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Arseniy Khitrov

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE POLICE IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN POLICE TV-SERIES

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*Arseniy Khitrov*¹

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Studies of representations of the police are important because they affect what people think about the police as an organization, what people expect from day-to-day interactions with police officers, and how police officers themselves work in the media-saturated context of contemporary Western societies. This study is based on an approach, which does not strictly separate studies of the police as an organization from studies of how the police are represented. In this paper, I formulate a methodological framework for analysing representations of societal and state institutions in TV series, and I use this framework to then answer the question of how the police are represented in contemporary police TV series in Russia. This paper based on a single-case semiotic study of a popular Russian TV series called *Glukhar'*. I consider the show's social and cultural contexts as well as its symbolic structures, such as visual and audial elements and its narrative. I develop a narrative model of the show, argue that the most prominent motif of the show is justification of the police's illegal actions, and finally build a typology of these justifications. I propose a detailed analysis of two types of justifications and ultimately conclude that the TV show represents the police estranged from the state but not from society. Finally, I argue that my methodological framework can be applied to other TV series in studies, which address representations of societal and state institutions.

Keywords: representation, police, TV, series, legitimacy, Russia, crime, drama
JEL Classification: Z

¹ National Research University Higher School of Economics. School of Cultural Studies. Candidate of Sciences in Philosophy. Associate Professor. E-mail: akhitrov@hse.ru

Introduction

In Eugene McLaughlin's words, 'the police remain an intriguing research site because it is the most visible representation of the state's sovereign authority in civil society' (McLaughlin, 2007: vii). If the police can be regarded as a representation of the state's authority, how do visual representations of the police relate to the state, society and the police as an organization? The answer to this question can be found in contemporary police studies that do not strictly separate studies of the actual organization from studies of its representations. Police scholars justify doing so with the claim that media representations of the police affect what people think about the police and what they expect from police officers, how the police officers themselves work in the media-saturated atmosphere of contemporary Western societies, and how people form opinions about norms, crime, policing, law, legitimacy, and security (Allen et al., 1998: 55; Clarke, 1983: 45, 1992: 232, 239; Garland and Bilby, 2011: 116, 118; Inciardi and Dee, 1987: 84; Leishman and Mason, 2003; McLaughlin, 2005: 104–105; Meyer, 2012; Reiner, 2008: 317, 2010: 178). Moreover, as Robert Reiner points out, studies of images of the police are important because they can affect police studies as a discipline. He criticizes some police scholars for failing to discern actual forms of policing from their mythical representations in fictional stories (Reiner, 2010: 20). For this reason, in my paper, I will address images of the police and ask the question of how police are represented in contemporary TV series, using the case of a Russian TV show.

An approach which takes images seriously permits us to go beyond a simplistic vision of the media as a mirror of reality. Clarke, Leishman and Mason, as well as Reiner prefer to use Voloshinov's concept of 'refraction' (Clarke, 1992: 239; Leishman and Mason, 2003: 75; Reiner, 2010: 178). These scholars thus treat representations not so much as images of social factors, but rather as social factors alongside other social factors. Such an ontological shift entails an equivalent shift in epistemology that would enable us to regard the results of an image analysis as equal to an analysis of society. The text, be it visual or textual, fictional or factual, would be equivalent to social action or interaction because it has social consequences.

This approach within police studies is in line with basic assumptions of two paradigms in the social sciences: the strong programme in cultural theory and social constructionism. The strong programme in cultural theory states that culture is not a mere reflection of social reality, but is a relatively independent variable, and thus studies of culture will contribute to a better understanding of how society functions (Alexander, 2006). One of the basic premises of social

constructionism is that the world is being constantly formed and reformed by communication and knowledge production (Burr, 2003; Hacking, 2000).²

I will base my present research on these two premises. This means that I will propose to regard my conclusions about representations of the police as going beyond the sphere of media, and as being applicable to studies of society as well. I assume here that images I analyse have social consequences. However, my paper does not include the analysis of social consequences of the TV show, for example in the form of its reception by audiences or its influence on the reform of the police. Instead, the paper invites the reader to look at the TV show's ideology as embedded in social reality and not as free-floating self-referential symbolic constructions. This paper's intention is limited to the proposition of a methodology that would allow the researcher to reconstruct ideologies of other police TV shows and then to link them with social situations. I am basing the premise of my study on the idea that a study of ideology behind images is a necessary first stage of the studies of the type I have described. In this study, I did a semiotic analysis of the TV show not for the sake of analyzing the TV show, but in order to be able to prepare grounds for further analysis of TV shows as social factors by proposing a methodology of TV shows analysis which can be translated to other TV shows and therefore produce comparable and cumulative data.

The case of *Glukhar*'

In this paper, I seek to answer the question of how Russian police are represented in contemporary Russian police TV series. In order to answer this question I conduct a single-case³ (George and Bennett, 2005) semiotic study of the Russian fictional TV show *Glukhar*' (2008-2011).⁴

In his discussion of representations of the police, police scholar Robert Reiner draws a distinction between factual and fictional images of the police (Reiner, 2010: 179). This distinction is useful because, as Reiner points out, sometimes 'factual' images of crime,

² While studies of the police representations do not usually evoke the strong programme in cultural theory, even though their premises are very similar, there are several works that explicitly (Lawrence, 2000; Surette, 2011: 29–51) or implicitly (Leishman and Mason, 2003; Reiner, 2010: 178) rely on the concept of social construction of the police.

³ I have chosen a single-case analysis for the following reason: an in-depth analysis of TV series requires knowledge of the plot and character development which is better acquired through the sequential reading of several episodes of one series rather than the cross-case comparison of various series. A cross-case comparison would break the sequential logic of the study and place emphasis on comparison of categories between series, rather than a chronological development of categories across episodes of one series. This design allows me to discover categories deep within one series which could then be further used in comparative, cumulative and even quantitative studies.

⁴ '*Glukhar*' ('Capercaillie' in English, with no connection with the bird) is a nickname of the major protagonist of the series, whose full name is Sergei Glukharev.

criminals, and the police build on fictional images and thus represent these phenomena inadequately (Reiner, 2010: 180, 186–187). This consideration means that studies of fictional images of the police are as important as studies of its ‘factual’ images. My research will contribute to the former type of research.

The reason for choosing TV images is that television is one of the major sources of knowledge about the world, including knowledge about social institutions. In this respect this research will also contribute to the existing field of studies of media representations of the police in general (Inciardi and Dee, 1987; Clarke, 1992; Leishman and Mason, 2003; Newburn, 2008; Reiner, 2008: 317; Meyer, 2012), of images of the police in TV series (Clarke, 1983; Inciardi and Dee, 1987: 95–97; Clarke, 1992; O’Sullivan, 2005; Leishman and Mason, 2003; McLaughlin, 2005; Newburn, 2008; Reiner, 2008).⁵

Russia an interesting case because in the 2000s the country was perceived globally as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.⁶ This was mirrored by domestic sentiments in Russia, due to public perceptions of the Russian police as corrupt President Dmitrii Medvedev launched a reform of the organisation in December 2009 (Dmitrii Medvedev podpisal ukaz o masshtabnoi reforme v MVD, 2009).

