6. The Role of Media for Democracy. Coverage of Social Problems in the St. Petersburg Press

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The research presented here is part of a joint Swedish-Russian study of media coverage of social problems. The work was done in the context of the broader project on the role of media for identity and democracy. The goal of the Russian part of the study is to reveal and describe the discursive strategies used by the St. Petersburg print media in their coverage of socially important problems and to define whether such strategies may be considered democratic.

Approach

The research uses a version of the classical/participationalist concept of democracy, as opposed to the revisionist/institutional concept (this traditional opposition is found in the work of many political scientists, see e.g. Schumpeter 1952). Thus, here, democracy is understood not as a specific institutional design, but as the ability of all citizens to take part in making the most important decisions concerning the development of their society. The democratizing activity of the media, then, is defined as providing a forum in which these decisions may be discussed by all interested parties, as well as promoting identities among the audience that place great value on access to such discussions and to decision-making. In relation to media coverage of social problems, it is particularly important that different social groups be given the opportunity to express their definitions of these problems and opinions as to possible solutions.

Thus the notion of social problems is defined here within a theoretical approach known as "contextual" constructivism (Best 2003). Unlike radical constructivism (e.g., Spector & Kistuse), which postulates that social problems are no more than public claims or labels defining some situations as problematic, contextual constructivism acknowledges some connection between claims (manifested, e.g., through the media) and objective conditions. Thus, for example, though corruption in the St. Petersburg press had not been widely covered as a severe social problem before President Putin publicly constructed it as a problem (claim), he did so exactly against the background of the rapidly growing statistics on corruption (condition). Such conditions, or more broadly social

factors, serve as causes of the rise and fall of social problems' very "existence" in the public domain, first of all in the media (for a description of such factors, see Hilgartner & Bosk 1988; to examine an application of such an approach to the Russian media, see Yasaveyev 2004).

One of the central difficulties of a constructivist definition of social problems as claims is the question of who must make these claims and how widely they must be made for them to be defined as social problems. Situations may be defined as problematic by dominant or marginal social groups or even individuals, either in the public domain or outside it. Fairclough, focusing on what he finds to be problems for those labelled as "losers" in a given social order, however, notes that "what is problematic and calls for change is an inherently contested and controversial matter" (Fairclough 2001: 125). Therefore, in the present study, it was decided that scholars would first tackle several social phenomena supposedly seen as social problems in the media of one or both of the studied countries, and then the representation of these problems in media would be studied. Thus, problems as objective conditions were not studied per se and were not compared with their coverage, but the dynamics and features of media texts were explained partly by events observed in the "world out there".

The first problem to be chosen was corruption, which is supposedly important to Russia but less to Sweden. The second issue was global warming (GW), which is thought to be important to Sweden but less to Russia. The third and most complicated was the problem of nationalism, supposedly important to both countries but in different ways. After the topics were chosen, the texts were selected and analysed using a complex of methods elaborated in a series of previous studies and adjusted to the goals of the present research.

Methodology

The methodology used is based, albeit very generally, on the Russian formalist school of text analysis – that is, it is presupposed that any text contains certain structural elements (such as actors and their actions, or conditions and results of the described event, or binary oppositions, or time and space categories, etc.) and that those elements may be revealed, separated from their concrete manifestations and typified. But what makes the study sociological is the presupposition that critical analysis of texts, with reference to their broader social context, may lead to meaningful conclusions concerning the media "life" of social problems. (First of all, revealing what images and discourses are predominant, and whose voices are represented, allows us to assess how "democratic" the studied texts are from a participationalist perspective.) Therefore an important feature of the methodology used here is that it overcomes the quantitative vs. qualitative dichotomy by integrating both approaches in two stages.

Data collection, selection and primary analysis

The first stage, which is predominantly, but not exclusively quantitative, relies heavily on the work with the media and information database *Integrum* (www.integrum.ru). Among other sources, it contains hundreds of Russian and Former Soviet Union periodicals and millions of articles, and it enables sophisticated automatic searches and chart making. *Integrum* was chosen as the source of empirical data because it is one of the leading Russian databases of this kind. The period of study was defined as the year immediately preceding data collection: March 1 2006 – March 1 2007. Before working with the database, three sets of Russian keywords corresponding to the three chosen social problems were agreed upon with the Swedish researchers.[1]

Selection of newspapers

The selection of newspapers was primarily based on the average issue readership (AIR) of newspapers.[2] Second, newspaper formats and political orientation were taken into consideration. Third, mentionings of all three topics in absolute numbers were studied, and then weighted by the frequency of issues of all newspapers. Twenty-one newspapers appeared to contain at least some mentionings, and the further choice was made among those newspapers. It was discovered that the market leaders almost ignored the studied topics, while some of the papers with a lower readership (especially business press targeting a very narrow audience) were sometimes very active in covering the selected problems. The sample included both types of editions. Two leaders, *Metro* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (The Truth of Communist Young League) *(KP),* were included in the sample (see Table 6:1). Both are local off-springs of national newspapers. *Metro* is a new (i.e., Post-Soviet) multicoloured paper dominated by advertisements, and the leader in its sector (with AIR exceeding that of the "normal" editions by several times). *KP* is a transmutation of one of the popular Soviet official editions, the leader in the "yellow press" sector, although yielding to several "ad" sector editions.

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[1] For the problem of global warming they were: "global warming" OR "climate change" OR "climate warming". For the problem of corruption they were: corruption [noun] OR corrupttion [adj] OR corrupt OR bribe OR bribery OR mzda [bribe] OR mzda-taking [bribery] OR corruptionist OR bribe-giver OR bribe-taker. For the most complicated problem of nationalism, the set included three related notions and their derivatives: nationalism OR nationalist [adj] OR nationalist [noun] OR racism OR racist [adj] OR racist [noun] OR xenophobia.

