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promoting youth involvement and
social engagement

New pro-citizen activities of young Petersburgers for 'public morals and order'

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Who are 'public morals and order'?



promoting youth involvement and social engagement

We chose two politically different forms of civic participation that brings them into conflict with state authorities and each other.

The main goal of these communities is **to change the existing order in the country**, at least in some ways.

Both communities share an aim to change society, they seek different (sometimes opposite) outcomes:

liberal values and openness in Russian society;

towards conservative values, strict regulations and strengthening of Russia.

'opposition activists'

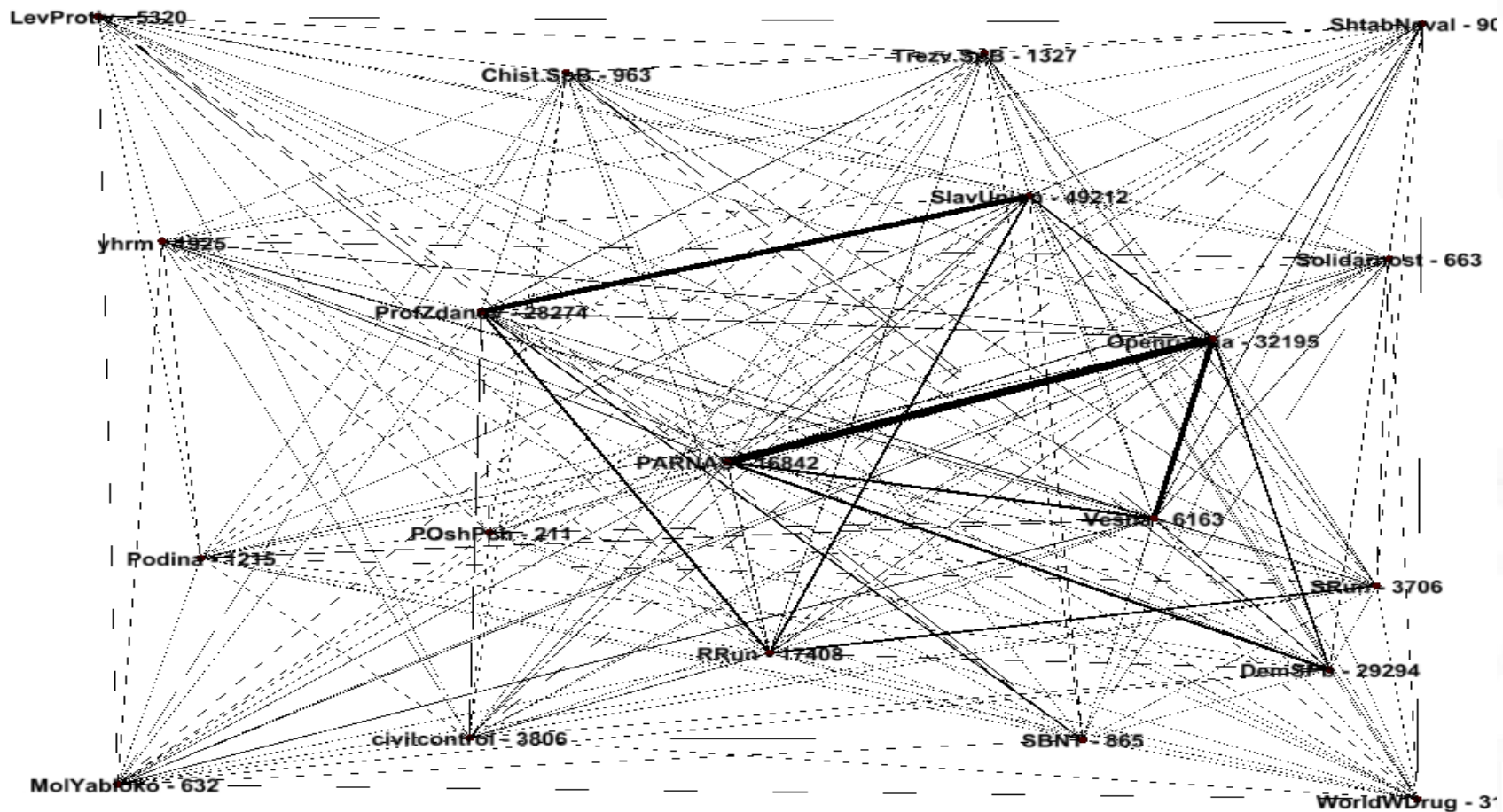
- **critical of the current Russian government**
- **want to change the existing social order**
(for instance, through a change of regime)

