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## Redefining need, reconfiguring expectations: the rise of state-run youth voluntarism programs in Russia

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# Redefining Need, Reconfiguring Expectations: The Rise of State-Run Youth Voluntarism Programs in Russia

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## ABSTRACT

*This article investigates the restructuring of the Russian social welfare system by interrogating Putin-era state-run projects to promote youth voluntarism. Set up in the aftermath of liberalizing social welfare reform, these organizations are interesting hybrids: at the same time as they honor the Soviet past and afford symbolic prominence to Soviet era values, they simultaneously advance distinctively neoliberal technologies of self-help and self-reliance. In dialogue with recent studies in the anthropology of neoliberalism and the anthropology of postsocialism, I consider the implications of these intertwined logics. Focusing on the interpretive work undertaken by one provincial voluntary organization, I argue that it offers a symbolic salve and a measure of recompense to those most disaffected by neoliberal reform, while at the same time inculcating new models of subjectivity and citizenship. In so doing, it encodes a new vision of the common good that has interesting hybrid features and draws on the models that the Putin administration ostensibly disparages. [Keywords: Russia, anthropology of neoliberalism, youth, voluntarism, social welfare]*

*“Look,” hissed Oktiabrina, “not the police, but members of Vazhnoe Delo!” She pointed to rows of high school aged youth, standing guard at both ends of the crowded bleachers where the World War Two veterans were seated. These were members of Vazhnoe Delo (Important Deeds), a regional youth voluntarism organization recently founded by the governor of Tver’. I’d noticed them even before Oktiabrina pointed them out; their bright yellow vests, emblazoned with the organization’s insignia caught the eye, even in this large crowd. They were officiating at an event commemorating the 65th anniversary of Tver’s liberation from occupying German forces—or “the fascists” as they are commonly recalled. It was one of the city’s most important holidays; indeed, people (of all generations) had been pouring into the square since the early morning. While young and old jostled, straining to get a good view of the military choir on the stage, the youth kept their post. The very young flanked the very old (the decorated veterans) and the very powerful: the bleachers were set aside not only for bearers of symbolic power but political power also—members of the regional and city administration.*

(Tver’, Russia, Saturday, December 16, 2006)

This article focuses on interpreting the work of *Vazhnoe Delo*—a regional youth organization that was set up by the governor of Tver’ region in 2005. The organization advances a very distinctive form of voluntarism. This program is officially directed at the “socially unprotected” (*sotsial’no nezashchishchennym*), mostly elderly people living by themselves, orphans, and the poor. Youth volunteers (mostly school children and university students) provide physical assistance to these people (carrying water, chopping wood, delivering medicine and groceries), and organize events and excursions. However, it also undertakes a great deal of patriotically inflected symbolic work, as this vignette attests.

I locate Vazhnoe Delo as part of a burgeoning social welfare system that emerged after the introduction of a highly controversial federal law: Law 122 on “monetization” that came into effect in January 2005. This law, which brought elements of neoliberal rationality and market principles to the Russian social welfare system led to widespread protests and social unrest all over the Russian Federation.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of this botched restructuring attempt, federal and regional politicians engaged in frantic efforts to minimize the political fallout, first by justifying and then by

recalibrating the law. As regional governors introduced “softening measures” (*smiagchaiushchie mery*), deputies of both federal and regional parliaments sought to fix some of its most controversial aspects and became mired in legal proceedings, some of which continue to this day. As they did so, the institutions of social welfare proliferated. In many cases, the system of in-kind benefits (*l’goty*), which had been presented as irrational and out of control, and which the law had sought to abolish, actually grew. At the same time, new kinds of social welfare institutions sprang up. In the name of voluntarism, philanthropy, and charity, federal and regional politicians launched quasi-state organizations like Vazhnoe Delo. Many of them targeted youth, enlisting them as volunteers.

In this article, I take the controversy around Law 122 and its effects as ethnographic object, bringing recent studies in the anthropology of neoliberalism and the anthropology of postsocialism into dialogue. Against deterministic or universalist accounts of neoliberalism as a unified, coherent entity spreading across the globe, recent anthropological accounts demonstrate that neoliberal forms articulate in uneven, often contradictory ways.<sup>2</sup> Bringing a governmentality lens to the topic, Ong urges us to view neoliberalism not as a coherent hegemonic project, but as “mobile calculative techniques of governing that can be decontextualized from their original sources and recontextualized in constellations of mutually constitutive and contingent relationships” (Ong 2006:13).<sup>3</sup> Such studies have shown that although neoliberal economic policy has global reach, specific local histories and conditions influence the extent of neoliberal restructuring and the way it plays out in particular places (Collier, Hoffman, and DeHart 2006; Ong 2006; Tsing 2004).<sup>4</sup> In sites where neoliberal economic policy is the exception, rather than the norm, neoliberal economic logic may coexist with other rationalities, with unpredictable results (Dunn 2004; Hoffman 2006, 2009; Collier and Ong 2005; Song 2009). The post-socialist case has proven to be an extremely fertile site from which to interrogate neoliberalism, and make sense of the complex social and cultural forms that characterize contemporary life both in the former East bloc and in China.<sup>5</sup> A foundational insight of the anthropology of postsocialism is the interplay of old and new forms of knowledge and practice in the post-socialist period. Scholars have argued against the dominant metaphors of legacy, extinction, and transition—which imply not only break, rupture, and closure but also a teleological notion of progress—to insist on the continued prevalence of practices and social forms. As Douglas Rogers

(2010) argues, 20 years on, the category “postsocialism” is still salient insofar as it pushes us to continue to (re)assess and consider local histories. Recent scholarship points to moments of resonance, fit, or convergence between socialist and liberal formations, confounding exclusionary models and challenging the notion of liberalism and socialism as mutually exclusive and incommensurate (Boyer and Yurchak 2010; Hoffman 2006, 2010; Song 2009; Yurchak 2002).<sup>6</sup> These studies suggest that we can view neoliberalism and socialism as utopian projects that, despite political-ideological assumptions of their opposition, have substantial points of commonality and overlap (Buck-Morss 2002, Bockman and Eyal 2002, Verdery and Chari 2009).<sup>7</sup>

These insights are important; they prevent us both from reifying neoliberalism and from skating over the complexities of the postsocialist present as well (Kipnis 2008, Rogers 2010). Indeed, contra the assumptions of much governmentality scholarship that presumes an opposition between “individualizing” neoliberal projects and more collectivist formulations (Hoffman 2006:552), these studies reveal how the introduction of neoliberal technologies can actually stimulate socialist imaginaries (Hoffman 2006, 2010; Dunn 2004; Kipnis 2009). At the same time, this scholarship cautions us about the act of interpretation: all that looks the same may not be. As some have shown, neoliberal practices (such as self-help and self-work) persuade and convince precisely because they resonate with or resemble prior socialist forms (Matza 2009, Shevchenko 2010, Zigon 2011). In Russia, as in other post or late-socialist contexts, voluntarism is emerging as a key site for the redrawing of citizenship and state power.<sup>8</sup> As such, it offers an especially interesting site from which to view these mutations. It is also a site where this resonance between neoliberal and socialist logics comes clearly into view.

I engage this scholarship to investigate the shifting terrain of Russia’s social welfare regime. I locate myself amongst those who are concerned with the peculiar convergences that take place as neoliberal governmentality meets with moments of state assertion, in contexts where publics may be very hostile to neoliberal economic policies (Ong 2006; Hoffman 2006, 2010; Song 2009; Hemment 2009).<sup>9</sup> Russia’s recent history makes it a particularly interesting site from which to examine these processes. In the Putin era, Russia underwent significant change—it moved from being a “laboratory” for neoliberal reform, to a site of backlash against it. These contested

models and the animus they generated continue to structure the social field in the contemporary era and set the conditions for the fusions I examine.

Vladimir Putin came to office in 2000, riding a wave of popular disenchantment with the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s and the foreign identified actors who prescribed them. He staked his legitimacy on opposing them. At the same time, his administration sought to “modernize” Russia and make it competitive in the global market. This has led to a push-pull of policies. Although he has staked his identity on being anti-neoliberal (and is viewed as an authoritarian rejecter of Westernizing norms by US commentators), Putin has advanced some neoliberal policies in a “liberal blend” of politics that defies easy description (Matza 2009). At the same time, he has celebrated, revived, and promoted elements of the Soviet past to articulate a contemporary “national idea.”<sup>10</sup> These contradictions, still apparent in the Putin-Medvedev era,<sup>11</sup> are particularly manifest in the sphere of social welfare (Hemment 2009, Richter 2009, Cook 2007, Chandler 2004), throwing issues of governing into question.

In dialogue with these works, I seek to make sense of the complex and often contradictory logics manifest both in the legislation that gave rise to this protest, and in the state-run youth organizations set up in its aftermath. The case of Law 122 offers an instance where a circulating shard of neoliberalism interacted with local moralities and ideologies with powerful cultural effects.<sup>12</sup> I argue it ruptured the symbolic order upon which the Russian social welfare system rested, introducing new hierarchies amongst populations that had formerly been united and devaluing some cherished aspects of peoples’ identity. These changes had profound ethical implications (Ong 2006:4). Crucially, it laid bare painful questions about inclusion/exclusion in Putin’s Russia, and ruptured a certain fragile sense of common good, one that—rather surprisingly—remained during the post-Soviet period and emphasized shared fate and collective values.

