3. People’s Perceptions of Democracy and Welfare in Different Media Environments

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In this article we focus on some opinions among the inhabitants in St. Petersburg and Stockholm on important social issues related to the political and economic changes during recent decades. We emphasize especially the opinions among the adult respondents who, above all in Russia, have experienced essential changes in their social environments during the last twenty years and whose attitudes are expected to diverge from the young people’s. However, we also show in the figures and partly discuss corresponding results for the young respondents in both cities.

We start (in section I) presenting some common perspectives on media and democracy, not least concerning the changing situation in Russia as it appears in the academic discourse and among media experts in the two cities who we interviewed in our study. In the following pages (section II) we summarize findings from our quantitative surveys. After that (section III) some findings are presented more in detail. Finally (section IV), we discuss the results in the light of prevailing views on the Russian and the Swedish society.

I. Some perspectives of media and democracy in Russia and Sweden

The abundant literature since 2000 on Putin’s Russia has been characterized by a multiplicity of views, which can often be related to one or another political interest.

Some Russian and many Western critics maintain that after the end of the Yeltsin years (1991-1999), the democracy in Russia has been set aside in several essential respects, not least as regards freedom of expression, and that new forms of dictatorship and censorship – direct as well as indirect – have been consolidating. In the wake of these developments owners of critical media have been arrested and exiled, independent voices removed, journalists killed, while “remaining independent media not controlled directly by the Kremlin are cowered indirectly into soft, uncritical reporting”.

1 Ostrow et al. 2007, p. 3.
The prevailing majority of the Western researchers studying the Russian society and media system are also critical of the medial and democratic development in Russia during the past decade. The summary of the Western research by Salminen\textsuperscript{2} constitutes a good example in this respect.

Salminen emphasizes that there is a sense that a political-ideological theme dominates in Western literature on the Russian media.\textsuperscript{3} One basic assumption is that the Russian political system is not democratic, while the Russian media system, according to Becker, is neo-authoritarian.\textsuperscript{4} For Oates it seems that the Russian media are mainly used as tools for propaganda as in Soviet times.\textsuperscript{5} Other examples mentioned are Lipman & McFaul who maintain that the Russian State’s effort to control all major television stations is the most obvious manifestation of the shift from democracy to “managed democracy”,\textsuperscript{6} and Belin who means that as during the Soviet era, the current Russian media are used as a weapon to attack political enemies.\textsuperscript{7} Both Western and Russian scholars agree on the fact that Russia did not adopt the Western kind of democratic media system.\textsuperscript{8} Oates says that in such a context, the Russians, in reality, are being led by the (television) broadcasters.\textsuperscript{9}

The Russian reforms of the 1990s and the succeeding development during the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century are seen in a different light in the leftist critique, condemning the need and adequacy of these reforms. Such critique, defending the Soviet project, points out that the economy was stable and growing until the end of the Soviet Union, after which the productivity of all sectors sharply fell or practically disappeared, at the same time as the living standard of the majority of the population was reduced to the poverty line. In such a situation the media are manipulating the consciousness of the majority in order to force them to comply with status quo.\textsuperscript{10}

On the other hand, many Russian analysts praise the Putin/Medvedev administrations, which are seen as a new phase of political reforms and strong mass parties. Pavlovski describes Putin’s rule as the first non-communist intellectual regime that prohibited disastrous politics and excluded the development of monstrous mutations of the social body. “Normalization” has become a benchmark of Medvedev’s administration, in the same way as “stability” was the point of reference during Putin’s presidency.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{2} Salminen 2009.
\textsuperscript{3} Salminen 2009, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{8} Salminen 2009, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{10} E.g., Kara-Murza 2002, 2008.
\textsuperscript{11} Pavlovski 2009a, 2009b; see also Danilin 2009.
There are, although few, Western researchers who praise the achievements of the Putin administration. One example is Wallerstein who stresses that Putin has been charged with “being authoritarian, with attempting to recreate Russia’s imperial control over its neighbours, and with reviving Cold War obstructionism in the United Nations”.\textsuperscript{12} However:

We know that what one person calls authoritarian tendencies another often calls the restitution of order. This is a conflict of interpretation that is widespread, even in the North Atlantic countries. Nicholas Sarkozy has just recently profited from this double perspective.\textsuperscript{13}

On the whole, Wallerstein asserts that “a fair observer would have to say that Putin has done well as a geopolitical player”.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Views of the media system in Russia}

A similar diversity of viewpoints is also characteristic of the situation in the media field as expressed by the Russian media experts participating in our interviews. Their viewpoints vary according to factors such as the position of the media (state or private company) within which the expert in question is engaged, the political orientation of the media company, the expert’s position in the hierarchical structure, as well as his/her age/experience.

Taking these factors into account, the assertions of Ostrow et al. (2007) mentioned above,\textsuperscript{15} describing the media situation in Russia in terms of censorship, can be discussed. Naturally, several of our respondents working at oppositional media (especially from the right wing) have a similar attitude as Ostrow et al. As one of our interviewed media experts says: “There are no independent mass media (in Russia) and there is also no, what I call, ‘boiler of public opinion’”. These critics also consider Western societies and media as models of democracy and freedom of expression.

Other media experts mention imperfections of the Russian political life and media. However, they explain such problems in terms of lack of democratic traditions, the Soviet heritage, the economic crisis and other factors.

Some interviewees say that the contemporary situation in Russia cannot be characterised as democratic, but point out that democracy is a complex concept. The Soviet society also had a range of democratic characteristics that are lacking today (the experts give several examples of previous equitable distribution in the Soviet Union).

Several other Russian experts – from the state controlled and also from several independent media – reject the hypothesis that there should be some

\textsuperscript{12} Wallerstein 2007.
\textsuperscript{13} Wallerstein 2007.
\textsuperscript{14} Wallerstein 2007.
\textsuperscript{15} Ostrow et al. 2007.
kind of political censorship in Russia. Naturally, there are several restrictions, which, however, they mean are characteristic also of Western media. One example is the following:

And the most important, representative democracy... [but it] does not always reflect the interests of people. Democracy is not PR and democracy is not money. Democracy is a real opportunity of the common people to influence the state policy. [...] I have not seen such a thing in any country. Democracy in the American variant, it is a defective one. In the Swedish (variant), they have self-regulated themselves, so to speak. They supervise themselves, though the laws give any opportunity.

Several persons are critical towards the attitude of the Western media and politicians, trying to force Russia to adopt Western values and lifestyles.

Some Russian media experts maintain that Russia is superior to the West, and especially to the USA, when it comes to freedom of expression as well as democracy in general:

That level of critical attitude towards the acting power, which we observe in the number of (press) editions and Internet sources in our country... I think that they wouldn't be allowed either in the USA or in Sweden.

Views of the media system in Sweden

In Sweden, the political development has been much more stable than in Russia during the recent decades, having been characterised by alternating right wing and social-democratic governmental alliances, which compared to the Russian situation have had less deviating policies from each other as regards their economic and political programs. Furthermore, the spectrum of views in the media literature has not been as polarized as, for instance, during the 1970s. In line with this, the views of our Swedish media experts are, on the whole, more consensus oriented and less diverging than those of their Russian counterparts.

The Swedish media, especially the mainstream press, often describe the political development in Russia in a negative light. In this context it should be pointed out that the great majority of the Swedish media experts declare that they know nothing of the media situation in Russia at all or only from the mainstream Swedish media. It is worth mentioning that many Russian media experts know more about the Swedish media situation.

The views of the Swedish experts of the media situation in their country differ from the Russian experts’ views in several other ways, not least when it comes to questions of censorship. Freedom of expression and democracy are by the Swedish experts regarded as two main characteristics of the Swedish society. However, there are a few exceptions, expressed mainly by the left-wing critics, who point out that censorship is exerted indirectly via the marketing mechanisms.
In the light of the works of several Western scholars considering advertising as one of the most powerful tools for limiting freedom of expression, it is interesting to note that most of the oppositional journalists and media executives among our Russian experts look upon advertising as a condition of attaining political independence and diversity of the media content. In general, the Swedish experts are more aware of the influence of advertising on the individuals and society than the Russian experts.

Another difference between the two groups of media experts is that most Russian experts (as well as ordinary people participating in our studies) point out that the decrease in the quality of newspaper content is one of the principal causes of the decrease in circulation and reading of papers in Russia. Often the press is called “yellow” or “gutter press”. Similar complaints are unusual among the Swedish respondents, an interesting observation when taking into consideration the fact that the Swedish newspapers are at least as “yellow” as those in St Petersburg.

This article will discuss the different perceptions of the concept of democracy in general from ordinary people’s points of view in Stockholm and St. Petersburg, respectively. Central factors that seem to explain several of these differences are the dynamics of social change, and especially the economic situation, i.e., the degree of poverty-welfare where the country and the individual are positioned.

II. Aspects of democracy, welfare and media

Our analyses of the quantitative surveys and group discussions among ordinary people reveal important differences between the generations (young people and middle-aged persons, respectively), between the cities and combined effects. Among other things, differences in the prevailing attitudes towards democracy and welfare appear between the cities, differences that to a large extent can be explained by the survey materials.

The social changes in Russia after 1990 have led to huge economic gaps, a “matter of course” often reiterated by (i.a.) the mass media. Russian as well as Swedish media have called attention to the fact that nowadays Moscow is No.2 in the world (after New York) regarding the number of dollar billionaires, while the income of the ordinary Russian citizen is quite low compared to that in the U.S. In this regard it is important to stress that the political and the economic elites in Russia are more fused than in Sweden and most Western countries. Furthermore, according to the daily newspaper *Izvestiya*¹⁶ Russia is No.1 in the world regarding the number of dollar-billionaires in the parliament (and according to one of our interviewees, a PR expert, almost all Duma representatives are at least millionaires). Another harsh theme in the Swedish media is the

¹⁶ *Izvestiya* 3 April 2008.
way in which the new social order in Russia (implying huge economic divides) has been brought about as a consequence of unfair – sometimes illegal – manipulations during and after the so-called privatization of the state property.\footnote{Cf. for instance Ostrov et al. 2007 and Kara-Murza 2002, 2008.} Many Swedish media are also eager to condemn the present political situation in Russia as undemocratic (including manipulated elections, corruption, brutal actions against journalists, etc.).\footnote{E.g., Dagens Nyheter 28 October 2009.}

The fact that the standard of living has been much higher in Sweden than in Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union is also evident from different Russian and Western research reports. As mentioned, Kara-Murza\footnote{Kara-Murza 2002.} shows that the production of goods in Russia during the 1990s drastically diminished (or practically disappeared) within a great number of societal sectors. The increasing import in several areas did not compensate for this reduction, something which meant lower consumption of corresponding products. The social inequalities (measured by the GINI coefficient and the Sen-index) has also after 1995 been much bigger in Russia than in the Nordic countries.\footnote{Kivinen 2009.}

However, in this article our starting-point is the views of ordinary people and their problems. From our studies it is clear that the elder generation in St. Petersburg deviates most from the three other groups studied (middle-aged persons in Stockholm, teens in St. Petersburg and teens in Stockholm): The adults in St. Petersburg state most often that their household economy is poor and it is this group that identifies itself least with successful and affluent people.\footnote{We want to point out that the survey samples in Stockholm and St. Petersburg do not differ from each other when it comes, for instance, to education; the shares of the different education groups are almost exactly the same.} Moreover, these middle-aged persons in St. Petersburg emphasize “economic prosperity for all” as the most essential characteristic of a democratic society.\footnote{Moreover, according to the opinion poll Russia Votes (accessible at the website of the research institute Levada, www.levada.ru/eng) the Russians are of the opinion that their economic/material situation has improved in recent years – in November 2000, 6% of the population said that their economic/material situation was good and 46% that it was bad – in March 2008, the corresponding figures were 19% and 26%, respectively (www.russiavotes.org/welfare/welfare_trends.php#078). It also seems as the attitude towards the own welfare in several respects has become more or somewhat more positive (different on different questions). However, 75% of the population meant in 2007 that they did not earn sufficiently from their ordinary work (of which 49% not totally and 26% definitely not) (ibid). Our data collections have also revealed corresponding trends.} A large proportion of the adults in St. Petersburg are also discontented with the

\footnote{This tallies with results from Russian opinion polls. In January 2008, the most frequent answers to the question about what is most important in order to be able to talk about democracy in Russia (the respondents were allowed to mark several response alternatives) were the following: 60% a high living standard; ca. 50% order, to obey laws; 45% equality before the law; and 44% political rights and civil liberties (www.russiavotes.org/national_issues/national_issues_politics.php).}
on-going democratic processes in Russia. They consider, as well, more often than the other groups in our study that the economic gaps between different social strata are increasing. They say less often than the other groups that they have a possibility of influencing the social processes. They also disagree most with the statement that ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media, which (according to a large proportion of these respondents) are controlled by a few powerful persons. Moreover, the respondents from this group most often claim that they are not satisfied with the way their life goes.

