

This article was downloaded by: [Svetlana Stephenson]

On: 17 January 2012, At: 08:04

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Europe-Asia Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceas20>

### The Violent Practices of Youth Territorial Groups in Moscow

Svetlana Stephenson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> London Metropolitan University

Available online: 11 Jan 2012

To cite this article: Svetlana Stephenson (2012): The Violent Practices of Youth Territorial Groups in Moscow, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64:1, 69-90

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2011.635894>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# The Violent Practices of Youth Territorial Groups in Moscow

SVETLANA STEPHENSON

## *Abstract*

This article analyses the violent practices of youth territorial groups in Moscow. These groups exist on the city periphery and mainly involve young people (most of them male), who are not well integrated into society through the schooling system. Rather than simply depending on violence as a survival tool within the dangerous and uncertain space of the streets, or as an instrument for crime, the members of these groups use their collective mastery of it as proof of elite status, in accordance with cultural prescriptions drawn from deep historical traditions.

AMONG THE MOST NOTICEABLE FIGURES ON THE Russian urban landscape is the figure of the *gopnik*. *Gopnik* is a derogatory term for ‘street’ young people, seen as violently colonising the city space and being involved in turf fights, attacks on young people who are not members of their local groups, minor delinquency and crime. The *gopnik* is a profoundly demonised figure in Russian youth folklore. There are websites and blogs describing how to identify a *gopnik* by his bad clothes and vulgar manners.<sup>1</sup> As the popular rock musician Mike Naumenko sang in his song, *Gopniki*, ‘Who is it walking, crushing everything in their way? Who is wearing bright coloured shirts and red socks? ... Who has dirty black rubber boots on their feet? These are *gopniki!* ... They make my life hell!’ They are always ready, as the song said, ‘to give you a black eye or to knife you’. And, as Naumenko sang, ‘their name is legion’.

Although the discussion is never conducted in class terms, the *gopniki* are widely regarded as aggressive low-class young people, unable and unwilling to conform to the norms of urban existence and hating those who are different. According to Kosterina,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation for providing financial support for this project, and to Rustem Maksudov for his invaluable contribution to designing and conducting the fieldwork.

<sup>1</sup>See for example, ‘The Virtual Museum of Gopniki’, available at: <http://gopniki.net/>, accessed 18 January 2011; <http://diabler.narod.ru/gop.html>, accessed 18 January 2011; and the blog of the contemporary artist Dmitrii Vrubel, available at: <http://dmitrivrubel.livejournal.com/721903.html>, accessed 18 January 2011, where he often displays his own caricatured portraits of the *gopniki*.

'*Gopnik* refers to street youths with a low overall level of culture who tend to attack weaker men in order to intimidate or rob them' (2006, p. 34). They are stereotyped as backward, conservative, ignorant and dangerously prone to violence. They form 'flocks' that attack 'normal' teenagers if they meet them on their way. For every youth subcultural group (be they violent skinheads or non-violent punks) the *gopniki* represent a negative pole of self-identification (Pilkington 2002; Omel'chenko 2006a). Essentially, in the dominant discourse, the *gopniki* are seen as young people who lack the cultural competency which would allow them to adjust to city life and the youth subcultural environments, and this explains their aggression to everybody who is different. They are 'folk devils', whose cultural pathology seems to threaten the wider social order. The construction of the *gopniki* in the dominant discourse is reminiscent of that of *lyubery*, aggressive youth groups from the Moscow suburbs of Lyubertsy, who at the end of the 1980s attacked Westernising youth groups in Moscow (Pilkington 1994).

However, here we come to an interesting and telling contradiction. *Gopnik* is a derogatory name which is not used by those it is applied to. In fact, young people who could be easily seen as *gopniki* if we applied the above-mentioned signifiers are often unaware of the existence of the term, and do not use it as a collective self-definition. Young people who spend time together on the streets and engage in aggressive practices, such as fighting and attacking other young people who wander into 'their' territory, do not see themselves as deviants, or as *lumpen* elements lacking resources that would allow them to function properly in the city space. Instead, they call themselves 'normal', 'ordinary' or 'local' lads (*normalnye*, *obychnye* or *mestnye patsany*), rejecting their marginal status and, instead, claiming a central place in the local systems of social relations. As this article will show, contrary to common stereotypes, the lads are not socially excluded delinquents. In fact, they are 'over-included' in the local space, although at the expense of participation in the larger society.

This article, written on the basis of interviews with young people and adult community members in several areas of Moscow, develops an argument which is contrary to representations of the *gopniki* as social drop-outs and agents of disorderly violence in the academic literature and populist media. It contends that these individuals share a set of cultural practices (too easily regarded as symptomatic of disorder) that can be seen as contributing to social structuration in peripheral urban communities. Young people commonly seen as *gopniki* perceive themselves as agents of territorial order, who sustain the predictability and homogeneity of the localised system of social relations. Violence, for all its destructive potential, is an important part of this territorial regulation 'from below' (Lea 2002; Stenson 2005).

### *Methodology*

One of the key difficulties facing anyone who wants to research the so-called *gopniki* is that the object of study is extremely volatile. To begin with, the term itself is a derogatory name applied to street youth by outsiders. As mentioned above, young people adopt the identity of *patsany*, 'the lads'. This identity is very broad, and is

shared not just by street youth across Russia, but also by young members of organised criminal gangs. The latter typically call themselves *konkretnye* or *realnye patsany* ('concrete' or 'real lads'). In the popular imagination, and some sociological literature, gang members are sometimes also seen as *gopniki* (Kosterina 2006), which adds to the problem of defining the subject of analysis. *Patsany* networks cannot be characterised as a distinctive subculture either. They lack pronounced class affiliations and share many of their practices with the wider youth culture. Their members can lean towards participation in other youth subcultures, and there is a considerable overlap between *patsany* practices and the cultural practices of aggressive youth groups (football fans and skinheads), such as collective fights and xenophobic and racist outlooks.

Nevertheless, there is one defining characteristic of *normalnye*, *obychnye* and *mestnye patsany* which sets them apart from other young people, be it members of criminal gangs, youth subcultural groups, or 'home-bound' young people whose lives are closely organised around the institutions of family and school. These are 'street' youth, who share strong local affiliations and identities, and collective practices that affirm their position as the 'masters' of the local space. Pilkington, for example, refers to them mainly as members of *dvor* groups, from the Russian word for the courtyard of a housing block (Pilkington 2002, p. 123), while Gromov, in his review of the Russian sources on street-based youth, also emphasises the centrality of place for their practices (Gromov 2009a). If they belong to named groups, the names normally correspond to the name of their street or the district. The territorial *dvor* groups tend to be concentrated in peripheral areas of Moscow, where people live in relatively stable communities, organised round the traditional Russian urban residential pattern—several multi-storey buildings sharing a courtyard. The lads spend much of their time with their peers on the street and are involved in a variety of collective practices and rituals aimed at defending their area from intruders and those who do not 'belong'. This article addresses these practices and rituals, and uses the young people's own accounts to analyse the meanings and organisation of their violent pursuits. I look at those *obychnye*, *normalnye* and *mestnye patsany* (whom I will call the lads from now on, to avoid the pejorative term *gopniki*) who form neighbourhood groups and networks and who are engaged in the practices of territorial 'defence'.

