



Lifestyle in Siberia and the Russian North

Edited by
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Cover image: Ulan-Ude, 2009. Participants of a brass band open-air festival are returning to their hostel from the main square where they've just performed. Photo: Luděk Brož, CC-BY.

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II. Conclusions

Joachim Otto Habeck

The authors of the preceding chapters hope to have contributed to the theoretical exploration of the concept of lifestyle, drawing on David Chaney (1996), Pierre Bourdieu (1984), and other social scientists' works. Beyond that theoretical contribution, it is hoped that this volume has reached the goal of documenting the rich diversity of everyday-life experiences in communities small and large across Siberia and the Far North of Russia. Each individual life project and biography should be encountered with sincerity, even if occasionally interviewer and interviewee had very different approaches to the meaning of certain norms and values, questions of social inclusion, and the future trajectories of society in Russia. Beyond the two biggest cities of the country — Moscow and St Petersburg — the authors have sought to capture hopes and concerns connected with personal fulfilment and social well-being in less central, in some cases very peripheral communities of Russia. This is a relevant pursuit in its own right, considering the prevailing image of Siberia as remote and generally backward.

Open boundaries, transnational exchanges, and the potential of communication via the internet have facilitated a degree of proximity between “home” and “research community” that many of us research-team members could not foresee at the time when we started ethnographic work in the respective community (usually in the 1990s). Notwithstanding this new proximity and openness, many of us also see a growing tendency of estrangement between Russia and western

European countries when it comes to mass media and public discourse. “Talking past each other” is one of the ramifications of internet-based social networks, and the undebatable existence of a language barrier aggravates old and new stereotypes.

In the sections to follow, I will first sketch out some trends that have come to exert pervasive influence on Russian society in recent years, then address the central research questions that the project has explored. I then return to the concept of lifestyle and discuss it in the context of the findings of this research project. Finally, I look into the meanings of modernity in the Siberian context, since lifestyle is often considered to be a phenomenon typical for high-modern and post-modern societies.

Beyond 2011: an update on social and cultural shifts in Russia

The chapters of this volume are all based on ethnographic research that took place around the year 2011. The research attempted to capture the diversity of lifestyles in Russia and simultaneously to examine factors that circumscribe and pose limits to individual aspirations and activities. The contributing researchers conducted fieldwork among a broad range of communities and social groups, each of them arguably constituting some reality of their own, notwithstanding the diverse types of connectedness of these communities and notwithstanding the different roles that individuals take on in their everyday life.

This volume may be read as a documentation of the breadth of social realities and ambitions in Siberia and northern Russia twenty years after the end of the Soviet Union. Eight years have passed since the time of the fieldwork; but nonetheless, the authors are positive that their observations and conclusions continue to have relevance and validity in the present time. Simultaneously, the members of the research team perceive gradual and wide-reaching changes in the communities in which they conducted research, and in Russian society at large over the last years. These changes have taken place not only in the domain of infrastructure (e.g. the completion of the road between East Siberia and the Russian Far East in late 2010) and telecommunication (e.g. the advent of GSM in about 2015 in remote rural settlements). Recent years have also seen a noticeable shift in public discourse and — to return

to Chaney's notion — sensibilities, as has also been observed by other social scientists, to be discussed in this section.

Generally, we can speak of a conservative turn in Russia.¹ This conservatism has been dubbed “blurry” inasmuch as it allows for a wide range of political stances and tropes of memory (Bernsand & Törnquist-Plewa 2019: 4, with reference to Laruelle). It emanates from the centre of power, finding support — sometimes superficial, at other times very intensive — on the part of local politicians and among the inhabitants, including the urban and rural communities where we conducted research. This does not mean that the range of possible forms and practices of self-expression has shrunk altogether; rather, the range has come to incorporate explicitly patriotic, religious, spiritual, and strongly traditional conceptions of self and social interaction. Many liberal convictions and lifestyles have become subjected to criticism that emerges from a disenchantment with pro-western and “democratic” trends of the 1990s and a nostalgic longing for a Soviet past when life was supposedly more “in order”. To be sure, such developments did not proceed in a steady, gradual, undisputed manner. Important discursive shifts occurred with the political events in Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014, with the ensuing sanctions and financial difficulties.

Disenchantment with the “liberal” 1990s

There is a widely shared and persuasive feeling among large parts of Russian society that the 1990s were a decade of disorder (*bespredel*). The policies of privatisation, market liberalisation, and pertinent reforms intended a very clear break with the collectivist ideology of the Soviet past. These policies derived from and simultaneously promoted a bundle of sensibilities around individual initiative, experimenting with new

1 Discussing this view with several colleagues from within Russia and beyond, I received divergent responses. Some of the contributors to this volume hold that conservative attitudes are not a new but rather persistent phenomenon, articulated by the juxtaposition of Russian values against those of the west. Similarly, Alexander Agadjanian (2017: 42) argues that the Russian Orthodox Church “actually served as one of the channels transmitting continuity with the Soviet past, thereby assuming some substantial elements of the late Soviet, predominantly conservative ethos”. Other commentators imply that Russia's current policies must be seen in the context of western countries' geopolitical advances and active alienation of Russia (e.g. Chris Hann in his controversy with Alessandro Testa, see Hann 2015: 90).

cultural forms and means of self-expression, not only but importantly through consumer choices. For the inhabitants of the biggest cities, it was arguably easier to develop new personal and familial strategies in terms of livelihood; the window of new opportunities was simply larger than in the more provincial parts of the country, where the economic restructuring often led to an almost complete devastation of the formerly state-owned or collective enterprises. At present, differences in life standards, livelihoods, and political attitudes continue to be determined by place of residence and centrality/remoteness (Zubarevich 2013).

The reforms of the 1990s were explicitly connected with democracy and liberal society modelled on North American and western European societies, but in the course of the 1990s it became clear that the “reforms” did not prevent, but rather nurtured illicit (in many cases, clearly criminal) methods of accumulating wealth and non-transparent practices of decision-making. Therefore, it is understandable that “democracy” and “liberalism” attained pejorative connotations in the political opinion of many inhabitants, who rather demanded a “strong hand” (*sil'naiia ruka*) to rule the country. In the almost two decades since Vladimir Putin's accession to power in 2000, the political design of a “strong hand” came to be real, which explains his popularity to a large extent. Regardless of how one evaluates the political success and moral basis of the government under Putin, many observers (within and outside Russia) agree that the country has regained its former geopolitical importance. Despite the very palpable economic ups and downs over the last twenty years, there is almost unanimous agreement among the populace that the economic and social conditions in Russia are now more stable than in the 1990s.

The disenchantment with the pro-western and “democratic” trends of the 1990s is accompanied with a nostalgic longing for a Soviet past (Bernsand & Törnquist-Plewa 2019). Such nostalgia is rarely connected with a desire to return *tout court* to the Soviet ways; it rather constitutes a selective reading of memories to be kept — to be kept, on the one hand, because they define moments of “good life” and happiness in personal biographies (as described in Chapter 6 of this volume); on the other hand, they also recall the absurd difficulties of everyday life in past decades, conjuring up a sense of bygone sociality and documenting the practical creativity of the narrator(s) in “getting by”. But nostalgia is

not just personal; it is also created and celebrated in public, at state level. The resurrection of the grandeur of the Soviet Union and earlier periods of Russian history surely carries an integrative function — a point of convergence that most citizens can identify with. It also serves to rehabilitate the nation's "sense of self" and establish political legitimacy through emphasis on historical continuity instead of rupture.