The reason *Glukhar’* can be seen as a significant cultural artefact in this context lies also in its cultural significance: the show appeared during a time when actors from the cultural field systematically challenged the police. I will provide support for these points in greater detail below, showing how social and cultural contexts pertaining to the police in Russia are closely interrelated.

This study of the Russian police show will contribute to the existing body of research literature on images of the Russian police and crime (Alex, 2007; Bondarenko, 2006; MacFadyen, 2008; Rawlinson, 1998; Tishler, 2003; Vatulescu, 2010; Vishevsky, 2001).

The reason for choosing this particular TV series is its high popularity. *Glukhar’* began to air in 2008 and lasted until 2011. The show was divided into three seasons and was comprised of 160 episodes in sum, 45 minutes each. According to statistics by *TNS Russia Media & Custom Research* company, during the last week of its airing, *Glukhar’* was the most popular TV programme on Russian television in general, the most popular TV show, and the most popular programme on the *NTV* channel. On Friday, 28 October 2011, the day after the last episode of

⁵ See (Allen et al., 1997, 1998; McLaughlin, 2005; Newburn, 2008; Reiner, 2008) for studies of images of the police in fictional films. For more detailed bibliography on studies of images of the police see (Reiner, 2010: 176–188, especially on page 188 for studies of fictional images). A similar bibliographical overview of literature on fictional images can be found in (Leishman and Mason, 2003: 49–104, especially on page 81).

⁶ In *The Corruption Perceptions Index* Russia’s position was low in the beginning of the 2000s and became even lower by the end of the 2000s and in the beginning of the 2010s: it was 79 in 2001, 71 in 2002, 86 in 2003, 90 in 2004, 126 in 2005, 121 in 2006, 143 in 2007, 147 in 2008, 146 in 2009, 154 in 2010, 153 in 2011, 133 in 2012, and 127 in 2013 (What we do - Research - Corruption perceptions index, n.d.).

Glukhar' was shown, the NTV channel broadcast a concert called *Farewell, Glukhar'!* An *Unusual Concert* which occupied the 8th line in the ranking of all Russian TV programmes of that week on the basis of the number of viewers.⁷ Moreover, *Glukhar'* became an umbrella brand. In 2010 two feature films based on the TV show came out. There were four other TV shows made on the basis on *Glukhar'* with a focus on other protagonists of the show.

It is possible to interpret the TV show's popularity as an indicator of the fact that it resonated with some of its viewers' needs, expectations, and, perhaps, values. It can be further assumed that some of those needs, expectations and values might be related to the police as one of the state's organisations and as an important social institution responsible for the implementation of the state's monopoly on force. While the issue of the audience's perception of the TV show deserves special attention, in this paper I will deal with the show itself, proposing my own reading of it as a text analysis. It would be hard to justify that this theoretically informed and reflexive reading is equivalent to any other type of the show's readings, but an informed reading is important because it reveals categories that can be further used in both informed interpretations of other shows and in studies of how different audiences actually perceive police TV shows. I believe that the study of this source will help to develop methodologies and categories that will be useful for further studies of fictional representations of the police in TV series beyond the Russian context, and finally it will contribute to a better understanding of how culture and society function.

Social and cultural contexts

Social and cultural contexts in which *Glukhar'* made its appearance in Russia in the late 2000s make it a phenomenon worth analysing in terms of cultural sociology.

The year 2008 when Russian television started broadcasting *Glukhar'*, Russian media were saturated with images of corrupt police officers who did everything except what they were supposed to do as professionals. One of the most emblematic affairs that framed the perception of the police at that time was the so-called 'bent cops' legal affair (in Russian, 'oborotni v pogonakh') which lasted from 2003 until 2006. Media that were covering this affair coined a special term for police officers who secretly perform or cover criminal activity—namely, 'werewolves in shoulder boards'. This media image entered public discourses and the sphere of cultural production. In literature, the famous Russian writer Viktor Pelevin published in 2004 a

⁷ These data were collected from the web site of *TNS Russia Media & Custom Research* company in April 2013, but

mystic novel entitled *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* which featured an actual werewolf who worked as a police officer.

Later, in April 2009, another event took place which brought to the fore the role of the police in public discourses. A police major named Denis Evsiukov walked in one of the Moscow supermarkets with his gun and killed two people, injured seven, and took hostages. Deputy Interior Minister Arkadii Edelev commented on this issue by stating that this killing was an isolated incident. As a response to his remark, the Russian version of the *Esquire* magazine published in its January 2010 issue material called 'We are working 24/7' which looked visually like a calendar and which contained daily reports about crimes committed by the police against civilians throughout several months of 2009.⁸ The Ministry of the Interior responded to this material by publishing on their website 'The calendar of virtue' which listed daily acts of bravery made in 2009 by Russian police officers.⁹ This symbolic exchange and meaning struggle between an internationally famous magazine and a state's organization can be seen as an indicator of the high importance of the issue of the representations of the police for the society at that time.

This issue was also present in the sphere of contemporary art. For instance, from 2008 until 2011 the police was a central theme for the *War art-group*. In 2011, some of the members of this group entered the band *Pussy Riot* which continued to challenge power relations and authorities in contemporary Russian society.

Thus, it can be concluded from these observations that narratives about crimes and illegal acts by the police were not isolated within the media sphere, but were systematically played out in the sphere of cultural production in Russia over the course of the 2000s. It can be also assumed that any cultural artefact that appeared at that time in Russia featuring the police was becoming at the same time an element of this highly intense field of symbolic struggle by virtue of the very fact of its appearance on the already prepared field.

As we can see, the image of the police which seemed to dominate media, cultural and arts discourses at that time was that of a bad cop that transgresses the law and threatens society by his or her uncontrolled power. There is a paradox in these narratives. In the light of Max Weber's idea that the state has a monopoly on force which it normally implements through its repressive apparatuses, such as through the police, an episodic action by the police which transgresses law but is taken against criminals, can be justified and legitimized as the action that is aimed at re-

they were no longer available upon examination of the website in March 2014.

⁸ The copy of the pages can be found here (drugoi, 2010). Textual version can be accessed here (Kalendar' | Zhurnal Esquire, 2010).

⁹ (MVD sostavilo sobstvennyi 'kalendar' muzhestva' militsionerov, 2010, Sait MVD :: O MVD :: Kalendar' muzhestva 2009 god, 2010).

establishing normalcy and at giving back the state its monopoly on force which had been stolen from it by criminals. In other words, the lawlessness of the police can be justified as a temporary state of exception.