[2] The data were taken from two large readership surveys: one by a leading local marketing company Comcon SPb (see Comcon) and a briefer quarterly National Readership Survey by the leading national media research company TNS (see TNS).

Table 6:1. Mentionings of the three problems in selected newspapers in the studied period, absolute numbers

Newspaper taken into sample	Number of articles mentioning topics		
	Corruption	Nationalism	Global warming
Delovoy Peterburg, weekly	167	72	13
Komsomolskaya Pravda, weekly	33	24	3
Metro, weekly	43	26	6
Nevskoye vremya, daily	285	138	25
Novy Peterburg, weekly	144	68	6
Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti, daily	302	169	46
Total	**974**	**497**	**99**

Then three leaders in absolute mentionings of the three topics taken together were revealed and included in the sample, and these newspapers also ranked high in weighted mentionings: first, *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti* (St. Petersburg News) (highest AIR among local non-yellow press, oldest Russian newspaper and official mouthpiece of the local authorities). Second, *Nevskoye vremya* (Neva Time) – once a leading newspaper among those that emerged during *perestroika*, although by the time of the study also fully controlled by the authorities and with a rapidly declining AIR. Third, *Delovoy Peterburg* (Business Petersburg), a leader among business newspapers, although with a modest absolute AIR; this paper had been started with Swedish capital and had a reputation of being relatively autonomous.

The sixth newspaper to be selected was a special case of *Novy Peterburg* (New Petersburg) (one of the leaders in the weighted mentionings, low AIR). It is important to understand that there are no truly oppositional newspapers in Russia apart from some that are very marginal and radical papers, and *Novy Peterburg* was exactly one of these. Its editorial board positioned the paper as "radically oppositional" and "national-patriotic", which meant that it fiercely criticized the government from nationalistic positions and on behalf of an impoverished nation that is being robbed by its authorities. The language it used was very dubious, vulnerable legally and criticized by human rights (HR) activists. In November 2007, the newspaper was suspended and its main columnist Nikolay Androuschenko, the author of the most critical articles, was arrested, and this time the HR activists stood up *for* him. Although this happened after the studied period, the circumstances are very important to the present study.[3]

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[3] December 2007 was the time of the parliamentary elections, which were to be followed by the presidential elections in March 2008, when Vladimir Putin was to quit his presidential post. Nikolay Androuschenko was released shortly after president Medvedev's inauguration, although by the time the present article was written, Androuschenko was still on trial. Shortly

After the six papers were selected, the distribution of the articles with the keywords was analysed: the distribution was uneven over the course of the study period and demonstrated peaks and fallst. A closer qualitative analysis of article headings and citations (provided by the database as the intermediate result) showed that those fluctuations were meaningful, and thus the peaks became the basis for the selection of small samples for more detailed analysis (second stage). This assumption of a relationship between frequency of content and meaning is the main feature of classical content analysis (see, e.g., Titscher 2000), however, the procedure of establishing such a relationship is essentially qualitative and, moreover, relies on the author's embeddedness in the social context (knowledge of "objective conditions"). Three separate samples of 51-60 articles were constructed for the three social problems, and three separate code lists were made.

In the second stage, the selected articles were read, coded and analysed. Some variables in the code lists were quantifiable in principle, but because of the small sample sizes, extensive statistical analysis was not used. Instead, many "variables" were filled with longer citations, and thus the filled code lists served more as a tool for ordering and visualizing the data than as a basis for mathematical analysis. That is, instead of writing categories on the margins of a text as "softer" discourse analysts would do, the citations were inserted into the columns of the corresponding categories. Code lists were made after reading small samples of articles, and the analysis was not limited to the tables.

Discourse analysis

Construction of a set of such categories – i.e., the structural elements of texts to be revealed – was the central part of the methodology. Russian formalists elaborated their categories because they were interested in narratives, and mostly not those of modern media. Many media scholars (e.g., Van Dijk 1988) have a similar event-oriented focus. Actors, actions, place and time are also at the centre of Bell's analysis of news stories (Bell 1998). Categories of actors, their actions and speech have proven to be highly relevant to the present study,

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before the first elections of this cycle, on November 22, 2007 *Novy Peterburg* was given an official warning for Androuschenko's article "Why we should go to the Dissidents' March on November 25" (the Dissidents' March was the main action of nearly all oppositional parties and movements protesting against unfair and manipulated elections). Androuschenko's article was seen to have elements of extremism. By law, after two such warnings, an edition may be closed down by the courts. Indeed, a week later the newspaper got another warning for an article published half a year before that, and was suspended by the district court. On November 23, the editorial hard disks were confiscated and Nikolay Androuschenko was arrested. He was accused of two crimes: (1) libelling an official (this primarily concerned the head of the City Housing Committee Unis Lukmanov, whom Androuschenko had accused of many sins, including corruption) and (2) putting pressure on the court through a series of his articles about the murder of a Congolese student. Both are the topics of the present study – topics on which Nikolay Androuschenko was working throughout the studied period – and they will be considered further below.

because it is through them that we can see which groups engage in what discourses and which of them are predominant.