Another striking difference is that, in spite of the fact that a majority of the Russian respondents accentuate collective values (that the State should help the weaker, that people should defend common interests), almost two thirds of both the adolescents and the adults in St. Petersburg agree on the statement that the individual’s prosperity should wholly be dependent on how well she/he succeeds in taking care of him-/herself and his/her family. Only one quarter of our Stockholm inhabitants agree on this statement. In the Russian qualitative group interviews (hardly in the Swedish ones) several declarations exemplified this position, that every person is responsible for his/her situation in society.

In the following sections, there are several results illustrating people’s perceptions of democracy and welfare in the two cities. In most cases we have endeavored to further elucidate the results by studying the correlation patterns of each variable in the entire set of characteristics (habits, attitudes, values, socio-demographic background, in total approximately 550 variables in the questionnaire) included in the surveys. This procedure assumes that people’s characteristics are interrelated and, thus, could be understood by structuring them in a multi-dimensional space (cf. Bourdieu’s theory on tastes and lifestyles). As Bourdieu points out, the correlations can be quite complicated since the different characteristics (variables) often are intertwined, leading to analytical difficulties.

On the whole, our studies show that the St. Petersburg respondents, although most of them trust the president (Putin), have a more critical attitude than the Stockholmers to a large number of social institutions (such as the parliament, the health care and the police – to mention just a few), to the state of democracy in their country, as well as to the impartiality of the media and their capacity to contribute as autonomous actors to the democratic process in their country. An

24 There is also a hesitation shown towards the market economy among the Russian population – according to Russia Votes in March 2008, 39% of the respondents said that the reforms must continue but 21% stated that they should be discontinued; 40% couldn’t make up their mind. When asked what economic system should be best for Russia, 15% answered market economy, 24% planned economy and 47% a mixed economy. A mixed attitude also emerged towards the question if Russia should be like the West or the former political system, or if the country should go its own, new way – the last opinion turned out to be most popular (www.russiavotes.org).

easy conclusion to draw of such results could be that the mainstream Western journalists are right when claiming that democratic norms are lacking in the Russian society. As mentioned earlier, however, the experience of the consistent, sometimes radical, political and social changes in Russia during the past 20-25 years has marked the adult inhabitants of St. Petersburg and can thus be assumed to constitute an explanatory factor in itself (as similar changes have not occurred in Sweden). Another basic explanatory factor is the difference in the tangible assets of the St. Petersburg inhabitants. It is interesting, however, that such a thesis, that economic wealth could influence people’s experiences and representations of democracy, was rejected by the large majority of our media experts (Russian as well as Swedish) who meant that economic welfare could hardly be considered as an important characteristic of a democracy.

For the moment, we prefer to refrain from drawing any far-reaching conclusions concerning the political and the social situation in either of the cities under consideration. However, the correlation analyses we have carried out suggest that the values that in a Western political tradition are associated with democracy, such as freedom of expression, are structured along a number of variables that in a Durkheimian interpretation would be recognized to indicate the agents’ integration into the prevailing social order, and into society in general.

Background variables such as good household economy and high education (partly correlating with each other) are among those that demonstrate the strongest correlations with values and activities that in the Western way of thinking characterize a democratic society. The analyses show that better household economy and higher education (characterizing agents with a higher position in the social field) also correlate with the respondents’ satisfaction with the way they live their lives, with their trust in the major political, economic and welfare institutions as well as with their trust in other people with whom they interact.

However, when interpreting the impact of education and household economy on other variables one should take into consideration that the correlation between these two background variables is not particularly strong (especially in Sweden). At the same time the proportion of well-to-do people is very low among the St. Petersburg respondents (as is obvious from Figure 3:9), whereas the level of education is very similar in the two cities. This circumstance implies that some characteristics/variables can display quite different correlations patterns (primarily among the St. Petersburg adults) with the two background variables in question.

One thesis that we pursue in this article is that democracy, freedom of expression and the like are relative ideas, the meaning of which depends on different social factors. The analyses of our materials show that even if we limit

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26 Durkheim i.a. 1897.
27 The Pearson’s correlation coefficient between household economy and education varies between 0.13 (Swedish adults) and 0.23 (Russian adults).
ourselves to one city – Stockholm or St. Petersburg – we find varying representations of these ideas depending on the persons’ place within the social space expressed in terms of their cultural and, not least, economic resources.

As already mentioned, in the following sections we endeavour to shed light upon some central aspects of the state of democracy in St. Petersburg and Stockholm by structuring a variety of views of the some 1,600 respondents from two generations in these two cities. In the concluding section of the article we try to make sense of some prevailing political and academic representations of these concepts in light of the reported findings.

III. Some findings more in detail

The political establishment in the two cities

We will start with a specific question that addresses the respondents’ attitudes to the political system in Russia and Sweden, respectively, since these attitudes are a result of two decades of social development.

From Figure 3:1 it is evident that Moderaterna (the Conservatives – the blue bar in the Figure) was the largest party among the Stockholm respondents when our study was carried out in 2006-2007. Socialdemokraterna (the Social Democrats) came in second place (the purple bar), followed by Miljöpartiet (the Greens), a situation that reflects the relatively stable electorate support of these parties in the Stockholm region since 2006 and that in general has been much more stable in Sweden than in Russia.28 The Russian respondents’ low trust in the political system of their country is expressed, i.a., in the answers to the question “Which political party do you like best today?”, where the Russian respondents seem to be strongly polarized: almost one third of the St. Petersburg respondents have answered “no party suits me”, which, together with the “hesitant respondents”, constitutes half of all the St. Petersburg respondents. The corresponding figures for the Stockholm samples are considerably lower: less than 15 per cent consider that “no party suits me”; together with the “uncertain” respondents there is approximately one quarter of the Stockholmers who have not chosen a party. On the other pole, the Russian electorate’s preferences clearly are to Putin’s United Russia which stands out as the biggest party (more than one third of all respondents or approximately two thirds of the respondents that have mentioned a party).

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28 It should be stressed that the Conservatives are over-represented while the Social-Democrats are under-represented in Stockholm compared to Sweden as a whole. It should also be mentioned that more West-oriented Russian oppositional parties (such as Jabloko and the Alliance of the right-wing forces) are stronger in St. Petersburg and the big cities compared to the rest of Russia.
The Russian respondents’ considerable deprecation of the prevailing political party system can also be attributed to several social changes – political (associated with lawlessness in several social domains) as well as economical (that have led to material penuries). United Russia is, thus without doubt, the party with largest electoral support – bigger than the remaining parties put together. The relatively new party A Fair Russia (created in 2006), of many considered as a satellite to United Russia, held the second place among the adults. The xenophobic Liberal-Democratic party, was, however, number two among the teenagers (8%). It should be pointed out that the data collection with the adolescents in St. Petersburg was conducted in the Autumn 2006 and (mainly) in the Spring 2007, while the adult survey was carried out in the Fall 2007, something that could explain the low numbers of partisans of A Fair Russia among the adolescents.

Persons who have stated that “no party suits me” are especially interesting given that they constitute a large proportion of the Russian respondents – especially among the young – taking into account that such voters’ views are disregarded in the final official counting of votes.
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Figure 3.1. Which political party do you like best today?

Characteristics of respondents who stated that “no party suits me” (compared with those who identified a specific political party)²⁹

An obvious difference between the followers of a particular political party and those who reject the established political system by stating that no party suits them, is that the former group have more confidence in the political parties generally, the parliament, the government and its ministers (including the Prime Minister/the President), as well as the City Councillor. The relationship is especially pronounced in the Russian sample ($r = 0.35-0.40$). Among the Swedish adult “partisans”, there are, as well, dispositions to trust welfare organiza-

²⁹ This description is based on correlation analysis, in which we have redefined the variable “Which party do you like best today?” in the following way: 1) persons who indicated any specific party, and 0) people who indicated that no party suits them. Uncertain respondents, and those who have not answered the question have been excluded from the analysis.
tions ($r = \sim 0.20$) such as the police, the school system, and the like. The “partisans” in both cities believe more often that “Ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media”, and that democracy works in St. Petersburg and Stockholm, respectively. The supporters of a specific party also believe relatively more often that it is possible to make one’s voice heard (for instance, through letters to the editor of a newspaper or via the Internet), and that one can influence the state of things in the country.

Moreover, people who have chosen a political party tend to like different kinds of popular culture (TV entertainment, musical hits, etc.) more than others. Among the Swedish supporters of a concrete party there is also a weaker but pronounced correlation with consumer behaviour, for example, to follow fashion trends and to think that the supply of goods and services, as well as people’s possibility to consume, has improved, etc.

Respondents who identify themselves as wealthy and as people in decision making positions and (in Sweden) people with a better economic situation are over-represented among those who adhere to a given political party.

The Russian respondents who reject the political structure are instead more often people with higher education, a relationship which does not exist among the Swedish respondents.

The fact that a larger share of the Russians than the Swedes seems indifferent to political life can be accounted for by several reasons according to the participants in our group discussions in St. Petersburg. For some individuals the political field is serving only a limited part of society that takes advantage of the power by illicit means:

There are all too many people who have a good life... they steal, plunder. They just don’t like to be disturbed by anybody. (young man, electro-technical college, St. Petersburg)

I don’t care about this (political) agreement. I care about a normal life. I care for how I could afford something. (middle-aged man, low education, St. Petersburg)

A Russian woman with high education thinks that people do not believe in parties and movements, since they have understood that they serve only the goals of some leaders. “So I try to be as meek as a lamb”, she adds.