In the second half of the article I turn to analyze Vazhnoe Delo, primarily focusing on its promotional materials and interviews with its director and staff. I view Vazhnoe Delo as a form of governmentality that responds to this rupture and the fallout it engendered (Gordon 1991, Rose 1996). The promotion of voluntarism in the context of state withdrawal is regarded as a quintessentially neoliberal dynamic (Harvey 2005, Hyatt 2001). However, the form of voluntarism advanced here is a complex fusion. I argue that Vazhnoe Delo offers a symbolic salve and a measure of recompense to those most disaffected by neoliberal reform, while at the same

time inculcating new models of subjectivity and citizenship. The form of voluntarism it advances is a hybrid that combines elements of neoliberal rationality with prior cultural forms—notably, it draws on (re)constituted socialist images and values—offering a symbolic solution to some of the ethical dilemmas Law 122 exposed and gave rise to. In so doing, as other Putin-era social welfare policies, it encodes a new, hybrid vision of the common good, which defies easy categorization.

### **Law 122 on Monetization**

In order to ground this discussion, it is necessary to provide some detail about Law 122 and its contours, and to situate it within Russia's recent history.<sup>13</sup>

Law 122 was directed at one of the last remaining Soviet institutions: the Soviet era benefits system, a huge and unwieldy system that provided in-kind benefits (*l'goty*), such as free or subsidized public transportation, to categories of the population.<sup>14</sup> This system articulated a distinctive vision of the common good, where the state provided basic social services to its citizens in return for political quiescence.<sup>15</sup> This vision, or contract, was central to the legitimacy of the Soviet system (Cook 1993). The benefits system remained relatively unscathed during the aggressive market-oriented reforms of the 1990s.<sup>16</sup> Remarkably, it actually grew during that decade as politicians attempted to make recompense to—and calm—the populations who lost out most from privatizing reforms. It is important to note that the social welfare system was not based on economic need, as it is in much of Western Europe or the United States.<sup>17</sup> In the officially egalitarian Soviet Union, there was no poverty. Full employment along with free education and healthcare supposedly guaranteed basic living standards to all. Instead, benefits were channeled to those who were unable to work (due to disability) or to those with exceptional needs (such as those with large families). In all other cases, benefits were awarded to citizens on the basis of merit—here, meaning service to the state (Cook 2007, Wengle and Rasell 2008b). Merit-based benefits held great symbolic value, affirming people's experience and the hardships and losses they endured (often at the hand of the state). For example, this type of benefit was awarded to honor military service during the Great Patriotic War (as World War II is referred to in Russia), labor during the five-year plans, or recognition of suffering incurred at the state's hand (i.e. repression, Chernobyl).<sup>18</sup>

Although the purchasing power of these benefits greatly diminished during the 1990s, their symbolic import held and people were greatly attached to them. However dysfunctional, the benefits system articulated a “relatively stable sociosymbolic framework” where “moral assumptions and economic practices complemented each other” (Oushakine 2009:24). By no means was this framework static; indeed, individual benefits may even have assumed greater symbolic significance at this time. Perestroika and Yeltsin-era revelations had led to a pervasive sense of shame about many episodes of Soviet history. In the context of what some now recall as a period of “national discreditation,” merit-based benefits honored citizens’ lived experience of that history (Chandler 2004, Cook 2007); they did so at a time when the prevailing discourse rendered that experience almost un-narratable.

Law 122 sought to replace the system of in-kind benefits with fixed cash payments. Further, it sought to regulate and reorganize the division of labor between the federal and regional governments. Whereas formerly, the federal government had borne fiscal responsibility for most benefits, Law 122 passed much of this responsibility to the regions. While the “most socially meaningful” categories of benefit recipient (*l’gotniki*), notably military veterans and the disabled, remained the responsibility of the federal government, responsibility for the majority (mostly pensioners, also veterans of labor, including those who labored on the wartime home-front and victims of repression) was shifted to the regions.<sup>19</sup>

Illustrating Ong’s point about the “mobility” of neoliberal techniques of governing, Law 122 was a “hybrid” that combined elements of the Soviet system with neoliberal economic policies (Wengle and Rassel 2008a). While it fell short of a liberal welfare model (it did not seek to implement means-testing to direct benefits toward the poor; it did not actually change the preexisting categories of beneficiary, which remained intact), it introduced key elements of neoliberal rationality; for example, it introduced “logics of cost effectiveness, accountability and transparency” and “shift[ed the] burden of welfare provision from state budgets to individuals, who now [had to] economize with limited cash allowances” (Wengle and Rassel 2008a:753). Further, the law was unequally implemented and contained the logic of exception that is frequently intrinsic to neoliberal reform (Ong 2006); that is to say, some categories of *l’gotniki* were exempted from some of these neoliberal logics.



Although it was not as radical as it could have been, Law 122 had dramatic effects. Crucially, it shook up categories of the population, introducing new hierarchies to the ranks of the *l'gotniki*. The most controversial shift concerned the status of World War II veterans. Honored and commemorated throughout the Soviet period, World War II retains intense symbolic significance in contemporary Russia.<sup>20</sup> Those who fought and those who labored on the home front during the Great Patriotic War had been united by shared federal recognition of their wartime contributions. Law 122 disaggregated these two categories. While the law advantaged military veterans by virtue of excluding them from the logic of monetization, it disadvantaged their home-front peers (sometimes their spouses) who were exposed to it.

A confident Putin administration carelessly presented Law 122 as an apolitical, technocratic measure that would rationalize an essentially flawed system of social benefits. However, it led to widespread social unrest. Law 122 marked, what Linda Cook has called, “the limits of liberalization,” a point against which Russian people pushed back (Cook 2007). Large-scale protests took place across the Russian Federation, in what some Russian commentators referred to as a “political tsunami” (cited in Oushakine 2009:26).<sup>21</sup> Crucially, these protests were bolstered by support from an unusual quarter: youth. Pensioners bearing Communist banners and placards (the usual suspects) were joined by young people, mostly students. Students, like pensioners found themselves demoted to the second-tier category of being regional *l'gotniki*; they too experienced the erosion of their in-kind benefits, most controversially, they lost their free bus passes. At a time of broad economic instability—caused by the emergence of for-profit education and increased fees, for example—this rankled greatly. Thus, these two generations who formerly had little in common—and which are typically considered to be diametrically opposed and to embody such distinctive characteristics<sup>22</sup>—found common cause, they were structurally united by Law 122.<sup>23</sup> Protests also took on diverse forms: radical student groups began to proliferate on campuses and some young people formed online communities of protest.<sup>24</sup>

### **Monetization's reverberations in Tver'**

I was in Tver' in March 2005, two months after Law 122 took effect. People spoke about nothing but the reforms and their anti-social, or anti-people

(*antinarodnyi*) character—a term that carried great weight, since it had been used to characterize the deeply unpopular “young reformers” of the Yeltsin administration that Putin positioned himself against. Indeed, Putin’s legitimacy was premised on his ostensible difference from his predecessors and the policies they embraced. His image was that of a resolute leader who stood firm against internationally mandated neoliberal norms and made amends for the national humiliation these policies had given rise to.

I was taken aback by the levels of anger and discontent people expressed; it was striking even in comparison with what I heard expressed during the free market fundamentalist excesses of the 1990s. Although I didn’t witness them (and they were not reported in the official media), protests and demonstrations took place in Tver’ also. According to one on-line source, 2000 protesting retirees blocked traffic in downtown Tver’ on January 15; this was swiftly followed by a larger demonstration on January 22, when 2,000–3,000 citizens gathered “to protest the president’s and the government’s anti-social politics” (Skaji n.d.). This represented a crisis for the Putin administration, which was particularly anxious about popular opposition in the aftermath of the so-called “color” revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgystan (2005).

For me, the ethnographic revelation was that people were driven to act. Russian people had remained largely quiescent in the face of 1990s era reform and had an almost allergic reaction to mass action. Although economic dislocation gave rise to considerable moral and cosmological confusion—as anthropologists have documented<sup>25</sup>—it did not translate into political action. Sergei Oushakine’s recent ethnography captures the ways people responded to the fragmentation of the state and social life in post-Soviet Russia (Oushakine 2009). He shows how the people he writes about—marginalized provincial subjects ranging from university professors to Afghan veterans—accommodated the absence of the state. What he calls the “patriotism of despair” is an amalgam of negatively structured forms of patriotic attachment that emerges in the immediate post-Soviet period (Oushakine 2009). Notably, although prompted by the state’s withdrawal, the narrative and symbolic strategies of connection his subjects engaged in did not address the state. Oushakine’s account captures the dynamic I have witnessed. During the 1990s, it had appeared that social inequality had been entirely naturalized; those who did occasionally protest (mostly pensioners and *l’gotniki*, including veterans) were regarded

with some embarrassment as remnants of the old system, as people who determinedly would not remake themselves. Yet here, they commanded empathy among diverse populations. Clearly, Law 122 marked the rupture of something that had remained intact. This seemed to imply that some core and basic notion of shared fate and collective values still persisted in postsocialist, post-egalitarian Russia. It became something of an ethnographic paradox: what was different and distinctive about this round of reform? What exactly did it destabilize or threaten?