Putin's political agenda has been characterised as generally conservative, and Putin himself does not shy away from using this characterisation himself.² This is not to say that Putin's leadership has no critics; in fact, even within the inner circles of the leading party, divergent opinions and conflicts about the meaning of conservatism exist, as becomes clear from Katharina Bluhm's (2016, 2018) close reading of conservative manifestos and her analysis of political groupings. Bluhm argues that conservatism in Russia cannot be simply equated with "Putinism" (2016: 6). To be sure, the government actively (and top-down) tries to create and maintain "a 'loyal' civil society" (ibid: 8), but conservative values have strong currency also among other actors and institutions, notably the Russian Orthodox Church (see below). Despite ongoing altercations about the "right" conservative path, there is a collection of values on which most conservative thinkers would agree: these include "justice, patriotism, social solidarity, the will to strong leadership and self-discipline. Beyond that, the 'traditional values and ideas of the majority of the people' (for example, in what

2 The emphasis on traditional values is exemplified by Putin's presidential address to the Federal Assembly on 12 December 2013, which contained the following statement: "Today, in many countries, norms of morals and morality are under revision, national traditions and the differences between nations and cultures become blurred. Society is now asked to show healthy acceptance of everyone's right to free conscience, political views and private life, but — however strange this may seem — also to show obligatory acceptance of the equality of good and bad [as] notions of opposite sense. Such a destruction of traditional values 'from above' leads not only to negative consequences for the societies, but [is] fundamentally anti-democratic, inasmuch as its implementation into life derives from abstract, diverted ideas against the will of the people's majority, which does not accept the current turn and the envisaged revision. — And we know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on the defence of traditional values that for thousands of years constituted the spiritual and moral basis of civilisation and of each people: the values of the traditional family, of genuine human life, which also includes religious life, life that is not only material but also spiritual, the values of humanism and diversity of the world" (Poslanie Prezidenta 2013).

concerns marriage and family) should be resolutely defended” (ibid: 25). Moreover, there is widespread agreement among the political elites and large parts of society that Russia’s future depends on technological innovation, the strengthening of infrastructure and institutions, and the “connection between modernization and geopolitics” (ibid: 13). To regain strength, it is assumed, Russia must combine technological development with a return to its own spiritual and cultural riches.

Marlène Laruelle, long-time observer of the patriotic turn in Russia, sums up these feelings and explains how they provide the basis and motivation for the work of organisations that engage in the promotion of patriotic education:

All the activists share the same negative views of the 1990s, the state’s collapse, the market economy and the so-called Westernisation (*vesternizatsiya*) of Russian society. They exhibit values that can be considered conservative: respect for hierarchy, emphasis on order, paternalism, fraternity, concern for one’s neighbour, respect for the elderly and social responsibility. Added to this is the idea that Russian society has become ill because it has forgotten its history (2015: 19).

Patriotism and patriotic education

While the organisations engaged in patriotic education cover only a section of youth activities, they exemplify very profoundly the ways in which conservative values and self-reliance are transmitted from the older to the younger generation. A process that was already well underway in the 2000s (Laruelle 2009; Le Huérou & Sieca-Kozłowski 2008; Oushakine 2009) has gathered further momentum in the last few years. Laruelle (2015) argues that the terms patriotic and patriotism have come to stand for an almost indefinite range of stances and political aims. She offers a typology of organisations, spanning the range from extracurricular clubs based at schools or municipal cultural institutions to clubs affiliated with the Orthodox Church, through to clubs under the supervision of former military staff. In addition, Laruelle also includes clubs engaged in historical re-enactment (2015: 14).

In the domain of historical re-enactment one can see considerable overlap in the personnel of these organisations and the people who organise live-action role-playing games (“larpers”) portrayed in Chapter 10. Public appeals to patriotic education resonate well with some larpers’

views on the pedagogic function of role-playing games. The theme of patriotic education also appears, albeit less directly, in the summer camps that aim to train (male) youth to find inner strength, as described in Chapter 9: the field game *Zarnitsa* with markedly military features has been taken out of its earlier context of Soviet patriotic education and customised to fit an indigenous educational mission. Whichever the context of youth camps in present-day Russia, there is nothing unusual in the prospect of children and youth arrayed in camouflage, which is owed to the outdoor character of activities and underlines a sense of comradeship.

Among the manifold facets of patriotic education that Laruelle points to is the interrelation of household income, place of residence, and leisure activities on offer for young people:

A kind of correlation probably exists between patriotism and social stratification but it needs to be studied in greater depth and with sociological tools. The poorer a person is, the more one's leisure activities depend on public service offerings. [...] [P]atriotism also has a territorial marker. The larger the spectrum of leisure activities on offer in general, in Moscow and the main Russian cities, the smaller the recruitment pool for patriotic clubs and the less appeal they have to anyone outside their captive audience (those seeking free leisure activities); while in smaller towns and even more so in villages, the patriotic activities sponsored by the town hall, former military personnel or the local parish are often the only ones available, so they enjoy a form of monopoly by default (2015: 18).

In small towns and rural settlements, different types of leisure activities are indeed limited in choice; moreover, many parents are on too tight a budget to be able to use commercially provided leisure activities. Village clubs or municipal Houses of Culture continue to offer (more or less regularly and successfully) extracurricular and leisure activities mainly for children at school age at little or no cost. Although I agree with Laruelle on the necessity to examine spatial and income-related aspects of engagement in patriotic activities, I see a wider spectrum of activities in the public sphere of culture, comprising genres of music, dance, and creative arts that may correspond to patriotic values, but do not necessarily do so (Habeck 2014). I agree with Laruelle that there is a noticeable slant towards patriotism as a moral value to be imbued

in young people's minds through school and extracurricular education; this is in line with the general trend of a conservative turn.

The Russian Orthodox Church

Numerous anthropological studies have looked at the strengthening influence of the Russian Orthodox Church after the end of the explicitly atheist Soviet state (e.g. Agadjanian 2017; Benovska-Sabkova et al. 2010; Köllner 2012; Luehrmann 2005; Tocheva 2017; Zigon 2011). One can also generally observe a growing popularity of other religious denominations with a long-standing presence in Russia (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism), of indigenous belief systems such as shamanism, and of religious groups that arrived to Russia rather recently and do not enjoy the legal status of "traditional religion" (e.g. Pentecostalists or Jehovah's Witnesses). Notwithstanding the diversity of denominations, the Russian Orthodox Church certainly holds the leading position. It is hard to ignore the immense number of church buildings in all parts of the country, some of them being restored as a result of the restitution of clerical property, others being built from scratch in towns and settlements at the extractive resource frontier. The position of the clergy is vested in personal, ideological and institutional "entanglements" (Köllner 2018) with local politicians, entrepreneurs, and the military at the national, regional, and local scale.

Despite some degree of diversity of interpretations within the Russian Orthodox Church, the predominant majority of the clergy shares the conviction that Russian society suffers from having lost its cultural values and its spirituality (*dukhovnost'*), and that only the restoration of the latter can help overcome existing social ills. In line with this thought, occasions abound for critiquing individualism, consumerism, and hedonism as "non-Russian" and a sign of degradation. While the general concern about *dukhovnost'* may seem timeless, the particular lessons drawn from it create novel responses: Kristina Stoeckl sees the Russian Orthodox Church as a "norm entrepreneur [...] calling attention to issues that hitherto have not been named" (2016: 133). The concern about social and personal wellbeing through spirituality should be considered as a sensibility in its own right, with newly developing or re-emerging aesthetics and norms of proper conduct, including patterns

of consumption and mobility. For example, the practice of fasting has attained widespread popularity (Mitrofanova 2018), as has the practice of pilgrimage (Kormina 2010; Naletova 2010).