However, newspaper articles are not necessarily narrative. Traditional Soviet theory of media genres divides them to "informational" articles, which include news as the main narrative genre and other descriptive texts, and "publicist" or "analytical" genres. Journalism students are taught that while news is centred around an event, analytical articles are centred around a problem. Despite the intensive hybridization of genres during the post-Soviet epoch, a rough version of this distinction has survived. I have shown elsewhere (Koltsova 2007) that the more a media text focuses on a problem, the less narrative the text is, i.e., the element van Dijk called the "main event" may be completely absent. Further, schemata such as that of van Dijk (1988: 55), which contain such elements as headline, lead, episodes, comments and the like, tell us a great deal about news as a type of discourse, but say little about the object of interest here – the social problem.

Fairclough (2001) has offered a problem-centred approach to discourse analysis, but his goals go far beyond text and discourse analysis, extending to a general critical analysis of the broader social context. Here I shall restrict myself to analysis of discourse, with only some references to social context. A social problem may itself be seen as a discursive construction or schema, consisting of a set of typical elements that may "live" in different types of discourse, including everyday conversation or internal government reports. My study on the representation of the homeless and homelessness, referred to above, suggests the following elements: *description of problem development and/or state of affairs*, *problem causes*, *consequences*, *suggested or already applied methods of struggle*, and *forecasts*. Some or all of these elements may reveal themselves through descriptions of *events, actors' actions or speech.* All of them were implemented in the code lists for the present study; additionally, code lists contained parameters unique to each problem.[4]

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[4] For corruption it was important to identify its type: everyday or business, and level of enforcement by the bribe-taker, both parameters according to a classification based on Georgy Satarov's INDEM research foundation studies of corruption in Russia (INDEM 1997-2006). Bribe size, if mentioned, was also coded. For nationalism, it was important to count mentionings of the three related problems (nationalism, racism and xenophobia) in each text to judge their relative weight. Given the social context in St. Petersburg (a series of murders of foreigners and migrants, especially students, that resounded in the papers), it was important to see whether each text contained mentionings of conflict/assault and what parties were involved. For global warming, it was important to see whether this phenomenon was regarded as a problem at all, because unlike the other two phenomena, global warming is often questioned not only as to whether it is an undesirable phenomenon, but as to whether it really exists. The results of the research are presented below.

General tendencies

Relative importance of social problems

The size of the samples for qualitative analysis did not allow in-depth comparisons between editions, however, some general trends were revealed. A focus on corruption correlated strongly with a focus on nationalism among 21 newspapers and, unsurprisingly, this depended on their format. Coverage of global warming was so limited that it was virtually impossible to see any trends in distribution among the newspapers, and although an analysis of articles on this topic was carried out, its results are modest and are not addressed here in detail. Low interest to global warming is most probably explained by the fact that, in people's minds, global warming is a problem of a smaller scale than the other two; it is rather a specific kind of environmental problem and is covered as much as other specific ecological (or specific nationalistic, corruption) problems/cases are. For instance, in St. Petersburg, global warming gets as much attention as water pollution and the murder of the Tajik girl (see further on). Ecology as a more general concept is covered at the level of corruption and more than nationalism. The dominance of corruption over nationalism may be explained by the distribution of power between the social groups affected by these two problems. While nationalism affects only a minority, corruption is a widespread phenomenon affecting the entire adult population, but especially business people, who have more opportunities to voice their viewpoint than do ethnic minorities. Furthermore, corruption is an officially acknowledged problem, while the existence of nationalism is often denied by the authorities.

Differences between newspapers

Despite prevailing opinions (both inside and outside the country) about the severe political censorship in Russia, vivid discussion with a wide spectrum of viewpoints was discovered when concrete cases were covered by media. It is true that censorship does exist for certain issues: Except in the case of *Novy Peterburg*, no criticism of president Putin was found – on the contrary, when criticism of state policy was expressed, it was often specially stressed that the president had outlined right directions which, unfortunately, were not followed. Similarly, St. Petersburg governor Valentina Matvienko was criticized only indirectly, through her policies. Reproaches were most often addressed to "authorities" and similar anonymous forces. However, concrete laws, bills, policies, and reactions to events were often covered differently – supported or criticized from different angles. And here some important differences between newspapers were found, which I will outline below and show in detail later in the article. *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti (SPV)*, as the official newspaper, nearly always expressed the viewpoint of the local authorities; when their position was contradictory, as in attitudes towards nationalism, the newspaper reproduced

those contradictions. The *SPV* sample of articles contained hard news stories on official events such as statements of official persons, press-conferences and governmental gatherings. *Nevskoye vremya* was close to *SPV*, though somewhat less restrained while *Delovoy Peterburg (DP),* as a business edition, demonstrated the most consistent, well-reasoned and reserved criticism. It also gave the floor to the widest range of social actors, including many direct quotes, often without commentary. *DP's* most obvious difference from *SPV* was in the question of nationalism. Yellow *Komsomolskaya Pravda (KP)* covered all topics to such a limited degree that no trends could be detected; even the ad-oriented *Metro* had more substantial and reasonably critical articles than *KP* did.

Finally, *Novy Peterburg* differed from all the others dramatically. It paid little attention to topics widely covered by others – such as the frequently discussed murders of foreigners or corruption stories that resounded in the media. Instead, it offered radical and overwhelming criticism of the "predatory" and "venal" Russian state at all its levels, including person criticism of President Putin, using "corruptionist" as a swear-word and holding the position of Russian orthodox nationalism. Thus, covering the death of Slobodan Milosevic, former Yugoslav leader tried by the Hague Tribunal, Nikolay Androuschenko called him a "great Slavic citizen" blaming his death on the "Eurobandits from the Hague and traitors of brothers-Serbs – Ukraine and Russia", or, more precisely the Russian "corrupt state". Most articles in this newspaper were much more emotional than those found in others; however, some of them, such as Androuschenko's investigation of *Viking* bank, contained more detailed arguments and evidence supporting the author's criticism than in any other newspaper.