My subsequent ethnographic work has offered me the opportunity to follow up on this question and to explore responses to Law 122. During research trips in 2006, 2007, and 2008, I was able to speak with people who are differently positioned within this new social welfare terrain. I have spoken both with people one might expect would feel negatively towards it (veterans and their families; other *l'gotniki*) and with those who might be assumed to have a certain investment in the new social welfare order (state social workers who long worked within the inefficient old system; staff and volunteers of *Vazhnoe Delo* and other quasi-state social welfare institutions). Although the issue no longer has political traction, levels of anger and dissatisfaction remain high. Across the board, my interlocutors referred to Law 122 and its repercussions as a “painful question” (*bolnoi vopros*). Just as the legislative processes associated with Law 122 are unresolved, so too are their feelings about its effects. In all these conversations, I have been struck by the tone, the gravity, and the sense of very personal connection that characterized people’s responses, regardless of their age. It was as if I had stumbled on intimate terrain. It became clear to me that unlike the debates in the United States, for example, social welfare reform in Russia is not regarded as something that affects “others.” Instead, it indexes processes many people feel implicated within.

I celebrated Victory Day,<sup>26</sup> 2008, with my old friend Lena and her elderly, veteran parents. We drank three toasts—to victory, to those who fought, and then to the rest of us, for whom they fought. Between each toast, all spoke with feeling about the war, along with its costs and injustices. Interwoven with these poignant recollections of the past was commentary about the contemporary injustice of Law 122. Indeed, this family embodied its contradictions. While her father was a decorated veteran of the front-line (*frontovnik*), her mother was a veteran of the home front. The disaggregating of their benefits and the attendant inconveniences brought additional levels of uncertainty to their already uncertain lives. Lena spoke

with feeling about the irrationalism of the law and enumerated its inadequacies. When I suggested that the “softening” provisions had made improvements, she snorted in derision. The high costs of medicines rendered these benefits inadequate (one course of medicine her father takes costs over 2,000 rubles per month, or about \$80 USD). As she did so, her father pulled out a medal from the cabinet and handed it to me. He explained that Lukashenko (the Belarusian president) had sent all Russian veterans a medal in 2004 to commemorate their role in liberating Belarussia. “Our idiots on the other hand” began Lena, referring to Russian politicians, “have forgotten the veterans and don’t do enough!” “How many do you suppose there are left?” she asked me, explaining that her father was 13-years-old when the war began and that he signed up to serve when he was only 17, that is, he was at the youngest end of the spectrum. “I have a feeling that our leaders are just waiting for them to die off,” she said with disgust.

Perhaps, Lena’s family’s response is unsurprising considering that both of her parents were disadvantaged by the new law; however, I have elicited similar accounts from those who might be supposed to have a stake in the new system, that is, amongst the staff of the state social welfare services. Regardless of their positionality, my informants spoke with feeling and empathy. Strikingly, I found that my questions elicited very personal responses and references to their own family members.

In September 2006, I interviewed an old acquaintance who now works in the department of Social Defense. She recalled the scenes of chaos and confusion she had witnessed during the spring of 2005 as distressed *l’gotniki* (mostly elderly and infirm) flocked to the department’s offices. She herself had fielded phone calls from morning until late in the evening, answering questions about the implications of the legislation from people fearful of losing their entitlements. She spoke only with empathy for the clients and their distress: “it brought tears to my eyes,” she said.

One of the most poignant exchanges took place with Nina Ivanovna, a senior analyst at the Tver’ department of Social Defense and former Communist Party activist and who worked for years in the *obkom* (regional committee of the CPSU). When I interviewed her in May 2008, Nina Ivanovna spoke with feeling about how absurd it was that different regions offer different amounts of cash compensation, illustrating her point with her own mother. She said that during the war, people served in factories all over the country; they had to move where they were sent (in her mother’s case, to the Far East). However, the amount of compensation

they received depended on the region where they now lived. She told me that while Tver' based veterans received a miserly 375 rubles/month (\$15), other regions gave much more (she quoted 800 [\$32] or even 1,500 rubles [\$60]).

Even Vladimir Borisov, the director of Vazhnoe Delo, chose to answer my question about the effects of monetization by talking about his own family members. He explained that his parents were both veterans of labor; they receive 300 rubles (\$12) or so a month, but this was grossly inadequate in the face of rising utility costs. Although it was clear from his tone and the way he spoke that his parents were not too badly off and that he was in a position to help them out, it was striking that he chose to mention them at all.

In sum, these accounts illuminate the moral and ethical dilemmas caused by the introduction of liberalizing economic reform. Here, monetization distressed people because it gave rise to a "broken link between the short term sphere of monetized exchange (compensation) and the long term order of social and moral values (social achievements)" (Oushakine 2009:26), resulting in a form of symbolic rupture. As we have seen, people felt their social achievements were devalued. Further, the unevenness of the reform upset peoples' sense of fairness and equity. Some categories of the population found themselves advantaged at the expense of others, causing additional distress as they scrambled to make sense of their own status. This interplay or articulation between categories of the population had the effect of, "crystallizing ethical dilemmas and "threaten[ing] to displace basic values of social equality and shared fate" (Ong 2006:4). Lena's words ("our leaders are just waiting for them to die off!") reveal deep distress about the state's fragmentation and signal the breakdown of trust in politicians in this time (Oushakine 2009). They signal her uneasy awareness of the stakes of the game—while some populations are privileged, others are excluded and deemed expendable (Petryna 2002:219).

But why here and why now? After all, Russian citizens had endured a decade of "shock therapy," with intense moral and ethical repercussions. I conclude that Law 122 had such profound effects for three reasons. First, it was traumatic partly because it marked the extension of these logics to a previously untouched domain. Of equal importance, this legislation resonated with deeper anxieties. It hit populations already battered and traumatized by the foreign identified assault to national dignity that was the market reform of the 1990s, interacting with the nationalist feelings so

brilliantly evoked by Oushakine (2009). The patriotism of despair, which had “provided a key base of support for the resurgence of Russia’s national assertiveness” (Oushakine 2009:7) and which the Putin administration had so successfully harnessed, now threatened to destabilize it. Until this point, the patriotism of despair had not been directed towards the state. Yet it came together in a volatile cocktail, leading to this rare instance of public protest.

In the immediate aftermath of Law 122, politicians scrambled to deal with the political fallout by making concessions and implementing “softening measures” that would take the edge off these reforms.<sup>27</sup> The Putin administration went into rhetorical overdrive, stressing the source of its legitimacy, its distinctness from the “anti-people” Yeltsin administration, and its concern for the well-being of the people. At the same time, it launched a series of new initiatives that extended some areas of social welfare provision (Cook 2009).<sup>28</sup> Simultaneously, politicians undertook symbolic work to reassure the populations most directly effected by monetization. There was a proliferation of expressions of devotion and care for the elderly, veterans, and the needy.

At the same time, the Putin administration launched new programs that focused on the younger generation—patriotic programs and organizations to channel their energy and ensure their loyalty.<sup>29</sup> Confirming Oushakine’s 2009 analysis, many of these projects had a historical dimension. Russian political elites appeared to grasp the importance of honoring the “long term order of social moral values” and the achievements they indexed (2009:26). They turned to World War II as a cultural resource as they launched these new programs. As during the Soviet period, politicians discursively deployed World War II to achieve a sense of shared purpose and national unity, and to acquiesce potentially restive and demanding populations (Tumarkin 1994).<sup>30</sup> In this case, it was directed at the two categories which had been most vocal in protest about Law 122: youth and elderly. This provides clues as to what those yellow vest-clad youth were doing on the bleachers that day in December 2006.

### **Important Deeds in Tver’**

I first became aware of Vazhnoe Delo during my trip to Tver’ in the spring of 2005. My friends informed me that while people were reeling from the effects of monetization, the oblast administration was beginning to make

moves to embrace and promote voluntarism. Following a “Social Forum” that took place in December 2004, the governor was urging the three sectors of society—business, the administration, and non-profit organizations—to work together to resolve social problems. One of the recommendations of the forum was that a center to support voluntarism should be established in the city, with the ultimate goal of establishing a network of clubs and organizations throughout the oblast. This talk of voluntarism at the time of restructuring caught my attention; it sounded like a distinctively neoliberal formulation (Harvey 2005).<sup>31</sup>

In March 2005, I visited the person who was appointed the head of this pilot project—Viacheslav Smirnov, a retired city deputy, living on a military pension, with a long history of working with youth. The center was clearly in the very early phases of formation; the offices were sparsely furnished and staffed by one young woman, a student, who chatted pleasantly with me while I waited for her boss. Smirnov told me that Vazhnoe Delo—as the program was to be named—was just beginning its work. It was conceptualized not as an organization, but as a “long-term social program” that would bring the forces of the three sectors together to resolve social problems of the oblast. Thus far, it had devised two main campaigns: a project to arrange trips and excursions for the elderly, invalids, and sick children and a project called “National Cuisine,” which would organize events designed to bring together diasporic populations in the city (Armenians and others). Its broader long-term goals were to attract and encourage people (youth) into voluntarism as well as to serve as a resource center—or “community foundation,” as Smirnov put it using the English term—for youth groups.<sup>32</sup>

By the time of my next visit in September 2006, Smirnov had stepped down, but Vazhnoe Delo had morphed and clearly burgeoned. The local newspapers were full of stories and pictures of yellow t-shirt clad, youthful volunteers engaged in diverse forms of voluntary activity: organizing concerts for the elderly, assisting invalids with domestic chores, visiting children in hospitals—and I learned from members of the student research team that Vazhnoe Delo had its own TV show. By the time of the patriotic holiday I attended in December 2006, the organization had grown exponentially. According to its director, it had branches in 31 regions of the oblast and there were now 3,000 volunteers.