While the church as an institution understandably emphasises its continuity in Russian history, religious rites and everyday practices were largely disbanded or reframed in Soviet times, so that now many individuals perceive the need to acquaint themselves and their children with these old-new practices and the belief system on which they are based. Some authors have discussed this realignment under the term *votserkovlenie* (“enchurchment”) (Benovska-Sabkova et al. 2010). The personal ambitions and aspirations that accompany the turn towards religiosity, the stream of communication with others about morality and appropriateness, the combination of a shared set of norms with practical exercise, and the repetitive character of the weekly and annual cycle of congregations add up to an expressive mode of identification, and is thus constitutive of a distinct lifestyle. Jarrett Zigon (2008) in particular discusses notions of morality in Russia in the context of practice.

Arguably more than others, adherents of the Russian Orthodox Church — or to do justice to the diversity of believers, more specifically the clergy — are very pronounced in their judgement when it comes to family, sexuality, reproduction, and the institution of marriage (Agadjanian 2017: 43–45). Inasmuch as this is supported by a general conservative turn in Russian politics and society, and the conflation of patriotic behaviour with a healthy nation, the opportunities for public expression of lifestyles diverting from these norms seem to diminish, as has been alluded to in recent publications (e.g. Luehrmann 2017; Mitrokhin 2013; Rakhimova-Sommers 2019; Stähle 2015).

Consumption and critique of consumerism

Not the least important element in the conservative discourse is the critique of consumerism implicitly understood as the blind pursuit of hollow (market-driven) promises and the zeal to gain satisfaction from the act of purchasing or consuming in its own right. In Russian public discourse, consumer culture is frequently portrayed as a phenomenon that has entered Russia from “the west”. The term “lifestyle” (*stil' zhizni*) and along with it, the idea of stylisation (*stilizatsiia*), easily acquire the

connotation of something spurious (exemplified in Chapter 9), devoid of authenticity and spirituality. Indeed, consumption is often considered to be the key marker of distinctive lifestyles not only in academic scholarship but also in mass media (the latter also pertains to Russia).

In some of the theoretical literature on lifestyle, the linkage between lifestyle and consumption is presented as straightforwardly direct: lifestyle can be analytically exposed through patterns of consumption (see the discussion of Michael Sobel's interpretation of lifestyle in Chapter 1) and consumption is a prime domain of social distinction. It is true that in contemporary Russia, there exists a range of lifestyles that derive their distinctive force largely from the display of fashion, cars (Broz & Habeck 2015), and other consumer goods, sometimes clearly bearing the signs of fetishisation of certain brands and commodities. More generally, the gradual spread of shopping malls in Russian (including Siberian) cities is just one indicator of the unfettered attractiveness of personal and household consumption (cf. Roberts 2016). Yet consumption did not appear suddenly with the turn from a socialist to a market economy: distinctive practices of consumption existed also in Soviet times, and in spite of the overall ideological emphasis on production, private consumption attained public legitimacy in the 1960s under Khrushchev (see Crowley & Reid 2010).

An example of current perceptions of taste and patterns of consumption is a recent study on clothing: Ol'ga Gurova (2014) uses interviews from St Petersburg and Novosibirsk to examine middle-class clothing preferences. She identifies gender, age, class affiliation, and place of residence as the main factors that shape the ways in which people select clothes, want to see themselves, and want to be seen by others. She argues that most male interviewees show a much higher awareness about dress and taste than in Soviet times and the 1990s. Older cohorts of interviewees continue to judge clothes in accordance with "classic" patterns, paying much attention to "cultivated" attire that suits the social occasion. Older people at times complain about the provocative manner of young people's attire, whereas most of the young interviewees emphasise that dress should express individuality and personality.

Gurova's study indicates a general tendency towards individualisation. The concern about finding one's personal style (*stil'*)

comes to the fore in interviews with both young and middle-aged informants. Gurova considers middle-class consumers as the main target group of marketing, and middle-class youth as those who are most prone to experimenting with new styles. Among her interviewees, there is awareness about (and usually respect for) people with very low income who nonetheless invest much of their scarce resources in “proper” or tasteful attire. Middle-class perceptions of the upper class have changed to some extent: the image of *nouveaux riches* in raspberry-red jackets and golden necklets, which was typical for the 1990s, is giving way to a different type of appearance, oriented towards a well-groomed body and higher quality garments.

Gurova notes that people in Novosibirsk dress more brightly and simultaneously more “grey-ish” and less individually than in St Petersburg, which is characterised by its restrained and yet individual apparel. There seems to be a paradox — bright versus grey — which may be explained by seasonality (cold winters do not offer many opportunities for bright clothing) and additionally by some sort of “herd instinct” (*stadnyi instinkt*) of Novosibirsk urbanites, who are generally prone to follow the latest fad, as one of Gurova’s interviewees said.³ Gurova also pays attention to the spatial hierarchy of trends in taste and dress: Novosibirsk largely follows and emulates trends received from St Petersburg and Moscow — with some local variation, which may partly be explained by its proximity to China and Far-Eastern markets. According to my interviewees in Novosibirsk, inhabitants of smaller industrial cities, such as Kemerovo, are even less individualist in terms of apparel, less refined and more trivial in their taste. People in district centres take the regional capital’s fashion as a yardstick, whereas villagers seek to incorporate the fashion that they observe in the district centre.

As such, these statements are not very surprising, but there are two points that deserve particular attention: first, despite the ethnic diversity of Siberia, very seldom do elements of regionally or ethnically

3 From my own observations, in the city centre of Novosibirsk it is indeed possible to dress in very ostentatious and “individualist” ways, but a few blocks further, towards the city’s suburbs, such statements of individualism will be met by stern glances and occasionally by sneering comments. See Habeck & Schröder (2016) on spatial aspects of explicit xenophobia and homophobia in some parts of the urban fabric of Novosibirsk.

specific dress enter the flow of fashion. There have been artistic and academic projects to identify distinct Siberian brand symbols, playing with existing stereotypes about Siberia (Press 2012). Nonetheless, fashion designers and managers in this domain continue to look for inspiration from Moscow, St Petersburg, and western countries, in some cases ultimately deciding to relocate there.⁴ It should be added, however, that in some of the ethnically defined territories of Russia — such as the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) — visible expressions of personal sensibilities that evolve around ethnicity can be seen clearly in the domestic and the public sphere (see Chapter 7). Second, the argument about the spatial hierarchy of fashion loses some of its clout in specific situations and spaces; and interestingly, it is in very remote villages as well as in large cities that research team members met individuals who show stubborn indifference to fashion as much as to the comments of their neighbours (exemplified in Chapter 3). Attire may look odd as long as it is practical.

Gurova mentions anti-materialist attitudes among some of her interviewees, both amongst the senior and the junior cohort. The former are likely to comply with the request from Soviet days “not to get obsessed with things” (*ne zatsiklivat'sia na veshchakh*, 2014: 60), whereas the latter display anti-materialist attitudes with the aim to express critique towards capitalism and consumerism. There is ample congruence here with normative appeals around *dukhovnost'*, discussed in the previous section, and also with the phenomenon of voluntary simplicity that has developed as a sensibility in its own right in Russia (cf. Il'in 2015) as well as in other societies. In the course of our research project, we came across many examples — and have presented them in this volume — of lifestyles and subcultures that continue to value self-made objects, home-grown food, regional products, economic self-sufficiency, a livelihood close to nature and the skills that come with it, and traditional crafts and skills as part of a regional — in some cases, indigenous — identity. Returning to one of the general arguments, any attempt to analyse lifestyle through the proxy of consumption remains insufficient if the sensibilities that lay at the core of these lifestyles are not understood in detail.