Corruption

Dynamics of coverage

An initial hypothesis was that President Putin's annual speech to the Federal Parliament on April 26, 2006, where he claimed that corruption was one of Russia's most critical problems, would produce a peak, which would be followed by a calmer but more long-term increase in coverage of this problem. However, the peak it resulted in was modest and short, and after it the coverage remained stable for about two months, until late June/early July. Since late June, however, the average number of articles on corruption did increase and was higher than before the speech throughout the entire studied period, even if peaks are excluded. What happened in late June/early July? There were a number of events: the peak started with the appointment of the new General Prosecutor on June 23 and ended with (a) Putin's annual responses to people's on-line questions, where questions on corruption were most numerous (July 6); and (b) ratification of the International Convention on Criminal Responsibility for

Corruption by the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament (July 8). The middle between the two events was mostly filled with articles on authorities' strategies concerning the "struggle against corruption" and with overviews of corruption in Russia, including sociological studies.

Another unexpected peak was found in December. It was initially thought to be connected to coverage of the annual results, where Putin's corruption agenda would be touched upon again. However, it turned out to be equally (a) an echo of a mid-November corruption scandal in the Federal Fund for Obligatory Medical Insurance then covered mostly in the national press, but reflected on later in the St. Petersburg press in a "localized" manner, and (b) a reaction to the International Day of the Struggle against corruption (December 9). The middle between these two events was mostly filled with cases of everyday and business corruption, primarily at the local level.

There was also a smaller and shorter peak in February 2007 connected to two formal events: Putin's decree on the commission on the fight against corruption and adoption of the St. Petersburg law on the struggle against corruption, but because a larger summer peak is also connected to formal events, it was decided to exclude the February peak. The calm period was chosen deliberately to represent the medium-level coverage period *prior to* Putin's speech to the Parliament.

Typology

Articles on corruption are too numerous and too varied to be classified on a basis of a small sample of 60 items. However, some regularities can be found. Unlike articles on global warming, these texts seldom talked of corruption as such, but more often considered it in connection with an event and even more often – touched upon it partly in connection with another problem. For instance, when talking about new rules of registration of ownership rights for land, a journalist would speculate whether such rules might lead to the growth of corruption. The prevalence of such articles shows the pervasiveness of corruption, which is present as a background topic in nearly any discussion of the government and its policies.

Policies and measures used to fight corruption

Policies were the major type of measures in the struggle against corruption that were widely mentioned in the articles. It is interesting that journalists talked about causes, consequences and forecasts much more seldom than about the measures used to combat corruption. Among the causes mentioned, authors or other actors usually named bad laws, the superfluity of regulations that turned into bureaucratic barriers or, on the contrary, the absence of clear regulations, which caused state officials to make arbitrary decisions; also mentioned were people's bad morals and the evil nature of the current regime. The consequences

addressed in the articles fall into two groups: the immediate consequences of concrete corruption acts and the general consequences for society. The latter include the subversion of initially good policies, the growth of risks and costs for businesses, especially small businesses, and the consequent decrease in business activity, the decrease in the country's investment appeal, the decrease in the government's accountability, the increased threats to democracy and human rights, and the general "devastation of the country". Forecasts mostly concerned development of concrete corruption cases and situations.

Measures to combat corruption fell into two radically different types, which produced two types of discourses on the problem of corruption. Despite the variety of texts on corruption, these two discourses could be clearly traced in the sample. The first type talked of concrete measures taken in a specific situation, most often concerning the arrest, trial or conviction of an official corruption suspect. This was mostly accomplished in the format of criminal news. The second and the most interesting type was the discussion of governmental anti-corruption policies. Most anti-corruption measures offered or introduced were legislative, e.g., ratification of the European Convention on Criminal Responsibility for Corruption and the introduction of laws on the confiscation of property gained through bribery, the responsibility of judicial persons for bribe-giving, the proportionality of the penalty to the magnitude of corruption gains, the limit on the monetary value of presents given to officials, etc. Given the dominance of legal issues among the causes, one may establish a correspondence between the causes of and measures used to combat corruption, which is not a necessary feature of the coverage of social problems. Other measures may be conventionally divided into "orthodox" (creation of various state bodies, audits by Procuracy and even "something like China-style death penalties for corruptionists", *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti* 03.07.2006) and "liberal" (withdrawal of the State from business, development of self-defence measures by the business community, mobilization of citizens and their legal resources), with a continuum between the two poles.

Differences between newspapers

This discourse merges into that on other policies, which often assessed whether those policies (could) lead to a reduction in or growth of corruption in the relevant sphere. And here newspapers visibly varied in their level of criticism. The official *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti* scantly or apologetically reported on official events or statements, *Nevskoye vremya (NV)* offered similar articles, but also contained criminal news on corruption, items on corruption-oriented research, and some criticism. Although this criticism was modest and rare, *NV* gave its readership more information on the current state of the problem. *Delovoy Peterburg (DP)* was still somewhat farther from officialdom. It avoided official texts and supplied the reader with detailed descriptions; when it did not

challenge governmental policies, it talked of the difficulties such policies would meet; when it did challenge governmental policies, it criticized the government in a well-reasoned, albeit mild and cautious style. It also considered many concrete corruption situations that went beyond the genre of criminal news. In general, *DP* gave the floor to the widest range of actors, including Russian and foreign research bodies on corruption and businessmen who were asked to tell about their experiences with state officials.