The evidential basis for this article is as follows. In June–September 2006, Rustem Maksudov and the author conducted 23 in-depth interviews with young people aged between 12 and 17 who were members of violent street groups from the peripheral areas of Moscow. Research took place in participants' homes and on the streets, and access to interviewees was achieved using a snowballing technique. We also conducted six focus groups with members of territorial groups (all of these groups were conducted in the school for juvenile delinquents in the south-east region of Moscow).<sup>2</sup> Each group consisted of between six and eight people. All the interviews and focus groups were tape-recorded, and the names of the interviewees were changed. All

<sup>2</sup>The school is an 'educational institution of a closed type'. It belongs to the Moscow city department of education. Its students are referred to it by courts for minor offences (mainly hooliganism and theft) as an alternative to criminal punishment.

interviewees gave their informed consent. We also conducted interviews with the parents of the young people who participated in our study.<sup>3</sup>

We encountered many practical and ethical issues in our research. The expediency of conducting focus groups in an institution, for example, needed to be counter-balanced with the unavoidable issues around trust. We attempted to resolve this by first conducting participant observation in the school and establishing preliminary contact with most of the focus-group participants. Focus groups themselves proved to be a very good method for accessing collective representations of street life and norms of violent conduct. Often, after initial hesitation, young people gave each other sanction to talk about topics that would otherwise be morally proscribed and avoided. The practices of physical and discursive violence were recounted with particular animation. Some of the stories of the young people's street pursuits, and the accounts of their moral codes, may have had problematic veracity; however, we were mainly interested in understanding the meanings of different practices for young people.<sup>4</sup> In my analysis I have given greater credence to what was said when the young people were reliving their street experiences, while recognising that some of their other accounts (of their personal histories of offending, for example) may have had limited reliability.

The openness of the interviewees had its downside as well, presenting specific issues for our positionality as researchers. The majority of young people we talked to held racist xenophobic views, which they expressed enthusiastically. They boasted about their violent attacks on ethnic minorities and other 'enemy' groups. They seemed to expect approval from us, and these expectations may have been based on other experiences of communication with adults since xenophobia is so widespread in Russia that these expectations are not unrealistic.<sup>5</sup> The clash between our own moral positions and those of the interviewees made us highly uncomfortable, but we felt that we needed to understand young people's constructions of their 'enemies' without offering moral judgement.

### *Youth, violence and social reproduction*

My research into violent street groups in Moscow took place at a time of an apparent resurgence of youth street groups and gangs across the developed world and the global periphery. Current concerns about the rise of violent street organisations threaten to turn into a full blown moral panic (Hallsworth 2011), in which the phenomenon of youth street organisations and gangs is often seen as both a product and a manifestation of societal disorder, stemming from the collapse of the normative foundations of either society as a whole, or more specifically of the poor and disadvantaged communities. These concerns are often framed in terms of the crisis of social reproduction, namely social and economic exclusion, the growth of the drug

<sup>3</sup>Because of the small sample and limited scale of research the findings should be regarded as 'first approximations' in need of further investigation.

<sup>4</sup>See also Graue *et al.* (1998, p. 120).

<sup>5</sup>In a national public opinion poll conducted by the Levada Centre in August 2006, 54% of respondents agreed with the idea of 'Russia for Russians', and 52% agreed that the government should limit migration into Russia (Levada 2006).

economy, and the lack of role models, particularly among certain disadvantaged groups of young people (Wilson 1998; Anderson 1999; Barker 2005; Pitts 2008; Rodgers 2009). In response to total disenfranchisement, it is argued, the poor sections of young people develop criminal adaptations where they use violence instrumentally, for economic ends, or use force to assert their individual status, which is otherwise undermined by economic and social powerlessness. Fears about low-class young people, who seem to reject mainstream values and engage in anti-social, destructive behaviour, are reflected in discourses about ‘chavs’, the modern successors of the working-class ‘hooligans’ (Hayward & Majid 2006; Nayak 2006).

There is, however, a different perspective on street social organisation, which, instead of social and cultural rupture, emphasises the tenacity of social reproduction. In it, attention is drawn to the long-standing traditions of youth territorial self-organisation, and to concomitant violent practices. Despite the seeming ‘perpetual novelty’ of youth ‘gangs’, violence and territoriality, this phenomenon has to be seen as part of long-standing historical continuities (Pearson 2011). Research shows the persistent importance of territory to groups of young people in different regions. Even in global cities, such as London or indeed Moscow, despite the dislocating processes of late modernity, young people still develop deep attachments to local places, which can become enclaves of stability and meaning amid breaks and disruptions. Violence is also present, and is even constitutive of young people’s practices, but, as Claire Alexander pointed out in her study of Asian youth gangs in London, ‘these conflicts often carry with them complex histories and sets of understandings that should not be simply dismissed as a catharsis for the culturally dispossessed’ (Alexander 2000, p. 21). Even in the conditions of social rupture, brought to traditional communities by late modernity, the forces of social reproduction can still be relatively strong. As Jock Young points out, late modernity can be characterised by ‘the generation of the notion of hardness, of fixity, a difference of self based on gender (e.g. hypermasculinity), ethnicity, “turf” (locality), and age (e.g. the gang)’ (Young 2007, p. 52). The structural limitations bearing on a variety of disadvantaged groups of young people (such as access to education, jobs, opportunities for upward mobility) can reinforce their attachments to localities and traditional ‘ways of doing things’ (Nayak 2003; MacDonald & Marsh 2005; Kintrea *et al.* 2008).

Other authors have drawn attention to the influence of class and place on youth practices (Wolfgang & Ferracuti 1967; Corrigan 1979; Pearson 1983; Hobbs 1988; Sanders 2005; Roche 2007). In working-class communities around the world, young people draw upon long-standing systems of local knowledge and gender roles which constitute them as defenders of the local public space, as strong and fearless men, invested with duties and obligations linked to traditional patriarchal and working-class cultural concerns. Their behaviour is not necessarily, as is commonly assumed, symptomatic of communal breakdown, crisis and delinquency. On the contrary, where long-standing cultural traditions of male fighting are present, they can act to ritualise and thus somewhat limit the danger of extreme violence (Winlow & Hall 2006).

Young people’s organisations may play an important role in the local social order. The place of youth street groups in local social reproduction has been addressed by criminologists, studying how street organisations and gangs become a force of social and economic structuration in communities devastated by deindustrialisation and the

retreat of forces of law and order (Sullivan 1989; Rodgers 1999; Venkatesh 2000; Brotherton & Barrios 2004; Hagedorn 2008). In the Moscow context, however, relatively high levels of employment and the presence of agents of state power (however corrupt and inefficient) make direct comparisons with the situation in American ghettos problematic.<sup>6</sup>

However, another classic study of a local system of social relations where youth street groups played a central role (Suttles 1968) can also offer a useful approach to the analysis of social relations in the Russian urban periphery. In this book, *The Social Order of the Slum*, Suttles analysed the street-corner world of young people in a peripheral area of Chicago, a place where, despite the proliferation of low-income jobs and relative poverty, people lived in stable communities with adults' lives organised around work. In the urban provincial societies described by Suttles, street violence became a part of the social ordering of relations. He demonstrated that concern for social order was shared by all the residents, old and young alike, and that territorial groups of young people, although being tough and violent, strove for management of local social relations and tried to resolve uncertainties about other people's behaviour as well as concerns 'about the usage of local parks, their rights to specific locations and the importance of certain boundaries' (Suttles 1968, p. 137). There was no deep opposition between youth and adults, as they all tried to build some predictability against 'common apprehensions'. In this provincial social world, reputations and categorical orders were paramount as they served to overcome indeterminacy and distrust. A street-corner group, Suttles stressed, 'defines groups of people so that they can be seen as representatives rather than individuals' (p. 220). Suttles also pointed out that such street-corner groups were not at all novel but arose out of ancient moral traditions, where young boys were expected to spend much time outside their households in close-knit groups.