'moral order activists'

- **preserve the moral order enshrined in the legislation of the Russian Federation**
(opposed smoking and drinking alcohol in public places)

- 29 in-depth interviews with people living at the time of the interview in St. Petersburg and identifying themselves as participants of civic initiatives.
- Informants' age was from 18 to 39 years old, median – 24 years old, 19 men and 10 women.
- 15 interviews with ‘opposition activists’:** 18-20 years old – 3 men and 1 woman, 21 - 30 years old – 5 men and women each, and 1 man after 30 years old.
- 14 interviews with ‘moral order activists’:** 18 – 20 years old only one man and one man after 30 years old, 8 men and 4 women aged 21 - 30.
- Researchers conducted the participant observation during five months (52 hours of observation) and in total 16 field diaries were collected.

Mapping of online communities in social network VKontakte was made with the help of VKMiner program/application



There are equal number of male and female participants.

They advocate the principle of gender equality.

BUT leading positions (for example, event coordinators) are usually occupied by men.

‘Well, I don’t think that age is. But gender... It seems to me that it does make a difference in people’s minds. Well, I mean that boys, men – they happen to coordinate things more often’ (Ira, female, 22 y.o., opposition activists).

There aren't equal number of male and female participants (the number of male participants is much higher than that of female ones).

The community is thought of as a masculine one with a dominant patriarchal order.

BUT girls in leading positions and this situation is not problematized and is justified as an exception to the rules.

INT: One of your leaders is [Elena]. A girl. INF: She is the only girl in the organization, yes. But it is an exception, as usual, because there are girls like that, yeah. <...> Girl does not have her own point of view about political or such kind of situations in the country in 99% cases. She will accept the vision of her boyfriend, I'm sure in it at 100 %, practice proves it». (Ivan, male, 19 y.o., moral order activists).



Ideas of gender equality and the more so of feminism are not very popular, and young people, to some extent involved in pro-feminist scenes, can cause not only dislike, but also aggression.

INT: And what do you think, for whom of young people now is the most difficult time, well, here among the youth?

ANTON: Youth? For women, it seems to me, is the difficult time because boys can somehow, well, not all, of course, but most guys can, if they pushed themselves, do something. But for girls, It seems to me, it is more difficult.

INT: Why?

ANTON: They are weak. A lot of things can affect them.

INT: But, on the contrary, all these women movements, who have recently...

ANTON: Feminism? well I do not approve it at all. (Anton, male, 28 y.o., moral order activists).

‘Opposition activists’, who are fighting for gender equality in society

I think, that it influences a bit, I mean the gender, maybe, not necessarily, and I'd say the terrible thing, I am a little sexist, sorry, it's true, it's true. But honestly, it is clear that if I would become some kind of official person, I will keep it to myself, well, that is, it can be and will be in my personal life, I mean in my networks, but it is clear that I will not be such kind in the public, in any case, if it affects someone (Varlam, male, 21 y.o., opposition activists).

‘Moral order activists’, who adhere to and promotes patriarchal values

Girls? Well, there are few girls, less than boys. Well, maybe 20% of the girls. [...] Well, girls can be afraid, maybe shy, maybe busy with other things. Someone is learning, someone goes clubbing. Just boys protect us, girls (Elena (is leader of group), female, 28 y.o., moral order activists).



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‘Opposition activists’

Funeral the Constitution RF



Action in defense of political prisoners



‘Moral order activists’

Raid for clear street