Novy Peterburg (NP) never talked about anti-corruption measures, but criticized governmental policies as being corrupt. Its ambiguous style combined strong evidence with an abundance of emotional accusations that finallymade the newspaper an easy target for authorities. For instance, it could easily claim that "frauds and cheats from the city government and the Housing Committee" were not going to compensate people for unrendered service, that the governor promoted the "criminal mechanisms of housing policy" and that such a form of stealing (through unrendered service) had become the norm. Articles in *NP* were full of exclamation points, vulgarisms ("why the hell", etc.) and entire words spelled in capital letters.

Corruption cases and types of corruption

Thus far, we have been talking about discourse mainly centred on measures, including policies, but another important type of talk about corruption, partially overlapping with the former, concerns concrete corruption cases. It includes the already mentioned criminal news and descriptions of corruption-related situations, many of which had no successful resolution. In such cases, the people involved were often unnamed because their guilt could not be proved. Situations when someone was arrested, if they did not constitute criminal news, were usually presented as examples of the successful struggle against corruption in interviews with officials. Apart from such situations, one success story was described by *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti*. It told how inhabitants of an apartment block near a park that had been given away for construction of a new house won the case in court and saved the garden. The only genuine journalistic investigation was the article by Nikolay Androuschenko, but it investigated the criminal activities of the *Viking* bank; the authorities were only generally accused of conscious deceleration of the criminal proceedings and of corruption. Androuschenko's long debate with authorities concerning this case is thought to have been one of the reasons for his arrest.

The corruption situations mentioned in the selected articles may be easily classified into several types according to several criteria. First, following Satarov's classification (INDEM 1997–2006), they may be divided into everyday corruption situations faced by common citizens and business corruption, where extortion of resources from entrepreneurs takes place (the latter being harder to avoid). Initially, it was thought that the authorities would try to play down the

scale of corruption as a social problem, and that therefore primarily everyday corruption would be mentioned. Surprisingly, the newspapers paid equal attention to everyday and business corruption, respectively. Moreover, when cases mentioned in articles were classified by the degree of enforcement exercised by officials, it turned out that the newspapers predominantly talked about the most severe kind of corruption, which is more like extortion than bribery.

Bribe size is also often mentioned in articles (from 2 to 300 thousand U.S. dollars) and depends on the level of corruption. The minimal mentioned bribe had occurred at the district level, the maximal at the federal level. Not unexpectedly, the St. Petersburg press paid the most attention to local situations. The most resonant corruption scandal in the Fund of Obligatory Medical Insurance, which was top national TV news in November 2006, hardly found its way to the local press. Indeed, an analysis of the ratio of its mentionings in national, St. Petersburg and other local press indicated that this was a predominantly national event in the printed press, too.

In general, the detailed character of the discussion, the variety of measures taken and described and other features of the discourse on corruption suggested that this problem had been and was going to be greatly reflected on in society. The consensus about the undesirable nature of corruption and about the importance of combating it was obvious and had two consequences. First, it opened an official "window" for relatively free discussion of policies and measures, although opinions were expressed, in the first round, by officials, and only in the second round by representatives of business and article authors. Those accused of corruption were present as actors, but, unsurprisingly, not given the floor; the voices of common people were virtually absent. Thus, the discussion was promoted but channelled into a narrow spectrum. The second consequence, which was related to the first one, was the relatively calm nature of the public discussion. All these traits are absolutely untypical of the heated and unstructured discourse on nationalism.

Nationalism

General background

To explain the coverage of nationalism in the St. Petersburg press, it is necessary to describe the major relevant events. As the second largest megalopolis, St. Petersburg is a city with a large proportion of migrants,[5] and in the past 5-6

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[5] Migrants of Russian and other citizenship, as well as of Russian and other ethnic groups, often have similar problems, but the problem presented by "ethnic" migrants for "core" Russian cities is specific, as such people differ in appearance, speech and behaviour. They are the objects of everyday discrimination irrespective of their Russian/non-Russian citizenship. For instance, Chechens are considered as alien as Tajiks, although Chechnya was fiercely fought for as a Russian territory.

years, it has acquired the reputation of being a "nationalistic capital" owing to the numerous assaults on foreigners. Although there is no reliable evidence proving that the number of such assaults is higher than, for example, in Moscow, some murders have come to resonate in particular, and the peak occurred during the studied period. Initially, authorities were reluctant to admit the nationalistic character of many of the assaults, but the murders of two Russian antifascist activists in 2004 and 2005 made it difficult to deny the growth of nationalistic activities. In the discourse of the studied period, several murders[6] were united into a single chain and often covered together. The most resonant among them was the murder of the Senegalese student Samba Lampsar in April 2006. Unlike other murders committed with cold arms, this was committed with a rifle that, moreover, had a swastika on it. This caused the authorities to become more active, and in mid-2006 a special 5-year programme called "Tolerance" was adopted by the local government. Procuracy – the body responsible for criminal investigation – demanded cancellation of the most resonant non-guilty verdicts. The released suspects of Tadjik girl Hursheda's murder (see note 6) were retried and convicted; non-guilty verdict on Congolese student's case (ibid.) was also cancelled and the case was sent for additional investigation. In Russia, the jury court is a very young institution, and its verdicts may be cancelled by higher courts.