Violence becomes associated with the protection of an imagined home space against the contaminating 'others', which are defined as being alien to the local community. As philosopher Wendy Hamblet argues,

'ordered' worlds are metaphysically rapacious worlds that feed upon the marginal, the different, the alienated and the non-belonging. Ordering systems not only suppress and regulate violence; they comprise it and they compose it. Mechanisms of control and order and organisation not only define the belonging and distinguish it from the marginal; they produce the alien through their alienating definitions. (2004, p. 34)

An additional insight into the nature and organisation of violence in close-knit communities is offered by Randall Collins (2008), who shows that local social ecologies may bear on the forms that street violence takes. Collins argues that, where strong communal reputations are present, violent acts can be perceived by their perpetrators not as aimed at instant gratification or instrumental gains, but as honourable acts. Agents of violence can construct themselves as elite fighters rather than banal hooligans or young men cultivating ultra-violent personae and displaying a

<sup>6</sup>At the beginning of 2007, the rate of unemployment in Moscow was 0.6% of the labour force, according to the Moscow government information site, available at: [http://mos.ru/documents/index.php?id\\_4=112695](http://mos.ru/documents/index.php?id_4=112695), accessed 22 December 2010.

commitment to 'doing evil' (Katz 1988). Their elevated status is reaffirmed by ritual exhibitions and staged fights with socially enforced limits, and by specific honour codes. The fighters use 'social techniques for creating violence' (Collins 2008, p. 332), specific forms of self-presentation and conversational devices that assert their dominance without the need to engage in immediate physical confrontation, and rituals of arranged combat, which are products of long-standing communal knowledge. Violence becomes a way of confirming masculine reputations (as tough guys) and the elite status of the fighters within the local system of social stratification. Although Collins did not address the background factors leading to violence, his insights into the links between local reputational orders and specific technologies of violence present a useful framework for analysis of collective violent behaviours.

Russian anthropologists have shown that the 'traditional' techniques of violent street conduct, and the obligation on young boys and men to master them, have been a part of the Russian social life for centuries, lasting long into the modern era. These traditions formed a core part of village life up to at least the end of the 1960s. The central practice here was that of the village fights, where young people were supposed to display their masculine prowess and their readiness to defend their local turf by engagement in highly ritualised battles with young men from a neighbouring village or even another part of the same village. These practices were encouraged by adults, who transmitted the norms and rituals of combat to the younger generation. Even in the late Soviet period, arranged group fights were common in the peripheral urban areas, where the first and second generations of urban dwellers came to live, and where the fighting village traditions remained a part of collective social knowledge (Zabryanskii 1990, pp. 129–30). In these fights young people sought to determine the borders of their territorial domination and prove their manly status (Kabanov 1928; Bernshtam 1988; Shchepanskaya 2001; Morozov & Sleptsova 2004). Recent research conducted in many Russian cities and towns, including Kazan, Ul'anovsk, Ulan-Ude, Murom, Tikhvin and Kirov, reveals the continuing presence of youth territorial groups, that colonise local streets and engage in warfare with 'outsiders' (Gromov 2009b).

Analysis of the social and cultural practices of these groups has so far been focused on their histories (Gromov 2006; Karbainov 2009), attacks against *neformaly*, members of youth subcultures (Pilkington 1996, 2002; Omel'chenko 2006b), constructions of dominant masculinity (Salagaev & Shashkin 2002; Kosterina 2006) and territorial fighting rituals (Golovin & Lurie 2005, 2008). Much attention has been paid to the evolution of some of these groups at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, from relatively amorphous peer networks, concerned with defending the local turf, into hierarchically organised entrepreneurial gangs. The Kazan and Lyubertsy gangs became the most well-known examples of such transformation (Salagaev & Maksudov 1988; Ageeva 1991; Bulatov & Shesler 1994; Pilkington 1994; Salagaev 2001; Pilkington 2002; Gromov 2006; Stephenson 2006, 2011).

However, specific analyses of youth violent practices in the context of provincial urban ecology have thus far been lacking. In this article, in line with Suttles' argument, I show that in peripheral communities there are cultural expectations that young people, especially boys, should spend time on the street in close-knit solidaristic groups. Young people themselves see the local social world in terms of categorical orders, dividing people three ways into members of the home space, enemies and allies.



They construct themselves as representatives of the local reputational elite and follow specific rituals of violent combat which may act to limit the severity and danger of violence. In other words, the lads are not liminal to the urban community, but are deeply embedded in it, and this shapes their violent practices. The seeming disorder of the Moscow street world has its own hierarchies, rules and moral codes, which in many ways reflect wider societal norms.<sup>7</sup>

The article is organised in the following way. First, I discuss the lads' networks, before looking at the transmission of violent knowledge in the territories where they live. I address the categorical order of the lads, their perceptions of other young people who live in their territories, of both enemies and suitable victims. I move on to analyse their constructions of honour codes and the use of specific devices of conversational violence—all which serve to construct them as a reputational elite. I then discuss a key form of ritualised violence—arranged combat. Finally, I conclude that in order to understand the violent practices of the lads, we need to situate them within the historical traditions of street male violence and the systems of social relations in the Russian urban periphery, so as to avoid the simplistic view of them as pathological and culturally incompetent.

#### *The lads' groups*

Street peer networks are ubiquitous in urban Russia. Young people hang out together on the streets in warm weather (or in underground cellars and lofts during the winter), listen to music, go out in groups to football matches or the cinema, make trips to local forests to enjoy a barbeque in the summer or go skiing in winter. Members of these *dvor* groups share all these practices of a wider youth culture. They have friends other than the members of their street groups, and socialise with their classmates and young people from other areas. Many have strong identifications with football teams, and participate in football-related violence. However, in some areas—which tend to be either peripheral areas of large urban settlements, or whole territories of small and medium-sized towns—these groups develop strong territorial concerns, leading to fights with 'outsiders' and harassment of 'intruders' (Golovin & Lurie 2005, 2008). It is worth noting that past and present Western studies have also shown that the social ecology of the urban periphery seems to be more conducive to the emergence of neighbourhood-based youth groups than metropolitan centres (Thrasher 1927; Kintrea *et al.* 2011).

Territorial identity becomes the master identity, shared by members of the local groups, and this differentiates them from other youth organisations. As one of our interviewees said, comparing his group to football hooligans, 'Unlike us, they don't fight for their territory, they fight for themselves'.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the territorial networks differentiated by the extent of their use of violence and criminal activities,

<sup>7</sup>In a study of the seemingly disorganised street world of Greenwich Village vendors, scavengers and panhandlers, Mitchell Duneier (1999) demonstrated that these people, commonly assumed to be dangerous outcasts, had a sense of moral order and engaged in practices that offered them self-respect and respect from other people.

<sup>8</sup>Author's interview with Andrei, 26 July 2006, Moscow.

inclusion of girls, presence or absence of leaders and other features of social organisation (such as internal discipline, style of clothes and insignia). On the borders of groups we find young people who spend time on the streets with their friends but do not participate in any organised activities (Gromov 2009a). Territorial networks typically comprise several friendship groups of between six and eight members living in the same block or blocks of flats from the same or neighbouring courtyards. The core contingents of these groups are young men aged between 13 and 17 years old. Little boys and sometimes girls from the age of seven or eight ('the little ones') often affiliate themselves with the network, although they are not considered real members and do not take part in the ritualised practices of violence described below.

In Moscow, groups of young people with endogenous territorial attachments and strong solidaristic relationships tend to be concentrated at the outskirts of the city, in residential projects built in the 1970s and 1980s for workers recruited by the Soviet industrial planners to work at the local factories. These projects are organised around the traditional Russian urban residential pattern—several multi-storey buildings sharing a courtyard. Moreover, not all the young men in these territories participate in territorial groups. Some young people, commonly known as *botaniki*, a synonym of the English 'geek' or 'nerd', invest more time in school and avoid the street lifestyle. Territorial networks tend to be composed of young people, mainly young men, psychologically alienated from school, where they struggle academically and where they feel the odds are against them. Many of our interviewees—members of *dvor* groups—missed weeks and months of school and they had relatively vague expectations of what they were going to do after finishing school. Most hoped to get employment, although nobody wanted to work in low-status and low-paid industrial jobs and nobody aspired to go to work in the service sector either. Becoming a car mechanic was one of the most popular aspirations, although a career as a contracted army serviceman or a policeman also seemed attractive (the latter career was widely assumed to be very lucrative because of presumed income from bribes). Generally, however, the lads' horizons did not stretch beyond the need to go to serve in the army at the age of 18, which formed a natural precursor to adult life. For the time being their main habitat was the street. Here they could prove their worth and learn important social competencies which they felt would serve them well in later life.<sup>9</sup>

While sharing many of their pursuits with mainstream youth, some of the lads we interviewed were also involved in criminal and violent activities. They sustained their street lifestyle by petty crime (mainly through stealing and shoplifting). The nature of the crimes was primarily social rather than economic—any money 'earned' by delinquency was quickly spent on playing gaming machines and on beer, alcohol and marijuana, consumed together with friends. While criminality was generally episodic and was not displayed by all groups or by all members of a given group, everybody was involved in violent control over their neighbourhood.