I visited Vazhnoe Delo’s new director, Igor Borisov, in December 2006. The organization had moved and gone upmarket: it now occupied small,



but nicely renovated offices in the center of town. After I had been buzzed in via intercom, a young woman greeted me at the door and led me through a crowded room to Borisov's office. It was a chaotic, but dynamic scene: boxes of literature lay stacked on the floor, and four or five young women sat behind on crowded desks at computers. Borisov greeted me warmly and invited me to sit down. As his secretary bustled to offer me tea and cookies, he told me a little of his background. He was another state insider with a youth connection; before he was appointed director of Vazhnoe Delo in the spring of 2005, he had worked for years on the youth committee of the oblast administration. He spoke quickly, naming key facts about the program and its activities and handing me leaflets and brochures. As he reeled off names, dates, and details about competitions and campaigns, I struggled to take notes and keep up with him. I left an hour later with a packet of promotional materials—bulletins, newsletters, and branded items that included a yellow baseball cap, t-shirt, pencil, and notebook—and an invitation to accompany volunteers on one of their next missions to the countryside.

By the time I left, I had a clearer idea of the organization and its workings. True to the goals expressed at the Social Forum, Vazhnoe Delo was a partnership (or "mechanism of collaboration," as one brochure put it) between spheres—the state, business, and civil society. It collaborates with the state in a number of ways. It has formal agreements of cooperation with both the local departments of Social Defense and Education. While collaboration with the former facilitates connection with the needy (Vazhnoe Delo consults its database to locate clients and borrows its vehicles to reach them), collaboration with the latter enables them to recruit volunteers: Vazhnoe Delo has a network of representatives in schools and institutions of higher education across the region. That is, teachers or school administrators—mostly of schools and vocational colleges—encourage their students to participate in Vazhnoe Delo's activities.<sup>33</sup> It commands substantial financial resources; its sponsors are both corporate (the local representatives of large businesses) and state. Like other contemporary civic organizations, Vazhnoe Delo competes in Federal and regional grant competitions.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, its brochures proclaim its status as a cutting edge and award winning program, a federally recognized trailblazer of the Russian voluntary movement.

I learned another nuance, too, one that is less visible in the promotional materials the program puts out: Vazhnoe Delo volunteers are not



only youth, but also the elderly—pensioners who have time and energy on their hands. Borisov informed me that they had created 80 clubs for pensioners in the oblast, working with the Tver' branch of an already-existing civic organization, The Pensioners' Union. This organization, he explained, is made up of younger people, those who did not fight or labor during the war and who are thus ineligible for upper-tier, federal level benefits. Indeed, upon closer inspection, I noted that some of the elders depicted in the brochures were themselves wearing yellow t-shirts; those I would at first glance taken to be recipients were actually volunteers. Through projects such as "Let's heal with good humor" and "Grandmas' pies," pensioner-volunteers brought cheer to orphans and sick children in the hospital.

### **Vazhnoe Delo as Statecraft**

"The development of the person is the main goal and an essential condition for the progress of contemporary society; it's absolutely a national priority."

(then-President Vladimir Putin, quoted in Vazhnoe Delo newsletter)

Vazhnoe Delo emerged during the spring of 2005, in tandem with the fall out of Law 122. I locate Vazhnoe Delo as a response to Law 122, particularly the law's cultural effects and the social protests it engendered. My analysis here focuses on the symbolic work it undertakes and on how it seeks to provide a kind of resolution to the forms of unrest Law 122 triggered. While I do not wish to discount the assistance and services it has rendered, my research persuaded me that the real work of the organization lies in its project of persuasion. As Putin's words quoted above reveal, Russian state actors are engaged in a very self-conscious form of social engineering via state-run organizations and seek to remake the youth who participate in them. Vazhnoe Delo actors do not shy from advertising this governing intent; indeed, they frequently proclaim it. Borisov spoke with pride about the awards the organization has won for its innovative technologies<sup>35</sup> and the PR element of its work is very pronounced. Between 2005 and 2008, the local newspapers were full of articles featuring activities and the organization had its own TV show.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, this led many of my interlocutors to dismiss the organization as "just PR." I came to regard

Vazhnoe Delo as an exercise in statecraft that is as much directed at the volunteers themselves as the people they ostensibly assist.<sup>37</sup> Its goals are to accomplish a full-blown makeover of state-societal relations and of the individuals who engage in them by redefining need and reconfiguring expectations (Matza 2009, Zigon 2011).<sup>38</sup>

Analysis of its promotional materials offers a means of examining the ways “those who seek to govern focus and imagine their world and seek to fashion it anew” (Rose et al. 2006:100).<sup>39</sup> Vazhnoe Delo responds and attends to the anxieties the legislation unleashed in complicated ways. First, it undertakes symbolic work to reassure the populations who were most affected by neoliberal reform. Second, it advances a new, hybrid notion of the common good where the state (re)asserts itself as its guarantor, advancing a distinctively new set of state/societal relations. While at first glance it may look like neoliberalism as usual, something more complex is afoot; here, as in other state projects, state officials offer up a blend of seemingly contradictory logics and discourses (Soviet, neoliberal, Russian Orthodox, nationalist). Strikingly, these ostensibly incompatible elements do not jar, but reinforce each other. Crucially, the youth and pensioners who are offered them find them palatable and persuasive, albeit for different reasons.

### **Redefining Need, Reconfiguring Expectations**

Vazhnoe Delo specifically attends to the categories that Law 122 destabilized and undermined. Its clients, the “socially unprotected,” are after all likely to be *l’gotniki*: those entitled to *l’goty* on grounds of advanced age, disability, or ill health, as well as people who were demoted to the regions and felt the ground shift beneath them with the loss of in-kind benefits. Through the Vazhnoe Delo, the state demonstrates that these populations are *not* expendable and that it cares for them and has not forgotten. The prize-winning “Assistance Service of Tver’ oblast” (*Patronazhnaia Sluzhba*) brings youth to assist vulnerable populations in the far-flung rural areas of the oblast. Images of agentive, yellow t-shirt wearing youth convey a sense of connection and dynamism. This “volunteer movement” acts as the authorities’ proxy, as a vehicle via which to communicate the enlightened, active, and ever attentive nature of the regional administration.<sup>40</sup>

Vazhnoe Delo materials frequently depict officials and local power brokers—governor Zelenin’s smiling face and glowing endorsement,

photographs of Vazhnoe Delo's benefactors and sponsors, and representatives of government and business. Bulletins and materials proclaim a vision where the authorities work in harmony with the other two sectors of society, pooling resources to ensure the common good. In contradistinction to the hastily drafted and poorly conceptualized Law 122, Vazhnoe Delo is a "long-term social program." While Law 122 threw the relationships between different branches of government into question, Vazhnoe Delo demonstrates the careful, rational collaboration of different state organs—the governor's office and regional branches of the Ministry of Social Defense and the Ministry of Education.

Vazhnoe Delo promotional materials convey a sense of the authorities' attentiveness and legitimacy; bulletins and materials communicate the impression of an ever-burgeoning local movement, one that originated in a community need, and grew under the benevolent gaze (and assistance) of the governor. At the same time as it genuflects to political powerbrokers, Vazhnoe Delo materials also acknowledge another, higher authority. Bulletins and newsletters regularly depict leaders of the Orthodox Church—that the Patriarch's photograph and quotation appears alongside those of local politicians and businessmen illustrates the extent to which Russian political elites now publicly align themselves with the Russian Orthodox Church. It also provides further evidence of the hybridity I have referred to. Indeed, this play between the sacred and the profane, between Orthodoxy and entrepreneurialism, is manifest in the organization's name: Vazhnoe Delo can be translated as either important business (in the entrepreneurial sense), or important deeds, implying Christian duty.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time as it attends to the pensioners and infirm who make up the majority of regional *l'gotniki*, Vazhnoe Delo devotes special attention to those who were most controversially affected by monetization, the "most socially significant" category of *l'gotniki*—military veterans. Vazhnoe Delo attends to World War II veterans by facilitating face-to-face encounters between veterans and youth, via parties or public (especially war-commemorative) holidays, as in the opening vignette. It publicizes these encounters in the published materials it circulates.<sup>42</sup> Vazhnoe Delo volunteers visit cemeteries and war memorials to engage in cleanup campaigns. Through the program of excursions ("*Nash Krai*"), youthful volunteer-guides take elderly people to visit significant commemorative or battle sites. War-related activities are key to the events and campaigns held jointly with the Pensioner's Union, too. These younger pensioners

(mostly in their 70s) were too young to fight, but their childhood experiences war were formative and remain central to their identity. Indeed, they refer to themselves as “*dety voini*” (children of the war) and have sought to win regional and federal recognition.<sup>43</sup>

At first blush, Vazhnoe Delo is very similar to Soviet-era institutions. As Young Pioneers, members of the Komsomol (Communist Youth League) and later as adults, via the institution of the *subbotnik*,<sup>44</sup> Soviet citizens were required to undertake forms of “voluntary” service. Meanwhile, the state promoted the notion of altruistic youth voluntarism via its support of the so-called Timur movement, an (originally) unofficial movement of children and youth who undertook forms of voluntary service, inspired by a children’s novel and the popular film that was subsequently made.<sup>45</sup> Vazhnoe Delo continues in this tradition. Much of the work volunteers participate in assumes the same form as their Soviet predecessors: chopping wood, picking up groceries, visiting orphanages, sitting and talking with lonely elders. In their use of uniforms (t-shirts, baseball caps, and bandanas) and mass actions, they visibly recall the Komsomol and Young Pioneers. Vazhnoe Delo’s war-related activities mark another point of continuity with Soviet-era organizations. However, the organization frames this work quite differently, communicating a new and distinctive set of state societal relations.