In the case of the interactions between media, culture, society, and the police in Russia during the 2000s, the question of how temporary this state of exception was, or if it was temporary at all, is difficult to answer. What is certain is that Russian media represented the police as gangs standing neither for the state nor for society, and, therefore, transforming a temporary state of exception into the permanent one.

The very term 'police' in Russia should be understood also in the context of its historical evolution, as there were two instances of renaming of the organization in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Before the revolution of 1917 the organization was called the 'politsiia', as in Europe. But in 1917 it was renamed to the 'militsiia'. By renaming the police, revolutionaries intended to emphasize that the allegedly repressive and bourgeois state apparatus ceased to exist and was replaced by the voluntary people's guard. The Soviet 'militsiia' were supposed to be recruited from volunteers from the working class and the peasantry. However, already in 1918 the voluntary 'militsiia' were transformed in the state organization while the title 'militsiia' remained intact till 2011, when the 'militsiia' were renamed back into 'the police'. This rebranding was part of a larger process of police reform that started in 2009 which included a series of purges of corrupt police officials. The rebranding element was a direct reaction to the flux of media reports about crimes committed by the police that were discussed above. This rebranding was meant to draw a symbolic line of demarcation between the 'old' corrupt 'militsiia' institution and president Dmitry Medvedev's 'new' reformed police institution. However, the question of the nature of this line of demarcation or even the of whether the line was drawn at all deserves attention, since we can see that the image of the old 'militsiia' did not completely disappear from the social and cultural spheres after this reform.

In this historical context, it is important to look at the iconic cultural figure of a good Soviet police officer in the manifestation of Uncle Stepan¹⁰, a fictional character created by the Soviet poet Sergei Mikhalkov in 1935, whose image has made its appearance twice after the 2009 reform. The first instance was in posters created by the Ministry of the Interior advertising job opportunities with the Moscow police in 2012-2014, and the second time was during the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Sochi in February 2014. The case of the job campaign can be seen as the Ministry's attempt to invoke in people's perception the memory of the well-known fictional figure of a 'militsioner' and to associate it with the new real figure of a

¹⁰ The image of Uncle Stepan is as popular in Russia as the 'bobby on the beat' is in Great Britain (Clarke, 1983; McLaughlin, 2005, 2007).

‘politseiskii’. This attempt is ironic because it shows a lack of new symbolic meanings that lead to the situation where the new ‘politsiia’ is redefined in terms of the old ‘militsiia’ which it was meant to contrast. Alternatively this campaign can be interpreted as an attempt to break with the post-Soviet ‘militsiia’ by creating a symbolic bridge between the Soviet ‘militsiia’ and the newborn ‘politsiia’. As for the second case, the whole opening ceremony of the Olympics where Uncle Stepan appeared can be read as a narrative about elements of Russian culture and history which Russia’s authorities wanted the world to know about. The fact that Uncle Stepan was on the same stage with Pushkin, Tolstoi, Malevich and Tchaikovsky means that Russia’s authorities regard the symbolic meaning of law enforcement agencies as equally important to the meaning of Russia culture.

There were other emblematic figures in Soviet and post-Soviet culture which stood alongside Uncle Stepan. Popular characters of police officers can be found in police novels by Uurii German (1937), Lev Ovalov (1939-1962), Ivan Lazutin (1957), Vil’ Lipatov (1967), Vainer brothers (1976) from Soviet times, books published in *The Library of Selected Works about the Soviet Militsija* series which mirrored the change in the police as an organization and in the myths surrounding this organization around the Perestroika and early post-Soviet times, and in the most popular contemporary detective and criminal novels by Alexandra Marinina, Polina Dashkova and Boris Akunin. Cinema and TV series directors Ivan Lukinsky, Gerbert Rappaport, Viacheslav Brovkin, Stanislav Govorukhin, Alexandr Baranov, Vladimir Bortko, Il’ia Kulikov, and Alexandr Rogozhkin created popular cinematic images of the police. These fictional works became points of reference both within and outside the field of cultural production.¹¹

Much like many of the aforementioned cultural representations of the police, the show *Glukhar’* also appeared at a time of change for the police as an organization in Russia: *Glukhar’* made its first appearance on Russian TV one year prior to the start of the 2009 police reform,. The fact of this timing, along with the aforementioned attention that media and popular culture paid to the issue of the police in Russia in the 2000s, makes *Glukhar’* worth studying as a case of the symbolic production dealing with a highly discussed topic.

My analysis of *Glukhar’* revealed that the show fits the aforementioned model of representation of the police as involved in illegal activities. Nearly all police officers that appear

¹¹ In December, 2010, during his press conference, Vladimir Putin, who was at that time the Russian Prime Minister, commenting on the status of Russian ex-oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovskii, who was in prison in 2010, said that Khodorkovskii should remain in prison, for ‘the thief should sit in jail’. This phrase is a quote from Stanislav Govorukhin’s crime drama *The Meeting Place Cannot Be Changed* (1979). In the same press conference, Putin quoted from another film, Leonid Gaidai’s *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1967), when speaking about Khodorkovskii’s trial, that Russian court is one of the most humane courts in the world. This example shows that representatives of Russian political elites refer to famous cultural products in justifications and explanations of their actions and decisions to the public. It can be assumed that references of this type are

on the screen are corrupt: they take bribes, transgress laws by performing illegal and violent actions against innocent people or people whose guilt has not been proven yet. Citizens are generally represented as distrusting the police.

This feature of the TV show which I discovered at the very beginning of my analysis and which was backed up with the further study of the show, inspired me to elaborate my initial question of how the police are represented in this TV show with two additional questions: is their breaching of the law justified and legitimized in any way, and if yes, how this is done.

My research revealed that the TV show represents the police as being estranged from the state but not from society. *Glukhar'* justifies and legitimates the police's violence and transgression of the law as a productive and constructive action in society's interests. In the next paragraph, I will give some basic details about the TV show's protagonists and circumstances, explain the method of my analysis, and then discuss the results of my study.

Protagonists

There are five major protagonists in *Glukhar'*: Sergei Glukharev, Denis Antoshin, Irina Zimina, Nastia, and Nikolai Tarasov.

Sergei Glukharev is an interrogating officer working at a Moscow police station called Piatnitskoe. He is in his thirties, lives with his mother and has romantic relationships with his boss Irina Zimina, a single woman with a child. Glukharev has a close friend, Denis Antoshin, who works as a traffic cop. They know each other from their childhood. Nastia is Denis's girlfriend and she works as a prostitute. Nikolai Tarasov is a law student who undertakes an internship at the Piatnitskoe office.

Methodology

The method with which I approach the TV show is based on the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998; George and Bennett, 2005). It consists in the following stages: in the first stage I conducted open coding of the TV show's scenes. During this stage I watched several first episodes of the TV show in order to identify the key category that would be related to my initial question of how the police are represented in the show and would

aimed at facilitating understanding and acceptance of the powers' decisions and ideologies by audiences able to decipher these

be present in many scenes of the show. This analysis permitted me to conclude that the motif of the police transgressing law and then justifying this transgression was one of the most repeated motifs. This observation leads me to the formulation of the core category of my analysis, that is, legitimation or justification of illegal actions.