<sup>9</sup>It is worth noting that the disjunction between the low status of these boys at school and a high status in the street context is reminiscent of Cohen's analysis of delinquent subcultures (1955), while the lads' seemingly hedonistic street practices and tough masculine orientations are similar to those that Willis (1977) described as reproducing working-class culture.

*The local sources of violent knowledge*

In the urban areas where young people grow up, street socialisation and warfare against people from other areas is a normalised practice. Knowledge about violent behaviour and its norms is transmitted by parents, older brothers and peers. In interviews parents of the lads said they felt powerless to help their sons to resist the strong pull exerted by street life. The parents knew and regretted the fact that street pursuits took their kids away from going to school or doing their homework, but a widely held perception was that one could not become a proper adult without having been in some way socialised by the street, in the company of one's peers. Parents of young men expected them to invest in street social capital, be sociable and build masculine reputations. While the parents were apprehensive about the dangers of street life, the loss of face was also to be feared. For example, in the Moscow suburb of Lyubertsy one local resident recounted how

once two lads were attacked in our area, and one of them started to fight back, and the other jumped on a bus that was passing by and went off. He was frightened and decided to run away. The father of the lad who ran away had to go to apologise for his son. He was worried his son would be despised in our area.<sup>10</sup>

In the same area the researcher observed a man chatting to a teenage boy on a bus who discovered that the boy was in fact the son of his old fighting mate. He introduced his own son to the boy, saying 'we always helped each other out, and you must do the same from now on' (Gromov & Stephenson 2008, p.436).

The street friendship group is where young people learn what it is to be a 'normal' lad and how to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity—which in the street context means the ability to exercise violence, to show toughness, bravery and quick wit, and the ability to overcome fear (Connell 1987; Messerschmidt 1993, 2000; Kosterina 2006). Here is a fragment from a focus group:

Vadim (13 years old): The group prepares you for the future. It means you're not a mummy's boy and you know when and how to respond. If somebody challenges you, you know how to behave. But if you sit at home all day, playing on the computer, then when you are 30 and you have a family, and somebody asks you for money, you'll just have to give it to them. You won't even know what to tell them.

Marat (15 years old): And you'll be dishonoured. Let's say some teenagers come to you when you are 30. Even if you're stronger than them, they'll still get what they want.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time our interviewees expressed a firm opinion that fighting and other 'pleasures' of the street life will be left behind once they are adults and have their own family. The cut-off point was seen to be conscription into the army, after which they expected to enter life as 'responsible adults'.

<sup>10</sup>Dmitrii Gromov's interview with KS, June 2006, Lyubertsy.

<sup>11</sup>Focus group with 12–15 year old boys, 12 August 2006, Moscow.

Our interviews and focus groups with the young people showed that they perceived the need to sustain strong territorial bonds and solidarities as a normative requirement for men of their age. Young people emphasised the following imperatives for a lad's behaviour: 'A normal lad should always have friends in the territory where he lives'; 'He has to have a group'; 'A lad can't run away if his friends are in trouble. He has to rush to help his friends if he sees that they're in trouble. If he pretends that he can't see anything, he's not a lad'; 'A lad doesn't lie, doesn't snitch. He doesn't help the police'.<sup>12</sup>

Concern about respect towards other members of the territorial network was expressed in many interviews: 'You shouldn't humiliate others, no matter whether they're older or younger';<sup>13</sup> 'If you can do something yourself, you don't ask a little one. Let's say there is a pack of cigarettes, and he's sitting over there, and you tell him, "go get me the cigarettes"'. That's wrong. If an older guy sees this, he'll hit you. You have to respect other people's honour and dignity'.<sup>14</sup>

### *Learning to love violence*

Recently, cultural criminology has drawn attention to affective meanings of street violence, to the joys of transgression that allow the dispossessed to overcome the daily humiliations of life in a society where they have very little social and economic capital (Katz 1988; Ferrell & Sanders 1995; Presdee 2000; Hayward 2004). However, although violence can indeed be experienced as pleasant (obviously this is true for the perpetrator, not for the victim), the narratives about the 'joys' of violence can be seen as part of discursive constructions, aimed at producing a certain subjectivity. In the group, young lads learn not to be afraid of fighting, and to perceive violence as natural, relatively safe, pleasant and an intrinsic part of the collective street life.

In our discussions the lads emphasised the 'biological' drive to fight. Within this sub-discourse violence is often presented in terms of irrational or compulsive acts—'we felt like a fight and went to the neighbouring district' (Nikolai, 13 years old), or as behaviour aimed at a desired physiological response—'we like the adrenaline rush we get from fights' (Artyom, 13 years old).<sup>15</sup> Another sub-discourse is related to the need to exercise control over emotions and not to be afraid of violence.

A lad should know how to fight. He shouldn't be afraid to have a dirty or bruised face. Let's say there are people who go to school. People who are mostly involved in 'useful activities' ... they study, go to after-school classes ... for them what matters most is that they have no scratches, no cuts on the face ... You have to be indifferent to all this.<sup>16</sup>

Or from a focus group:

Alexei (16 years old): We are safer than the rest who are afraid to fight. The most important thing is to hit first.

<sup>12</sup>Focus group with 12–15 year old boys, 12 August 2006, Moscow.

<sup>13</sup>Author's interview with Andrei, 15 years old, 26 July 2006, Moscow.

<sup>14</sup>Author's interview with Konstantin, 14 years old, 10 August 2006, Moscow.

<sup>15</sup>Focus group with 12–14 year old boys, 11 August 2006, Moscow.

<sup>16</sup>Author's interview with Andrei, 15 years old, 26 July 2006, Moscow.

Dmitrii (17 years old): You're not afraid of a fight because you know that your mates are with you, that they will not leave you if you get into trouble. Even if you know that you will all take a beating, and a heavy beating at that. You still know that together you will fight back.

Gradually, under the tutelage of the group and their other peers and siblings, the lads learn to interpret their feelings during fights as joyful and see violent altercation as a celebratory collective event. This can be illustrated by the following fragment from the same focus group:

Interviewer: Why is it that some guys like to fight and others don't?

Mikhail (17 years old): It depends on their upbringing.

Alexei (16 years old): And on the group they belong to. Let's take [the example of] our group. Let's say we have one guy who doesn't like to fight. We tell him, come and fight along with us, everything will be fine. He tries for the first time and sees that we are stronger. We told him that he'd get an adrenaline rush. He is happy that we've won. And then he starts fighting automatically.

Mikhail: I remember how my brother came back home after a fight. I was a little boy then. He came home, all covered in blood, with a stick in his hands. He looked very happy, covered in blood, with no teeth.<sup>17</sup>

Among the tutors in violent behaviour one finds ex-convicts and members of organised criminal groups. In Russia, a high incarceration society, sources of knowledge of the criminal world are always on hand for teenagers looking to establish their dominance in the city space. According to Valerii Abramkin, the Head of the Centre for the Criminal Justice Reform, every fourth adult Russian man has had personal experience of the penitentiary system (either detention or imprisonment) (Radio Rossi 2005). Prison culture is highly influential in Russia (Oleinik 2003; Efimova 2004). With its cult of strong character, risk and action, as well as the romantic brotherhood of outlaws, prison culture reproduces and exaggerates the values of dominant masculinity which young people strive to emulate. It also contains its own limitations on expressive and extreme violence, including the practice of *razvod*, verbal rather than physical domination over victims, which I will describe below, and prohibition of violent attacks against women.

