developments in the late Soviet period. Improved living standards under Brezhnev gave rise to consumerism all over the Soviet Union, but in the south this consumerism took very specific forms: given the pervasive shortage economy, the local populations of Central Asia and the Caucasus began to spend their surplus money on life-cycle events, which not only strengthened their personal networks but also allowed them to reaffirm their local identities; Russians and other 'Europeans' were usually excluded from these networks (Koroteyeva and Makarova, 1998; Pétric, 2002, p. 180).

Labour migration has become a mass phenomenon across the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which remains a relatively closed, common migration system (Sadovskaya, 2013, p. 29). While Russia continues to receive the lion's share of migrants, Kazakhstan has also become a recipient country. The remaining four Central Asian republics are all 'sending' countries. With the overall number of Kyrgyzstani labour migrants above 500,000, it is estimated that about 30 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's economically

active population is currently working abroad; and the situation is no different in Tajikistan (ibid., p. 30). Labour migration, in other words, is more than a common livelihood strategy in these countries; it is an economic must and affects most families. Tellingly, virtually all the young people who participated in my study on Osh left the city shortly afterwards.

Finally, comparative studies argue that post-socialist youth have become 'mostly non-ideological': young people are pragmatists with little interest in religion or politics. Youth in formerly socialist countries, while examples of public activism before 1991, now lead the way when it comes to seeking private solutions to problems (Chernysh, 1995, p. 176; Stetsenko, 2002, p. 263; Roberts, 2008, p. 12). Youth organisations tend to work mainly for the benefit of their leaders (Williams et al., 2003, p. 79). The findings from Osh partly confirm, but also qualify these claims. Young people indeed hesitate to join political parties, and the share of young people working or volunteering for non-governmental organisations is not much higher than 5 or 7 per cent (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 217–218). Yet, they do not necessarily withdraw into the private realm. Considerable numbers turn to religious groups, mainly Islamic or Christian; and many get involved in donor-funded associations. In fact, donor-funded projects allow different youth cultures to thrive; they create spaces where youth can give rein to their imagination and explore different identities (ibid., pp. 209–263).

Sociologists remind us that post-socialist youth have a particular historical awareness that frames their views of current processes of political and economic change. People are highly aware of the rights, privileges and social practices that existed under socialism, and so many elements of change are judged against this experience, at least to a degree (Williams et al., 2003, p. 45; Roberts, 2008, p. 4). In the former Soviet Union, and Russia in particular, this historical awareness contains specific layers. Russia is a society that has traditionally positioned itself between East and West (however artificial and imagined these categories may be). Elites have periodically called for measures to 'catch up with the West' while insisting that Russia must not become over-reliant on it. Moreover, since periods of rapid modernisation have occurred repeatedly throughout Russian history, any such process tends to be perceived as a process of renaissance. It is not surprising, therefore, that few call for an indiscriminate imitation of the West. Pilkington's research on youth across a variety of Russian cities suggests a selective appropriation of western goods and ideas. She concludes: 'While young Russians aspire to Western standards of living [...] they do not seek to emulate Western standards of "being"; and where spiritual life is concerned, young people remain firmly rooted to the local' (Pilkington and Bliudina, 2002, p. 20; Pilkington and Omel'chenko, 2002, pp. 210–211).

The Central Asian case is even more complicated because the region is discursively situated not only between East and West, between old Soviet and new capitalist images and expectations, but at the centre of far more

complex cultural flows. Historical awareness heavily draws on real or imagined (and often glorified) pre-Soviet experiences, nomadic and/or Islamic cultures, and a close, but contradictory and changing relationship with Russia (and, to a lesser degree, China, Turkey and Persia). Youth in the region are, in this sense, post-too-many-things to be reduced to post-socialism. That said, the relationship with Russia continues to be a crucial factor. The Russian Federation has once again become a key point of orientation in the former Soviet south. Unlike in the past, it is not primarily for political or military reasons. In fact, since the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, at the latest, Russia's geopolitical ambitions have alarmed many in its 'near abroad'. The new proximity is largely of an economic and cultural nature, fed by massive labour migration. Yet, it differs from state to state. The scope and depth of labour migration and economic ties differ, as does the influence of Russian media. In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia, but also in Uzbekistan and in the richer states of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, after a long pause, Russia has once again become a key filter of globally circulating media images. It is but one of many, yet it is an important one.

The selective borrowing, local adaptation and creative use of globally circulating goods and images has been documented in many different parts of the world. One of its global side effects is that 'more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of "possible" lives than they ever did before' (Appadurai, 1991, p. 197). Imagination and fantasies, fed by the new mass media, are increasingly shaping people's expectations – and this is where distinctive patterns have emerged in the post-socialist space. Fantasies of consumption now greatly affect identity formation among youth (ibid., p. 107). These fantasies are shaped by socialism and post-socialism alike. That young people think of 'new Russians' (or 'new Kazakhs', 'new Azerbaijanis' and so on) almost exclusively in terms of shopping habits reflects the current consumerism as much as the scarcity of goods and lack of variety under the old system – as is documented by Oushakine's study of youth in Barnaul, Siberia (Oushakine, 2000b). However, it is not just any old shopping that successful people are said to engage in; it is shopping in mindless quantities. While excess and exaggeration are distinctively new qualities, they are direct responses, and imaginary reproductions, of previous patterns of consumption. Young people project their own system of dispositions onto the new, post-socialist being, and while they make fun of it, their identification with it is only deferred (ibid., pp. 109–110). This identification is helped by the lack of an industry of cultural production that could offer any alternative reference points (ibid., pp. 112–113).