The second stage consisted of axial coding, during which I firstly noticed that when the issue of justification of illegal actions takes place in the show, some other categories also appear. Those are categories of law, order, violence, justice, power, security, crime, morality, norms, and control. I also paid attention to judgments about police officers' work by the show's characters or the police's own self-descriptions. Then I coded scenes that I was watching with these categories.

The third stage consisted of selective coding, during which I was writing memos only about selected scenes that were related to categories elaborated during the previous stages. The memo-writing permitted me to develop a model of justification of illegal actions. In order to test this model by further empirical data from the show, I kept watching the show until saturation, or the moment when every new scene supported my model and there were no new elements of the show that contradicted it. My total corpus consisted of 9 episodes from which I selected 46 scenes on the third stage. All 46 scenes were selected on the basis of their relation to the key category, surrounding categories, and/or included verbal accounts of the police's work.

As a cinematic image includes visual and audial elements, in my analysis, in all its three stages, I paid equal attention to the audial elements that were speech, sounds, and music and to the visual ones that were characters' actions, appearances, environments in which the scenes took place, and technical elements such as framing, focus, camera movements. Additionally, I considered the narrative development (Fiske, 2011; Turner, 1999).

My model can be summarized as follows. The TV show is based on the narrative pattern that consists in the following sequence of actions: police officers transgress law, someone contests this practice, police officers propose explanations that justify and legitimize the transgression. I made a typology of justifications and revealed that there are four stable patterns: justification through the figure of the outsider who becomes the informant; description of the seemingly illegal actions as humane ones that are performed in interests of society; deconstruction of media stereotypes of the police's violence, and finally through pointing out the religious mission of the police.

In this paper, I will address these four types of justification.

From the outsider to the informant

The first type of justification is a narrative that goes through all the 9 episodes that comprise my sample. This narrative is based on the following scheme: the outsider has a number of normative assumptions about how the police work, s/he enters the police station and openly expresses her/his criticism that consists in pointing out that the police's actions go against certain legal or moral norms. This criticism faces counterarguments in verbal form or in a form of practical demonstration of how the police actually work. Police officers explain to the outsider the principles their actions are based on and why the chosen ways are good. The outsider accepts these arguments and becomes the insider who now persuades other outsiders. In episodes that I included in my sampling this outsider becoming the insider was Nikolai Tarasov.

The first episode of the TV show starts with Nikolai entering the police station. It seems that this is one of his first visits there because when he talks to Sergei Glukharev, Nikolai has to remind Glukharev of who he is. The very first cut of the first series is a scene filmed with a subjective camera, and the vision belongs to Nikolai walking along the corridors of the police station. This technique might facilitate the viewer's identification with Nikolai, but it also symbolizes the viewer's position towards the film's universe in general and the police as organization in particular. Nikolai, being a newcomer regarding the police, can be a guide for the viewer unacquainted with the realities of the police.

The viewer becomes gradually familiarized with the police station and the conduct of police officers through Nikolai's eyes. Nikolai is a carrier of normative expectations from the police that consist in the idea of the necessity to follow norms and regulations and obeying laws. Using Weber's terms, at the beginning of the series, Nikolai accepts legal authority and renounces any informal type of authority. Moreover, he regards the society as 'Gesellschaft', which is a group based on formal, impersonal contracts, and not as 'Gemeinschaft', which is a community based on informal principles.

Nikolai's normative expectations collide with the reality principle expressed by Glukharev. Throughout the first two episodes, Nikolai's amusement with and refusal of the routine practice of policing as it is accepted at the police station is systematically overridden by Glukharev's and Antoshin's explanations.

Those explanations permit Nikolai to see the police's actions which could seem simply illegal to him at the beginning, as instrumentally rational and even value-rational meaningful actions. Glukharev's and Antoshin's explanations permit to see their actions as instrumentally rational because they give Nikolai pragmatic reasons for acting in a certain way, and as value-rational because they point out at some values that rule their decisions.

Those explanations create conditions for a possible reconciliation of the viewer with the image of a corrupt police officer.

From episode 1 until episode 3 it is Nikolai who is the object of persuasion, but already in episode 5 Nikolai starts to explain the inner logic of the organization to outsiders.

Oleg (Nikolai's cousin): Kolian (*this is a diminutive of Nikolai*), are you going to come and work at my firm after graduation?

Nikolai: I'd rather not. I've told you already: I am going to work at the police.

Oleg: No way! Perhaps you should consider the profession of a street cleaner. They have a higher salary. If you want, I can talk to people in my housing department.

Nikolai: Oleg, shut up. I've said already that this issue is not to be discussed. I like investigation. I... You can really get in there, you can earn some cash with every move you make. It is very interesting!

Oleg: The first case can be interesting, the second one, too, the third one also, but when you dig into the two hundredth one, I would like to see how interesting it will be for you. And also, money, my dear...

Nikolai: And I've got no interest in it now, thank God.

Nikolai's father: Maybe for the moment. Look at your girlfriend. Let's suppose this [the relationship] is serious. Do you think she will agree to live... [breaks off]
(Episode 5, 09:29-10:52)

This conversation takes place in the flat of Nikolai's father, who is a lawyer. The household is emphatically rich: there are pictures on walls, there is a hunting dog and there are servants. This luxurious standard of life is meant to designate and emphasize the prestige and financial benefits of the profession of the lawyer compared to much poorer conditions at Glukharev's or Antoshin's workplaces. The luxurious style of life contrasts with the way characters converse in this scene. Their appeals to each other are unceremonious and are not different from the way people talk at the police station. Both the riches of Nikolai's father and Oleg's description of the low prestige of the profession of the police officer are grotesque and stereotypical. Being set against each other, they create a sense of a challenge of Nikolai's choice. Nikolai justifies the profession that he wants to choose by pointing out that it is 'interesting'. The next challenge is Nikolai's father's remark about Viktoria. This remark is based on the male-breadwinner patriarchal model of the family and it is further developed in the episode when the viewer learns that Oleg courts Viktoria and gives her expensive presents which neither Nikolai

nor Viktoria can afford. However, within the scene in question the contradiction is overcome by the father who suggests that Nikolai might change his mind in the future.

Nikolai justifies some wrongs of the profession in episode 8 which is dedicated to moral panic over a paedophile. Nikolai accompanies home a schoolgirl whose mother, Galina, is late from coming back from work. The mother invites him over for dinner, and both the mother and her daughter thank Nikolai for his protection:

Nikolai: And where is your husband?

Galina: I've never had one. We live happily together, both of us.

Nikolai: Oh, I am sorry.

Galina: Never mind. We are used to it. Am I right, Anna?

Anna: Yes.

Galina: Of course, sometimes it's hard when there is no man at home. When something happens. Like these days, I am afraid. Who will help? Nobody!