In the areas where the lads live, members of the criminal community can become 'overseers' of violence. Among the characters always present at the local scene the lads often mention retired criminals, an 'uncle Misha' or 'uncle Vanya'. They are always there, chatting with the neighbours or playing dominoes on a bench in the courtyard. In fact, their main role is to be 'dispatchers' of violence, utilising their authority and connections. They can find out the whereabouts of a stolen bike or mobile phone, and even arrange for it to be returned, or warn the youngsters about an enemy incursion into their territory. They can mobilise additional fighters for arranged combats. For such favours the lads must pay—the currency is often a crate of beer—but the lads can also reciprocate 'in kind'. Members of organised criminal groups may ask the lads, in

<sup>17</sup>Focus group with 16–17 year old boys, 25 August 2006, Moscow.

return for a favour, to destroy a kiosk controlled by their competitors or physically punish those people who did not pay a debt or a 'due'.

*The categorical order of the lads*

The lads perceive their local area as a home space, where they know everybody and where they are relatively safe, but they are extremely wary about venturing into other territories. As Marat (15 years old) said:

I know the territories where it's best not to go. It's best to go on the metro, and then have a longer walk. They may ask you which area you come from, or they may not. Just hit you on the head. And then you lie there unconscious till the morning.

The lads also develop defensive obsessions about the outside world which is always ready to intrude. There are territorial anxieties, as playgrounds, stadiums and other public spaces may become the subject of disputes with youth from neighbouring areas. Vigilance is also required because outsiders may raid the home territory; for example, they can come in to attack the local young people or demand their mobile phones.

The construction of a group that sees itself as sustaining social and moral order in the home space implies that there are also 'others', those who cannot be a part of it, and this requires a definition of those people who do not belong. The categorical order of the lads contains several key categories which define other participants of street space. People tend to be perceived not as individuals but as categories, members of specific groups. There are the lads themselves and their allies and friends. There are the so-called *botaniki*, local young people who avoid the street life. Being members of the home space, they are openly ridiculed but rarely attacked; then there are *lokhi*—non-affiliated outsiders, who may or may not be subjected to verbal abuse or extortion (*razvod*), and sometimes direct violence; and then there are the enemies. These can be *neformaly*, representatives of youth subcultural groups (for example, punks or rappers), or other territorial groups, or minority ethnic groups. 'Intruding' into the home area colonised by the lads, they become what Mary Douglas (1966, p. 36) called 'matter out of place' and thus are legitimate targets of violent attacks. Typically for a group that sees itself as protecting the borders of the community, the discursive constructions of enemy groups include the trope of 'pollution' (Sibley 1995). These people bring 'dirt' to the area (for example they drop litter, and leave empty cans and bottles around) and this is why they are opposed:

If two or three guys from another territory come to our area . . . . If they behave quietly, nothing will happen. But if they throw rubbish on the ground, or break bottles, this is different. You have to call your friends, one, two, and they will chase these guys from the territory . . . they may go back home without money, without mobile phones, and beaten up as well. (Andrei, 15 years old)

As the lads' reputation in the area rests on having legitimate grounds for confrontation, there must be some minimal marker of 'alien' identity for violence to be unleashed. For example, as Russian young men often express their street masculinity

by walking and drinking beer from a can or a bottle, this practice can mark them as suitable enemies. If a youth walks with a can of beer in his hands in an alien territory, he risks being attacked. There is also anecdotal evidence that increasingly the victims of the lads are young people from exclusive residential developments that are built on the borders of the lads' own turf, or in the home space itself. The lads resent an intrusion of affluent outsiders into their territories, and attack them to show them 'who's boss'.

Ethno-nationalist discourse is an important part of the construction of 'us' and 'them', and people from Central Asia or the Caucasus become suitable victims for the lads (although neighbours who live in the same area and belong to ethnic minority groups are not attacked). These people (lumped under the designation of *chornye* 'blacks') are also associated with transgression and pollution. It is claimed that they intentionally violate Russian customs and traditions, have a higher birth rate than the locals and will soon outnumber the latter, and they allegedly bring drugs into Russia and corrupt its youth (though it is worth noting that many of the lads we talked to habitually consumed drugs themselves). Unlike skinheads and other far-right groups, the lads do not have a cohesive political ideology, although they tend to espouse nationalistic and xenophobic views (that are largely shared, as our interviews demonstrated, by their parents).

However, violence does not have to be supported by a moralising discourse. It is often enough for violence to be unleashed if a person belongs to an enemy category. As Andrei said, 'If we walk and see a "black", we will of course beat him up. But if there is no "black" in sight, and we see a stranger who's Russian, we will happily beat him up instead'.

#### *Honour code*

The lads construct themselves as the local reputational community and often invoke a particular code of behaviour (lads' rules, *patsanskie ponyatiya*), which can be seen both as a product of historical traditions dating back to pre-modern times, and as a specific 'cultural ideology' which asserts young men's collective superiority in the local social structure (Collins 2008, p. 229).

Many of these rules, such as prohibitions on attacking women, old people or children, are not exclusive to the lads' communities, being expressions of the generalised norms of chivalry, a product of patriarchal societies (Felson 2002): 'You can't hit a girl or touch a guy if he's walking with his girlfriend. Even if he shouts abuse at the local lads, it's not allowed. He will get his punishment when he comes back on his own' (Andrei, 15 years old). 'The lads can't attack children below the age of 12 or 14. This is dishonourable. If you see that he can fight, then you can do something. But if he's a little one and you hit him, he falls down and that's it' (Mikhail, 17 years old).

The fact that young people use these rules in discursive construction of what it means to be a lad demonstrates that they perceive themselves as a reputable status group. As their identities are grounded in repetitively enacted performances and communal ties, the lads are concerned about their collective reputations, which are dependent upon 'proper' execution of violence. While their hegemonic masculinity

needs to be constantly reaffirmed, they also have to establish some semblance of ‘fair play’, at least on the level of *post hoc* justifications and rationalisations. For example, it is not considered proper to start a fight with those young people who are physically weaker and who do not belong to enemy groups, namely the *botaniki*. Such people tend to be subjected to verbal intimidation or ridicule, to what Collins calls ‘conversational’ violence (Collins 2008), which I discuss later on.

Here is a fragment from a focus group with 13–15 year old boys:

Andrei (15 years old): Sometimes when we want to get some adrenaline, we go in a group of 15 or so people to a different district. We see the local guys sitting near a building in sufficient numbers (also 15 or so). That’s all it takes . . . Or we go to another area and see a big crowd of guys coming towards us. Sometimes we take a train and beat up punks and rappers if we find them, or get off and look for a group of local guys in a village.

Interviewer: If you were looking for trouble on a train, and there was a group of *botaniki* there, would you attack them?

Marat (15 years old): What would be the point? Just imagine, some guy is sitting there, reading a newspaper. What’s in it for us? We’re interested in the people who can hit back.

The existence of this unwritten ‘code’ of violent behaviour does not mean that its norms are never violated. On the contrary, violation seems to be quite common, though with the exception of grave crimes such as informing on one’s friends to the police, what follows is usually verbal reproach rather than physical punishment. Such violations include assaulting a weaker opponent, which cannot be construed as an honour confrontation, and beating up a ‘little one’. Similarly, hitting a girl will be frowned upon (except for the lads’ own girlfriends, over whom they may have ‘special’ rights).