It is also important to mention an event that happened outside St. Petersburg but that echoed in its press. On August 30, 2006, in the small town of Kondopoga (republic of Karelia in the North-West), drunken visitors at a bar offended its Azerbaijani barman. He ran for help and brought a group of friends, mostly Chechens; in the fight that followed, two Russians were killed, some wounded. The police who witnessed the event took no action either during the course of the fight or after it. The next day, the Azerbaijani-owned bar was burned down. In two days, leaders of the radical nationalistic organization Movement Against Illegal Immigration (MAII) gathered at a large protest meeting. An agitated crowd pogromed the local flee-market – a place where migrants are usually employed. Authorities made some arrests, promised to teach children tolerance and simultaneously to fight illegal immigration (note: Chechens are Russian citizens). They also had to hide local Chechen women and children in a sana-

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[6] Three murders preceded the studied period: 9-year-old Tajik girl Hursheda Sultonova in 2004; Vietnamese student Wu An Tuan in 2004 and Congolese student Roland Epassak in 2005. All were slaughtered by groups of young males. In late March 2006, when this study begins, the jury found a group of teenagers suspected of Hursheda's murder, and with a nationalistic motive, guilty only of hooliganism, and gave them a very mild sentence. This immediately resulted in a protest demonstration whose participants were worried that from that point on, skinheads would feel safe and assaults would continue. The same evening, a 9-year-old black girl Liliana Sissokko was attacked and wounded with a knife. Later that year, a jury discharged the young people accused of murdering Roland Epassak (June) and Wu An Tuan (October), which was widely discussed in the press. The latter occurred just after another murder of an Indian student in September.

torium outside Kodopoga for several weeks. The story was top national news for about two weeks.

Dynamics of the coverage

The initial hypothesis was that the there would be two major peaks, one caused by the murder of Lampsar Samba (the one perpetrated with the swastika-marked rifle), and the other by the events in Kondopoga. The first hypothesis was confirmed, although the articles in the April peak were equally focused on Samba's murder and on the chain of events surrounding the "mild verdict for Hursheda's murderers – protest march – assault at Liliana".

The events in Kondopoga, however, were not the cause of a separate clear-cut peak, rather they were a part of a broad and relatively mildly sloping period of increased interest in the topic from September to November. This is explained by a whole series of various events discussed separately or together. Kondopoga per se was discussed only in the first two weeks of September, which corresponds to the highest level of interest in this event both in the national and Karelian press. Then until the end of November, one can trace a sequence of less covered events, including the protest actions of foreign students in St. Petersburg, the Russian-Georgian conflict, nationalist political events in the Ukraine, the nationalist "Russian march" of MAII, and discussions on a new jury verdict in which those accused of a racist attack on a Vietnamese student were declared innocent. Among all of these events, the "Russian march" sub-period was selected as the local event, not connected with students' murders, as one such murder was already included in the analysis. Naturally, this sub-period does not only contain articles on the "Russian march". It has been extended to a period somewhat longer than four weeks.

The calm period corresponds to medium-level coverage. It also includes news on the guilty verdict for the leader of the fascist organization Mad Crowd, which balances earlier non-guilty verdicts.

Keyword usage

The complexity of the issue of nationalism, racism and xenophobia has given rise to a need to search for and analyse the mentionings of all keywords, allowing us to more generally map the distribution of attention paid to the different notions. An analysis of references to keywords in the general population of articles and outside it has shown that *nationalism* and its derivatives are far ahead of *racism*, *fascism* and *xenophobia,* including their derivatives. Thus, in the small sample, *xenophobia* is slightly overrepresented. The qualitative analysis has shown that *nationalism* was usually used as an umbrella term embracing all other notions. For instance, the largest surge of discussion in which St. Petersburg is depicted as the capital of nationalism was provoked by assaults on two black people (Liliana Sissoko and Lampsar Samba), which could be called

cases of racism. However, the Russian nationalistic culture does not usually differentiate between black and non-black ethnic others, and therefore racism is seen as a sub-type of nationalism. In Russia, the word Fascism refers to German Nazism (the latter term being nearly unused), but classical Nazism has problems taking root in Russia, because it denies the rights of Russians themselves. Fascism is thus a term usually used from outside the nationalistic culture to completely deligitimize nationalists; radically nationalistic youth movements and groups prefer to call themselves skinheads, although this informal term hardly finds its way into the serious press.

It is also important to note that issues of nationalism, especially in the official discourse, are often indissolubly merged with those of extremism, which was not a keyword in the present study. In 2006, the peak in the campaign to combat extremism occurred. It included amendments to the Law on Combating Extremism that were discussed more than the law itself. The law defines extremism broadly, but mostly as anti-systemic political activity (including discursive activity). However, in the 2006 edition, it also includes: "damaging health and property of citizens in connection to their views, race or ethnicity, religion, social status or social origin", propaganda about such activity and "propaganda and public demonstration of Nazi symbols" (Federal law, 2006). Given this context, it is easier to understand why organizations and groups that commit hate crimes, such as Mad Crowd, are more often called extremists than nationalists.

Typology

The structure of the small sample on nationalism was different from both of the other samples. Five-sixths of the articles were entirely devoted to the issue (in the corruption sample – less than a half), and of these 10 were devoted to the problem as such, not in connection with an event. These kinds of articles usually discussed solutions and policies aimed at the struggle against nationalism. The other, event-orient articles dealt not only with murders and non-guilty verdicts, but often with official and public reactions to these events (public statements, meetings, conferences, protest actions). Even superficial reading reveals the intensity of events and the high degree of social tensions underlying the publications. It is interesting, however, that coverage of this potentially global issue relatively seldom went beyond the boundaries of St. Petersburg, with the distribution of articles in terms of their globality-locality being very similar to the distribution for corruption.