4 Two of my interviewees for this project did.

Increase in mobility and international tourism

Mobility has the potential to make people more aware of the range of lifestyles that exist outside their immediate sphere of everyday life: it offers manifold opportunities to realise in which ways others (relatives, friends, acquaintances, and members of the general public) live under very diverse conditions and pursue very diverse forms of work and pastime activities. A particularly strong version of this argument has been made by Vladimir Popov with regard to international tourism as a trigger for tolerance and democracy:

Russian tourists can be considered as the subjects trying actively to master new forms of transnational practice, identity and subjectivity after a long stay in actual closedness during the days of the Soviet era and the following economic crisis of the 1990s. Except for the transnational mobility, hardly any phenomenon in the cultural aspect has contributed to the weakening of the dominant codes of behaviour which have remained an inheritance from previous historical periods. Many forms of social and cultural life seen outside, especially in the advanced Western countries, have appeared extremely attractive and acted as ideals of what many would seek in their daily lives. It is felt that the experience, acquired in the practice of international mobility, has appeared as the important reason encouraging social changes in Russia towards a more open and democratic society (2012: 160–61).

While I agree with the statement that transnational mobility fosters a sense of openness and awareness of other modes of living, I am more sceptical about the tenet that the experience of having been abroad encourages a more democratic and tolerant society. Acquaintance with other people's living conditions and comparison with one's own mode of living does not necessarily mean that travellers accept other countries' social arrangements and other people's values as applicable in their own societal context.⁵ In the oft-discussed comparison of "us" in Russia with people living elsewhere, I frequently encountered statements to the effect that Russia needs to pursue its own way. Having said that, from among the interviewees of our research project, many of the urban and

5 Dennis Zuev (personal communication) observed that Russian *Work-and-Travel* students visiting the United States for a mid-term period (up to four months) did not generally develop a stronger sense of tolerance or acceptance of alternative life-ways.

some of the rural inhabitants judge their stays abroad very positively, with some taking the decision to spend part of their life in a different country (in North America, Europe, Southeast Asia), quite frequently moving back and forth between their new home abroad and their home town in Russia in a sense that clearly shows the marks of a transnational existence.

Popov's assessment is based on statistical data from across Russia; it does not account for regional differences. While travelling to Mediterranean countries or Thailand came to be something of a mass phenomenon in the 2000s, it nonetheless remains the privilege of urban inhabitants; whereas those living in rural settlements continue to arrange their travels in dependence on relatives in Russian cities, combining a host of practical issues (shopping, provisions, healthcare, etc.) with the maintenance of familial networks. Exceptions of this rule are some rural communities in the vicinity of Russia's state boundary, e.g. with China or Finland, but in these cases, the aspect of pleasure in travel is usually less important than its economic aspect. Regional disparities of mobility are stark across the different parts of Russia, as has been recently shown by Bolotova, Karaseva & Vasilyeva (2017) — a point to which I will return below in line with the discussion of mobility patterns in the rural settlements of our research project.

Lifestyle, habits of travelling, and visual forms of self-presentation

The research project was designed with the purpose of studying two questions:

- (a) What is the mutual relationship between changing technology and infrastructure on the one hand, and lifestyles, on the other, *as exposed by habits of travelling?*
- (b) What is the mutual relationship between changing technology and infrastructure on the one hand, and lifestyles, on the other, *as exposed by changing visual forms of self-presentation?*

An examination of the above was achieved through the prism of three sub-questions: (i) How have technology and infrastructure changed

over time?; (ii) How have habits of travelling changed over time?; and (iii) How have visual forms of self-expression changed over time?

How have technology and infrastructure changed over time?

Chapter 2 of this volume discusses changes in technology and infrastructure in detail, and only general trends shall be repeated here. In comparison to present times, travel in the last Soviet decade was harder and easier: it was harder inasmuch as there was a general shortage of tickets, and passengers had very little choice when it came to selecting their travel time and means of transport, let alone a full itinerary of travel. It was easier inasmuch as larger parts of society felt travels to be affordable, even if regulated through a complex balance of entitlements and limitations. The dendritic character of infrastructure (mirroring administrative hierarchies) was specific for the Soviet Union as a country with a centrally managed economy and a vast territory; in present-day Russia, this condition continues to exert its impact on the movements of people for all kinds of purposes, including touristic ones.

After a period of the state's inability to sustain infrastructure in the Far North and Far East of Russia during the 1990s, one can now witness a technological overhaul of the main arteries and also gradual expansion of infrastructure. These tasks figure high on the political agenda: they reflect the intention to "catch up" with other countries; they are partly influenced by geopolitical considerations; and — in the remoter parts of the country — continue to be guided by the development of resource extraction. Many settlements in the Far North and Far East owe their existence to resource extraction and/or the maintenance of railways and roads, and this phenomenon is likely to continue in future years.

Internet connection is now of essential importance in many spheres of life, and younger people experience the necessity to have access to the internet arguably more strongly than members of the older generation. The implementation of a reliable and high-speed internet connection in rural and remote areas of Russia proceeds at comparatively fast pace. Within only two decades, the mobile phone has become an indispensable part of everyday communication and personal logistics for nearly all inhabitants of the region. Mobiles and the internet have also laid the ground for an exponentially growing production and circulation of

photographs, continuing the legacy of home photography of the last Soviet decades and expanding visual forms of self-presentation in terms of quantity and also diversity of content.

However, GSM and internet coverage are regionally disparate, as is the transportation network. The number of privately owned cars has increased rapidly, facilitating individually arranged travel and loosening the dependence on trains. Trains and public bus services now compete with commercial bus and *marshrutka* services. The latter offer a much higher degree of flexibility in planning one's movements, but this depends on personal income and is thus subject to social stratification.

How have habits of travelling of travel changed over time?

With regard to tourism in Soviet times (notably, the 1960s to 1980s), Brož and Habeck have highlighted the intricate interplay of tourism organised by institutions and so-called "wild", individually arranged tourism (Chapter 4). Purposes and destinations in the institutional segment of tourism were largely prescribed by ideological considerations. Leisure was not *per se* a reason to travel; instead, tourism required a "noble cause" such as the restoration of health and productivity, acquaintance with the history and socialist present of the country, or, in the case of trips outside the Soviet Union, the idea of a "friendship of nations" (*druzhba narodov*). Journeys abroad were strongly controlled by state and party organisations and considered a special privilege. Yet also within the Soviet Union, the allocation of travel vouchers and similar entitlements occurred in a rather arbitrary way, despite a belief in the equality of citizens. Individually arranged travels relied either on networks of relatives and friends, or on the use of largely informal services at the margins of the state-provided tourist infrastructure. Yet alternative lifestyles and modes of "getting around" also existed in Soviet times, as is illustrated by the informal network of person-to-person recommendations (*sistema*) among hippies who were willing and ready to offer their flat as a hang-out or transit lodging to like-minded people.