Thus, the self-proclaimed ‘fairness’ of the lads’ rules needs to be seen critically. They operate in a violent world, and whatever their intentions, violence can never be effectively ritualised and contained; it always overflows (Girard 2005). The need to demonstrate one’s status as a member of the street elite and to build the network’s solidarity around fighting leads to dangerous escalations and confrontations, when the categorical order of suitable and non-suitable victims often becomes blurred. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss the normative code of the lads as simply fictional. It is a part of their understanding of their social reality, which has material implications for the social order of street interactions.

#### *Conversational devices of violence*

The lads perceive themselves as collective masters of the streets. Their ownership of the local territory is sustained through effective performances that are meant to show the other participants in street interactions that they are marginal to the local street community. This is achieved through the way the lads present themselves and their specific verbal skills (*razvod*). Lads use what Randall Collins calls ‘conversational devices’ of violence, which aim to demonstrate to the other participants in the interaction that they are in control of the situation. As Collins notes, ‘violence is not brute force alone, but where successful it is a skill at picking and manoeuvring victims into playing one of the victim roles’ (2008, p. 155).



Some of the lads who were focus-group participants described their use of such conversational devices in their encounters with the strangers:

Stepan (16 years old): You can talk to a guy for five minutes and he will give you everything, and he won't even go to the police.

Roman (17 years old): Say you see a guy standing there drinking beer. You'll have a cigarette, but you'd still go to him and ask for one. And you will pretend you are upset, you urgently need money because somebody is not returning their debt. And you've lost your mobile phone. Let's sell yours, and tomorrow we'll get you the money back. You must understand, mate, shit happens. He's not comfortable, but after you talk to him for 20 minutes, he gives you his mobile phone, and you leave him your phone number, which isn't real.

When somebody becomes a victim and accepts it without fighting back, this almost inevitably means that further victimisation will ensue. The skills of verbal manipulation mean that physical violence or even threats of violence are not necessary as the victim, who is made to realise his subordinate position, becomes fearful and passively complies with the demands of the attacker.

As Salagaev and Shashkin argue, in the case of a similar practice in Kazan, verbal intimidation is centred on the construction of the subordinate masculinity of the victim: 'The dialogue is a sort of funnel, where, after one marker of a [victim] is found, a whole image is then constructed. As a result of the victim's internalisation of his role, he, fearing physical violence, inevitably becomes materially dependent upon the group member' (2002, p. 158).

What also seems important here is that, like many other street practices, mastery of conversational devices of violence is acquired under the tutelage of the group, and represents a part of street social capital that allows the lads to achieve their aims without exposing themselves to the dangers of physical violence, as well as the possible legal consequences of such violence. After all, as a result of such confrontation, the victim 'voluntarily' parts with his money and possessions.

Research into the practices of young people belonging to territorial youth networks in other regions of Russia confirms that such networks value the skills of verbal intimidation and see them as a marker of dominant status. This contrasts with the violence demonstrated by recent migrants from rural areas, who, lacking communal ties and organisation in their new place of residence, tend to rely on brute physical force rather than conversational techniques (Karbainov 2004).

#### *Arranged combats*

One of the key cultural practices of the lads is arranged combat—a ritual where members of different territorial networks meet to stage a fight under specific conditions and limitations. Apart from being a way to resolve individual confrontations, arranged combats are used by different street groups to test their strength, settle disputes or confirm territorial boundaries. These fights tend to take place in neutral areas or, in a trope reminiscent of medieval culture, on a bridge over a river separating two areas, or, in winter, on the river ice (Golovin & Lurie 2005).

Apart from being a way to settle group disputes, arranged combat limits the risks and dangers of individual violent confrontations. There are frequent occasions in the lads' lives when one or several of them become outnumbered in a street encounter by members of an 'enemy' street group. Such a situation may be resolved without paying a high physical cost or becoming dishonoured by running away. The young men can fall back on their status as members of an honourable caste of 'warriors'—something that a *botanist* or a *loch* could never do—and request parity of forces with the 'enemies'. They can make a case for postponing the fight to a future date, when the balance of forces will be fairer. As Mikhail said, 'If I am caught on my own in enemy territory, I don't want to be beaten up. I'd say, listen, I am on my own, and there are several of you. Let me get together with my lads and we will sort it next Sunday'.

The lads agree in advance on the approximate number of fighters and whether weapons (such as chains, clubs or knuckledusters, but never guns or knives) can be used. While most of the time the agreement is fulfilled, the parity of fighters is never guaranteed.

It was like this in my area. A group of guys [from outside] challenged me and I said, let's arrange a group fight on our side of the river. They said, OK, how many? I said, collect about 40 people. I went home, got together with my mates, we saw three or four other guys we knew and asked them to come. I gathered the guys from our courtyard. There were about 30 of them. And the people who I talked to, they brought about 30 people more. The other guys came to the middle of the bridge, looked at us, saw that they were outnumbered and went back. We wanted to run after them over the bridge, but then decided not to. (Anton, 17 years old)

Arranged combats are perhaps the only events in the life of a territorial network in which a young man must participate. If he is summoned to such a fight, he must have a very good reason not to come, otherwise his reputation can suffer irreparably. Apart from being away at the time, a mother's illness is the only acceptable excuse.

The ritual of arranged combats is deeply steeped in war symbolism. There is usually a specific spatial arrangement of the participants. The lads make formations with the strongest at the front and at the back, and the younger in the middle. Someone has to start a fight, and often one of the lads will shout obscenities at the enemies to provoke them. Sometimes a fight is started by the group leader, challenging the enemy leader to an equal battle. If a group is defeated, the reputation of the territory suffers. This is why fights can lead to an escalation of violence. If the youngsters lose, their older comrades may try to reinstate the damaged reputation of their territory by going out themselves to fight. Alternatively, they can tell the youngest to arrange another revenge fight. There may be lengthy cycles of arranged fights, in which neighbourhood groups may build alliances to help each other out. The favours done by one group to another are returned, and it is not uncommon also to offer 'payment' for extra fighters (usually a couple of crates of beer). Respectable adult figures in the local community (as previously mentioned, these are retired criminals—established experts in the use of violence, or former members of the street group) may help the youngsters mobilise additional fighters.

The ancient traditions of group honour fights become highly functional in the urban context, with all its risks and unpredictability. Arranged combat converts the

individual risk into a collective one, individual honour into group honour. It becomes possible to utilise the status of the lad in the community and to use it to minimise danger to oneself. Agreed-upon rules, staging and aestheticisation of violence limit it to more controlled and ordered forms (Bloch 1986; Ben-Ari & Fruhstuck 2003; Girard 2005; Collins 2008). Once again, long-established cultural prescriptions allow the lads to both manage violence and use it to construct themselves as an elite reputational group.

### *Conclusion*

In a polemic challenging Elijah Anderson's influential analysis of the violent 'code of the street' as a feature of profound social disorganisation among certain sections of ghetto community, Loïc Wacquant (2002) argued that we should not present this code as a set of pathological adaptations, but attempt to account both for its historical origin and the specific circumstances in which it finds its contemporary expression. On the one hand, says Wacquant, we need to trace the genesis of the code as 'historically sedimented and class-ethnically inflected masculine ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in urban public space'. On the other hand, we must explain how the code emerges in particular places of destitution and alienation, 'perhaps with influences from the criminal or convict culture' (Wacquant 2002, p. 1492).

My research in Moscow has shown that, indeed, while young people's strategies of collective control over the space of the streets are frequently dismissed as irrational, pathological or linked to oppositional 'gang cultures', the lads' violent practices are inextricably linked to their embeddedness in local communal networks and local systems of knowledge, formed under the influence of village and prison cultures, as well as of cultural constructions of hegemonic masculinity. Their disassociation from the mainstream institutions of urban society coincides with their over-inclusion in the local social networks which require the use of violence for territorial defence.

On the street, young people accumulate social capital—social relationships, networks, connections, obligations and identities—which provide support and access to resources (and in the case of our lads, reputations and, when involved in street crime, material gains as well).<sup>18</sup> However, social connectivity, through the normative structures in which it is embedded, can increase exposure and vulnerability to risky practices (Pilkington & Sharifullina 2009). Street social capital, which includes the normative expectation that young people would participate in local violent practices, results in the lads subjecting themselves and others to the risk of injury, or even death, and to criminal prosecution.