According to a student at a liberal arts college, young people do not want to think about anything, they just want to have fun:

Well, in fact I would like people to start thinking more. Now in Russia and in general, in principle, there are many young people who don’t want to think about anything, and there is even music which contains information, texts, which make people depressed… And then people listen to dance music… well, as they say now, sausage (slang for the house style music), because it doesn’t make people think deeply.
Trust in social institutions

The fact that the St. Petersburg respondents generally to a lesser extent than the Stockholmers choose the established political parties is also evident in Figure 3:2, from which it appears that few respondents in the two cities and age groups have marked any higher degree of trust in the political system in general (the political parties, the parliament, local authorities and trade unions, as well). However, the Swedish respondents have higher trust in their parliament, while a larger proportion of the Russians trust their government.

The results are important to take into account in relation to the Swedish media discourse on the pressure on the Russian media exerted by the Putin’s (and Medvedev’s) administrations, suggesting that people could be ideologically manipulated by the State. It is clear that a large percentage of the St. Petersburg’s population – particularly adults – feel they are outside the political system (and in many respects perhaps outside the society in general). Rather than classifying them as apolitical, one could say that the political system does not contain any alternatives for such people; the “liberal” and “democratic” parties of Western style politics (and the ‘Russian’ type of parties such as United Russia) are not real options for them. One possible explanation is that such political ideas and social structures have not grown organically in the country but has been enforced under a short period characterized by (mainly) selfish economic aspirations which often have proved to go against common people’s interests. As an additional consequence of such efforts, the ideological nature of ideas such as democracy and freedom of expression has been revealed as a false picture of reality subordinated to certain interests of the dominant strata. Our group interviews confirm this hypothesis.

A young man (at an electro-technical gymnasium, St. Petersburg) concludes that the young and adult people just do not believe that they can change anything, why they do not participate in the elections. “The candidate is already elected [in advance]”, as a girl studying fashion and design in St. Petersburg puts it. This is echoed by several other utterances:

   Everything is corrupted here, it is clear who votes and who wins. (young woman, law college, St. Petersburg)
   I know that I can’t change anything, even through elections. Who they want to appoint, will be appointed. (woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

Of course, as in Stockholm, there are several St. Petersburgers in the group discussions who believe that if people join together, they can achieve some results:
I think that an ordinary man cannot influence the society. Only when gathered together, let’s call it a group, a community, he can influence. (middle-aged woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

The distribution of responses regarding trust in social institutions among the Stockholm respondents suggests that similar views exist in Sweden, as well, albeit considerably less pronounced, which according to our hypothesis could be due to a higher living standard in general and a greater homogeneity in terms of people’s material resources.

Figure 3:2 presents the shares of the respondents in the four groups studied who trust different institutions. The grouping of the institutions in Figure 3:2 is based on the respondents’ answers to the various sub-questions which are structured by way of multivariate analysis. The groups of answers could conditionally be called ‘state institutions’, ‘welfare institutions’, ‘trans-national institutions’ and ‘media institutions’; the latter is also divided into private and governmental/public service media.

In general, it should be stressed that the structural pattern of trust obtained by way of factor analyses looks quite similar in the two cities and age groups (i.e., in all four samples). For example, trust in the medical service is strongly linked to confidence in other institutions sorted in the same group – the police, the legal courts, etc. Moreover, people’s trust in such welfare organizations is linked, naturally enough, to people’s experience of their society as being fair and as making progress in several important respects (labour market, purchasing power, human rights, combating corruption, etc.). The church, the armed forces and the Prime Minister/the President are located in a separate factor as these societal forces differ partially from the general pattern.

Of course, people’s expressed trust in social institutions, media, etc., cannot be considered as a measure of their actual behaviour or especially of the long-term influence of the institutions/media. There are, for instance, studies showing that many persons’ opinions and views are influenced by contents in yellow press, advertising and other popular media, although these persons state that they do not trust such media (contents).30

30 See, e.g., Johansson 2008 and Article 4 in this anthology.
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Figure 3.2. How much trust do you have in the following institutions? 31
(by age and city, cumulative per cent)

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<td>The state-controlled other media</td>
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<td>The multi-national corporations</td>
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<td>Private radio and TV channels</td>
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The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

It should be noted that the correlation pattern (the inter-relatedness of people’s trust in the different institutions – especially within a cluster of social institutions as sorted in Figure 3.2) is much stronger among Russian than among Swedish adults. This means that the Russian answers are more polarized along a number of binary oppositions (while the Swedish answers are more consensus oriented) regarding attitudes towards welfare organizations such as medical service, etc. In Sweden the different “trust factors” are also more autonomous.

31 The questions on trust are to a large extent inspired by the nationwide survey, National SOM, conducted by The SOM Institute, Sweden.
areas. For instance, the Stockholmers’ attitudes towards the media are more often independent of trust in political organizations, etc.

There are a number of differences between the two cities concerning the teenagers’ trust in the major institutions of society. According to Figure 3:2 it is also evident that several differences are especially salient among the adults. For instance, the adults in Stockholm have more confidence in the police, medical service, parliament and legal courts compared to the adults in St. Petersburg, among whom the church, the national defence and especially the President are more trusted than the corresponding Swedish institutions. The Russians’ relation to their President has been lively discussed by Swedish media. Below we try to shed some light on the issue based on our correlation patterns.

One central finding is that the Russians’ trust in the President is strongly bound up with the opinion that the country lives up to the UN Convention on Human Rights (and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child even though this relationship is less pronounced). There is also a somewhat positive correlation between trusting the President and trusting people in general (asked about in another question). People who trust the President are somewhat under-represented among people with high education, especially if the education of the respondent’s parents is taken into consideration, i.e., people with high education and high-educated parents tend to have lower confidence in the President than the rest of the middle-aged persons in St. Petersburg. N.B. The answers to the questions whether the own country lives up to the UN Conventions on Human Rights and on the Rights of the Child, respectively, indicate that a significantly higher proportion of the St. Petersburg residents (nearly 40% of the adolescents and approximately one third of the adults compared with about 25% of the Stockholm adolescents and approximately 10% of the Stockholm adults) do not know what the UN convention in question is about or have no opinion, a result that, in our analyses, is related to the relatively widespread indifference to political issues among the Russian respondents.

Concerning media use, the President’s supporters are under-represented among frequent Internet users (who, in their turn, seem to be politically more active and often are high-educated people with access to the new media where they search, i.a., political and scientific information).

On the contrary, the St. Petersburg respondents who trust Putin (which is somewhat more common among persons with low education) tend to watch television, especially the state-controlled Perviy Kanal (Channel One) and Rossiya (Russia), significantly more diligently than the rest of the respondents (the correlation is particularly marked in the adult sample, \( r = 0.25 \) Perviy Kanal, 0.22 Rossiya)\(^ {32} \) – and as a consequence also a number of TV programmes, not

\(^ {32}\) It is interesting to point out that listening to Echo Moskvy (Echo of Moscow), a radio station renowned as regime-critical by several oppositional media experts in our study, has no
least the news editions and talk shows but also Russian series, on these channels. Television is, as well, more often (than among people who do not trust the President) identified as an important source of knowledge and information. These results might be seen as a confirmation of the criticism about political manipulation by the media, primarily television, which has become the most important medium in Russia – to the extent that it is unequivocally proven that the situation in Russia differs significantly from other countries concerning control of television by political and other elites. One ought therefore to analyze at which point the media situation in Russia is significantly different from, and in which respects it resembles, the situation in, for instance, the U.S., Italy and Sweden.

Trust in the President correlates positively with people’s attitudes towards most of the other Russian institutions, not least the government\(^{33}\) and the parliament, as well as towards the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank. Trusting the President is also strongly related to opinions that democracy functions in Russia in general \(r = 0.43\) and in St. Petersburg \(r = 0.39\).

The supporters of (the former) President Putin consider much more often than other respondents in St. Petersburg that the situation in Russia is getting better in most social domains – the governance (from foreign to security issues, \(r = 0.48\)), the moral of the public sector \(r = 0.40\), the possibility for the individual of expressing his/her opinions \(r = 0.38\), the business conditions in the country, etc. This is one essential explanatory factor of Putin’s popularity – to the extent that there have been real ameliorations in these respects, which seems to be the case, since even Putin’s critics admit it.

Trust in Putin is even strongly correlated with the beliefs that the representation of reality in the newspapers and especially the TV news editions usually is true and correct and that ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media.

Concerning interest in media content in general, it should be mentioned that people in St. Petersburg who trust their President more often than the average of our Russian respondents consider that it is important for them that the media deal with welfare issues (such as child care and family issues, terrorism and

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\(^{33}\) Pearson’s correlation coefficient \(r\) is ca. 0.4. It should be mentioned that the corresponding correlation in Stockholm is much stronger (0.8) which means that the involved variables in Sweden (trust in the prime minister and in the government) are almost identical, in contrast to in Russia where the president is experienced as a more independent political factor. Another variable that correlates strongly with Stockholmers’ trust in their (in 2007 right-wing) prime minister (besides trust in the government and in the parliament) is the opinion that privatization and open market economy is good for Sweden. There are, on the other hand, faint negative correlations with the opinions that “economic prosperity for all” is an essential characteristic of a democratic society, that the state ought to help the weaker and less capable to live a life fit or human beings, as well as that the information technology leads to growing unemployment and/or increased possibilities of control.
defence issues, alcohol and drug abuse, gender equality) but also, and not least, with interest in furniture, food and cooking.

The church is another institution, which the young – and especially the middle-aged – respondents in St. Petersburg trust much more than the Stockholmers of the corresponding age groups. It might be that in difficult situations people believe more in God (as well as in UFOs and different kinds of charlatans), one of our St. Petersburg media expert explains. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union (and of the Communist system characterized by atheism), the Orthodox belief constitutes an important source of national identification and integration in society (the Orthodox Church is associated with words of honour such as “spiritual values”, “renaissance”, and “tradition”), the informant continues. It should be stressed that, although free, the Orthodox Church has become a close ally with the state, an important cog in the power machine. (Interestingly, our informant is, on the one hand, an anarchist and anti-fascist, adverse to Western ideology, and, on the other hand, an advocate of orthodox values.)

Several statements in the group discussions suggest that the Orthodox Church is perceived by many St. Petersburg participants as an essential part of their culture, and as a distinctive characteristic of the Russian nation. These respondents maintain that Christianity has strongly influenced the developments in Russia in general.

I like the culture in Russia… different museums, buildings… if visiting them, it’s very interesting to see how the Russian culture was developing. It’s very rich and… religion, it was paganism before the Baptism of Russia, if you consider it… it’s also interesting, and after the Baptism… how everything was […] developing. (young woman, studying chemistry, St. Petersburg)

In a similar manner, the relatively strong positive image of the armed forces in the representations of many Russian respondents depends, of course, to a great extent on the image of the army’s power disseminated by the mass media. “We possess the best engineering inventions: airplanes, helicopters…”, a young man says (studying information technology in St. Petersburg) referring to a TV broadcast on the army and military technology.

However, a large proportion of the young respondents express a negative attitude towards the state of things in the Post-Soviet army, as they know them from relatives and, of course, from the media. (It should be mentioned that military service is compulsory for Russian men.)

Our army now is in a bad condition… awful… and many people are misled. And when they come and… [when] a recruit joins the army, he faces awful conditions. He can simply fall ill and… (young woman, practical gymnasium, St. Petersburg)
The negative attitude, when it exists, towards the political parties and the parliament, is not seldom built on knowledge received from the media. Often the respondents mention the Duma deputees with reference to TV scenes (for instance, showing deputees sleeping or picking their noses during the parliamentary deliberations).