Sociological work carried out in Russia in the 1990s confirms many of the observations mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, but also reflects the normative and fatalistic tone of Russian social scientists during the tumultuous first decade of post-socialism. These scholars insisted that young people in Russia stood out in so far as they had entered a state of anomie:

values and standards had become uncertain, and young people had become alienated from society (Williams et al., 2003, p. 73). As a result, the young generation no longer had any interest in accepting, reproducing and improving the social order. Instead of being a social group, youth had been reduced to a demographic group. What is more, they were stuck in-between old and new sets of values. The rejection of social control had not been replaced by new mechanisms of self-control. Some of the old collectivist values of the Soviet period had been substituted by extreme individualism, suspicion, intolerance and a lack of moderation, all part of a 'post-totalitarian syndrome' (ibid., p. 45; see also Klicperová-Baker, 1999, pp. 4–5).[5] With materialism on the increase, 'making money' had become young people's primary concern (Adelman, 1994; Stetsenko, 2002, pp. 268–270). Young Russians purportedly lived only for today and had little sense of responsibility. The 'looting of the state' under Yeltsin thus helped to create a new type of citizen who lived at the expense of society (Williams et al., 2003, p. 71). In Poland and elsewhere in the post-socialist bloc, a comparable 'psychological epidemic', consisting of a permanent sense of threat, aggression, envy, cliquishness and xenophobia was identified among young people, at least in the early 1990s (Kulerski, 1992, pp. 111–112).

Yet, attributions of anomie, selfishness and a new lack of responsibility perhaps reflect more the fears of parents, political elites and scholars raised under socialism rather than young people in how they perceive their own lives. Some ethnographic studies suggest that post-Soviet youth, despite the new uncertainties and risks, actually experience their daily lives as relatively stable, secure and often exciting; if anything, it is their Soviet-educated parents who find it hard to adapt to the new circumstances. It is the parents who are the true 'lost generation' (Markowitz, 2000). My own observations from Osh confirm this: young people emphasised new opportunities, navigated through the new maze of cultural influences and reference points with remarkable ease (usually without experiencing these as contradictory, unlike their parents and many outside observers), and tended to find solutions to life's problems.

This observation points the question of intergenerational differences. Many studies have identified a generational gap in post-socialist society (Chernysh, 1995, p. 163; Kuehnast, 1998, pp. 646–648; Rigi, 2003, p. 40; McBrien; 2006, p. 343; Marsh, 2010). The young tend to be less educated, more exposed to financial insecurity and have little communal or political influence. Differences in values appear among the most important sources of tension between the generations. While young people often dismiss the experience of previous generations, many of those who grew up under Soviet rule reject, or do not understand, their children's views and aspirations. Young people, it is argued, stand out for their consumerist attitudes, low work ethics and a new insistence on time for leisure, all opposed by their Soviet-educated parents (Chernysh, 1995, p. 163; Rigi, 2003, pp. 40–44).

Intergenerational tensions are also reinforced by the moralistic discourses on 'correct' behaviour for youth. Partly these are a socialist legacy, and partly they are informed by counter-ideologies, such as nationalism and religious fundamentalism, which reject the socialist order and articulate new behavioural models. The Soviet Union as a whole defined itself in opposition to a materialist West (Oushakine, 2000a, p. 1004). Not surprisingly, many people in the former Soviet bloc still contrast their own caring and collective thinking with excessive western individualism (Omel'chenko and Flynn, 2002, p. 83; Blum, 2007, pp. 88–91) and they expect their offspring to behave in accordance with these behavioural norms. In Central Asia, a 'good Kyrgyz girl' or a 'good Muslim boy' are expected to follow prescribed, and strictly gendered, forms of behaviour. To inculcate these forms, new subjects (called *odobnoma* in Uzbekistan and *adep sabak* in Kyrgyzstan) have been introduced into the school curricula that teach young people how to act properly, especially in front of elders (on Kyrgyzstan, see Reeves, 2006, p. 181). This discourse also invokes a collectivist spirit, insisting that local youth are different from individualistic Europeans (a category that includes Russians and Ukrainians). Young people can choose to meet or ignore the new behavioural models, but given the new financial insecurities and dependence on networks, the costs for the violation of social expectations are high. At the same time, the young are exposed to more media-communicated lifestyles than ever before, and their lived realities often differ from the normative discourse promoted by the older generation.