Characteristic for the 1990s and even more so for the 2000s is an increasing diversity of modes and motivations of tourism, facilitated by the shift towards more flexible and more individual arrangements of

transport (Chapter 2). This diversity is also in line with a post-Soviet interest in exploring new types of leisure activities, often in response to commercially created desires and images of exotic destinations (Chapter 4). The consequences of the social stratification of tourism — and of mobility more generally — are manifold. In Novosibirsk and other Siberian cities, a mushrooming number of travel agencies started to cater for different desires and different household budgets from about 2000 onwards. In later years, part of this market segment has moved towards online sales. In addition, couch-surfing and other travel practices based on online social networks have contributed to the growth of a non-commercial (or at least, less commercial) touristic infrastructure, which is of great importance for young (more often than not, urban-based) travellers with a limited budget, creating the basis for a spontaneous and cosmopolitan attitude towards travelling.

The above remarks about changing habits of travelling are not meant to downplay the scope of *personal topographies* (cf. Chapter 5) of those inhabitants that we interviewed in remote rural settlements; rather it means to say that they differ from each other. Several of our rural interviewees combine extended stays in roadless forest or tundra areas with regular visits to the respective regional centre, which may be several hundreds of kilometres away from their place of residence. Towards the tundra or forest “end” of their personal ambit of action, they frequently find themselves outside the area covered by GSM or the internet, being left to their own navigational abilities (for many urbanites, a frightening prospect); whereas in the other direction, their travels usually follow pathways that continue to be prescribed by administrative hierarchies and dendritic infrastructure. Earlier, it was suggested that inhabitants of rural communities travel significantly less to foreign countries and that their holiday itineraries closely follow their networks of relatives and friends, usually with the purpose of accessing services and goods that they do not have at their place of residence. This suggestion is supported by the data that research team members collected in the three rural communities of Novoe Chaplino, Saranpaul’, and Chavan’ga; yet what also comes to the fore are important differences in each community’s configuration of mobility patterns.

The case of Novoe Chaplino (briefly portrayed in Chapter 6) corresponds quite closely with the blueprint of pathways constituted

by institutions and kinship ties; however, part of this community's kinship networks went beyond the Soviet border and were severed for that reason. The historically existing connections with communities across the Bering Strait were revived during a short period in the 1990s but have largely been discontinued. Occasionally, a cruise ship came along to bring visitors from abroad to the village, creating insecurity among local inhabitants of "what to show", in other words, what to present as locally and culturally unique. The potential asset of Novoe Chaplino's location on the Bering Sea has not sparked the emergence of new pathways, so that personal topographies remain geared to the district and regional centre. Spatial imaginaries include Anadyr', Magadan, and also Moscow, St Petersburg and Black Sea resorts nine time zones away in much more vivid form than any place in neighbouring Alaska or neighbouring Kamchatka. Due to the extremely high costs of travelling, holiday trips are predominantly dependent on state benefits.⁶

Inhabitants of Saranpaul' (Chapter 9) speak of their place as an island, hard to reach and then hard to leave behind again. Arrangements of logistics and travel reflect the limited range of transportation and consumer goods in the village. Having said that, the summer camps for young people organised by indigenous pedagogues draw visitors from far afield, and there has been a regular exchange of youth between the summer camp and Germany. It is the secluded location and indigenous cultural heritage that make Saranpaul' a tourist destination, and both local and visiting youth experience the camp as an opportunity for self-cultivation and discovering one's talents.

Chavan'ga (Chapter 3) used to be a rural settlement economically based on agriculture and fishing, but is gradually turning into a weekend or summer-cottage settlement. Much depends on the concerted efforts of individuals to make a living in this village. The village may by now be abandoned, were it not for the fact that several individuals decided to stay or return at their own discretion, sometimes to the amazement of their relatives. More than in the other two rural settlements, one gets the impression that inhabitants pursue some individual life

6 Life projects can be discerned in the narratives of many photo-elicitation interviewees of Novoe Chaplino, but there were also interviewees who did not perceive any necessity to narrate their biography in any sense of a coherent "project".

projects which, when taken together and notwithstanding personal animosities, engender a sense of social cohesion and identity of the place.

In the discussion of changing patterns of mobility, I have gradually shifted the emphasis from tourism to other motivations for travelling, particularly the habit (by necessity) of inhabitants of remote communities to draw upon family members who now live in different locations. Out-migration of young people is a common phenomenon in rural communities, but it is not necessarily a one-way road. This also accounts, in the long run, for some of our indigenous interviewees' journeys in search of "roots", which may occur several generations after an ancestor's relocation (see Chapter 5). In both Soviet and post-Soviet times, people travel towards a distant (Siberian, Far Northern, or Far Eastern) "home", the initial reasons for which go back to the metropolitan-bound mobility of the indigenous intelligentsia. In recent years, travelling in search of "roots" has been increasingly associated with spiritual well-being.

For most of our "rural" interlocutors, it is not unusual to combine rural and urban places of residence in their biographies. Higher education and the search for a job require young people from rural communities to move to the district centre or "the city" (often the regional capital). Our research has shown that young people's decisions about moving (leaving, returning, commuting) are judged by others in very ambivalent ways. On the one hand, parents are aware that higher education and career necessitate their children to move away. On the other, there are hopes that young people will then come back to support and maintain the household and the rural community. Villagers may be sceptical about a young person's return from the city to the native village, especially if higher education has not been completed. Such cases may be viewed as personal failure, even though the person themselves may view it differently. Chapter 3 provides examples of individuals who have decided to go for voluntary simplicity, to forfeit a better salary of a job in town for the benefit of personal freedom and a less stressful working day in the village. These observations are indicative of a more general trend among young people to balance work-life requirements with individual ideas of self-fulfilment.

Bolotova, Karaseva, and Vasilyeva (2017) conducted anthropological field research among youth in three different regions of the Far North: Kirovsk (a town in Murmansk Oblast), Yagodnoe (a small town in the uplands of Magadan Oblast), and Syndassko (a rural settlement near the Arctic Ocean, in the north-eastern “corner” of the Krasnoïarsk Region). The juxtaposition of the three cases vividly underscores the stark disparities of Far Northern regions in terms of transportation and infrastructure, and it also illustrates the strong influence of these conditions on young people’s patterns of mobility and their life decisions. As Bolotova reports, many youths and also some older residents of Kirovsk conduct regular trips to the regional capital, to other towns in the region, and also occasionally to Finland and Norway. An important reason to return to Kirovsk is the beauty of the surroundings and a range of outdoor activities, particularly skiing. A high degree of connectedness also comes to the fore in virtual communities:

New technology contributes to the transformation of the perception of space: due to the high level of Internet accessibility in the Murmansk region, there are numerous groups on social networks that are popular on the regional level. For example, there are travel companion groups, regional virtual communities, and interest clubs that also organize regular off-line meetings, such as climbers, Hare Krishna followers, cyclists, role-playing gamers, anime fans, and many others (Bolotova, Karaseva & Vasilyeva 2017: 89).

Compare this with Vasilyeva’s description of life in Syndassko, which to outsiders comes over as rather bleak:

[Y]oung people’s planning horizon is short, and the decisions about relocation and life change can be spontaneous. Therefore, young people’s life strategies and related movements are often not caused by purposeful action but happen on a whim. At the same time, one’s biography usually includes a lot of mobility, which can last for many years (Bolotova, Karaseva & Vasilyeva 2017: 113).