It seems to me, that in our Duma... a lot of superfluous people receive salaries for just sitting there, for sleeping in the Duma. It is even shown how they... (young woman, music school, St. Petersburg)

The state officials and executives (ministers) are also the embodiment of the evil in the perceptions of several Russian participants in the group discussions.

Zurabov in charge of social issues was in power for such a long time. People were writing to him, complaining, everything was in the media. Why could not he (Putin) remove him? (middle-aged man, low education, St. Petersburg)

Several young people take it for granted that being in power necessarily goes together with corruption.

If a common person decides to become an official ... to the State Duma [...] and if he is not a bribe taker and he does not want to take bribes, he just wants to work... well, he will be kept from working, be killed or ... (young man, practical gymnasium, St. Petersburg)

All participants in the group discussions seem to be aware of the fact that bribes occur at several levels of the public affairs and in business, as well.

The state executives are often singled out as responsible for the desperate situation of common people. For instance, a middle-aged woman (low education, St. Petersburg) talks about the callousness of representatives of the municipal administration and the obstacles they put in her way, while she is trying to run her business:

You know, I would like to put it this way: Don’t give me anything, but don’t disturb my work. Well, we don’t expect any help from the state; we understand that we wouldn’t get anything from it. But, at least, do not impede my work. We’ve got enough!

Very often the respondents discuss the police in negative terms. A middle-aged man (with high education and parents with low education) asserts that it is dangerous to have contacts with the police:

They are horrible people. I am afraid to look at them, and to speak to them…
We are afraid of police outrage, frankly speaking... have you thought about it, when you visited some party and drank 150 grams... aren’t you afraid of taking the metro? (middle-aged man, high education and parents with low education, St. Petersburg)

A woman with low education relates with indignation a story from a TV broadcast where some homeless people in a hopeless situation approached the police and were palmed off. Several young people also tell stories about policemen’s illegal actions.

**Media credibility**

In the West there has been a great deal of media reports about the Russian media’s alleged lack of autonomy. Several researchers and journalists, particularly Western, but also some Russian scholars, journalists and other media experts, as well as common people interviewed in our studies, emphasize the view that (Russian) media are non-independent tools in the hands of political and economic forces that largely overlap. Figure 3:2 above shows that there are no major differences between the two cities concerning the share of the respondents who trust the media – with small variations: there are slightly higher proportions of the Stockholm respondents who trust the print media and the public service broadcast media, while the relationship is the reverse when it comes to private broadcast media, which are more trusted by the St. Petersburg residents than by the Stockholmers. It is also worth mentioning that the Russian respondents have greater confidence in opinion polls – a knowledge instrument that did not exist during the Soviet era and which by many Russians seem to be perceived as a positive (democratic) social instrument (for instance, as an important medium to express their views (\( r = 0.48 \)) and as an opportunity for the individual to influence society (\( r = 0.34 \))). Trust in the polls is also connected with the view that newspapers give a true picture of the situation in society (\( r = 0.35 \)). Moreover, the Russian respondents are more positive to phone-in TV shows than the Swedes are.

In Sweden, the opinion polls and market surveys have a much longer history and have often been criticized in the media and in academic research, as well. The public has also become blasé, which in all likelihood explains the Stockholm respondents’ more negative attitude toward such studies.

In Figure 3:3 four statements concerning people’s experiences of the media credibility and their fair/unfair representation of different social strata are sorted by the multivariate analyses into two groups.

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34 It could be mentioned that the pattern of people’s attitudes towards these media are different in the two cities, i.a., with respect to education; high-educated people in Stockholm are somewhat over-represented among those trusting Swedish public service media (\( r = 0.13 \)) while high-educated people in St. Petersburg are much more sceptical to the state-controlled broadcast media (\( r = -0.27 \)).
The first three statements are positively correlated with each other; this is especially true of the first two sentences ($r = 0.60$ in Sweden). These three variables are, in their turn, negatively related to the last statement, that the media contents are controlled by few powerful persons, i.e., the more people are convinced that the media contents are controlled by the elite, the less people believe in the correctness of the media representations.

Considering the fact that many Russian and Swedish researchers, as well as journalists interviewed in our project, assert that Russian television is dependent on political forces and controlled directly by the presidential administration, it is worth noting that more than one quarter of the Russian adolescents compared with less than one fifth of the Swedish adolescents agree on the statement “The picture of reality conveyed through TV news is usually true and correct”. On the other hand, a somewhat greater number of Swedish adults believe that they by reading newspapers are given a correct picture of the situation in society. (We discuss in Article 2 the fact that a significantly larger share of the Stockholm respondents usually read newspapers as compared to the inhabitants in St. Petersburg. The differences are especially striking among the adults – less than 20 per cent of the St. Petersburg adults compared to almost 70 per cent of the Stockholmers of the same age usually read a daily paper every day.)

How could one interpret the results in Figure 3:3? Can it be concluded that, in this respect, the Russian state-controlled television is more neutral and objective than the Swedish public service television, while Swedish newspapers should be better than the Russian ones? Or could it be that a greater proportion of the Russians have been deluded by the televised ideological messages, while the Swedish respondents are more vigilant in this regard and can see the “truth” behind the TV representations? The following correlation patterns give us some guidance for understanding these results.
As regards the statement “The picture of reality conveyed through TV news is usually true and correct”, Figure 3:3 shows that there are no big differences between the adult answers in St. Petersburg and Stockholm. Among the adults in St. Petersburg who agree on this statement there are strong positive correlations with a whole range of variables, for example: the opinion that the democratic and economic development in Russia is improving; the view that Russia lives up to the UN Conventions of Human Rights and on the Rights of the Child; and trust in most social institutions, in the first place the state-controlled radio and TV channels and opinion polls but also in the national governmental institutions as well as in trans-national political and commercial organisations. People in both cities who trust the news programmes on television are also optimistic concerning several trends in the societal development in their country (namely, that “the individual’s possibility to express her/his opinions publicly” are improving, as well as the business conditions, the ethics of the public sector, etc.). The links in these respects are stronger in St. Petersburg where there is a pronounced correlation between people’s trust in TV news and their opinions of other societal trends and institutions – the educational system, the opportunities to consume, the international security, etc., are improving.

Regarding media use it should be emphasised that this statement (“The picture of reality conveyed through TV news is usually true and correct”) is agreed upon more often among diligent TV viewers in St. Petersburg who readily watch not only the news programmes, but also different kinds of (especially Russian) serials, music and other entertaining stuff. They also tend to consider television an important source of information and knowledge – unlike the highly educated respondents who more often dissociate themselves with the statement and mistrust the TV news, more often have access to computers and the Internet, and more often use the new media as a source of information and knowledge.

In addition, the same statement (“The picture of reality conveyed through TV news is usually true and correct”) is confirmed much more often by the supporters of the biggest political party, Putin’s United Russia, than by other people and less often by the cultural elite. Agreeing on the statement has no significant correlation with people’s economic situation.

The correlation pattern is more or less similar in Stockholm; however, there are no significant correlations between the statement and the respondents’ level of education. Unlike the St. Petersburg respondents, in the Stockholm sample the statement in question correlates positively not only with trust in the public service broadcast media \(r = 0.37\) but also with reading newspapers \(r = 0.20\). The view that TV news are true and correct has in Sweden no relationship with political party preferences.
As we have seen in Figures 3:2 and 3:3, the proportions of people who trust the public service/state-controlled television/radio and the daily papers, respectively, are quite similar in the two cities.

The general correlation patterns associated with the variable “Ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media” are quite similar to the patterns for “The picture of reality conveyed through TV news is usually true and correct”, although somewhat weaker. In Stockholm there are no pronounced connections with the respondents’ media use (frequencies and amount); agreeing on the statement is, however, somewhat related to certain preferences for media contents, such as reports about celebrities and other entertainment material. The inhabitants of St. Petersburg more often dissociate themselves from this statement than the survey participants in Stockholm.

The fourth statement, “The media contents are controlled by a few, powerful persons”, is negatively related to variables reflecting people’s trust in social institutions, beliefs that democracy functions in Sweden/Russia, and that many social conditions are improving in the country (gender equality, economic divides, and the individual’s possibility of expressing his/her opinion). People who agree on this statement are also, more often than the rest of the respondents in both St. Petersburg and Stockholm, critical of several aspects of the new information technology.

When interpreting the results of both “Ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media” and “The media contents are controlled by a few, powerful persons” it is necessary to bear in mind that St. Petersburg much more heavily than Stockholm is populated by people living in fragile economic and social circumstances. Given the polarization of the Russian society in these respects, it is again worth noting that the (quite critical) responses of the Russian middle-aged persons – more than 50 per cent agree on the statement “The media contents are controlled by a few, powerful persons” – differ from the answers of the Russian teenagers (although both age groups live in the same media environment and material circumstances) whose responses, on the other hand, are hardly different from their Swedish peers. The response distribution of the adult Stockholmers is more similar to the two youth groups. In all four groups the assertion “The media contents are controlled by a few, powerful persons” has an explicitly negative correlation with faith in the accuracy of the TV news.

However, as mentioned previously in the text, the correlation patterns show that agreement on the statement “Ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media” in the two cities is related to the belief that “The picture of reality conveyed through the TV news is usually true and correct”.

35 The statement “Ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media” is, besides the positively correlated variables that in Figure 3:3 are sorted in the same factor, quite strongly related to people’s trust in state institutions, state-controlled media and to their positive attitude towards several economic and political aspects in the societal development.
Questions about the media portrayal of ordinary people were also put in the qualitative group discussions. The middle-aged group participants in St. Petersburg are practically all of the opinion that ordinary people – workers, abandoned children, inhabitants in one’s own village in disrepair, low-paid persons – are not shown and heard in the media in contrast to celebrities, businessmen, “the top” and special “clans”. One reason is, according to an interviewee, the changed aim of the media, especially television; now it is audience ratings that count, why the audience’s real interests are not met.

Many say it is disgusting with so much about the celebrities’ glamorous lives (which is common content in the Swedish media, too):

[…] it should not be shown throughout the country how they (celebrities) are having fun, sit on golden toilets and talk that this is the country’s future when about 80 per cent of our young people do not even eat sausage every day. […] On the front pages of all our newspapers they must show not women with huge breasts and hips, but a dying face of an old woman who gave her life to the country, and now is absolutely forgotten in some flat, full of bedbugs. They should show a veteran with all his honours and underwear covered with his excrement in his room in the collective flat and […] next to him… a delegate’s photo in a luxurious car. They must show a child cut by a sadist in the entrance (of a house) – and just after it Xenia Sobchak with her perfect hips on the golden toilet. I think when this information is available people will wake up much sooner. […] But what I see now… a wonderful life of beau monde. I don’t want, I am fed up with it, I am angry at them. […] (middle-aged man, low education, St. Petersburg)

We see all these gutter-children dying there, we see all this. I think that the media have to bring this home to our deputies, that they must have huge screens with all these articles and pictures, so that they are shown them during their meeting when they sit and clean their noses… or sleep… and to show […] old men, how they are treated, so that they see all this… and to overfeed them with this information, so that they see it in their dreams. (middle-aged man, low education, St. Petersburg)

However, a couple of examples of programmes and columns are mentioned as different among the St. Petersburg interviewees:

[…] Bez kompleksov (Without complexes) […] I see that these celebrities do not participate there. There is no one like Yakubovich. She does not invite those who are okay having about 20 marriages and supporting all their children. Well, I see people that she invites, this horror… these women, homeless, abandoned… everyone talks about their lives in this programme. (middle-aged woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

I think that in Komsomolka there is such a section where you are stopped in the street. It is on television, I think, though I watch television only a little… people
are asked about their opinions, at least. I think that these thoughts... interviews are published truthfully. (middle-aged woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

Similar views appear in the group discussions in Stockholm. Viewpoints expressed are, among others, that the media are owned by big consortiums and offer contents that shall be sold, something that to a great extent leads to journalism that concentrates on celebrities and occupational pundits. Media seldom present ordinary people and if they do, it is in a manner that is misleading for that person. Those participants in the group discussion who know what really happened or what lies behind an article or programme consider the media representations most often fragmented and faulty. A couple of high educated men who themselves have been interviewed by the media, are disappointed at how misleadingly they were treated and when one of them wrote a correction, it was not accepted.