The subtle and interesting thing about Vazhnoe Delo is that it provides a measure of symbolic recompense and consolation to those most disaffected by neoliberal reform, at the same time as it advances some of the same. That is to say, it attends to the anxieties around Law 122, but simultaneously extends elements of the same logic. Vazhnoe Delo’s original statement of goals indicates that it is very much in synch with the goals of 122. In violation of the socialist era social contract, it proceeds from the assumption that the state cannot—indeed, should not—be responsible for resolving all social problems. Vazhnoe Delo’s proclaimed mission is to find solutions to the region’s social problems. Its target group is the “socially defenseless,” those who for a variety of reasons find themselves unprotected, or at least under-protected (staff and volunteers usually cite pensioners—especially those living alone and without the support of family members—orphans, the disabled, and infirm).<sup>46</sup> Although this category is not strictly defined in means-testing terms, it does indicate a material kind of need. Yet Vazhnoe Delo does very little to alleviate material problems. Despite the substantial financial resources the program commands,

only a small portion of these funds go to the needy. Its operating costs are considerable; a large proportion of its resources are expended on maintaining it as a project: maintaining a high profile in the media; funding the monthly newsletters, glossy brochures, and TV show; sustaining the executive board, or HQ, that is, Borisov and his staff. Beyond this, Vazhnoe Delo clearly states that the provision of material assistance is not its goal. As its literature states, its goals are, “to provide *non-subsidized* forms of assistance to the population as an *alternative* to material benefits.” In this denial of the material, we can identify multiple currents at play. It is at once evidence of neoliberal logic, and testimony to the rising influence of the Orthodox Church in Russia. It is served up with a heavy dose of socialist paternalism. The *Ustav Dobrovoltsa*, a pledge document for incoming volunteers, illustrates this fusion well, stating that Vazhnoe Delo’s goal is to encourage volunteers “to unite with the purpose of undertaking *beskorystnoi* (without self-interest; self-less) non-material help to people who need it.” In its appeal to volunteers, this statement invokes alleged Soviet traits of idealism, sincerity, and commitment to the collective. At the same time, the document invokes the logic of fundraising, by naming “the attraction of material, financial, personal, and other resources to enable additional assistance to the needy categories of the population of Tver’ oblast” as another goal (Vazhnoe Delo n.d.). Here, volunteers are (rather confusingly) called upon to attract material support in order to unselfishly provide immaterial support to those in need. The most valuable gift that volunteers can give is not material assistance, but gifts of kindness (as communicated in the campaigns’ names: “Be Kind” or “Kind Deeds”). What the “socially defenseless” really need, Vazhnoe Delo campaigns proclaim, are demonstrations of care, to know that the authorities (both sacred and secular) are listening. Beyond this, they need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and become active.

I was able to explore this latter theme with Borisov. In the same interview during which he recalled his own parents’ response to monetization, he took pains to emphasize this point. Using language that recalled the statements of politicians in the immediate aftermath of Law 122, he told me: “we soften the effect of this. We help people feel that they are not totally neglected (*razbrosheno*). We don’t give material assistance, you understand.” In another interview, he went on to explain that while one of Vazhnoe Delo’s goals was to attract volunteers and organize volunteer projects, it was also interested in “activating” people to help themselves.

These efforts appeared to be particularly directed at pensioners, the second most numerous category of volunteers. Thus, the pensioners clubs encouraged by Vazhnoe Delo were oriented not only towards providing opportunities for their members to socialize (*obshchenie*) and feel embraced by the state, but they also had another motive: "Our goal is to activate these people, to stimulate them in order that they don't sit around waiting for support from the state, but rather, help themselves and each other. It's the principle of mutual support." Indeed, the distinction between these two categories (volunteers and clients) is very blurry. The needy are asked to be volunteers, and in becoming active, they are also supposed to take care of their own needs, taking a double load off the state.

During interviews, Vazhnoe Delo volunteers and staff members frequently acknowledged the organization's similarities with the Komsomol or Young Pioneers; however, I noted that some of the organization's architects preferred an alternative parallel, describing it as a contemporary version of the Timur movement instead. The Timur movement is a Soviet era precedent that is less official-seeming than the Komsomol and Young Pioneers; although it was officially sanctioned, it is remembered as a grassroots movement, a spontaneous and irrepressible upsurge of good deeds, driven by the best instincts of the younger generation. As such, it is a perfect model for Vazhnoe Delo. The Timur movement's war-time credentials make it particularly appropriate for Vazhnoe Delo's goals. The book that inspired the movement (published 1940) tells the story of a group of children who secretly undertook good deeds to help the families of *frontoviki* (those who fought on the Eastern front). It celebrates the Great Patriotic War as a sacred time that brought out the best in the Soviet people. In this way, Vazhnoe Delo as other official Putin-era youth organizations, is implicated in a revived form of the "war cult" that was sustained in the Soviet period (Tumarkin 1994).<sup>47</sup> As during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods, the cult is less about actual veterans than their symbolic import. Clearly, the number of surviving veterans or those who actually contributed to the war effort is dwindling. It is important to note that this is a distinctive vision of the war and a reformatted version of the "cult," carefully tailored to meet the contemporary needs of the state.<sup>48</sup> It offers a vision of the common good, and of shared fate that simultaneously dignifies the past and the future. The war here is remembered as a time of selflessness, a time when people engaged in good deeds, as a time that brought out the best in people—and, as a time of ingenuity and enterprise,

too—when individuals (children included) and communities took charge of their own destiny and realized their resourcefulness. These Soviet era wartime values are newly valorized and linked to the contemporary goals of statecraft (“modernization”), in order to stimulate and unleash an entrepreneurial kind of ingenuity and resourcefulness.

If the “hook” of the Brezhnev-era war cult was “shame”—where young people were shamed into feeling respect for their elders (Tumarkin 1994)<sup>49</sup>—Vazhnoe Delo offers something different, something forward-looking and enticing. Veterans and youth are united in forward-looking projects that offer channels of upward mobility. In their concern for the greater good, the youthful volunteers are offered a heroic subject position and equivalence with their frontoviki forebears.<sup>50</sup> To the pensioner-volunteers, it brings back a vision of the war that includes them. It acknowledges their stake and suffering in the war—as “children of the war (dety voini). It also acknowledges that they might have been—or might wish to imagine themselves to have been—agentive during the war as Timurovtsy. Celebrating the war in this way is also a coded way of critiquing the policies of the 1990s and of Putin’s predecessors. It was here, after all, that the “national discreditation” took place.<sup>51</sup> Thus, as in other patriotically inflected education projects, youth are encouraged to transcend the “shame” of the Yeltsin era.

In sum, Vazhnoe Delo offers a distinctive brand of voluntarism, one that is designed to appeal to the two most important constituencies—youth and the elderly. On the one hand, it recalls prior forms of social organization and heroic episodes of Soviet history (the war, the pulling together), as we have seen. It engages pensioners in culturally familiar forms of activity (concerts, events) and invites youthful volunteers to see themselves as Timurovtsy, patriotic successors to the heroic World War II generation. On the other hand, it is new, modern, and presents itself as part of a global, or at least a European trend. Volunteers are encouraged to combat traits associated with the Soviet past (citizen dependency, passivity) and view themselves as entrepreneurs and dynamic “leaders” at the vanguard of a new all-Russian movement.

Philanthropy, voluntarism, and “doing good” is as much a site of subjectification as it is a straightforward transaction. That is, it effects changes in the ways subjects (both volunteers and recipients) construe themselves. It serves as a kind of governmentality that produces particular kinds of citizens (Cruikshank 1999, Hyatt 2001, Lyon-Callos 2004, Rose 1996).<sup>52</sup> If Vazhnoe Delo talks the needy out of expecting material

support from the state, reemphasizing a new form of paternalism and kin relations, what does it offer the volunteers? What kind of person or citizen does it call forth?

Borisov spoke with enthusiasm about the organization's innovative approach to voluntarism and the diverse "technologies" it adopts. I found him to be rather dismissive about the parallel with the Timur movement—perhaps, giving a nod to the Western-identified researcher, he was enthusiastic to emphasize the newness of Vazhnoe Delo. He seemed to say that the real task of a contemporary volunteer—as opposed to their Soviet predecessors or to those who hand out crude forms of charity—is that they are engaged in a more technological project of stimulating society. He invoked Europe and the United States—where he had recently traveled—where voluntarism is a "norm" in society and contributes substantially to the economy.