Here again we see an obvious connection between living conditions and the predictability of pursuing a life project. By extension we see that the conditions and limitations of lifestyle diversity — where lifestyle is seen as expressive and intentional practice evolving around certain sensibilities and ambitions of self-formation — depend on infrastructure and predictability of transport. In remote small

communities, there is also a particularly palpable connection between the possible range of lifestyles and local strategies of procurement through land use, barter and exchange, public-sector jobs, pension payments, and other state-granted benefits. Connectedness is defined as being positioned in far-extending social networks of kinship and direct exchange, much more than through any virtual social network (Syndassko does have access to the internet, but it is reportedly very slow and highly expensive).

Yagodnoe, the third location of Bolotova, Karaseva, and Vasilyeva's study, occupies an intermediate position, and yet a precarious one in view of the mass out-migration from Magadan Oblast to the "mainland", i.e. the European part of Russia or more southerly parts of Siberia. As Karaseva reports, inhabitants judge the condition of the road to Magadan and the state's willingness to invest in road maintenance as an indicator of the town's future prospects; the road takes on the position of a lifeline. Movement in search of higher education and also weekend entertainment are so strongly oriented towards the regional capital, some 500 kilometres away, that the sense of place comes to include Yagodnoe, Magadan, and the road as a dispersed notion of "here". An internet connection exists and some inhabitants have experience with online shopping, but the logistics of delivery are complicated enough to induce residents of Yagodnoe to do their shopping in Magadan (Bolotova, Karaseva & Vasilyeva 2017: 98).

The findings of these three authors resonate with those of our research, in that they point out stark disparities in young people's mobility. They complement our interviews with people above the age of forty, i.e. those that remember conditions and practices of travelling in Soviet days compared to today. To sum up the post-socialist shifts: in comparison to Soviet times, personal topographies and spatial imaginaries (Chapter 5) attained a larger ambit and diversity in the first and especially the second post-Soviet decade — for many inhabitants of Siberia, but not for all. Depending on the household's location and economic situation, the withdrawal or continuation of state-subsidised transportation, and social ties outside their own place of residence, the interviewees that we met in the framework of our research project largely differ in their capacity to develop personal ambitions and life projects beyond the level of "making ends meet".

How have visual forms of self-presentation changed over time?

In the 1960s and 1970s, visualisation through photography put the work collective at centre stage and also paid reverence to the family as a social institution; whereas in the 2000s, new technological means of photographing and sharing photographs have been instrumental in the visualisation of leisure activities and everyday life, with the family remaining a focal point of reference in the lives of most of our interlocutors. What has also become apparent over recent years is a heightened or renewed concern with spiritual fulfilment and the expression of spiritual values through visual means.

As Jaroslava Panáková put it in Chapter 6, “happiness is part of an individual lifestyle project, its ‘architect’ and ‘companion’, and sometimes its ultimate goal. We seek to do what we think will make us happy, even if it does not necessarily end up this way”. What has changed over the decades is the configuration of the self and the collective: work has shifted from being seen as something beneficial for the collective and the entire society to something that should be both socially and individually fulfilling (Chapter 3); it has shifted from visually framing one’s own role as a self-within-the-collective towards self-within-the family, self-with-children, self-with-friends, or simply self in an immense range of activities and places (Chapter 6).

As a result of this shift, there is a growing willingness of individuals, alone or together with others, to picture and present themselves in a larger diversity of roles. The role of the committed worker, the role of the caring mother/father/relative, and the role of the cheerful traveller have already been present in the portfolio of visual forms of self-expression in earlier decades. These are now complemented by additional roles — free time permitting — of more leisurely and informal pursuits. This is a result of two processes: on the one hand, of the shift from the professional (and concomitantly, time-consuming and infrequent) art of photography towards the everyday, ubiquitous (and concomitantly, trivial) practice of photography. On the other hand, it is the result of a wider array of socially relevant moments that deserve to be depicted.

These findings are exemplified by two domains of self-expression that figured most strongly in Chapters 7–10 of this volume: ethnicity

and role play. Ethnicity, as has been established by Eleanor Peers in Chapter 7, underwent a specific form of “moulding” in Soviet times, and the mould comprised a certain range of genres (attire in the first place; along with music, literature, theatre and opera, and cuisine) through which ethnic peculiarities were to be expressed within the framework of the brotherhood of peoples. These genres and expressive forms have well survived into post-socialist times. As Artem Rabogoshvili shows in Chapter 8, this does not prevent ethnic communities’ members and activists from treating such expressions as sincere statements. Rather, they may take advantage from clues that are easily recognisable to others and as such create a “surface” for public consumption, notwithstanding their individual views on the source and significance of ethnic belonging as part of personal identity.

To put it differently, donning a Tatar costume is a statement in reverence to Tatar cultural traditions, but it is neither just role play, nor is it necessarily an outward sign of deeply felt Tatar identity. *Some* members of ethnic communities intentionally incorporate publicly recognisable expressions of ethnicity into the ambience of their home even though the artefacts may look artificial; *some* ethnic activists debate the “authenticity” of certain elements; and *some* others combine them in creative and ironic ways with different, and at first glance inappropriate, genres. If ethnicity is understood as a sensibility in its own right, then the manifold stances towards the use of dress and other visual symbols can be read as individual positions about style and veracity. It would be facile to underestimate the political power of statements about ethnic belonging: as the first scene of Chapter 7 illustrates, people in power, regardless of their own ethnic background, feel required to comply with the populace’s expectations about regional loyalty.

A differentiation is made in Chapter 8 between *old-time residents*, i.e. ethnic groups that were already in Soviet times acknowledged as minorities by some or all of Russia’s administrative units; and *newcomers*, i.e. groups that in the Soviet Union had their “own” republics or territories but are now usually considered as migrants from *Blishnee zarubezh’e* (“Near Abroad”), mainly from Central Asia. For both groups, dress and other visual clues are important means to show their presence in a multicultural social fabric. Public festivities and national holidays carry much currency in this endeavour, and in that respect, newcomers

have to invest considerable energy in following the patterns already established among the old-time residents. The degree of commitment varies among members of communities of both groups. Such differential degree of involvement can be taken as a criterion of immersion into a distinct lifestyle, similarly manifest in live-action role-playing (LARP) communities, even though the basis of LARP is usually not ancestral and much more intentional.

Role play involves a quite specific form of stylisation, which requires the self to be someone else and yet to be oneself. Inside the *chronotope* of live-action role-playing games, change of dress is mandatory, and a huge amount of attention is paid to the aesthetics of garments and accessories. The apparel is not only prescribed by the scenario but also the subject of personal style and taste. These costumes, the dramatic moments of the action, and the strong emotions of the actors are all recorded using photographs and films. The photo-elicitation interviews with larpers and our visits to their online forums provide abundant visual clues to self-as-other-and-yet-self, starting with black-and-white photographs from the late 1980s and ending with fully-fledged photo albums to be shared widely and publicly through the social network VKontakte. This has also helped larpers to see themselves not as lone oddballs, but as followers or participants of a large community, albeit with different degrees of commitment. As Tatiana Barchunova and Joachim Otto Habeck show in Chapter 10, there are different degrees of personal involvement in the “world” of the game, and the most devoted larpers draw no clear boundary between play and reality. As Barchunova found out, many larpers see “real life” as one variation of other worlds. By transferring items of dress or accessories into “real life”, they visually demonstrate their readiness to make playful self-stylisation an element of their everyday life.