Anna: Why nobody? We've got Kolia (*diminutive of Nikolai*)!

Galina: Yes, Kolia is our hero today! (Episode 8, 36:51-37:20)

Nikolai is invited to play two roles simultaneously: of the absent husband/father and of the good cop who deals with people informally, as with 'Gemeinschaft', not 'Gesellschaft'. His sex and his societal function reinforce each other, contrary to the scene from the episode 4 where Irina is offended by Glukharev's humorous remark that she is a police major first and a woman second (Episode 4, 15:20). Nikolai leaves the mother his telephone number, saying that she can call him 'at any moment'. This phrase does not mean that he flirts with her. His kind gesture is shown as precisely shattering once again the division between formal and informal relationships between the community and the police.

In episode 8, even though Nikolai does not answer criticism of the police by laying out justifying arguments, he nevertheless justifies the organization by his own protective, caring, and informal behaviour. In the end of the episode Irina Zimina meets Nikolai in the corridor of the police station and tells him that people from several schools and Galina called to thank him. Thus, his assistance receives public approval that can be seen as yet another justifying image. Moreover, just after Irina tells Nikolai about public recognition of his assistance she also announces that he is welcome to become an investigator at Piatnitskoe police station after graduation from university. Thus, Nikolai is recognized as a true police officer by both the people and the organization and also his informal care of the people does not contradict with Irina's vision of the police officer's mission.

Formal norms vs. humane principles

The second type of justification of the police's illegal action is based on a binary opposition between the idea of formal and often bureaucratic norms and humane principles. People from outside the police regard informal and illegal actions by the police as traditional (determined by interiorized habituation) or affectual (determined by the actor's emotions and feelings, aggression in particular). Glukharev does not play his actions off instrumentally-rationally (legally) but rather acts and presents his actions as value-rational. His and his colleagues' value system is structured around a basic opposition between formal norms as institutionalized in rules or laws and informal norms which are situational and represented as 'humane'. Denis expresses this opposition emphatically in episode 3:

Vitaliy Pavlovich, I certainly understand everything, I understand that there are rules and all sorts of things, but one has to remain human in every profession.
(Episode 3, 09:14-09:19)

Formal norms can stem from the state in a form of bureaucratic language that has to be respected in protocols and is opposed to the language of the everyday conversation (Episode 3, 14:50; Episode 7, 26:23-26:45) or from the direct control by senior organizations (Episode 9, 16:57-17:11). Another source of the formal norm is people, but in this case they are represented as antagonists to the majority of the TV show's protagonists. The most emblematic example of this opposition is episode 4 where three minors stole a car and the car's owner, Vadim, exacts the most severe punishment for them.

Vadim: You know, I look at the so-called young generation, and it astonishes me. Excuse me, but they are jerks. Tell me—did we smoke, did we drink, did we steal cars when we were kids?

Glukharev: You and I had different childhoods.

Vadim: Yes, yes, yes... But nevertheless...

Glukharev: Have you signed the claim? You may go now.

Vadim: Thank you. (Goes towards the exit, then stops). Excuse me, how many years of prison will they get?

Glukharev: Two of them will get one year of conditional sentence and the third one, who has been brought to trial once already, will get two years of conditional sentence, perhaps, but I am not sure he will get even that.

Vadim: What?! (He returns to the table and sits down) And you call it the system of justice? Give me a piece of paper, please.

Glukharev: What for?

Vadim: What do you mean? Do you realize for how long I had been saving up for this car? And now they will get one year of conditional sentence? Give me a piece of paper, please, I will compose another claim!

Glukharev: And what are you going to claim?

Vadim: Firstly, (he takes an edition of the criminal code out of his bag) the claim about hijacking. Secondly, (opens the book and quotes from it) about damaging property on a large scale. Thirdly, how is it called? Hooliganism... Drunk driving without a license. That is why they will get it all.

Glukharev: Listen, man, are you sane? You got your car back. Well, it is dented a little. I will talk to the parents; they will pay you for the repair.

Vadim: No!

Glukharev: What 'no'? You don't get it? They are just kids! What? They have to go to prison because of you?

Vadim: Exactly! That's exactly the place they belong! (Episode 4, 17:03-19:49)

Vadim demands the realization of the formal norm, while Glukharev is shown as the agent that who customizes the law to the concrete circumstances. Moreover, Glukharev is guided by the value-rational principle that consists in the idea that the systems of justice and law are flexible tools of normalization and inclusion of the delinquent person back into society, and not as a stern instrument of punishment and exclusion. The person who insists on the implementation of abstract principles does not take into account circumstances. Glukharev, on the contrary, does take them into account and functions as a mediator between the law and the community rather than as a force external to the community. Furthermore, it can even be said that interests of the community are more important for Glukharev than the abstract and impersonal realization of law. He can ignore the law, he is able to withdraw himself from the obligation to carry it out, but he is depicted as incapable of ignoring people's requests if they coincide with his personal vision of the norm and justice.

The episode contains several scenes that can help explain why Glukharev chooses to rely on this principle. There are two reasons for his position: a personal reason and a conceptual

reason. The personal reason is hinted at in the scene where Glukharev and Antoshin talk about their common childhood and the viewer learns that when they were children they stole a car too (Episode 4, 12:10). Even though it was Antoshin's father's car, the fact holds that Glukharev as a child was far from being obedient. This fact is emphasized in Glukharev's conversation with Vadim: 'My childhood was different from yours'. This circumstance makes him sympathetic to three underage criminals. There is another reason that I have categorized as a conceptual reason because it is not described in the episode as resulting from Glukharev's experience, but consists in his vision that the deviant personality should be transformed into the normal citizen through informal methods. Glukharev suggests that one of the children's parents should propose to Vadim to pay for the repair of his car; then, later in the episode, when they fail to make his arrangement, Vadim himself organizes the repair through his informal connections at a car repair shop involving one of the children who happens to have a part-time job there. This work is paid for unofficially as well. Glukharev subsequently manages to resolve another problem, with Irina's young son this time, who attends the same school as three minor criminals. He regularly faces insults from his older schoolmates, and Glukharev asks the three minor criminals to go to protect Irina's son as a part of their unofficial punishment.

The whole of episode 4 handles education and parenting. Four family models are presented: one of an uncared-for young man with a single alcoholic mother, the second of a brutal (supposedly single) father, the third of a two-parent better-off family, and finally the fourth of Irina. At the beginning of the episode Irina asks Glukharev to help her son, and Glukharev teaches him to fight back against his offenders. The scenes of Glukharev's parenting are framed by distinct gender categories:

Glukharev: Who am I to him?

Irina: You are a man. And I am just a woman, after all.

Glukharev: You are a police major! (Irina is offended) It was just a joke.