However, some Stockholmers point out that there are letters-to-the-editor columns and on the last but one page in the Stockholm City, for example, people can voice their opinions. One person also remarks that it is easier to have a contribution to the debate accepted in local newspapers. A woman mentions interesting programmes on ordinary people, for example, about a woman who had breast cancer and about people hit by the tsunami catastrophe.

In both cities, but especially in Stockholm, many also mention the Internet in these contexts but the opinions about how people’s voices are heard there are mixed – see also Article 2 regarding the subject of the Internet.

In sum, the analysis suggests, in accordance with our point of departure in discourse theory, that the media “objectivity” is a relative concept, and that it is impossible to say which TV channel – or other media – reflects the reality more “truthfully” than the others. It lies, on the other hand, not within the framework of the project to concretely determine the mechanisms by which truth effects are created. The correlation analyses, however, indicate that the level of acceptance of widespread perceptions such as “truth” interplays with people’s acceptance of the political system at large (trust in society’s institutions, and the like) and people’s relationship to the different media, particularly public service/state-controlled media and print media. “You aren’t able to be independent from politics”, a young man studying mathematics in St. Petersburg says, meaning, among other things, that independent media are an impossibility.

Perceptions of democracy

Figure 3:4 shows that definitely more persons in Stockholm than in St. Petersburg are satisfied with the way democracy functions in their own country and home town.
Figure 3:4. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy functions in... (by age and city, cumulative per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teens SPb</th>
<th>Teens Sth</th>
<th>Adults SPb</th>
<th>Adults Sth</th>
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The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

In a similar vein clearly more persons in Stockholm than in St. Petersburg are of the opinion that one’s own country “rather well” or “very well” lives up to the UN Convention on Human Rights (about 60% in Stockholm and about 10-20% in St. Petersburg) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (somewhat lower percentages, but the same differences between the two cities). As mentioned, significant proportions, especially in St. Petersburg, do not know what is addressed in these conventions.

In the questionnaire there are several questions dealing with people’s apprehension of society’s characteristics, aiming at concretizing the answers to the question in Figure 3:4. In particular a multi-item question should be mentioned assessing the perception of the current trends (improvement/improvement) in a number of social domains (business, well-being, political stability, criminality, environment, etc.). Since the situation in the two societies (which is the point of reference for the respondents’ assessments of different developments) is quite different, it is difficult to compare the distribution of the answers. However, we can say that a majority of the St. Petersburg respondents have expressed negative views on the on-going developments in a number of social domains, such as corruption, the environment and the ethics and morality of the business sector. The Stockholm respondents are generally more neutral. In both cities, the areas that one usually thinks go towards the better are “the offer of goods and services”, “the individual’s possibility to consume” and “the individual’s possibility to express her/his opinions publicly”. In the fourth place in both cities comes “business conditions” – see examples of views of the societal development in Figure 3:5.
**Figure 3.5. Do you find that the development in Russia/Sweden is changing for the better or worse in the following areas (examples): (by age and city, per cent)**

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<thead>
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<th>Teens SPb</th>
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<th>Adults SPb</th>
<th>Adults Sth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>The ethics and morality of industry</td>
<td>Criminality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The ethics of the public sector</td>
<td>Economic divides</td>
<td>The environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The offering of goods and services</td>
<td>The individual's possibility to consume</td>
<td>The individual's possibility to express her/his opinions publicly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Business conditions</td>
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The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

Another factor of crucial importance for the interpretation of the previous Figure 3.4 on how democracy functions in the country/city is how individual respondents characterize democracy. The issue is of importance, i.a., in the light of the negative media coverage of the Russian politics in the Swedish (and Western) media, and the reverse image and negative picture of the West in the dominant Russian media. Swedish media have, thus, pointed out that the idea of democracy partly has become disgraced during the vehement economic restructuring in 90s Russia, and has been even more disregarded in the decade since 2000. The following analyses also hint at the fact that democracy and related concepts are filled with nuances and have different significations depending on social circumstances.

We tried to nuance the issue of democracy by asking the respondents to choose three of the most distinctive characteristics of a democratic society from a list of seven given alternatives with possibility to complete the list with an additional open-ended alternative. Five response alternatives – see Figure 3.6 – were chosen to rather different degrees among the respondents.

Figure 3.6 includes, thus, expressions that the respondents used in order to describe their view of a democratic society. It is clear that there are huge differences between the inhabitants in the two cities as regards their opinion on the characteristic features of such a society. Approximately 50 per cent of the middle-aged St. Petersburgers associate in the first instance democracy with “freedom of expression” while almost all middle-aged Stockholmers (and the majority of both Stockholm and St. Petersburg adolescents) do so. Conversely, almost two thirds of the adult Russians have marked “economic prosperity for all” as an essential characteristic of democracy; in addition, “order” (and even “discipline” although more marginally) is more valued as a democratic virtue in Russia than in Sweden.
**Figure 3:6. What is democracy, according to you? Please choose three of the following expressions that you find best describe a democratic society: (by age and city, per cent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Teens SPb</th>
<th>Teens Sth</th>
<th>Adults SPb</th>
<th>Adults Sth</th>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom of expression</td>
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<td>That everyone helps each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic prosperity for all</td>
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<td>Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
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The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

However, respondents with better economic conditions in Stockholm have designated “freedom of expression” as an essential feature of a democratic society more often than the rest of the Stockholm respondents. The minority who has dropped “freedom of expression” has significantly lower confidence in most social institutions, primarily the government, the Prime Minister and the political parties, but also newspapers and opinion polls. Furthermore, people who did not attach greater value to “freedom of expression” often dissociate themselves from liberal values and very often consider that the development in Sweden – and especially in Stockholm – is changing in a negative way in several democratic and economic respects: economic and social (in)equality, (un)employment, the individual’s possibilities of expressing her/his opinion, etc.

It could be mentioned that the minority of Swedish adults who have omitted “freedom of expression”, are also less than the average person interested in (domestic as well as foreign) news and rarely believe that ordinary people themselves can influence social events in one way or another (via the Internet or other media). The corresponding relationship is weaker in St. Petersburg. Here the “freedom of expression” has been chosen as democracy’s distinctive feature relatively more often among assiduous users of computer and the Internet – for their work as well as for leisure – especially those who more often use the entertainment services of the Internet. Internet use is, as well, strongly related to higher education in Russia. “Freedom of expression” is chosen somewhat more often among intellectuals and more seldom among immigrants. In Russia, the Internet in 2007 was still far from every man’s property and its use in itself functioned as a sort of indicator of success – or that the person in question knows and accepts the established code of distinction (in which the Internet is highly valued), that is, takes the game seriously, seeks to show integration into the code as a stake in the struggle to become integrated into the growing consumer society.

It should be pointed out that the choice of “freedom of expression” is opposed – in Stockholm as well as in St. Petersburg – to the choice of the fol-
lowing response alternatives: “economic prosperity for all”, “order” and “discipline”, statements relatively more usual among persons in a precarious material situation. In Stockholm the response alternative “economic prosperity for all” has been chosen more often among people who cast their vote to the left and share values such as “The state ought to help the weaker and less capable…”, and who mistrust the (right-wing at the time) government and the Prime Minister. Other results indicate that these people also more often have a poorer economic situation and feel anxious.

The correlation pattern in St. Petersburg is weaker and structured in a relatively different way. Persons who have chosen “economic prosperity for all” as an essential characteristic of a democratic society have more often marked that they trust the Russian government (and the national defence), and tend to identify themselves as Christians more often than the rest of the Russian respondents (and also like Christian music.) These persons tend to be people who, on the one hand, are poorer, have lower education and were hardly struck by the economic transformations during the 90s, and, on the other hand, support Putin’s line, which by the big media is depicted as “stability”.

The inclination to choose “order” has in both cities some positive correlation with the opinion that “the ethics of the public sector” is improving. In St. Petersburg choosing “order” is more frequent among respondents claiming that the current development implies better possibility of consumption (there is no corresponding relation in Stockholm). For the rest, there are no correlations with media use. “Order” has generally weaker correlation patterns, which means that we cannot describe satisfactorily its relations to the variables in the survey.

Among the Stockholm respondents, the choice of “order” is associated with liberal values. It is, thus, negatively correlated with a number of values implying that “people should stand up more often for common interests in society”, where “the state ought to help the weaker…”, a society in which it is important that the media deal with issues such as the situation of the homeless, HIV/AIDS, the relations between ethnic groups, gender (in)equalities, economic divides and other social problems.

As mentioned, the question about the words respondents find best describe a democratic society, also had an open-ended option where the respondent in his/her own terms could indicate other properties that are essential for a democratic society. Approximately 8 per cent of the St. Petersburg and about 13 per cent of the Stockholm respondents supplemented their answers to the fixed response alternatives with this alternative option. The responses, however, are significantly diverse in that almost all the Swedish responses described “democracy” as a positive condition – free choice, equality, freedom, participation in decision-making, respect, etc. – while a large proportion of the Russian answers described “democracy” in negative terms – such as disorder, corruption,
lawlessness, dirt, humiliation of the Russians, destruction, marasmus, chaos, emptiness.

Possibility of influencing

There are big differences between the middle-aged persons in St. Petersburg and Stockholm when it comes to the perception if one can influence the societal development oneself. Whilst approximately one third of the Swedes are of the opinion that they at least partly can influence, the corresponding proportion in St. Petersburg is negligible. About two thirds of the Russian adults think instead that they cannot influence the development at all (compared to approximately one fifth of the adults in Stockholm) (Figure 3:7).

Figure 3:7. Do you think that you yourself can influence the social development in Russia/Sweden? (by age and city, per cent)

The few Russian adults who nevertheless answer in the affirmative are more often persons with higher education, who use the Internet more (in order to search for, among other things, juridical, political and other factual information), and who, in addition, most often regard themselves as successful, affluent people with liberal opinions, decision makers and people in responsible positions, intellectuals, etc. Furthermore, they tend to believe that the development in Russia is improving when it comes to, among other things, societal divides, the individual’s possibility of consuming, and ethics within industry. On the other hand, as hinted at earlier, the correlations with their trust in the State and other societal institutions are weaker than among other respondents in St. Petersburg.