There are many factors informing the social behaviour of Moscow's territorial networks. Apart from the prescriptions of archaic village traditions, which Russia, as a late moderniser, has retained in its peripheral urban areas, the social practices of street

<sup>18</sup>I use here Bourdieu's approach to 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1984, 1990) which offers a way of looking at individuals in various social positions as agents who, through the way they use social networks and connections, are able to sustain their place in the system of social stratification. According to Bourdieu, in order to obtain social capital, individuals have to possess a certain sociability, which is based on social competence and dispositions acquired in the process of upbringing and in the development of habitual practices.

territorial groups in Russia were influenced by specific features of Soviet urbanisation. Here social life was organised around compact residential developments, where young people tended to be brought up in relatively stable communities. In this sense the social practices of territorial networks at the Moscow periphery can be described as provincial, centred upon the stable, repetitive, highly localised systems of relations.

In such areas street violence can have a ritualised character and be part of a wider informal ground-level social regulation. Far from being agents of 'lawless masculinity' looking for situational domination (Campbell 1993, p. 202), young men may act as members of local knowledge networks and informal power arrangements in their territory. Ancient rituals of violent conduct, such as arranged fights and the skills of conversational violence, act as brakes on violent escalations, prevent extreme confrontations and help the lads to prevail without using excessive and unnecessary force.

The street groups described here are historical formations, rooted in specific cultural traditions, as well as in class configurations, residential histories and patterns of settlement; but they are capable of self-transformation. This is what happened in many of the Russian regions, such as, notably, Kazan and Lyubertsy, where many of the local violent groups turned into hierarchically organised entrepreneurial gangs.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the direction of greater organisation, another direction is possible for a territorial street group—that of disorganisation. Territorial groups are in fact on the wane in Russia—and have been since the 1960s. Old Muscovites remember turf fights taking place right in the centre of Moscow, on the Arbat. Now territorial battles are mainly confined to the outskirts of the city. Similar tendencies are visible in other Russian urban areas. Nevertheless, while other forms of youth social organisation come and go, parochial solidarities of the kind demonstrated by the Moscow lads turned out to be lasting phenomena, able to co-exist both with the Soviet system of official youth organisations, with young pioneers and *komsomol*, and with, using Zygmunt Bauman's expression, the 'liquid' world of late modernity. A similar phenomenon of violent territoriality is present in many urban locations around the world (McGrellis 2005; Rodgers 2009; Kintrea *et al.* 2011; McAlister *et al.* 2011), and there too, as in Moscow, young people's territorial behaviour is frequently dismissed as irrational, pathological or linked to oppositional 'gang cultures'. If, however, we are to understand what is happening in the urban spaces, we need to avoid dismissing young people's practices as irrational or pathological, and look at the collective codes and cultural traditions that govern their behaviour.

*London Metropolitan University*

### References

- Ageeva, L. V. (1991) *Kazanskii fenomen: Mif i real'nost* (Kazan, Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo).  
 Alexander, C. E. (2000) *The Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Identity, Masculinity* (Oxford, Berg).  
 Anderson, E. (1999) *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York & London, Norton).  
 Barker, G. (2005) *Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion* (London, Routledge).

<sup>19</sup>For a detailed analysis of this transformation see Gromov (2006) and Stephenson (2006, 2011).

- Ben-Ari, E. & Fruhstuck, S. (2003) 'The Celebration of Violence: A Life-Fire Demonstration Carried out by Japan's Contemporary Military', *American Ethnologist*, 30, 4, pp. 540–55.
- Bernshtram, T. A. (1988) *Molodezh v obryadovoi zhizni Russkoi obshchiny XIX—nachala XX veka: Polovozrastnoi aspekt traditsionnoi kultury* (Leningrad, Nauka).
- Bloch, M. (1986) *From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the merina at Madagascar* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press).
- Brotherton, D. & Barrios, L. (2004) *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang* (New York & Chichester, Columbia University Press).
- Bulatov, L. M. & Shesler, A. V. (1994) *Kriminogennye gorodskie territorialnye podrostkovo-Molodezhnye gruppirovki (ugolovno-pravovye i kriminologicheskie aspekty)* (Kazan, Knigoizdat).
- Campbell, B. (1993) *Goliath: Britain's Dangerous Places* (London, Methuen).
- Cohen, A. K. (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe, IL, Free Press).
- Collins, R. (2008) *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton, NJ & Woodstock, Princeton University Press).
- Connell, R. (1987) *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge, Polity Press).
- Corrigan, P. (1979) *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (Crisis Points & London, Macmillan).
- Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, Ark).
- Duneier, M. (1999) *Sidewalk* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux).
- Efimova, E. (2004) *Sovremennaya tyur'ma. Byt, traditsii i fol'klor* (Moscow, OGI).
- Felson, R. B. (2002) *Violence and Gender Reexamined* (Washington, DC & London, American Psychological Association).
- Ferrell, J. & Sanders, C. (1995) *Cultural Criminology* (Boston, MA, Northeastern University Press).
- Girard, R. (2005) *Violence and the Sacred* (London & New York, Continuum).
- Goldson, B. (ed.) (2011) *Youth in Crisis? 'Gangs', Territoriality and Violence* (London & New York, Routledge).
- Golovin, V. V. & Lurie, M. L. (2005) 'Boi na mostu, ili s kem voyuyut podrostki', in Ermachenko, I. O. & Repina, L. P. (eds) (2005) *Mir i voina: Kulturnye konteksty sotsialnoi agressii* (Moscow, IVI RAN).
- Golovin, V. V. & Lurie, M. L. (2008) 'Ideologicheskie i territorialnye soobshchestva molodezhi: Megapolis, provintsialnyi gorod, selo', *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 1, pp. 56–70.
- Graue, M. E., Walsh, D. J. & Ceglowski, D. (1998) *Studying Children in Context: Theories, Methods, and Ethics* (Thousand Oaks, CA & London, Sage Publications).
- Gromov, D. V. (2006) 'Lyuberetskie ulichnye molodezhnye kompanii 1980-kh godov: Subkultura na pereput'e istorii', *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 4, pp. 23–38.
- Gromov, D. V. (2009a) 'Podrostkovo-molodezhnye ulichnye gruppirovki kak ob'ekt etnograficheskogo issledovaniya', in Gromov, D. V. (ed.) (2009b).
- Gromov, D. V. (ed.) (2009b) *Molodezhnye ulichnye gruppirovki: Vvedenie v problematiku* (Moscow, IEA RAN).
- Gromov, D. V. & Stephenson, S. (2008) 'Patsanskiye pravila: Normirovanie povedeniya v ulichnykh gruppirovkakh', in Martynova, M. Y. & Lebedeva, N. M. (ed.) (2008) *Molodye Moskvichi. Krosskulturnoe issledovanie* (Moscow, RUDN).
- Hagedorn, J. M. (2008) *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press).
- Hallsworth, S. (2011) 'Gangland Britain? Realities, Fantasies and Industry', in Goldson, B. (ed.) (2011).
- Hamblet, W. C. (2004) *The Sacred Monstrous: A Reflection on Violence in Human Communities* (Lanham, MD & Oxford, Lexington).
- Hayward, K. J. (2004) *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience* (London, GlassHouse).
- Hayward, K. J. & Majid, Y. (2006) 'The "Chav" Phenomenon: Consumption, Media and the Construction of a New Underclass', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2, 1, pp. 9–28.
- Hobbs, D. (1988) *Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class and Detectives in the East End of London* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).
- Kabanov, S. F. (1928) *Bor'ba s ugolovnoi prestupnost'yu v derevne* (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo NKVD RSFSR).