Irina: Serezha (*diminutive of Glukharev's first name Sergei*)... Please... (Episode 4, 15:14-15:47)

Irina's female identity becomes much more important than her professional identity, and she has no doubts that despite the fact that she occupies a higher position in the professional hierarchy than Glukharev, she cannot be a role model for her son. She needs a male figure that would transmit patterns of the 'male' behaviour. Glukharev accepts this proposition and comes to their house. Irina goes to the kitchen and leaves Sergei and her son alone for a men's conversation.

At the end of the episode, several storylines are intermingled, all problems are resolved, and even the most delinquent schoolboy seems to finally become included in the network of social relations. The episode points out at the parallelism between parenting and implementing law, and at the efficiency of this method. A similar comparison between parenting and policing can be seen in the scene discussed above, in which Nikolai comes to an unknown family and plays a role of an absent father there.

The police's disrespect of formal principles does not imply anarchy and uncontrolled violence. On the contrary, police officers are depicted as submitting themselves to regulations that simply do not coincide with formal ones.

In episode 3, a traffic cop stops a pregnant woman and tries to have her driver's licence suspended. This police officer acts according to a formal principle, but Antoshin, who is guided by informal humane principles, stands up for the woman and even initiates a physical fight for her. His deviance is represented as something that can be excused because of his humane intention to act in the interests of the people. The situation is quite ambiguous because Antoshin, who initiated the fight, is not punished by his boss, but, on the contrary, gets promoted because his uncle is a general (Episode 3, 32:08-34:42). There are only two persons in the episode that voice their disagreement with this situation: Antoshin's boss, who is forced to promote Antoshin, and the officer who fought with him. Thus, the person who does not respect the law gets promoted and encouraged by other colleagues with the exception of only the two aforementioned colleagues.

Denis Antoshin demonstrates his allegiance to some norms in the conversation with his girlfriend Nastia in episode 5. Someone has bitten Nastia, and Denis is angry about the situation:

Nastia: People like us are bitten often. It's normal. It's the cost of my profession. There is nothing to be done with it.

Denis: Is that normal? Nastia, what are you talking about? What you are doing is not normal. Neither is it normal that you are bitten. What is going on in our heads - it's not normal. If we get used to all that, if it seems normal to us... It's not normal, Nastia. (Episode 5, 29:38-30:14)

Norms that Denis refers to here are not legal, but rather moral and philosophical ones.

The police's disrespect of formal principles does not imply anarchy and uncontrolled violence. On the contrary, police officers are shown as submitting themselves to regulations that simply do not coincide with formal ones.

The police officers who realize informal justice can also be depicted as ‘wrong’ within the TV show. In episode 5, Denis is about to arrest a person who, as Denis suspects, had bitten Nastia. Denis puts marihuana in the person’s pocket and starts the procedure of detention, but then Nastia pops up in the office and tells Denis that he had taken the wrong person. Denis releases the person and begs his pardon (Episode 5, 23:25-23:50). In episode 9 Denis and two other traffic cops wrongly beat up three homeless people. When they realize that they took those homeless people for another group of homeless people, they put a bottle of vodka near their beat up bodies as compensation (Episode 9, 18:40-18:57). The show insinuates that the price for being compassionate and humane with people and for carrying out informal rules which can save somebody’s life and guarantee freedom when the formal law demands the opposite is that sometimes the police officer can take an innocent person for a suspected criminal.

Yet another example of the police’s preference given to moral norms instead of professional ones can be found in episode 9 where Glukharev talks with a cash messenger who drank vodka with a homeless person and then lost his bag with food and a gun in it. The homeless person, whose name is Moskva (which translates to ‘Moscow’ in English), takes this bag and finds the gun. The cash messenger tells the police a story where he was a victim of an attack and a robbery. Glukharev finds out that the cash messenger lies and cries shame on the cash messenger when they meet.

Glukharev: Why did you drink with that homeless person?

Cash messenger: He seemed normal to me. And also he had a nickname... ‘Moskva’ or something like that...

Glukharev: So, you celebrated the acquaintance with Moskva?

Cash messenger: Try to understand: I live alone, I have no family, no friends, and then I met him. We started to talk; we drank. I brought another bottle. We drank again. And then... I just fell asleep. How could I have known that he would take the gun? (...)

Glukharev: What does your conscience say about you trying to make an innocent human being guilty?

Cash messenger: Is he a human being? He is a homeless person!

Glukharev: Ah, I see now what you mean! But how is he different from you, you drunk? Is the difference that you’ve got a place to live?

Cash messenger: They drink, they steal, what’s their use?

Glukharev: And what’s your use? (...)

Cash messenger: Mister investigator, I beg you...

Glukharev: I will think about it... (Episode 9, 32:05-33:46)

Glukharev's appeal to the cash messenger's conscience, his final phrase 'I will think about it' and the cash messenger's prayer 'I fall on my knees' are markers of informal relationships between the investigator and the victim who might turn into a suspect. Glukharev also is represented as a sovereign who can decide who is human.

Later in the same episode Glukaryov meets Moskva's wishes to be sent to jail because he has no place to go even though his guilt is not proven. There is another indicator of the informal approach in the term 'sin' which Moskva uses.

Thus, the police is represented in the TV show as the organization which is separate from the state with its official, impersonal, and abstract norms, but closer to the people which police officers that they interact with informally, personally, and sometimes illegally.

Deconstruction of media stereotypes of the police

In my sampling, several scenes can be interpreted as indicators that the image of the police as a corrupt and violent organisation is a stereotype produced by the media.

In episode 8, in a search for a paedophile, Glukharev and Antoshin beat an innocent person whose name is Oleg. Later, it turns out that Oleg is a journalist working simultaneously on two reports: the one about a paedophile and another about a corrupt police colonel. His interest in the paedophile case causes Glukharev and Antoshin to notice and suspect him of being the paedophile. Oleg's involvement in the case of the corrupt police colonel results in his perception of Glukharev and Antoshin as messengers from this colonel who are sent to stop Oleg from investigating the case.

When Glukharev and Antoshin find out that Oleg is not a paedophile and they beat him up 'in vain', Denis Antoshin proposes to Glukharev to run away: 'There are two options: either run away from here, quickly or explain to him what just happened' (Episode 8, 34:41). Glukharev chooses the second option, to explain the situation, but does so while drinking vodka with Oleg.

If the first option were chosen, Oleg would have all the reasons to add this beating to his report about the lawless police and therefore to reinforce the media stereotype of Russian law enforcement authorities. Glukharev prevents this from happening and normalises the situation through a ritual-like collective drinking. The following dialogue takes place in the series:

Glukharev: Olezha [diminutive from the journalist's name Oleg], tell me, why are you following the case of this colonel? Why are you digging into his case?

Oleg: You—do you understand... You and your people ... [Slurring his speech from the alcohol and writhing from pain from the beating]

Glukharev: Olezha...

Oleg: You talk to your people in a certain manner, and I do it in a different manner.

Glukharev: Olezha... [Oleg and Glukharev shake hands] forgive me.

Oleg: Whatever.