Indeed, like their European counterparts, Vazhnoe Delo volunteers are encouraged to make themselves over and to engage in diverse forms of social entrepreneurship. Borisov explained that in addition to the forms of service they engage in, volunteers take leadership-training programs, and psychological training programs where they learn how to design social projects and to fundraise. The program encourages its volunteer-participants to compete in a variety of locally designed campaigns; competitions invite them to submit accounts of their activities (as in Volunteer of the Year contest), or to design social projects. One of the most interesting campaigns I came across was the "Social Advertising Project" (*SotsReklama*). Residents of the oblast (the competition was not only open to participants in Vazhnoe Delo, but to the whole population) were invited to contribute submissions (posters or video clips). The goal of the competition, as stated in the brochure, was to popularize the idea of social activity and voluntary assistance to those in need. At first glance, this resembles the mobile shards of neoliberal governmentality Ong (2006) writes about; competitions such as these issue an injunction for volunteers to become "entrepreneurs of himself or herself," who are constantly invested in reworking their human capital (Gordon 1991:42). As such, it strongly recalls the model of voluntarism offered by agencies such as the Ford Foundation and IREX to young people in Russia during the 1990s. Yet, it also recalls Soviet rationalities and social engineering through which citizens were encouraged to compete via competitions between work collectives, and the Stakhanovite movement.<sup>53</sup> In the late socialist period (1970s-1980s), the



institutions through which citizens conducted (state-mandated) voluntary work became markedly entrepreneurial. The Komsomol-organized construction brigade functioned as a quasi-private enterprise and its members were exposed to a form of merit pay (Yurchak 2002:7).<sup>54</sup> There are other areas of resonance. In their emphasis on health and clean living (anti-smoking and anti-alcohol campaigns), the Sots Reklama project closely resembled Soviet-era agitational work, for example campaigns to encourage the population's culturedness (*kulturnost'*) (Rivkin-Fish 2009, Volkov and Kelley 1998).

It became clear to me, first, that Vazhnoe Delo architects draw both on Western European models and the models they encountered during late socialism, and second, that these models frequently sit quite comfortably together. The organization's website reveals a *mélange* of Soviet-seeming projects, some of which appear Soviet while others resemble Ford Foundation funding streams: ecology, patriotism and patriotic education, social tolerance, respectful attitudes toward the elderly and those with disabilities. One former Vazhnoe Delo volunteer, now a student co-researcher on our project explained the "career ladder" offered by the organization. In their "Diary of Personal Growth"—a booklet designed by the Russian State Social University and distributed by Vazhnoe Delo—volunteers were to record their activities. While I was struck by its resonance with the corporate world and the self-help genre, my colleagues recognized something distinctively Soviet. Indeed, as I studied the materials, I learned that active volunteers are invited to progress through the following stages: candidate, volunteer, brigade leader, leader, then chair of Supreme Soviet. When I showed these materials to one of my colleagues who had been active in the Komsomol, she nodded, unfazed, in recognition. These technologies and the required forms of documentation strongly resembled the work she had undertaken as a Komsomol leader during the late socialist period (Yurchak 2006). Additionally, Borisov's point about "activating" people is ambiguous—it can be read as either a neoliberal charge or as a statement in the entrepreneurial-managerial register of a late socialist Komsomol activist whose task is to manage and direct people (*upravliat'*). In Vazhnoe Delo, as in other Putin youth projects, these logics meld in interesting fusion (Hemment 2009, Lassila 2011, Wilson 2005:63).

In sum, I came to see Vazhnoe Delo as a key site for "the interplay among technologies of governing and of disciplining, of inclusion and exclusion, of giving value or denying value to human conduct" (Ong 2006:4)

in the sense that it is a place where the needy and deserving are redefined and in flux. Equally crucial, it is a site where new forms of subjectivity are inculcated in the pensioners and volunteering youth. We can detect elements of neoliberal rationality, a form of governmentality where individuals are “induced to self manage according to market principles of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness” (Ong 2006:4). Yet this is in tension and sometimes in accord with other rationalities. In Vazhnoe Delo materials as elsewhere in contemporary Russia, we see a mixture of individualist, neoliberal, and socialist discourses of the self (Matza 2009:495). What is striking here is not only the coexistence of these different rationalities, but their resonance with each other. In Putin-era youth projects, the utopian projects of socialism and neoliberalism meet.

## Conclusions

I have argued that Law 122 had powerful cultural effects and that it ruptured a certain sense of common good, one that emphasized shared fate and collective values. As we have seen, *l'goty*, or the events or status they marked were a source of pride and *l'gotniki* were not stigmatized (as “welfare recipients” are in liberal welfare states), but dignified under this system. The comparison with the United States is instructive. Anthropological scholarship shows how welfare reform during the 1980s led to the pathologization and demonization of welfare recipients, for example, in the person of the “welfare queen” (Lyon-Callo 2004, Hyatt 1994).<sup>55</sup>

I see Vazhnoe Delo as a response to this rupture and the sense of panic it instilled. I have suggested that it can be viewed as a form of governmentality that emerges at this juncture, prompted by a complex amalgam of forces: the Putin administration's fear of social unrest and fear of being tarred with the same brush as the Yeltsin administration it disparaged. As other youth projects, it was a hasty improvisation as political elites sought to respond to this apparent crisis of governing. Politicians frantically devised policies and projects that not only made amends for the perceived violence of the legislation itself, but which met deeper needs—the anguish and bitterness about prior neoliberal interventions, the “patriotism of despair.” They drew on diverse tools and models as they did so—Soviet models, icons, nationalist symbols as well as some of the concepts that derive from the neoliberalizing interventions of the 1990s. It is an ambiguous decision in the arena of civil society that has contradictory and uncertain

effects. Focusing on the interpretive work undertaken in this program, I argue that it offers a symbolic salve and a measure of recompense to those most disaffected by neoliberal reform, while at the same time inculcating new models of subjectivity and citizenship. Vazhnoe Delo seeks to assuage anxieties about economic policies and restructuring, and, crucially, grants disenfranchised subjects symbolic recognition, at the same time as it advances some of the same logic—purchasing consent for the possible continuation of neoliberal oriented reforms. In so doing, it encodes a new vision of the common good that has interesting hybrid features and draws on the models Putin ostensibly disparages.

This case illuminates the complex and contradictory effects of globally circulating neoliberal logics. The introduction of one unambiguously neoliberal element (monetizing reform) gave rise to an ambiguous response that is less easy to define. Although Vazhnoe Delo acts in concert with the logic extended via Law 122, it also contradicts this logic. While it relieves the state of some of its social welfare responsibilities, it also brings the state back in.<sup>56</sup> Institutionally speaking, Vazhnoe Delo illustrates the specific type of “social partnership” that is emerging and encouraged during the Putin and post-Putin era. It is a hybrid form of social security and care, both explicitly connected to and disassociated from local and regional state actors, policies, and welfare regimes (Caldwell 2007, Kay 2007, Read and Thelen 2007). While it proclaims its voluntary status and its rootedness in the community, it exists *pri gubernatora* (under the jurisdiction of the governor’s office). In sum, it is implicated in articulating a composite form of citizenship, where civic organizations are expected to be both self-reliant and auxiliaries of the state (Salmenniemi 2009). Further, contra many discussions of neoliberal governmentality which “presume an opposition and perhaps incompatibility between neoliberal projects of ‘individual’ improvement and self-enterprise, and notions of ‘social’ progress, solidarities and values” (Hoffman 2006:552), we see that the introduction of neoliberal logics into the Russian social welfare system through this legislation had complex effects; rather than being strictly individualizing, the introduction of Law 122 actually served to reanimate socialist imaginaries (2006).<sup>57</sup> The future of the Russian social welfare system is very much up for grabs.

Scholarship on postsocialism suggests how individual actors may apprehend and interact with these complex and ostensibly contradictory logics or assemblages. First, they do not necessarily experience them as

jarring (Patino 2010); second, they may embrace the logics offered because they resonate with familiar forms. These shards may appeal because they connect easily with other forms of motivation and self-work valorized under state socialism (Shevchenko 2010, Rivkin-Fish 2005, Yurchak 2006, Zigon 2011). The case of Vazhnoe Delo is interesting because it engages two different constituencies: pensioners, who were born during the late Stalin period and for whom World War II was formative, and youth who are too young to have experienced socialism but inhabit a present suffused with forms of the Soviet past. These citizens' embrace of voluntarism does not indicate their wholesale adoption of neoliberal forms (nor neoliberalism's determining reach). Far from it. The young and elderly volunteers I have profiled are drawn to Vazhnoe Delo for diverse reasons, propelled by diverse social imaginaries.