Voices and opinions

In contrast to the other two issues, the polarization of opinions in general, and on some issues between newspapers, was much greater. The set of actors was much more varied than in the corruption articles. In the former case, as already mentioned, the dominant actors were representatives of authorities who were

depicted as dealing with or speaking about the struggle against corruption. The second most common actors were representatives of authorities who had been charged with corruption. In such cases, they were given coverage, but not a chance to speak (voice). In the nationalism articles, the great proportion of the actors were not representatives of authorities, but also included were NGO (non-governmental organization) members, experts, protesters, and victims of the problem and its sources. Although victims, as usually in social problems representations, were given more coverage than voice, one thing was very important. The question who is the victim of the social problem and who is its source/initiator was a contested matter; sometimes roles ascribed to a couple of characters in one article were reversed in another, and a victim was called an offender. In this uncertainty both from time to time were given floor to justify their positions, and so victims got more voice than usual.

The polarization of opinions of all those varied actors primarily concerned the causes, consequences and methods of combating the problem, but most visibly it concerned their interpretation of major events. Within the small sample, concerning the causes and methods of combating nationalism, it may be said that the articles that saw causes in such things as the "unwillingness of migrants to adapt" or in their competition for jobs or even as "provocation against St. Petersburg" (see later in the text) tended simultaneously to promote more repressive measures against nationalists. The proposed measures ranged from more police patrols to a general "firm administrative battle on extremism", combined with stricter regulation of migration. Thus, ethnic minorities were automatically seen in the articles as migrants and guests who were currently not on "their own" territory (see also note 5).

Differences between newspapers

The articles that identified the causes of nationalism in "social problems", such as the low social status of migrants or people's false "stereotypes" about migrants, tended to insist on milder measures, such as development of education in the sphere of ethnic cultures and general promotion of tolerance. They also connected ethnic minorities to migrants less often. The first, harder group of measures was clearly more characteristic of *Novy Peterburg* (*Sankt-Peter-burgskiye vedomosti*, at least in this sample, avoided the topic of combating nationalism), while *Delovoy Peterburg* mentioned milder measures. *Novy Petersburg*, naturally, did not offer to help in the struggle against nationalism at all, as it saw nationalism as a virtue. Therefore, *NP* instead offered to struggle against the anti-Russian government. But, to repeat, the most obvious cleavages between newspapers concerned the events.

A first cleavage was connected with the assault on a black girl named Liliana Sissoko. Most newspapers viewed this event in the context of growing national-ism, but the most official paper, *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti,* cited governor

Matvienko, who warned against drawing premature conclusions concerning the possible nationalistic nature of the assault. Even when commenting on the murder of a black student with a swastika-marked rifle, the authorities said that it was a provocation of unknown forces who wanted to discredit St. Petersburg in anticipation of the G8 summit to be held there three months later. This viewpoint was mentioned by all of the papers, but not always apologetically. Even the "almost-official" *Novy Peterburg* gave equal status to Matvienko's interpretation and to the alternative opinion of the African Unity social movement.

The second important cleavage concerns mild and non-guilty court verdicts. Of the two most obvious interpretations (jury members are nationalists *or* city investigative bodies collect poor evidence), both are unfavourable for the local authorities. Therefore, *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti* tried to vindicate the two groups, both of which worked under "difficult circumstances"; *Novy Peterburg* admitted to more general problems with the Russian legal investigation and court systems; *Delovoy Peterburg* and *Metro* assumed that the jury had a nationalistic bias, and *NP* – ironically – sympathized with *SPV* on the issue of the jury being objective. However, in line with its general policy, *NP* proclaimed that the true cause of what was happening to the accused was not the erroneous actions of investigators, but the intentional plot of the corrupt regime against honest Russians. Thus, according to this view, the jury's behaviour constituted heroic resistance against the government's policy of anti-Russian fascism.

A third visible point of cleavage was the so-called "Russian March" of the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (MAII), scheduled for the Day of National Unity, November 4.[7] The dubious character of this new holiday was widely discussed in the press, especially in the context of the post-Soviet tradition in which different political parties and movements organized street demonstrations on November 7 and after the abolition of November 7 – on November 4. The "Russian March" was proposed by MAII, the movement that organized the anti-migrant pogroms in Kondopoga and viewed them as a successful action of true Russian patriots. St. Petersburg authorities hesitated in approving this march, claimed it would be prohibited and finally let it happen in a distant place, far from traditional locations for public actions.

Novy Peterburg critically commented on the discrepancies between the words and deeds of the local authorities. *Delovoy Peterburg* gave the floor to several youth movements that planned demonstrations for November 4, mostly movements with a pro-Kremlin and nationalist oppositional orientation, including

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[7] The year before the studied period, the main Socialist holiday, the Day of the Socialist Revolution celebrated on November 7, was abolished and replaced with the Day of National Unity on November 4. The official decision on this holiday states that, on this day, the volunteer multi-estate army "liberated Moscow from Polish interventionists" (although the link between this event and this date is questioned by historians); it is also the day of the famous Orthodox Icon of Our Lady of Kazan.

the MAII. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published an article headed "Russian March failed" and described it as a poorly attended farce. Using a mocking style, it depicted a minor fight between the MAII, who were shouting "Support Kondopoga! All power to the Slavs!", and Antifa (antifascist) youth movement, who shouted "Fascism won't do!" and who were the first to throw a petard at the MAII. Finally, *Novy Peterburg* stiltedly wrote about the success of the Russian March, which was held in spite of the viciousness of the authorities. Coverage of this event clearly shows that, when it comes to the heated topic of nationalism, the same cases may be not only interpreted, but also described using completely opposite terms – from failure to success.