The pattern is with certain displacements similar among the Stockholm respondents. Unlike in St. Petersburg, however, the Swedes who believe they can influence society themselves are also interested in news, societal programmes and similar newspaper content. They tend, as well, to be of the opinion that “Ordinary people can influence what is happening in society by making their voices heard on the Internet”, and that “The individual’s possibility to express her/his opinions publicly” has improved (two correlations that are weak or do not exist among the adults in St. Petersburg, depending on the fact that so few persons have answered in the affirmative).
As hinted at previously, there is a positive relation between the respondents’ economic prosperity and the opinion that one can influence societal development oneself.

Also in this respect the adult Russian respondents are the most deviating – and most sceptical – group. Especially noteworthy is the huge difference in relation to the Russian adolescents – in spite of the fact that both age groups of the population live in equal social conditions. Moreover, the young people in both cities have quite similar opinions – in spite of their different social conditions. The results presented in Figure 3.7 constitute, thus, an interesting point of departure for speculations on the factors that determine people’s attitude to political and social realities. The observations could be considered as another indirect support for the hypothesis that the adult St. Petersburgers’ scepticism depends on their multiple experiences of major social changes.

The answers in the qualitative group discussions confirm these findings. The Russian adult participants, both the low- and high-educated, of both sexes, do not see any possibilities of influencing the societal development as ordinary individuals. It is not possible via traditional media or the Internet either, they say. If conditions are ripe, strikes and rallies are hypothetically a possibility. However, it does not function, among other things since people in Russia are so unorganized (compared to in the West, where public opinion is paid more attention to), one person believes.

A boy at an IT college in St. Petersburg believes that the reason is rooted in the Russian society where the people are not united, not organized. In the West, it is different, according to a middle-aged man (low education, St. Petersburg):

> Just look at the Western countries… if you go there, there are thousands of people there… a crowd, but we do not [act]… we just sit. So what? Well, we have enough for bread […] So well, to hell with them, why shall I go there…?

> I can say that something is solved in the West. They take social opinion into account. (middle-aged women, low education, St. Petersburg)

Another person says that it might be possible to influence if one knows someone in the top of the party. Still other persons think that for influencing society one requires time – but this is lacking because people are busy to earn money to survive:

> It’s kind of a work. It is a certain work in a political or social organization. And if a person deals with this work, he has to deal with it. If I have to earn my living, I must have a normal work which is paid. I won’t have time for protest organizations. (middle-aged woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

Young people from a technical college in St. Petersburg give several examples where the protest failed to reach its goal. “People stand up, but cannot achieve
justice”, one of them says. “They just will disperse [the demonstration]”, another student explains motivating his unwillingness to take part in rallies and demonstrations.

And other declarations are, for example, the following:

You can [say] anything you want in the kitchen about anybody you want. But it’s useless to push something in real life. (middle-aged woman, low education, St. Petersburg)

I think that ordinary people can’t influence… even if to consider on a small, district scale. No matter how much we were struggling against Blin Donald’s construction so that they don’t cut out our park, Piskarev […]. We wrote so many leaflets, they were immediately removed. And […] this ‘Blin’ is being built, the park is being cut out. (woman, high education, St. Petersburg)

On the other hand a student of information technology, talking about the faults and the impossibility of changing anything in Russia (including through the media) concludes at the same time that “there is no perfect government. It seems to me that it is unrealistic, because there will always be frauds”. And a young woman at a law college asks: “But how is it possible to change the attitude in society, for example? The society is a system, which has been developing for years…”.

Similar views are expressed by students at a mathematical college, who say that everything in modern society and not only in Russia is decided by money. Without money, it is impossible to take part in political life and exert any influence on society. And even if somebody succeeds to form a party, it has little chance of changing anything, especially if the party would struggle against rich people. It is important that this conclusion applies not only to Russia, one student in the group says. He takes as an example the failure of attempts by Greenpeace to deal with oil magnates.

… but it will never be changed because it is economically disadvantageous to [the involved] countries, so no one will support it.

However, it is worth highlighting that also in this respect, the belief in one’s possibility of influencing, the material conditions (conditioned by the past 20 years’ changes) play a decisive role. The personal economic situation is, thus, emphasized, especially among low-educated persons – if you do not have money for bread, why go out and strike or demonstrate and get wet there?, as one man puts it.

The Stockholmers in the group discussions are considerably more positive towards ordinary people’s possibilities of influencing the societal development. Two high-educated men give examples of having had influence themselves by starting an interest-free bank and by establishing a day-care centre by means of a private parental cooperation. However, this might be said to be more about free-
dom of action in business or of influencing one’s own financial or practical situation than of changing society.

Other Swedish participants point out ways to go if one really wants to exert an influence – to join or start a political party, to join another movement or association, to demonstrate, to collect lists of signatures, to try to start up a debate on the Internet, to write a letter to the press or to give tips to the newspapers via their special tips telephone numbers.

But many persons in the Swedish group discussions mean that there was more debate and action during the 1970s and 1980s and that everybody is more resigned and quiet today – instead saving money in stocks and shares has become much more important. One has the possibility to influence but few people take the chance. People are cowards.

They can (influence) if they activate themselves but I think that people are afraid of saying what they think, because then one must stand by what one has said and sometimes I believe that this is very tough for many persons. I mean, one can think wrong. And that is very dangerous. Then someone can discover that one does not think in the same way as he does. Then they might find that one is stupid and that means loosing face, you know. […] One wants to show an image of being a successful person without having to stand on the barricades. (middle-aged woman, low education, Stockholm)

Yes, I think so (that ordinary people can have influence). Otherwise it is damn indolent by them not to do it. We who do not engage ourselves politically, we have ourselves to blame. We have the possibility, it’s not more difficult than that. No, I think we… we complain… it’s complaining too much without doing anything oneself. (Another participant: But what can one do oneself then?) But you can join a political party, can’t you? There is nobody who is in a political party any longer! Devote that energy that people have for complaining to joining a party instead. […] Those who really engage themselves, all credit! We others shall damn not… We are allowed to have opinions and we shall vote. But no… such things irritate me… that we say ‘no, there is no possibility’. One certainly has a possibility! (middle-aged man, high education, Stockholm)

**Overall political orientation**

Figure 3:8 displays the respondents’ agreement on five general statements about the role of the State versus the individual’s private initiatives in society.
Figure 3:8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (by age and city, cumulative per cent)

The state ought to help the weaker and less capable to live a life fit for human beings
The individual’s prosperity should wholly depend on how well she is taking care of herself and her family
Privatization and an open market economy are good for Sweden/Russia

These statements on general political orientation are in Figure 3:8 – as in previous bar charts – divided into groups by way of factor analyses, whereby the two extracted factors here are somewhat negatively correlated. The variables sorted in the same group correlate strongly with each other and show similar correlation patterns with the rest of the variables in the survey. However, such correlations are weaker or non-existent in the Russian samples. In Sweden, the five statements could be aligned along a left-right scale according to a Western political tradition. The blurred correlations between the statements in question among the inhabitants in St. Petersburg depend in all likelihood to a large extent on the different political system in Russia and partly on the fact that most people want to dissociate themselves from those leftist attitudes that are considered to be part of the compromised past. The fact that the young capitalist Russian state lacks resources and organisation to satisfactorily help people in trouble, also means that many people actually must manage the material situation on their own.

In Sweden, the first two statements are more closely related to social-democratic and other left-wing ideologies in Sweden. We give as an example a list in the note below of the strongest correlations (ordered by size) with the first statement, “The state ought to help…” among the Stockholm adults. The listed variables define, thus, to a large extent the place of this statement in the context of all other characteristics – habits, values, etc. – included in the survey.36

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36 The state ought to help the weaker and less capable to a life fit for human beings
Correlates positively with:
0.5268 I would like that people more often defended common interests in society
0.3527 The situation of the homeless people (important in the media)
0.3031 Refugee and immigrant issues (important in the media)
0.2919 Aid to other countries (important in the media)
0.2875 HIV/Aids (important in the media)
0.2739 The trade unions (trust in) – (continued)
The second statement, “I would like people to stand up more often for common interests in society”, has in Sweden by and large a similar pattern as the first statement. As for media use and other attitudes, this statement is agreed upon more often by Stockholmers who adhere to (in society) “legitimate” aesthetic norms: they readily watch art films, TV theatre and other cultural programmes as well as debates on current political issues and news editions, and they listen to similar radio contents. These people, more often than the average person, consider that it is important for them that the media deal with social issues, such as economic divides, environmental problems, refugees, the situation of the homeless people, gender equality, and the like. Radio, daily newspapers and books are often mentioned as more important information sources among these people who also have stronger trust in the trade unions and in the public service media than the rest of the Swedish adult participants. There are no or weak relationships with the variables measuring the perceptions of the state of democracy in Sweden, although there is a weak negative relation to the opinion that the economic gaps between different population strata have improved. Unlike global protest movements (and partly United Nations) to which these people are positive, they to a greater extent than others consider that U.S.A and the multinational corporations have a negative impact on people’s living conditions. Stockholm respondents agreeing on the second statement are also more often concerned about the possibility that the Internet could be used by authorities and employers for supervision and control. Public actions such as demonstrations, protest meetings and strikes are considered important ways for expressing one’s opinions.

0.2737  The relation between different ethnic groups in Sweden (important in the media)
0.2689  Issues on equality between women and men (important in the media)
0.2614  Economic divides in society (important in the media)
0.2382  Environmental issues (important in the media)
0.2363  Issues on the labour-market (unemployment, occupation) (important in the media)
0.2238  Strikes (important for expressing one’s opinions)
0.2124  Child care and family issues (important in the media)
0.2035  Educational issues, school issues (important in the media)
0.2024  Swedish Television and Swedish Radio (trust in)
0.2003  It is a matter of concern that authorities and employers via the Internet get increased possibility of supervision and control
0.1953  Global protest movements (influence people’s living conditions)
0.1837  People helping each other (a trait of democracy)
Correlates negatively with:
-0.3414  Economic gaps between different population groups (become better)
-0.2903  The unemployment (becomes better)
-0.2766  Privatization and open market economy is good for Sweden
-0.2520  The possibility for the individual of expressing his/her opinions publicly (becomes better)
-0.2149  The prime minister (trust in)
-0.2128  Multinational corporations (influence people’s living conditions)
-0.1873  USA (influences people’s living conditions)
As is apparent from Figure 3:8 more people in St. Petersburg than in Stockholm agree on these first two statements. One possible explanatory factor could be a partial heritage of the Communist ideology. Another factor is the growing economic divide in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union with deterioration of the tangible assets for the majority of the Russian population as a consequence. In the group discussions several participants witnessed such a divide deepening during their own life.

The third politically orientated statement, “A human being’s prosperity ought to be wholly dependent on how well she succeeds in taking care of herself and her family”, has a well-known (predictable) right-wing correlation pattern in Sweden. At the same time, Sweden has a long tradition of a relatively well-functioning system of social insurance and care of different kinds, why it is also understandable that the statement is not felt as being topical to most of the Stockholmers. The much stronger endorsement of this third statement in St. Petersburg is more difficult to interpret, not least because of weaker correlation patterns. The strongest positive correlations here are with the opinions that Russia lives up to the UN Conventions on Human Rights and on the Rights of the Child, respectively. There is also a weak positive correlation with the amount of TV viewing and somewhat stronger with regarding TV as an important source of knowledge and information. When it comes to TV genres, there are some weak correlations in St. Petersburg with preferring news programmes, comedy serials, documentaries, etc. There is also a weak positive correlation with trust in the President.