So, how does this play out? How do participants make sense of Vazhnoe Delo and the complex vision it advances? To what extent has it brought about a change in their perceptions of the state's responsibility, the recipients of their work, and their vision of the common good? My ethnographic research suggests that the outcomes thus far have been uneven. Monetization remains an extremely controversial and painful issue in Russia. In all the interviews I have conducted in the past four years, people have spoken about it with grave concern. Again, even those who might be considered to be directly interested in it, such as social workers, speak this way. In an interview conducted in May 2008, a senior social worker of the Social Defense structures shook her head gravely as she recalled the monetization reforms: "'Standardization,' 'budgetization,' 'optimization' are the favored terminologies now, but the best form of assistance the government can give is to give someone a job and pay them appropriately." Further, I found that Vazhnoe Delo volunteers commonly use kinship terms to refer to the recipients of their support—in referring to their work with the elderly, they speak of the *babushky* (grandmothers) they have helped.

Although there is still no consensus view of the dysfunctional neediness in Russia as in liberal welfare states, my ethnographic research suggests that conceptions are shifting in line with Law 122's intent. Most people I spoke with agreed that the existing system of social welfare benefits was untenable. Many, especially those who are engaged in Vazhnoe Delo, but also many of the students I have interviewed in the context of this research project, accept that the state cannot and should not be responsible for

meeting all social problems, and embrace the principle of “self-help.” Indeed, the idea of the undeserving poor circulates in their discourses about maternity capital, another area of state social policy where the state has recently extended benefits.<sup>58</sup> In their discussions of this new policy, the young people I have spoken to have articulated their fear that “socially marginal” populations (usually citing “drug users” or “alcoholics”) will “take advantage” of benefits, resulting in the reproduction of poverty. Notably, this emergent conception of an “other” is currently rather abstract and disassociated from the ranks of the *l’gotniky* who may well be comprised of their own extended family members. Similarly, members of the Pensioners’ Union speak with pride about their engagement in *Vazhnoe Delo*. Their engagement in *Vazhnoe Delo* campaigns—and their broader collaborations with the governor’s office—marks them as different and distinctive from the “socially defenseless.” It marks them as vigorous, self-defining citizens who do not simply ask, or expect, but who step up to formulate their own responses to social problems and get involved in working toward solutions. Indeed, in an interview, one member of the organization explicitly contrasted their group with other local veterans’ associations, which have a passive relationship with the state and “which just say ‘give, give.’” It strikes me that these seniors are being encouraged to reconsider their earlier service to the state in this way, too. *Vazhnoe Delo* campaigns invite them to reformulate their years of labor (as teachers, engineers, agricultural workers, etc.) in a different way; they encourage them to view them not as something that entitles them to secure and inalienable rights and benefits, but as individual markers of quality and positively valorized characteristics (enterprise, industriousness, initiative). In return, they are offered a dignified formulation of partners of the state. In interviews, their pride in this was apparent. They saw their participation in *Vazhnoe Delo* and the organization itself (not to mention their efforts to extend state recognition to *dety voyni*) as their accomplishment and their achievement.

In sum, I consider that projects like *Vazhnoe Delo* offer a solution to the ethical dilemmas presented by this ambiguous moment of social welfare reform—at least to the minority who participate as volunteers within them. ■

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### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>The law sought to "monetize" in-kind benefits (*monetizatsiia*)—that is, to replace social benefits with cash payments for vulnerable members of society, and to introduce fees for formerly free services.

<sup>2</sup>I use David Harvey's (2005) definition of neoliberalism as a starting point in this paper, to refer to deregulation, privatization, and the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provisioning. While never consistently enacted, it does exist as an ideal type. Harvey traces the steady ascendancy of neoliberal economic philosophy from the 1970s, through the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, to the point where they achieve hegemony (and have global reach) in the postsocialist period. Although inconsistently implemented, they are certainly manifest and traceable in the plans and blueprints of the IMF/World Bank and in their ambitions for the region.

<sup>3</sup>These studies have productively engaged the work of governmentality scholars such as Nikolas Rose (1996), bringing their insights into dialogue with ethnographic material.

<sup>4</sup>Ong's (2006) recent account examines neoliberalism's uneven extension into South Asia. She notes the paradox whereby Asian publics and politicians are at once deeply hostile to neoliberalism, which they understand to mean US domination, and simultaneously implement selective neoliberal reforms.

<sup>5</sup>The anthropology of postsocialism emerged as a critical retort to early scholarly and policy discussions of the former East bloc. Its primary thrust has been to problematize the dominant narratives of transition (legacy, extinction, and transition itself), and to reveal the interplay of past and present as well as continuities of social forms via ethnography (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Gal and Kligman 2000, Humphrey 2002, Verdery 1996).

<sup>6</sup>A burgeoning field of scholarship grapples with the challenge of making sense of the complex social and cultural forms that characterize contemporary life both in the former East bloc and in China. Some examine the logics of late socialism to argue that there were strong points of similarity with the neoliberal logics that subsequently arrived and began to circulate in postsocialist space. See for example Yurchak's (2002) discussions of "entrepreneurial governmentality" exercised by Komsomol activists that subsequently enabled them to successfully engage in business enterprises. Relatedly, Shevchenko (2010) examines forms of self-reliance and notions of autonomy in the late and early post-soviet period that are distinct from neoliberal notions and yet which "predisposed people to find neoliberal notions palatable." Zigon's (2011) discussion of Soviet logics of moral personhood and self-work also pertains. In a recent article, he argues that these make people more receptive to neoliberal logics (2011). Hoffman (YEAR) points to "unexpected points of convergence" with logics of late socialism in China and how neoliberal practices can become "integrated" with other logics, including authoritarian ones. While many of these works are compatible with the anthropology of neoliberalism and directly engage Ong's work (Hoffman 2010, Matza 2009, Zigon 2011), others take sharp exception to it. Kipnis (2008) faults recent studies of neoliberal governmentality for implying neoliberalism is more all-encompassing and distinct than it actually is and "reducing" local ideas to a "derivative set derived from the West." While I take these issues seriously, I think it productive to put these literatures into dialogue. My own interest is in tracking the complex fallout from the 1990s, when neoliberal logics were very consciously brought and implemented by foreign and domestic actors (liberal reformers and the representatives of international lending agencies). These contested models and the animus they generated continue to structure the social field in the Putin era and set the conditions for the fusions I examine.

<sup>7</sup>Some have provocatively explored the socialist origins of neoliberalism. Bockman and Eyal (2002) present "neoliberalism" as the result of a transnational dialogue in which East European actors participated

long before socialism's demise. Crucially, in their account, neoliberalism is an "actor network" not something authored by the West and imposed on Eastern Europe as dominant accounts maintain (for example, Wedel 1998), but something actively constructed by parties on both sides.

<sup>8</sup>Some anthropologists working in China are pursuing similar research agendas, exploring the newly burgeoning NGO sector and emergence of state-sponsored charity and voluntarism. At the 2010 meetings of the American Anthropological Association, two panels were devoted to the topic of volunteerism in China organized by Friederike Fleischer, C. Julia Huang, and Lisa Hoffman.

<sup>9</sup>Ong (2006) notes that the term "neoliberalism" is used and is well known amongst people in South Asia, if not to US publics. In Russia, the key term is "globalization" or "market reform" itself; meanwhile the term "liberalism" is broadly discredited, associated with the work of hostile foreign institutions and governments (Oushakine 2009:112).

<sup>10</sup>The state-led initiatives I examine here exist within a broader cultural field that is suffused with the Soviet past. A veritable nostalgia industry has sprung up in Russia over the last decade that includes TV series, film and social media (Ivanova 1999); in addition there are new artistic currents that return to reevaluate the Soviet past (Yurchak 2008). This return to the Soviet past is ambivalent, as scholars have shown (Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004; Oushakine 2007). Others have explored the dynamics of the "memory wars" that rage in formerly socialist states. See for example the work of Alexander Etkind and colleagues (Available at <http://www.memoryatwar.org>), Laruelle (2011).

<sup>11</sup>Vladimir Putin was succeeded by Dmitry Medvedev in 2008 after serving two consecutive terms as president (2000-2004, 2004-2008). Due to constitutionally mandated term limits, Putin was ineligible to stand for a third consecutive term; however, he retains immense political influence as Prime Minister.

<sup>12</sup>Neoliberal technologies are not just exported wholesale, but may circulate in fragmentary form. Similarly, they interact with existing local ideologies, moralities, and subjectivities (Ong 2006, Tsing 2004).

<sup>13</sup>I offer a more detailed discussion of the law and its complexities in a recent article, Hemment 2009.

<sup>14</sup>These benefits also included free or subsidized public transportation, steep discounts on residential utilities, free local telephone service, free medication, free annual treatment at sanatoriums and health resorts, free artificial limbs and wheelchairs for invalids, and guaranteed employment for the disabled.

<sup>15</sup>I offer the formulation advanced by Kristen Ghodsee and James Richter in their invitation to participate in the conference on "Redefining the Common Good after Communism." For discussion of the Soviet "social contract" and its significance, see Cook 1993.

<sup>16</sup>Welfare reform certainly had enthusiastic proponents during the 1990s. The so-called young reformers that presided over the usual package of deregulation and privatization drew up a series of ambitious plans and programs that closely followed World Bank prescriptions. However, these never came into effect. During the 1990s, communist parties had strong representation in the state Duma; together with powerful interest groups and coalitions, they were able to block the executive from following through on these policies (Cook 2007).