Conclusions

It is clear that the St. Petersburg press presented very diverse coverage of social problems, but how democratic was it? Did it provide a forum in which important decisions could be discussed by all interested parties? Did it promote citizen identities that value such discussion? The answer is no less complex than the coverage itself.

First, the structure of the voices that were represented is different for the different problems. In the relatively few articles on global warming, most references were made to Russian or foreign academic experts who stressed the causes and consequences of the problem, or to Russian or foreign officials talking in political and economic contexts about various measures to combat global warming. In articles on corruption as an officially acknowledged problem, the predominant actors were representatives of authorities who were speaking about the fight against corruption. The voices of businessmen and the journalists themselves were also present, but ordinary people were excluded. Those accused of corruption entered the articles as actors, but they were denied the floor. And a particular question in this context concerns whether, in light of the normative theory of democracy, the opinions of such actors should or should not be represented.

Articles on nationalism, often case oriented, were more diverse. A great proportion of the actors were not representatives of authorities, but included NGO members, experts, protesters, and victims of the problem and its sources. Opinions were more polarized, which seems to be closely connected to the fact that nationalism, unlike corruption, is not a univocally recognized problem in the official discourse.

The complexity of the studied phenomena is also seen on a more general level that stretches beyond differences between specific problems. Thus, regarding both nationalism and corruption, on the one hand, we could see a relatively wide spectrum of opinions, from a moderate liberal discourse standing for such problem solutions as deregulation and public mobilization and self-help, to a

statist, paternalistic and moderately repressive discourse close to the official viewpoint, and further to an extreme nationalistic anti-government but also very repressive discourse. On the other hand, by the time of the present research, the oppositional liberal discourse, more extreme than the one we found, had already been nearly eliminated from the press. Thus, the spectrum we observed was not complete and was shifted towards the nationalistic pole. A year later, the only newspaper promoting the extreme nationalist discourse was shut down, which made the spectrum more symmetrical, but also even more narrow. The situation with the official discourse is also complex: on the one hand, it clearly dominated; on the other, it drew in the elements of other discourses catering to different audiences, thus acquiring polysemy within itself and leaving room for limited discussion using its own terms.

The atmosphere of "free" discussion was most visible in *Delovoi Peterburg*. When it did not criticize the government, it still kept a distance from it, and in any case it gave the floor to the widest set of actors, including, e.g., victims of corruption, or liberal and nationalist politicians. But, even in this paper, articles presenting multiple viewpoints were not in the majority. Most common in all the newspapers were texts that promoted a single position, although *DP,* more than the others, published texts with diverging positions, thus opening a discussion between them. Its rigour and orientation towards presenting precise data and argumentation also contributed to the culture of discussion. *Novy Peterburg*, although very oppositional, on the contrary had no intention of discussing the position it stood for with the government or with anybody else. It used all the classical mechanisms of propaganda and balanced on the brink of what is legal.

It is also important to say that the agenda concerning all the social problems discussed here was not at all always set by the authorities. As concerns corruption, one may claim that this topic was initiated by the Federal Government, but this agenda setting was already based on a general consensus concerning the high level and great harmfulness of corruption and was preceded by an already quite high level of coverage of the topic. With regard to nationalism, the pressure of events was so strong and the degree to which they constituted a problem was so great that the authorities could not, even if they wished, keep them from being covered or leave them without a reaction – either discursive or embodied in actions. Their behaviour with regard to these events was indeed re-active and rather followed than anticipated them. The absence of a consistent governmental position on the matter made a great deal of room for public discussion; it was also reinforced by an absence of consensus in society itself. Finally, it cannot be concluded that the modest representation of global warming was the result of a conscious plot on the part of the authorities. Rather, it was not on the agenda in society in general and in the expert communities in particular.

It should also be noted that some "elements" of the social problems were covered less than others everywhere, as they usually are in the Russian press. Thus, the causes of problems were paid less attention to than the measures to combat them, and the problem victims were given a voice less often than the problem solvers were. However, on the whole, it cannot be said that all aspects of problem coverage were effectively controlled by the authorities, and the public discussion, though not without its limitations, did have an influence on the authorities' actions

The results of the present study on media coverage of the three problems also have several implications for a broader media theory. The media have often been accused of shifting their attention from tendencies and problems to separate decontextualized events. This, however, is not at all the case in the coverage of corruption and global warming in the studied press. A possible cause of such accusations seems to lie in the fact that most research has been centred around news as an event-oriented genre (or entertainment content), and thus what in the Soviet media was called a publicist/analytical item, as a problem-oriented genre, slipped from the attention of scholars. It also seems that an orientation to events shifts towards an orientation to problems as the "hotness" of the problem decreases. Because the hotness itself emerges when events are multiple, recent and have the potential to resound in the media.

Besides this, the depth of the problem analysis and the discussion of it has been shown to be dependent on public agreement on the problem. Where too much disagreement is present, both concerning the existence of the problem and concerning its features, emotional comments suppress democratic discussion, and the media reflect a wide spectrum of polarized opinions that do no talk to each other. When the problem and its main features are generally acknowledged and agreed upon, the discussion becomes calmer, deeper and more well-reasoned, and the various voices begin to interact. Although in Russia the spectrum of voices on corruption was purposefully narrowed by the authorities, it seems that with more consensus the spectrum should narrow anyway, as this is what constitutes consensus as such. Finally, when agreement is complete, there are no subjects left to discuss, whether this agreement is on the features of a problem, its existence or importance, or whether it is based on full and correct information as opposed to false and/or missing information (as with global warming, which was considered unimportant in the public opinion). Thus, it seems as though a medium level of agreement is needed to promote the most democratic and productive discussions of a given problem.

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