In both cities there is a negative correlation between this third statement and the respondents’ attitudes to social actions (strikes, demonstrations, participation in political or other organisations, etc.) as a way of influencing the societal development. “People have different goals”, a student declares (mathematical college, St. Petersburg) thus explaining the impossibility to change things in society. “Even a revolution will lead to a change of power and nothing more.”

Revolution is stupid, it won’t change anything because other people will take their place. (young man, college of humanities, St. Petersburg)

There is no correlation in the two cities between agreeing on the third statement and the level of the respondents’ (or their parents’) education or with his/her household’s economic prosperity.

However, a central dimension in the Post-Soviet ideology is that Russia is a country of possibilities, which fosters the idea that everybody must solve his/her own problems (“the more you work, the more you get”, “if you fail, it’s your fault”) – a liberal interpretation of the Western (especially the American) lifestyle spread, i.a., by the media, that has found a foothold in the Post-Soviet Russia. Such a view of life does not leave much space for concern of issues such
as gender equality, refugees’ misery, etc. The rapid economical and political changes seem to have pushed into the background values such as solidarity and collectivity (concepts that have been compromised by the Soviet ideology). Tired of the gender “equality” of the Soviet time, many Russian women are eager to express their alleged desire to become just “a normal” housewife.

The individualistic opinion that the majority of the inhabitants in St. Petersburg display with their answers to this statement depends, thus, without doubt on the prevailing political state of things since 1991. Several participants in our group discussions have pointed out that they cannot expect any help from governmental welfare institutions (after having been deceived by different ideologies – left-wing as well as right-wing). There are several testimonies about families (with several children) who got into disastrous situations without any chance to obtain a reasonable social support.

At the same time, an essential role in this context can be ascribed to the Soviet-ideological heritage, as well, which has been incorporated through, among other things, the social realistic art and literature. Famous examples are Nikolay Ostrovsky’s (1904-1936) novel Kak zakalyalas stall (How the Steel Was Tempered), which as his other autobiographic novels portrays how the Russian youth through the hard school of war matures into good citizens, and Boris Polevoy’s Povest o nastoystashchem cheloveke (A Story about a Real Man), in which a pilot with amputated feet after an accident during the Second World War gives proof of strong will, manage to come back to normal life and resume his profession. In spite of the materialistic Marxist ideology, the message of these books could be interpreted in the way that the individual is responsible for his/her fate and must him/herself overcome the hard obstacles.

There are several similar examples also in the contemporary Russian media operating in a new liberal environment, while a minority quickly and easily has become superrich in a questionable manner – a situation that must be legitimized by the media that are controlled by the new elites. Several talk shows on television, for example Den rozhdeniya Bourzhouy (The New Bourgeois’s Birth), constitute excellent examples of such a discourse, the philosophy of which could be summarized as: “Why are you complaining? You have to take care of yourself and your family. You are expecting help from the State or your comrades? In fact, the society has changed.” In such TV programmes there are often live examples of poor young people who have grown up in an orphanage, who have got many drawbacks and several times have fallen back to the bottom of society, but who at last have come up to the elite thanks to their indefatigable struggle.

Such “positive” ideology could likewise explain why the St. Petersburg teens (more than the teens in Stockholm) are rather positive to privatization and a free market economy (the fifth statement in Figure 3:8), at the same time as the majority of them according to the group discussions are convinced that most
rich people have acquired their wealth illicitly, a theme that also is treated in many popular movies and TV serials, for instance, *Brigada*.

In the Russian adult group discussions corresponding attitudes are expressed:

A few times I watched programmes where they showed people who had no arm, leg and both. Young people who are involved in business now, I admire them. Just in my life, I was oppressed and concerned with diseases and a sick husband, a sick mother… it gives me energy, I understand, my God, […] (middle-aged woman, low education, St. Petersburg)

With such a perspective, the compassion for the deprived is limited among many of the inhabitants in St. Petersburg – in spite of the fact that the majority of the group participants mean that the State should take care of the deprived people:

They (the homeless people) didn’t have enough desire [to work]. These homeless people who live at garbage dumps or these *gastarbeiter* Go to the village, take these houses there – there are lots of them! Restore a house, a vegetable garden – plant whatever you want. Take the land, it’s free. Do whatever you want there. You can become a businessman there. They don’t need this, they are lazy. (middle-aged woman, low education, St. Petersburg)

The fourth statement in Figure 3:8, “Competition and struggle for life is more natural than mutual help and cooperation”, is the least endorsed statement but the one of the five that is most male-dominated in both cities.37

Finally, the St. Petersburg respondents who consider that “Privatization and open market economy are good for Russia” have more often than the average person a positive attitude towards advertising in general, consider that they can influence the course of social events in Russia, and that Russia lives up to the UN Convention on Human Rights. There are many other interesting correlations in the materials and we mention, as previously, only a selection. These people (as well as their parents) have also more often higher education and better economy than other people. Unlike the majority of the St. Petersburg adults, more of the persons agreeing on the fifth statement associate democracy in the first place

37 The correlations with this statement are generally weak among the adults in St. Petersburg. To mention but a few: In the Russian city it is related to preferring violent photo subjects – such as a wounded man, a butcher’s bench, a car accident and quarrelling tramps – and to appreciating music genres such as reggae and hard rock. “Lots of money, wealth” tend to be important for these persons who also use the Internet somewhat more than the average. The respondents agreeing on the statement are also somewhat disposed to say that they are influenced by brands in their clothing style, that the statement “the higher the price, the better the product” is right, and they “feel envious of others because of something they have purchased”. Among adults in Stockholm the correlations are stronger and somewhat different. These Stockholmers have often a neo-liberal attitude and a marked interest in business and new technology.
with “freedom of expression” and are often of the opinion that democracy functions well in St. Petersburg and in Russia. They tend to positively experience most aspects of the latest development of society studied in our survey, i.e., medical services, the individual’s possibility to consume, the ethics of trade and the industry, the struggle against corruption, diminishing the economic gaps, etc., and regard democratic and economic development and life in general in a positive way. Moreover, they tend to believe that they themselves can influence societal development. They also find it important for individuals to express their opinions through, for instance, participating in a political or other organisation, opinion polls, demonstrations/protest meetings, telephone calls to TV programmes, the Internet, etc. They readily watch new European films and use the Internet to a great extent.

Many correlations as regards this fifth statement in Figure 3:8 are the same among the Stockholm adults, however, perhaps stronger as regards trust in most institutions in society and in the multinational corporations, as well as faith in the Internet as a democratic platform. The Stockholmers agreeing on this statement clearly sympathize with right-wing parties. More often than the average person they associate democracy with “freedom of expression” and dissociate themselves from “economic prosperity for all” as a democratic trait, as well as from the statement “The state ought to help the weaker and less capable to a life fit for human beings”.

Here is, thus, a further example of the correlation pattern indicating that in Stockholm “freedom of expression” as a distinctive characteristic of democracy to a greater extent than among the average person is an opinion among affluent persons.

Economic and personal situation
People’s different economical household situation has repeatedly emerged in the above-discussed correlation patterns, and is, thus, in a high degree related to persons’ perception of democratic values, their attitudes towards different social institutions including their media use. In this section, we more closely focus on this economic and some other variables, which are essential indicators of people’s existential conditions.

Figure 3:9 shows that a considerably greater proportion of the Stockholm adults state that they have a better economic situation compared with the corresponding age group in St. Petersburg.

Interestingly, the 17-year-olds in St. Petersburg judge on average their household economy in a much brighter light than the 45-55-year-olds in their city. A similar but much weaker relationship appears among the Stockholm respondents.

Household economy is positively correlated with the frequency and amount of Internet use, especially at work, a partly spurious correlation due to the fact that people with higher education are over-represented among wealthy people,
especially in St. Petersburg. The Internet is also mentioned much more often as a source of knowledge and information among well-to-do persons, as newspapers are. Moreover, e-mail and mobile phones – and even direct contacts – are more often mentioned as important communication channels among richer people who even seem to have broader contact networks. (They also more often meet with their families.)

Figure 3:9. How would you like to describe your household’s economic situation? (by age and city, per cent)

TV viewing, on the other hand, is more popular among people with a more precarious economic situation. Less affluent people also tend to play computer games more frequently than the average person, and state a bigger interest in trends within the game area.

It is characteristic that Stockholmers’ trust in other people (see Figure 3:11 below) and in the major social institutions (such as government and parliament, public service TV and daily newspapers, legal courts, opinion polls, banks, transnational corporations) goes along with their economic prosperity. Household economy is also positively related to a number of opinions that the development of their countries is ameliorating, and with the belief that democracy functions and/or has improved during the latest decades – a trend evident in both cities.

As noticed previously, among richer people democracy is more often associated with the concept of “freedom of expression” than among poorer people who instead more often mention “economic prosperity for all” and “discipline” as characteristics of a democratic society (the correlations are more marked in

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38 As an example it could be mentioned that richer people say more often that the latest societal development means improvements as regards the individual’s possibility of expressing his/her opinions, economic divides in society (more marked in Sweden), the medical service (more marked in Russia), and the individual’s possibilities to consume.
Stockholm). Likewise, affluent persons in both cities consider more often than non-affluent persons that their country lives up to the UN Conventions on Human Rights and on the Rights of the Child.

Moreover, economically successful people consider more frequently than poor people that membership in a political party or other organisation is important for expressing one’s opinion. They also agree more often than the poorer that privatization and open market economy is good for Sweden/Russia, that ordinary people can make their voices well heard in the media and – as we already pointed out – that they can influence the societal development.

Furthermore, well-to-do persons more often than the average person identify themselves with economically secure people, as well as with successful people, fellow workers/colleagues, and compatriots. At the opposite end of the scale, one finds more often persons who identify themselves with people who belong to another religion, and, naturally, with poor people experiencing hardships in life.

The fact that richer people are better integrated into the social order is evident also from their general lifestyle pattern (i.a., they visit more often restaurants, theatres, and the like), at the same time as their household economy has no relation with interest in fine arts (such as classical music, jazz, modern art), which in both cities are associated with possession of legitimate cultural capital (according to Bourdieu’s theories). They constitute, thus, what in Russia is called “new Russians” (the *nouveau riches*).

From Figure 3:10 it is also obvious that the adult respondents in Stockholm especially are satisfied much more often with the way their life is progressing than the inhabitants in St. Petersburg of the same age (who on average have a considerably lower household income).

This finding is hardly surprising given the correlation patterns of this variable showing that rich persons more often feel glad and appreciated and are more often satisfied with their lives than poorer people who, in their turn, surrender more often to depression and anxiety.

*Figure 3:10. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the life you live? (by age and city, per cent)*

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<th>Teens Sth</th>
<th>Adults SPb</th>
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<td>Very satisfied</td>
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The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

Being satisfied with one’s life is also connected with the feeling of being able to influence society, with higher education and with a corresponding life-style
(going to the theatre, an interest in high culture, etc.). Satisfied people also have trust in political and welfare institutions. As for the rest, being satisfied with one’s life correlates with consumer-oriented questions, especially among the young respondents, an issue discussed in Article 4 on advertising.