Glukharev: Listen, bro, forgive me. Why do you need this anyway?

Oleg: You know, somehow I cannot lead a normal life when I know that those who are meant to protect the law violate it. Moreover (hits the table), they do it so shamelessly! Don't you get it?

Glukharev: Olezha, you know, I'll tell you, I violate the Criminal Code too sometimes.

Oleg: Really?

Glukharev: Yeah.

Oleg: Yeah, ok.

Glukharev: Yeah...

Oleg: But you don't gain anything from it!

Glukharev: Ha! (Episode 8, 39:18-40:26)

Glukharev and Antishin find a common language with Oleg and come to the conclusion that the difference between them lays solely in the 'manner' in which they speak with 'their people', and not in any set of fundamental principles. Moreover, Glukharev receives a kind of indulgence from Oleg after his confession to violating the Criminal Code. What permits Oleg to accept this situation of lawlessness is his hypothesis that Glukharev 'does not gain anything from it', that is, he does not use it for personal benefit.

In the same episode, Nikolai comes to a school to lecture schoolchildren about security measures related to the moral panic over a paedophile who appeared in the district which the Piatnitskoe office is responsible for. This is a school, which Nikolai attended when he was a pupil. In the school's corridor he meets his former teacher who reacts unsympathetically when she learns that Nikolai is undertaking an internship at the police:

Teacher: How are you, tell me! What are you up to?

Nikolai: Everything is going. I work at the police station. Well, actually, I don't work there yet, I have an internship.

Teacher: Hmm... At the police station... I thought you would make an honest living... You were an 'A' student!

Nikolai: It's a shame you've got such a negative opinion of the police.

Teacher: But what else am I supposed to think? I watch TV. The police show up a lot on TV. They have beaten somebody; have robbed somebody; have taken a bribe. So why are you here?

Nikolai: I've come to give a lecture about security.

Teacher: Ah, it's because of you that I had to cancel the exam in mathematics! (...) The police will ruin you, Kolia. (Episode 8, 24:44-25:30)

Even though Nikolai does not articulate any justifying arguments, the scene itself can be regarded as justifying the police in several ways. Firstly, as the viewer knows by that moment how and in what circumstances Nikolai really works at the police station, s/he might disagree with the teacher's vision. Secondly, the scene points out that the media is the source of public concern about and a fear of the police. Considered together, those two nuances can make the viewer sceptical of the grounds for distrust towards the police.

The narrative scheme of this type of legitimation is the following: some characters are described as those whose only source of information about the police is media. In their opinion, the police are gangs of criminals that are violent and corrupt. 'They have beaten somebody; they have robbed somebody; they have taken a bribe', as the teacher from the present scene says. She is not happy with Nikolai coming to the school ('Why did you come here?') and she draws a rhetorical line between his work and the work of the school ('here'). During the next stage, the representative of the police establishes informal contact with people distrusting the police and finally persuades them to suspend their mistrust and even to change their opinion on the police from a negative opinion to a positive view. At the end of episode 8, Nikolai receives a positive feedback from several schools for his lectures about security measures, accompanies Anna to her home and establishes informal contact with her mother.

It should be emphasized here that media stereotypes about the police are deconstructed not for characters who express critical opinions about the police in the first place, but for viewers of the show who know these opinions from previous scenes. In other words, the unit of justification is the whole narrative pattern containing the motif of media stereotypes and not just one or two actions or phrases. Moreover, people who expressed their concern with the police are

not present in scenes where these concerns are addressed. For instance, the teacher does not witness Nikolai's success at Anna and her mother's home or at the police station where Zimina offers him a job. This circumstance can be interpreted as an indicator of the fact that the viewer's opinion about the police matters rather than the opinion of the character who expressed his/her distrust in the show itself.

Policing as a religious mission

There are several scenes in which policing is depicted as a religious mission that aims to implement certain moral principles and protection of security, law, and morality. In these scenes, the police officer is represented as a person who is either an agent of these principles, or a witness of their realisation that happens by itself, independently from a human decision or action. In the analysis below, I will approach scenes where religious motifs are present in order to build a model of the metaphysics of morality in *Glukhar'*. I will start with a scene in a bar where Glukharev mentions the Apocalypse:

[In a bar. Glukharev and Denis Antoshin sip at their beers]

Glukharev: Den [*diminutive form of Denis*], I think I want the Apocalypse to come.

Antoshin: What are you talking about?

Glukharev: You know... I want the global overturn to come. And that all this crap, all this dough, you know, statuses, positions, laws, decrees, all that that would lose its meaning in just one second. And then everything would start over. From the scratch.

Antishin [sings]: 'Down to the foundations, and then we...' [quote from *The Internationale*]

Glukharev: Never mind, don't worry about it. (Episode 2, 28:51)

This mentioning of the Apocalypse contrasts with the environment where Glukharev produces his short monologue. Interestingly, in his speech, Glukharev equates social statuses and laws: he wants them both to lose their meanings. It is possible to assume from this phrase that in Glukharev's vision, the Apocalypse is not the final and the highest court where those who have not obeyed the rules will be punished, as it is held by the Christian dogma, but the moment when all rules are cancelled. Thus, it can be said that rules are neither ultimate, nor are they entirely

arbitrary and subjective. The reason they cannot be regarded as ultimate is that they can be cancelled. The reason they cannot be seen as arbitrary and subjective is that it is only with an advent of the Apocalypse that they can be stopped. They cannot be stopped by a personal decision of an individual. Rules belong to the higher order, and thus only a higher order can cancel them. This belief holding that moral norms are independent from subjective opinions is called in ethics moral realism. As I will show, *Glukhar*'s moral metaphysics is moral realism.

In this scene, Antoshin responds ironically to Glukharev's confession. He quotes from *The Internationale*: 'The world is about to change its foundation'. While in French this line suggests that the world will change by itself ('*Le monde va changer de base*'), the Russian language official translation of *The Internationale* by Arkady Kots carries a different meaning: 'We will destroy this world of violence / Down to the foundations, and then / We will build our new world...'. The Russian language version, which Denis quotes supposes that, firstly, the active agent is not the world itself, but the working class, and, secondly, that the world is going to be destroyed and then rebuilt subsequently not just changing its foundations, as it is said in the original French version. Denis' allusion to *the Internationale*, a song that was very popular in the Soviet Union, can be read as a marker of Antoshin's irony about Glukharev's idea. Glukharev's dream about the Apocalypse reminds Antoshin about the Soviet utopia and its subsequent fall which took place less than two decades before their conversation took place. The fact that religious and revolutionary-communist motifs go together will not be seen as arbitrary if we take into consideration that the Christian doctrine was sometimes interpreted as a version of the communist utopia and communism was seen as a religion.

In another scene, Glukharev says in passing that there is no respect for law in society, but there is a fear of the police, which replaces law. Respect is set against fear, and fear can be produced in the state of exception when the law is suspended:

[Glukharev and Antoshin are about to attack a car repair shop]

Antoshin: Is this really necessary?