As Ina Schröder shows in Chapter 9, ethnicity and role play come together in summer camps organised with the purpose of teaching young people to rediscover traditional cultural values. In the camp that Schröder studies near Saranpaul', video footage is broadcast daily to campers in a quasi-news format so that participants can judge their own and other's performance and discuss what went well or not so well. This results in a dense daily cycle of action, visualisation, and evaluation. Like the games described in Chapter 10, there is also an annual cycle

of preparation, enactment, evaluation, and exchange of memories. The games differ, however, in the extent of irony versus pedagogical ambition: the summer camp near Saranpaul' is earnestly didactic in its role play.

To conclude this section, let me add a general observation. More often than in earlier decades, visual forms of self-expression contain a smile. The smile may be interpreted variously: as a sign of hedonistic self-indulgence; as an ironic twinkle that signals a subversion of social norms and expectations; or as the warm glow of mutual care and sympathy. All of these interpretations contribute to the exploration of lifestyles: they may be read as expressions of a consumer-culture attitude to fulfilling material desires and the satisfaction of bodily senses; as the temporary joy of diving into subcultural diversions from "grey" everyday life and serious behaviour; or as the more perennial happiness of being together with loved ones. Let readers be reminded that photographs usually depict only happy moments, and that the stories that surround them have many different shades. By the same token, self-expression through visual means almost always carries a message about personal ambitions and intentions, about trying to be good to oneself and others, and about trying to be good at something.

Reassessing the concept of lifestyle

In the introduction to this volume, I argued that lifestyle can be seen as a particular *mode* of identification: it is expressive, routinised, and stylised. It is expressive inasmuch as the practices and choices are meant to convey a message about one's self to others (and frequently, they are deliberately deployed for that purpose); it is routinised through repeated action (with some procedures taking on such a habitual character that they no longer depend on active reflection); and it is stylised in that it combines collective ideas and fashions with a certain degree of personal variation and play with conventions. (The latter point could also be described as individual positionings towards and around sensibilities.) Lifestyle is a particular mode of identification among other modes of a less expressive kind, i.e. modes of identification which are not articulated in the public or have to be completely hidden

(which does not imply that these modes are less serious or less intensive an experience for the individual).

One of the conclusions to be drawn from the research presented in this book is the interconnection of lifestyle, repeated action, and reflexivity. When embarking on this project, research team members pondered on the question whether (and if so, in what ways) lifestyle requires any form of reflection on the part of the individual. We agree with the suggestion that repeated action leads to habituation — and that it perpetuates and reproduces structures of social interaction. We also follow Bourdieu in claiming that tastes and predilections are strongly influenced by existing conventions, institutions, and social positions — to such an extent that individual “choices” are not a matter of choice but rather non-reflexive enactments of class-dependent patterns of taste. However, on behalf of the research team, I argue that this is not sufficient to chart the explanatory potential of the concept of lifestyle.

Under the constraints of time, energy, and social and economic resources which every human being experiences, some type of action always occurs at the expense of another type, and thus some choice of activity reduces the potential for other choices. On this basis, it is possible to discern different degrees of involvement in certain activities. The more intensive the involvement in an activity, the higher the significance in the life of the individual. The cases presented in several chapters illustrate different degrees of involvement — in some cases, obsession — with certain activities, and the most devoted practitioners can be most clearly identified with a distinctive lifestyle. With the gradual enskillment of practices related to the personally significant activity, individuals develop habitual (and largely non-reflected) patterns of actions, i.e. routines, and also patterns of self-expression. The intensity of involvement and the personal significance of the activity, however, become objects of self-reflection.

Moreover, individuals pursue personally significant activities not in isolation, but usually in communication, co-presence, and/or interaction with others. In the framework of such exchanges, enskillment comes to be a topic of communication. The process of training, the acquisition of a specific vocabulary, and also the comparison of one’s own competencies with those of others all bring about self-inspection, dialogue about

things worthy to be achieved, collectively shared ambitions, and also individual aspirations (“reaching the next level”, so to speak). In the process of learning and practicing together, in the constant flow of concerns and ideals, individuals develop their own way of doing things “right”. They develop their own style and their own responses to what they have come to acknowledge as a shared sensibility, to return again to Chaney’s concept, and this by necessity has an expressive aspect to it, including visual clues that in composition result in “surfaces”.

This can be observed with regard to outdoor adventurers and activists interested in maintaining the cultural memory of a small place (Chapter 3), activists of ethno-cultural organisations (Chapter 8), indigenous pedagogues (Chapter 9) as well as among regular larpers (Chapter 10). It can also be observed among those who pursue a spiritually rewarding life, be it in search of the healing power of nature and the spiritual forces residing therein (Chapter 4) or under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church. Likewise, the quest for a renewed engagement with indigenous traditions (Chapter 7 and Chapter 9) entails an expressive and reflexive element of self-formation and a personal response to issues of modernity, cultivation, and social and individual progress.

Lifestyle and modernity in post-Soviet Russia

On a more general level, the research team also pursued the question of whether a focus on lifestyle in Siberia helps to generate an anthropological contribution to scholarly debates about *modernity*. Some authors have argued that lifestyle is a feature of modern, high-modern, or post-modern societies (see Chapter 1). Does the concept have any explanatory value in a non-western setting such as “provincial” Russia? Do notions of modernity and progress carry any relevance in the historical and contemporary context of Siberia?

Much has been written by anthropologists and historians about the Soviet modernisation project (e.g. Kotkin 1995; Volkov 2000; for Siberia and the Far North: Slezkine 1994). The Soviet government and the Communist Party actively pursued the goal to spur progress not only in technological terms, but also to create a “new person”, a “Soviet person” (*sovetskii chelovek*, Smirnov 1973) and thus to induce shifts in people’s convictions, ambitions, self-perception, and behaviour. Such social

engineering has held sway over large parts of the country's population, and it should not be forgotten that explicitly deviating views or open resistance were not tolerated.

The effects of modernisation were notably strong in rural and indigenous communities: the "old" way of life was to disappear — a mandate that was accompanied by dramatic and at times violent disruptions in all spheres of life. At the same time, the Soviet modernisation project opened up new trajectories of personal fulfilment and aspirations, notably through formal education, a diversified range of occupations and careers, and also through a country-wide flow of cultural production, creating a shared Soviet cultural space. Indigenous forms of cultural expression were permitted to persist — but only in a sanctioned form — to be utilised for public displays of diversity in the framework of a "modern" Soviet conviviality. (As we have seen, this type of display of indigenous culture also has reverberations in present-day Russia).

In the light of the quest for modernity and progress, which had pervasive power in all parts of the country, there was a wide variety of individual and collective responses to the idea of how to be "modern" in different domains of life. These responses depended not only on changing political priorities, but also on the individual's involvement in different social networks. Moreover, Yurchak (2006) has convincingly shown how the very institutions and mechanisms which served to create an ideologically legitimate frame for activities simultaneously created spaces for unofficial, informal, and partly illicit activities at the margins (such as the boisterous parties at the fringe of socialist manifestations that everyone was expected to attend).

The heightened significance of visibility constitutes an important part of modernity — and of lifestyle (Chaney 1996: 101). This trope is most clearly addressed in Chapters 6 and 7 of the volume. Panáková shows in Chapter 6 (with reference to Sontag 2005) that visual media is a key phenomenon of the "modern": images come to determine demands, mingling with and replacing the immediacy of first-hand experience. Similarly, Peers argues in Chapter 7 (with reference to Chaney 1996) "that the anonymity of [...] urban space, the development of cultures of consumption, along with mass advertising and fashion, and the fracturing of pre-modern hierarchies have led to a new emphasis on visualisation in the formation and negotiation of social structuration

and identity" (p. 262). Later in the chapter, she expands on this point and identifies as one of the characteristics of the "essentially modernist nature of the Soviet project" the power of the Party and the government to create "normative conceptions of aesthetic experience" and "legitimate patterns of sensibility" (p. 275). This, I would add, generated new ways for individuals to perceive their own role in society, and the lifestyles available to them.