Some express consumerist attitudes and desires. Sex is no longer a taboo subject, as it was for most of the Soviet period (admittedly, to different degrees across the socialist bloc) (Attwood, 1996). The new openness, however, is not welcomed by everyone. Raised in what has been characterised as a 'staunchly conservative society' (ibid., p. 95), Soviet-educated parents often reject the open discussion and portrayal of sexual activity, blame it on excessive westernisation, and view it as part of the reason for the young generation's 'low morals'. In many southern regions of the former Soviet Union, which did not experience the Soviet version of the sexual revolution in the 1970s, premarital sex continues to be subject to severe communal chastisement and even punishment, particularly among young women (see Roberts et al., 2000, pp. 105–107). That said, forms of young people's interests and behaviour that tend not to risk charges of immorality can also cause friction, such as the development of a pronounced religious or national identity (Bourdeaux, 1995; Witte Jr./Bourdeaux, 1999; Shterin, 2003; Lassila and Mijnssen, 2012; additionally Abu-Lughod, 1989, p. 11; Saktanber, 2002). In southern Kyrgyzstan, religious preachers and movements, many of which operate transnationally, allow young people to distance themselves from their parents and give them the chance to experiment with religious questions and identities (Kirmse, 2013, pp. 89–125). In a context in which the parental generation grew up with, and often embraced, atheist and

supranational ideals (and tended to reduce religious practices to 'culture'), such strategies and behaviours can easily lead to tension and conflict.

Another crucial factor identified as affecting youth across the former socialist space is the strength of conservative gender ideology (Stetsenko, 2002, pp. 253–254). Some point to the continuity with the Soviet period, when men and women were seen as occupying different but complementary roles (Pilkington, 1996, pp. 39–56; 132–151). Others argue that the move towards market conditions, with a new emphasis on toughness and competition, has brought traditional gender roles back to the fore (Bruno, 1996). In some, largely non-Slavic regions, the new insistence on distinct roles for men and women is also part of religious or nationalist rhetoric that projects the Soviet idea of gender equality as a colonial imposition and a distortion of 'natural', pre-Soviet gender roles (Kandiyoti, 2007). In predominantly Muslim regions, a man's domination over his wife is now often staged in public (even if a more equal relationship is practised behind closed doors) (Pilkington and Yemelianova, 2003, p. 273). Either way, while the reasons behind this development may vary from region to region, the division of gender roles seems far more pronounced than in Western Europe.

What about peculiarities in state policies towards youth? At first sight, these are just as alarmist and, at the same time, indifferent across the former Soviet Union as they are elsewhere: a youth-as-victim rhetoric, aimed at justifying state control and protectionism, stands in contrast to an otherwise high degree of 'juvenilophobia'. The young are treated as little more than a potential electorate, ignored or actively sidelined in practice (Williams et al., 2003, p. 79; Dhillon and Yousef, 2007). There are, however, some peculiarities in former Soviet republics and Soviet satellite states. In recent years, and with varying degrees of success, some of these states have tried to establish state-sponsored youth organisations, largely to exert greater control over youth and rally support for the incumbent regimes. In many ways, these new organisations have adopted the language, imagery, strategies and structures of their communist forerunners (McGlinchey, 2009; Lepisto, 2010; Lassila and Mijnssen, 2012). In Russia's Nashi movement, for example, educational seminars on healthy lifestyles (strangely reminiscent of the *novyi byt* campaigns in the 1920s, aimed at forging a new 'Soviet being') and public denunciations of alleged 'enemies of the people' have become common practice.

The degree to which such developments result indirectly from the socialist past and more directly from the current turn towards authoritarianism in the affected countries (which may be linked to the socialist legacy) is debatable. The question remains as to how long post-socialism actually lasts. One may wonder if the concept still has any mileage 25 years after the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe, where young people no longer have any personal recollection of the previous political order. Moreover, as the

economic situation has stabilised and even improved in Russia, Kazakhstan and various other post-socialist states, more differentiated strategies and views of political and economic change have emerged. Recent sociological research on youth in Kazakhstan, for example, shows that young people are generally supportive of capitalist market conditions, while a considerably smaller percentage express a trust in democratic institutions (Junisbai, 2014). Whether this is yet another Soviet legacy or, rather, the result of economically successful authoritarianism in the post-Soviet period, remains to be seen.

Notes

1. By 1997, the IMF found an astonishing 48 per cent of the workforce working in agriculture.
2. 'Bride kidnapping' refers to the abduction of young, unmarried women by young men for the purpose of marriage. The spectrum of types of bride kidnapping ranges from staged abductions (arranged with the bride or her relatives) to actual intimidation and violent kidnappings in broad daylight.
3. International Labour Office, Global Employment Trends for Youth (Geneva, 2006).
4. See, for example: 'Generation Praktikum', DIE ZEIT, 14 (2005), 31 March 2005.
5. The report of Klicperova-Baker can be downloaded from the Research Support Scheme Electronic Library at http://e-lib.rss.cz, date accessed 12 December 2014.

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