Figure 3:11 shows that Stockholmers, especially the adults, also trust people in general more than the adult inhabitants in St. Petersburg do.39

Figure 3:11. In your opinion, to what extent is it possible to trust people in general? (by age and city, per cent)

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One ought to be very careful about trusting people
In general one ought to be careful about trusting people
People are generally trustworthy
One can totally trust most people

The vertical lines/marks represent every 25 per cent.

According to our studies, there are, as well, big differences between Stockholm and St. Petersburg when it comes to attitudes towards work and leisure. While the inhabitants in Stockholm much more often stress that it is leisure that makes life worth living, not work, the inhabitants in St Petersburg, on the contrary, emphasize much more often that it is work that makes life worth living, not leisure. This fact is related not only to tangible assets but also to basic attitudes characteristic of consumer society which has a different history in the two cities. This (and a corresponding figure) is discussed more in detail in the Article 4.

IV. Social reality, cultural traditions and media discourse

To better understand the research findings – and not end up in the Western media’s dominant discourse with negative views of Russia as an undemocratic country and the corresponding Russian views of the West – one needs to take into account a number of factors: the alternate economic, social and other changes, which have occurred during a short time period in Russia and which, according to our findings, support the hypothesis that the adult Russians are

39 Other research also shows that individual and collective social capital (social resources that evolve in social networks and social structures characterized by mutual trust, i.e., trust in other people and in social institutions and associations, respectively) are positively related to better health both mentally and physically – and that such individual and collective social capital is more common in welfare states, such as Sweden and Denmark, than in most other (European) countries (Rostila 2008).
more sceptical to various forms of ideological beliefs than the adults in Sweden. It seems that the changes in Russia have instilled a kind of “natural” relativism, i.e., an understanding of the relativity of the “truths” of the dominant discourse that are spread by the media. The fact that the societal changes have meant that the majority of the Russian people have got a worse economic situation than during the Soviet era, even if somewhat better in the first decade of the 21st century than during the 1990s, has further contributed to this scepticism.

It is therefore essential to refrain from considering concepts like “democracy” and “freedom of expression” as given states of things that characterize certain societies (e.g., the Swedish), but that is alien to Russia in 2007. There are several results suggesting this. The fact that the Russian youth, who live in the same conditions as their parents, more resemble Swedish adolescents when it comes to experience of the possibilities to influence the development in their country, points in that direction. Other examples of similarity between the teenagers in the two cities are the feeling that democracy works in the own city/country, satisfaction with one’s life, etc. On the other hand, there are also many essential aspects of the own society of which the majority of the Swedish respondents are negative (see, for example, the upper part of Figure 3:5).

We should also take into account the fact that the dominant Swedish (and Western) discourse, on the one hand, and the Russian one, on the other, differs in several important respects in matters relating to issues of democracy, such as freedom of expression, and that the discourse – scientific, political, and the like – as manifested in academic studies as well as in the popular media is always related to power which is being exercised and simultaneously is characterized by its history and therefore has a certain in-built inertia.

Here it is useful to recall that Russia during a long period, stretching back at least to World War II and going on until the collapse of the USSR, has been a key political and military superpower, in relation to which Sweden (and the West) to a large extent has defined itself – militarily, economically and ideologically. The fact that Russia today is widely regarded as (at least) a military power also plays a role. The fact that the country has significant natural resources, as well, and has regained some of its political influence in much of the former Soviet Union are also important factors that give direction to the discursive truth effects, in which concepts of “democracy” and “freedom of expression” are important inputs or stakes, which circulate through the media and in one way or another also affect the “independent” academic discourse.

In conclusion we can say that the persons’ responses about their attitudes towards the major social phenomena very often are structured in similar patterns of relationship in St. Petersburg and Stockholm (i.e., they are structured

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40 According to Foucault (i.a., 1971), Bourdieu (1998) and other thinkers with relevance to our theoretical framework.
along the same main factors that give meaning to the central concepts that are focused on in this article). At the same time, the answers to a series of questions look different in the two cities (are differently distributed in terms of percentages), because the majority of the respondents in St. Petersburg and Stockholm are positioned in different social and economic circumstances, something which, thus, conditions the answers. In some cases, the patterns of relationship appear clearer among the Russian respondents depending on a larger polarization of the population by socio-economic factors as well as on the above-mentioned scepticism to the dominant discourse’s ideological function, a scepticism that today seems to be more developed among the Russian adult respondents than previously, that is, as a “gift” of the past 20 years of experience.

In other cases, the opposite trend exists: The correlation patterns emerge much clearer among the Swedish respondents, for example, in the case of consumer-oriented issues, where Sweden has a long history that has led to the circumstance that (virtually) the entire population is well-integrated and differentiated in accordance with the current sign system in a relatively developed consumer society. Such a development has just started in St. Petersburg, where the prospective consumers are still not properly integrated into such a code system, but strive to show in a conspicuous way the status-filled objects that they have managed to acquire as a kind of deposit for connection to the coveted Western consumption and its “prosperity”.

From the results reported in this article, it is evident that a considerable proportion of the St. Petersburg (and probably the whole Russian) population feels alienated from the political discourse, especially as defined in the Western consciousness. Responses to questions on whether Russia adheres to the UN Conventions of Human/Child Rights, where nearly half of St. Petersburg-respondents did not know what the two conventions consist of, and on political affiliation where many dissociate themselves from the party-political system (find that no party suits them or are undecided about which party would best represent their interests), speak for this.

It is important to stress that there are barely any St. Petersburg adult respondents who believe they can influence society, while more than 25 per cent of the Swedish respondents (and nearly one third of the adults) think they can affect society in one way or another. The question is, however, whether such a belief corresponds to real opportunities or behaviour. Statements from the group discussions suggest that few really participate in such societal processes (besides voting). Some people point out the opportunity to join political parties, demonstrations, etc. But such opportunities are not comparable in the two cities, due to the fact that the Russian society is much more divided economically, while the Swedish society is more homogeneous and most Swedes have higher living standards and are more consumption-oriented. This seems to have the consequence that political actions such as demonstrations and the like in Sweden most
often are addressed to forces outside the country, those that are operating on an international or global level, against ongoing wars or dictatorships – that is, political circumstances that have attracted the attention by the media in a way that is usually adapted to the dominant power discourse.

There is reason to believe that the adult St. Petersburg respondents’ low belief in the possibility of influencing the society themselves also in this respect depends on deterioration of material circumstances as a result of the fact that the social system and political ideologies have changed repeatedly since the 1990s. Indirect but certain evidence of this is the answers from the young Russian respondents who – similar to their Swedish peers and even to the Swedish adults – to a greater extent than the Russian adults believe they can influence the societal development (but who can hardly be said to have greater opportunities in this respect than their middle-aged compatriots).

From the empirical materials presented in this article it is clear that the St. Petersburg respondents give expression to a state of things in several social domains, suggesting that the state of democracy in Russia is unsatisfactory compared to the situation in Sweden. Behind such a judgment, there are, however, some basic assumptions and social conditions that must be taken into consideration:

– Such a conclusion is made from the perspective of the established Western value system.

– The critical attitudes of the St. Petersburg respondents are, to a great extent, reactions to the information about power abuses spread by the dominant Russian media (which, however, are also accused of being partial, undemocratic, etc.)

– The fact that the St. Petersburg respondents to a significantly greater extent mark and comment on such abuses of power is due to a number of factors outside the ideological meaning of concepts such as “democracy”, “freedom of expressio”, and the like:

• The power abuses are much more obvious for the St. Petersburg participants because of the short history of a “democratic” society in Russia (compared to Sweden).

• The fact that the general standard of living is significantly lower in Russia than in the West implies that such abuses appear as much more harmful for the separate citizens than they do in Sweden.

• It must be stressed that similar evil practices are very common also in Sweden (and in the Western countries in general) where the media daily report about power abuses. The fact that the majority of such abuses in reality remain
unpunished is not experienced as important since they do not seem to threaten the prosperity of the ordinary citizens.

Several results presented in this article, not least the different attitudes between the St. Petersburg adults and adolescents, respectively – implying that the opinions of the St. Petersburg adolescents are much more similar to the Stockholm respondents (especially the young ones) – indicate that economic and social factors are essential for people’s views on “democracy”, “freedom of expression” and other concepts of central importance in the Western political, academic and media discourses.

The distributions of the answers to several questions (such as people’s trust in political, trans-national corporations, etc. and, not least, state-controlled/public service media) suggests that the situation in Sweden is not always much better (in some respects even worse) than in Russia – at least seen from the views of our respondents in Stockholm and St. Petersburg.

As shown, different aspects of media use, media preferences and attitudes towards the media are intertwined with aspects of democracy and welfare, something that is reflected in the correlation patterns in our studies. Still, some aspects need more in-depth investigation. For example, the positive attitude in St. Petersburg towards the statement, “A human being’s prosperity ought to be wholly dependent on how well she succeeds in taking care of herself and her family” would be a central subject for further analyses, principally of the media content. Prime questions to be further elucidated are: In what way has this (in Russia prevailing) representation been created? And which role do the media play in this context?

The fact that so many inhabitants in St. Petersburg in our studies agree on the above-mentioned opinion regarding individual responsibility could depend on several factors. It may express an experience that the State and the fellow-beings, in spite of promises and ideas, de facto have not taken care of everybody, which is why people have to manage their own way. The answers to the statement may, on the other hand, reflect an uncertain attitude towards the former Soviet Union with its collectivist ideology, which today is repudiated by many people. Our group interviews confirm that the above-discussed results partly depend on such factors. On the third hand, it may be an attitude that is heightened by the transition to market economy during the last decades with its emphasis on individualism and consumption in a more and more global media environment.

It is highly plausible that the media play an important role in creating such a representation, especially when it comes to young people who have less direct knowledge and experience of the issue. At the same time, the media discourses are constructions, formed and reproduced in different contexts, periods and at different places. This can, of course, also be said of Sweden; the description of economic divides in the Swedish media should equally be subjected to in-depth analyses.
Our interviews with media experts in St. Petersburg support our assumption that the dominant contents of the Russian media, being an essential bearer of the prevailing discourse in society, reflect – and largely contribute to the reproduction of – the power relations in the so-called total field (cf. Bourdieu’s theory), in which the social agents (institutions as well as individuals) are structured along some central dimensions (essentially different forms of economic and cultural capital).

This complex of problems has on a concrete level been dealt with by several other media researchers, among them Ilchenko who reflects on popular culture (popular Russian TV programmes, video/computer games that are more often played by both young people and adults in Russia than in Sweden). He maintains, in sum, that the paradigm of collectivism has been replaced by the philosophy of individualism (see, however, our earlier comments in this article on the Soviet social realistic art and literature). The psychological focus in the inter-human exchange that previously was represented by the catchphrase “The human being is for humans friend, comrade, brother” has been substituted by the principle “each one for him/herself”. Ilchenko suggests that in public opinion the change has led to a confirmation of a new paradigm, that the human being must survive under conditions of economic, ideological and ethical freedom that have suddenly become reality in Russia. The patriotic, traditional paradigm “Sam pogibay a tovarischa vyroichay! (You may perish but save the comrade!” has with that been given the reverse meaning, something that in turn has led to, i.a., alienation.

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