If one accepts the power of images and imaginaries to be a central feature of modernity, then the Soviet Union was embracing modernity from its very beginning, considering the intensity of visual messages emanating from the centres of power and mirrored by local performances of progress in the peripheries. In addition to these official displays of well-being, the development of home photography — i.e. mass production of cameras for private use — since the mid-1960s was instrumental in capturing vernacular interpretations of what "good life" looks like (Chapter 6), and these personal interpretations themselves largely drew on the aesthetics ideologically promoted by Soviet design and media (Chapter 7).

Aesthetics and the whole array of societal changes were promoted pervasively across the country,⁷ yet the promotion and implementation proceeded at different speeds; moreover, they were negotiated regionally and locally in divergent ways. Some of the authors have referred to Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's book *The Social Life of the State in Sub-Arctic Siberia* (2003), which captures vividly the "advent" of the state in Central Siberia, its local applications, and the unfinished character of this process, always with the prospect of a better future yet to arrive. Regional variations of Sovietisation come to the fore in Chapter 7: Yakut/Sakha interpretations of progress and the "good life" gave the project of modernisation a specific slant. In other areas of Siberia, too, staged performances of "progress" underwent regional variation, though usually they largely complied with the frame of a general Soviet "mould" of cultural expression. Nonetheless, such performances occasionally entailed subtle undertones, to be interpreted as critique by spectators who could read between the lines. To add one

7 The distinctive style of Soviet architecture, design, artworks, and cultural performance is often associated with the avant-garde of the 1920s (Mally 2003); however, it is possible to discern typically Soviet forms of artistic and aesthetic expression also in subsequent decades (Papernyi 2007).

more observation, even in places where the appurtenances of modernity (and technical progress) arrived with significant delay and were continually limited in stock, inhabitants creatively combined — through *bricolage* — the items they had at hand, often in pursuit of individual ideas about “how to be modern”.

Modernity was also defined through mobility and the extension of infrastructure and (state-controlled) accessibility of all parts of the country; in other words, the Soviet state made immense investments in order to reduce remoteness. What disappeared in the process of modernisation were earlier indigenous patterns of mobility, itineraries, means of transport, and the skills needed to handle them; these were replaced by a new form of mobility, reaching as far as Moscow, Leningrad and the Black Sea, requiring new skills but also widening indigenous individual’s social networks throughout the Soviet Union. Such new modes of mobility were regarded as a metaphor of the country’s progress. As Panáková puts it, these changes resulted in “an initiation into another understanding of what one should be, wants to be, or can afford to be through displacement” (Chapter 6 (p. 226)).

The first post-Soviet decade, the 1990s, saw large-scale experimenting with new ways of being at the societal and personal levels; this shift was strongly oriented towards consumer goods, social practices, and lifestyles from outside the country, often from “the west”.⁸ Such experiments often included self-expression and the display of wealth through shiny and glittery forms of attire (among these, the raspberry-coloured jackets mentioned earlier in this chapter). Curiosity about distant destinations was first impeded by generally low financial resources, but in the early 2000s, travelling abroad became achievable for considerable numbers of Russians. At about the same time, digital photography and communication via the internet provided the basis for a hitherto unexperienced and dazzling flow and diversity of images, apparently marking Russia’s entry into a post-modern condition, whereby the grand political narratives lose their pervasive power, the quest for happiness is relegated to the individual, and the “necessity to choose” one’s own way (Giddens 1991) becomes mandatory.

8 The collected volume *Consuming Russia* edited by Barker (1999) puts consumption at centre stage but extends far beyond consumption in the narrow sense, depicting a large array of shifts in popular culture and aesthetics in the first decade of post-Soviet society.

Notwithstanding, the 2000s and the 2010s do not fully comply with such a conceptualisation of the post-modern condition. In contemporary Russia, the *multitude* of moral norms and convictions is rarely given credit as a value in its own right; state institutions, the Orthodox Church and other “norm entrepreneurs” (Stoeckl 2016, see above) apprehend it with scepticism. Norms and convictions thus undergo a process of consolidation. The conservative turn, however, does not negate a simultaneous quest for modernisation. The ingredients of the new type of modernity combine technological and infrastructural development with an inward-looking reassessment of the past and the search for moral values and sources of inspiration from within Russian history. The search for spiritual revival and the refusal of consumerism and individualism have already been portrayed as sensibilities in their own right, and they resonate with current critiques of consumerism elsewhere in the world. One more factor influencing current conditions and limitations of lifestyle plurality in Russia is the fact that the experimenting with goods and ideas “from outside” now takes place in a calmer manner, possibly resulting from a certain degree of saturation. This shift is very much in line with the pervasive emphasis on patriotic forms of behaviour and morality.

Towards the end of the conclusion, let us come to the question of whether lifestyle can be applied in the context of *indigenous* Siberia — more precisely, in the context of a region with many ethnic groups whose members continue to pursue hunting and herding as “traditional” forms of resource use and derive a sense of identity from them. By now it should have become clear that such application is not only possible, but also has explanatory value in the analysis of social change in socialist and post-socialist societies. This is not to say that pre-revolutionary, “traditional” indigenous societies were exempt from expressions of lifestyle (a tenet that was discussed in Chapter 1). While it may appear that in “traditional” society, the rigidity of social institutions limited the room for manoeuvre of individual actors,⁹ it is nonetheless clear that livelihoods in the tundra, taiga, or steppe also

9 Sántha and Safonova (2010) have made an explicit statement about the egalitarian, non-hierarchical character of Evenki society, where authority is not determined by inherited status but by individual competency and success in pursuing tasks necessary for the well-being of the community, up to the point of Evenki interlocutors ridiculing any form of social hierarchy.

depended on individual talents and skills developed through training and in communication with others. It also relied on individual ideas about how to do things right, with concomitant variation in aesthetic predilections. The retrospective application of lifestyle to “traditional” indigenous societies of Siberia (say, two or three centuries ago) would need to be based on safer empirical ground, but at least the possibility should not be ruled out. The conventional historiographic differentiation between the pre-revolutionary and the Soviet period of indigenous peoples’ history went hand in hand with a differentiation between a dark past and a bright future; it left little descriptive space for shades in between.

Finally, the pedagogical mission of indigenous teachers and activists to revive traditional skills and indigenous spiritual values, along with the decision of indigenous families to make a living by hunting, fishing, or herding, can again be read as personal positionings towards sensibilities — statements about specific moral values that one should strive for. Neo-traditionalism (Pika 1999) may thus contribute to the formation of a distinct lifestyle in its own right, especially so when traditional attire comes to be used for the creation of a “surface” to be acknowledged by the wider public.

This research project has sought to elicit hopes and sensibilities of indigenous as well as other inhabitants of Siberia. The purpose was to show the contemporary breadth of ambitions, some of them being particularly Siberian, but in no way disconnected from other places. Our interviewees and friends often share with us (the members of the research team and contributors to this volume) their latest photos, taken in reindeer herders’ camps, tourist camps in the Altai mountains, at school or the workplace, at home with their families, during their travels to their grandparents’ home, or to Paris, London, or New York. We hope to continue to share our exchanges and friendship with them in future years.

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