Glukharev: Yes, it is, Denis, it is. If people in our country do not respect the law, they should at least be afraid of cops.

Denis: This is a weak compensation.

Glukharev: It is the only one we have. (Episode 2, 42:45)

A scene from episode 4 where Glukharev and Antoshin discuss social status of three children accused in stealing a car, Denis says the following line:

Denis: Nobody explained to them what is good and what is bad. Those people don't spend a lot of time outside prison cells in their lifetime. (Episode 4, 12:40)

This phrase suggests that the police's mission is to explain what is good and what is bad¹². It ensures the existence of basic distinctions of moral values and judgments. The police know how the world is arranged and what consequences will meet those who do not respect moral laws. It seems from first glance that moral norms are products of interpersonal arrangements, conventions or education ('nobody explained to them'). However, the second part of the phrase suggests that the norms are more than just human conventions, for they have objective and material consequences ('those people don't spend a lot of time outside prison cells'). There is an objective order of things that divides people into two groups: those who live out of prison and of those who do not, a division which materializes as a consequence of actions which are based on notions these people have, and not based on others' perceptions of them. In relation to this order of things Denis positions himself as a referee standing on the outside and giving an account of what is going on in the world. He is not an active participant who implements the law. The law implements itself, and Denis just witnesses how justice carries itself out. He is a prophet of justice who predicts that sinners will be punished because this is how the world functions.

This moral realism can also be traced in a dialogue from episode 5 that has already been quoted in the section 'Formal norms vs. humane principles':

Nastia: People like us are beaten often. It's normal. It's the cost of my profession. There is nothing I can do about it.

Denis: Is that normal? Nastia, what are you talking about? What you are doing is not normal. Neither is it normal that you are beaten. What is going on in our heads, it's not normal. If we get used to all that, if it becomes normal for us... It's not normal, Nastia. (Episode 5, 29:38-30:14)

Denis knows for sure what is normal and what is not. At first glance it seems that he allows for a small degree of arbitrariness of moral norms and their social constructedness ('If we get used to all that, if it seems normal to us'). But this arbitrariness turns out to be just an illusion that results either from habit ('we get used to all that') or from self-deception ('if it seems'). There are objective moral laws behind these habit and self-deception.

¹² There is an additional meaning of the phrase 'what is good and what is bad'. It refers to a poem for children by an early Soviet poet Vladimir Maiakovskii *What is good and what is bad* (1925). In this poem, a child comes to his father and asks him about the meaning of these two notions.

In episode 6, Glukharev drops a short phrase that deserves attention here. He says:

Glukharev: God—he see some stuff from time to time. And so God’s punished him. Because out of the mouths of the police officer comes the truth. (Episode 6, 34:00)

We can see here again that the police officer is represented not as the agent of justice, but as a witness of its realization. The agent in this phrase is God. The police officer is a mere mediator between God and the human being, a prophet, who delivers the truth to people. Moreover, in this phrase there is an allusion to a famous Russian proverb, ‘out of the mouths of babes comes the truth’. Glukharev replaces ‘babes’ with ‘the police officer’. In this logic the police officer becomes associated with concepts of a child, truth and God that invites the interpreter to enter the hermeneutic circle of Christian symbolism (‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven’, Matthew, 18:3 and ‘the Lord God is the Truth’, Jeremiah 10:10, in *Russian Synodal Bible*).

Conclusions and perspectives for further studies

The show reinforces some media and cultural representations of the police in Russia in the 2000s, yet contrasts other stereotypes. In its portrayal of constant police corruption, the show is in line with dominant discourses in media and culture in Russia. In the show, the police are represented as an organization which has monopolized violence in its own right by budding off from the state apparatus and forming its own separate institution of violence and force. At first glance, it might seem that the police officers in *Glukhar’* do not perform social functions which they are supposed to carry out by law. Instead, they take bribes, protect their own interests, cover and hide crimes committed by their colleagues from other departments, use force as an interrogatory means towards people whose guilt is not proven. In this way, the police are no longer a representative of the state apparatus (and thus, of the law), and the state of exception to the law was no longer the temporary tool for re-establishing normalcy, but rather a permanent condition.

However, while in dominant media and cultural discourses of the 2000s the police were represented as gangs estranged from the interests of both the state and the people, the show *Glukhar’* emerges as a series of images of police officers acting against the law (and thus the state) but in the favour of society. The latter interpretation is not given in a straightforward

manner, but rather is the result of a meaning struggle over seemingly illegal actions in the show. These illegal actions by the police are not represented as uncontested patterns, but instead they are repeatedly challenged within the symbolic tissue of the show and are finally justified and legitimized.

Thus, *Glukhar* does not instil radical doubt in legitimacy of the police in general, of the police as an organization. The TV show rather problematizes the legitimacy of some patterns of police functions, such as its use of informal rules and its recourse to illegal means. However, the police's actions described in the TV series as illegal are finally justified and legitimized. My analysis has shown that there are four modes of justification and legitimization in the show: transgression of law is presented as disregard of abstract, formal norms in favour of concrete, pragmatic, experience-based, and humane principles; description of the police's activity is given in an ethnographic manner through the figure of the outsider who gradually becomes the 'native' informant; media stereotypes of corrupt police officers are challenged; and, finally, the mission of the police is described in religious terms.

The model of society which the TV show depicts is a 'Gemeinschaft', the integrative community that is based on internal and emotional links and informal contacts rather than a 'Gesellschaft', the community based on aggregative and associative formal contracts with no feelings or emotional belonging. However, the type of 'Gemeinschaft' that is presented in the show is not that of a permanently existing enclosed community but of a sporadically appearing community of accidentally connected citizens that are anonymous and singular otherwise.

As symbolic constructions these representations can be further studied in the context of a rich patchwork of Soviet and post-Soviet representational types, both fictional and factual. This kind of analysis can reveal how meanings are produced, transmitted, negotiated or contested within the intertextual field. However, as suggested at the beginning of this paper, these interpretations of the TV show can be also seen as not just free-floating self-referential symbolic constructions, but as constructions embedded in social reality, and therefore, meanings that were reconstructed here can be seen as social meanings circulating in society and having the potential to influence people's interpretation of norms, crime, law, legitimacy, and security, our understanding of the police and policing, the police's self-perceptions, and, finally, people's vision of police studies. The latter perspective, in order to be fully realised, demands an analysis of audience reception of the show and audience reception of the police as organisation in the light of the show. This type of analysis will permit us to understand how meanings are produced, transmitted, negotiated or contested outside of the sphere of symbolic production, in society.

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Corresponding author:

Arseniy Khitrov

National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia). School of Cultural Studies. Associate Professor.

Maly Trekhsvyatitelsky pereulok, 8/2, room 312, 109028, Moscow, Russian Federation.

E-mail: akhitrov@hse.ru, Tel. +7 495 772 95 90 * 22703

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