- Karbainov, N. I. (2004) 'Molodezhnye subkultury Ulan-Ude: Razlichnye praktiki konstruirovaniya maskulinnosti', in *Muzhskoe v Kul'turnom Kontekste Goroda*, St Petersburg, 22–24 April (Moscow, Institut Etnologii i Antropologii RAN and St Petersburg, Sankt-Petersburgskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet).
- Karbainov, N. I. (2009) "'Ey, khunkhuz, kuda idyosh? Zdes' bratva, i ty umryosh!': "Ulrichnye voiny" v Ulan-Ude', in Gromov, D. V. (ed.) (2009b).
- Katz, J. (1988) *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil* (New York, Basic Books).
- Kintrea, K., Bannister, J. & Pickering, J. (2011) "'It's Just an Area—Everybody Represents It": Exploring Young People's Territorial Behaviour in British Cities', in Goldson, B. (ed.) (2011).
- Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., Pickering, J., Reid, M., Suzuki, N. (2008) *Young People and Territoriality in British Cities* (York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation).
- Kosterina, I. V. (2006) 'Skinkhedy i gopniki: Raznye liki agressivnoi maskulinnosti', in Shkolnikov, I. A. & Shnyrova, A. V. (eds) (2006) *Konstruirovaniye maskulinnosti na zapade i v Rossii* (Ivanovo, Ivanovskii tsentr gendernykh issledovaniy).
- Lea, J. (2002) *Crime & Modernity: Continuities in Left Realist Criminology* (London, Sage).
- Levada, T. (2006) *Rossiya dlya Russkikh...?*, available at: <http://www.levada.ru/press/2006082500.html>, accessed 24 December 2010.
- MacDonald, R. & Marsh, J. (2005) *Disconnected Youth?: Growing up in Britain's Poor Neighbourhoods* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).
- McAlister, S., Scraton, P. & Hayden, D. (2011) 'Place, Territory and Young People's Identity in the "New" Northern Ireland', in Goldson, B. (ed.) (2011).
- McGrellis, S. (2005) 'Pure and Bitter Spaces: Gender, Identity and Territory in Northern Irish Youth Transitions', *Gender and Education*, 17, 5, pp. 515–29.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (1993) *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield).
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2000) *Nine Lives: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Violence* (Boulder, CO & Oxford, Westview Press).
- Morozov, I. A. & Sleptsova, I. S. (2004) *Krug igry: Prazdnik i igra v zhizni severorusskogo krest'yanina (XIX–XX vv.)* (Moscow, INDRIK).
- Nayak, A. (2003) *Race, Place and Globalization: Youth Cultures in a Changing World* (Oxford, Berg).
- Nayak, A. (2006) 'Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-Industrial City', *Sociology*, 40, 5, pp. 813–31.
- Oleink, A. N. (2003) *Organized Crime, Prison, and Post-Soviet Societies* (Aldershot, Ashgate).
- Omel'chenko, E. (2006a) 'Smert' molodezhnoi kultury i rozhdenie stilya "molodezhnyi"', *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 30, 3, pp. 167–79.
- Omel'chenko, E. L. (2006) *Ritualnye bitvy na Rossiiskikh molodezhnykh stsenakh nachala veka, ili kak gopniki vytesnyayut neformalov*, available at: <http://politi.ru/culture/2006/05/23/gopniki.html>, accessed 26 December 2010.
- Pearson, G. (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (London, Macmillan).
- Pearson, G. (2011) 'Perpetual Novelty: Youth, Modernity and Historical Amnesia', in Goldson, B. (ed.) (2011).
- Pilkington, H. (1994) *Russia's Youth and Its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed* (London & New York, Routledge).
- Pilkington, H. (1996) *Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia* (London & New York, Routledge).
- Pilkington, H. (2002) *Looking West?: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press).
- Pilkington, H. & Sharifullina, E. (2009) 'The Mutual Extraction Industry: Drug Use and the Normative Structure of Social Capital in the Russian Far North', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 20, 3, pp. 251–60.
- Pitts, J. (2008) *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime* (Cullompton, Devon, Willan Publishing).
- Presdee, M. (2000) *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime* (London, Routledge).
- Radio Rossii (2005) *Persona rata: Valerii Abramkin*, available at: <http://www.radiorus.ru/news-htm?id=205364>, accessed 26 December 2010.
- Roche, R. (2007) "'You Know America Has Drive by Shootings? In Creggan, We Have Drive by Beatings". Continuing Intracommunity Vigilantism in Urban Northern Ireland', in Pratten, D. & Sen, A. (eds) (2007) *Global Vigilantes: Perspectives on Justice and Violence* (New York, Columbia University Press).
- Rodgers, D. (1999) *Youth Gangs and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Literature Survey*, LCR Sustainable Development Working Paper No. 4 (Washington, DC, The World Bank).

- Rodgers, D. (2009) 'Living in the Shadow of Death: Gangs, Violence and Social Order in Urban Nicaragua, 1996–2002', in Rodgers, D. & Jones, G. A. (eds) (2009) *Youth Violence in Latin America* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Salagaev, A. (2001) 'Evolution of Delinquent Gangs in Russia', in Klein, M. W., Kerner, H. J., Maxson, C. L. & Weitekamp, E. (eds) (2001) *The Eurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe* (Dordrecht & Boston, MA, Kluwer Academic Publishers).
- Salagaev, A. & Shashkin, A. (2002) 'Nasilie v molodezhnykh gruppirovkakh kak sposob konstruirovaniya maskulinnosti', *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsial'noi antropologii*, 1, 5, pp. 151–60.
- Salagaev, A. L. & Maksudov, R. R. (1988) *Podrostok v gorode: Problema sotsializatsii* (Kazan, KGU).
- Sanders, B. (2005) *Youth Crime and Youth Culture in the Inner City* (London, Routledge).
- Shchepanskaya, T. B. (2001) 'Zony nasiliya (Po materialam Russkoi sel'skoi i sovremennykh subkulturnykh traditsii)', in Bocharov, V. V. & Tishkov, V. A. (eds) (2001) *Antropologiya nasiliya* (St Petersburg, Nauka).
- Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London, Routledge).
- Stenson, K. (2005) 'Sovereignty, Biopolitics and the Local Government of Crime in Britain', *Theoretical Criminology*, 9, 3, pp. 265–87.
- Stephenson, S. (2006) 'Kazanskii levafan: Molodyozhnye territorialnye gruppirovki i problema sotsial'nogo poryadka', *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 30, 3, pp. 97–110.
- Stephenson, S. (2011) 'The Kazan Leviathan. Russian Street Gangs as Agents of Social Order', *The Sociological Review*, 59, 2.
- Sullivan, M. L. (1989) *'Getting Paid': Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press).
- Suttles, G. D. (1968) *The Social Order of the Slum. Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City* (Chicago, IL & London, University of Chicago Press).
- Thrasher, F. M. (1927) *The Gang. A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago, IL, University Press).
- Venkatesh, S. A. (2000) *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press).
- Wacquant, L. (2002) 'Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography', *American Journal of Sociology*, 107, 6, pp. 1468–532.
- Willis, P. E. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Farnborough, Saxon House).
- Wilson, W. J. (1998) *When Work Disappears: New Implications for Race and Urban Poverty in the Global Economy* (London, London School of Economics and Political Science, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion).
- Winlow, S. & Hall, S. (2006) *Violent Night: Urban Leisure and Contemporary Culture* (Oxford & New York, Berg).
- Wolfgang, M. E. & Ferracuti, F. (1967) *The Subculture of Violence* (London, Tavistock).
- Young, J. (2007) *The Vertigo of Late Modernity* (London, Sage).
- Zabryanskii, G. I. (1990) 'Mekhanizm formirovaniya antisotsial'nykh podrostkovykh i yunosheskikh grupp', in Karpets, I. I. (ed.) (1990) *Kriminologi o neformalnykh molodyozhnykh ob'edineniyakh* (Moscow, Yuridicheskaya literatura).