<sup>17</sup>Esping-Anderson (1990) offers a model of different types of welfare states, characterizing them as liberal, conservative, or social democratic based on such factors as the level of service the government provides and their reliance on market forces. In his analysis, the Scandinavian model is the outlier.

<sup>18</sup>The system encompassed a large proportion of citizens. According to estimates, by 2003, more than one-quarter of the population was eligible for some form of *l'goty* (Ovcharova and Pishnyak 2005:7 as cited in Wengle and Rasell 2008a:742)

<sup>19</sup>According to figures cited by Wengle and Rasell, the regions became responsible for the majority (two-thirds) of *l'gotniki*. The most numerous categories were labor veterans and pensioners, which were estimated to comprise 30 million people (2008:744). The federal government retained responsibility for 16.7 million people, of whom 69.8 percent were disabled; 8.9 percent Chernobyl sufferers; 6.1 percent military vets; the rest were orphans or World War II veterans (2008:744).

<sup>20</sup>For discussion about the centrality of World War II and the role it has played in collective memory in Russia, see Smith (2002) and Oushakine (2009).

<sup>21</sup>Matza (2009) also discusses the fallout from Law 122 in terms of its effects on governing. In his account, monetization "introduced new uncertainties into the management of life, rolling back decades of state social support and services, introducing new opportunities for citizen initiative, and transforming kinship formations" (2009:496).

<sup>22</sup>In the postsocialist period, the category "youth" indexes anxieties about Russia's uncertain present: immorality, materialism, the degradation of cultural values. Youth have been represented as apathetic,



apolitical, problematically self-interested, and embodying the negative elements of transition to a capitalist economy (Pilkington 1994). Meanwhile, the elderly represent the discredited socialist past.

<sup>23</sup>Not to make too much of the potential alliance between these groups. Matza (2009:506) finds evidence of fissure and mutual hostility between pensioners and youth in the aftermath of the monetization reform. Indeed, animated by different concerns, prompted by different social imaginaries, the two groups mobilize two different conceptions of citizenship in narratives triggered by this legislation.

<sup>24</sup>Anti-globalist leftist movements appeared in Russia around the time of the 2006 G8 summit, held in St. Petersburg. Many of these groups threw their weight behind these protests.

<sup>25</sup>A rich body of anthropological scholarship has explored the topic of how postsocialist subjects made sense of increasing polarization, stratification, and the emergence of sharp new hierarchies (Caldwell 2007; Humphrey 2002; Rogers 2010; Verdery 1996, 2000). Some studies have focused on narratives and practices of consumption as a site where people process and make sense of new disparities and their own marginalization (Patino 2005, Shevchenko 2002). Michele Rivkin-Fish's (2009) recent article explores the paradox of Russian people's consent to economic stratification head on. She shows how some people welcomed and embraced new forms of social differentiation, because they located in them a means to reclaim their own status. Here, materially impoverished medical workers project cultural capital onto paying consumers and view their success as evidence of a form of moral restitution, that is, as evidence of the rise of Russia's intelligentsia, or cultural elite.

<sup>26</sup>Victory Day (*Den' Pobedy*) celebrates the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Since it was declared a public holiday in 1965, it has become the most meaningful of Soviet, then Russian holidays. Despite the fact that it is an artifact of the official "cult" of World War II that was initiated and sustained by the Soviet authorities (Tumarkin 1994), it remains intensely meaningful across generations. Even my most critical interlocutors referred to it as a "sacred" holiday.

<sup>27</sup>For example, by raising pensions and extending benefits in some cases.

<sup>28</sup>During 2005, Putin launched four so-called "National Priority projects"—Health, Education, Affordable Housing, and Agriculture. Shortly afterwards, he launched a new pronatalist program that provided financial aid ("maternity capital") to new mothers. Linda Cook (2009) locates this as a watershed moment when the federal government made a decisive shift away from the liberal welfare model towards more "statist" forms of intervention.

<sup>29</sup>During the Soviet period, youth were targets of state policy and moral education (*vospitanie*) via the Komsomol (Communist Youth League). Largely ignored in the immediate post-Soviet period, youth were targeted once again during the first Putin administration (1999–2004). Putin's youth policies have included the founding of state-run youth organizations, Patriotic Education Programs (2001–2005 and 2006–2010), and pronatalist demographic policies. State attention to youth affairs needs to be understood in the context of deeply rooted concerns about the graying of the nation and Russia's demographic "crisis" (for discussion of Russia's current pronatalist policies, see Rivkin-Fish 2010).

<sup>30</sup>Nina Tumarkin (1994) traces the emergence and subsequent demise of the "cult" of World War II during the Soviet period. Intended to instill loyalty toward the Soviet state, it consisted of "a vast program of public displays of loyalty" (1994:132). It emerged, significantly, during another historical moment of anxiety about global cultural flows and the Soviet Union's place within them: during the post-Stalinized Brezhnev era. Designed partially to placate veterans, it was also directed at youth, who were deemed alarmingly cynical and apathetic, as well as prone to the seduction of rock music and counter-cultural forces. The cult was unevenly sustained through the 1970s and 1980s, but by perestroika, it had faded or failed.

<sup>31</sup>A distinguishing feature of neoliberalism is that it pushes responsibility for social services to non-state actors; witness the proliferation of non-state bodies such as NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and quangoes (quasi non-governmental organizations) in advanced liberal rule countries (Harvey 2005), and the global promotion of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) by development agencies since the 1990s. Other scholars have used a governmentality lens to examine the phenomenon from an alternative angle, focusing on how non-state actors take on the role of governing society, that is, making society conduct itself (Cruikshank 1999, Hyatt 2003, Lyon-Callo 2004).

<sup>32</sup>This marked a dramatic turn-around on the part of state officials. During the 1990s, local state officials had been dismissive of requests to support non-governmental initiatives such as this; indeed, the concepts of "civil society," and "voluntarism" were regarded as suspiciously foreign. Yet, here, the state was endorsing them. For more detailed discussion of the emergence of a distinctive Putin era civil society project, see Hemment 2009.



<sup>33</sup>According to our data, the majority of youth volunteers are school children and students of vocational schools which offer secondary education to youth aged 16-18, although some students of higher education establishments also participate.

<sup>34</sup>Vazhnoe Delo benefits from the new system of grants and funding established by the Putin administration and distributed by both federal ministries and the federal Public Chamber (Hemment 2009, Richter 2009). According to the financial plan posted on its website, Vazhnoe Delo was supported by the following grants and donations in 2008: the regional committee of internal policies (1.5 million rubles), one large grant from the federal Public Chamber (650,000 rubles), a donation from Konzern RosAtom (400,000 rubles), and from unspecified contests and contracts (1.298 million rubles). Vazhnoe Delo has won state sponsorship by other means as well, including a prize in a competition organized by the Federal Ministry of Education. In this case, it applied for funding as an organ of the state committee on youth affairs. In addition, I learned that the organization has "permanent sponsors" amongst local businesses, including a successful local bakery. In this way, it is the beneficiary of an emergent form of corporate sponsorship where companies demonstrate loyalty to the state by contributing financially to quasi-state projects.

<sup>35</sup>Vazhnoe Delo works in tandem with new institutions, which are producing a new form of expert knowledge concerning voluntarism. These include the local branch of the Moscow-based Russian State Social University and the Scientific-Educational Center for Innovative Technologies for the Development of the Professional Careers of Youth, a semi-independent center within Tver' State University. With the support of federal and regional funding, the center is engaged in developing methodological-technological materials to encourage the development of youth voluntarism. Drawing on and adapting western European materials, it embraces a model of the volunteer as a professional, seeing voluntarism as an important element of professional development.

<sup>36</sup>I have tracked Vazhnoe Delo's activities between its founding in 2005 and 2009. After 2008, it became noticeably less active in the city of Tver'. According to the organization's director, this is due in part to the global economic crisis, which led to a decline in corporate sponsorship. It is also due to the lack of an active and sustained support from the city Mayor. Since 2008 it has held most of its campaigns in the villages and towns of Tver' oblast'.

<sup>37</sup>Vazhnoe Delo's materials are fairly explicit on this score: while the organization's first goal is to assist the socially defenseless, its other, equivalent goals are to assist the development of a voluntary movement and to stimulate society to undertake useful activities.

<sup>38</sup>These authors also examine the forms of self-work encouraged by the contemporary Russian state. Matza (2009) notes the new prominence of psychology in Russian state educational policy. The 2001 Ministry of Education decree he discusses introduced forms of psychological training into schools, for example, deploying psychology as a tool to accomplish its project of "modernization" (2009:492). Zigon's (2011) work on "making the self" in contemporary Russia also pertains; he explores the emergence of a neoliberal ethos of social welfare in the medical and psychological fields (I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for putting me in touch with this work).

<sup>39</sup>My decision here is prompted too by methodological constraints. Our research has focused on the perspectives of volunteers, not recipients of aid.

<sup>40</sup>This finding resonates with Sergei Oushakine's (2009) recent work. Vazhnoe Delo materials emphasize connections, rather the fragmentation that took place in the 1990s. Here, *vlast'* (the political authorities) represents itself as a well-oiled machine, as if in response to these popular perceptions.

<sup>41</sup>In his recent article, Zigon (2011:46) explores some of the ironies that result from this "assemblage." In his analysis of a Church-run social welfare center, he shows how the Russian Orthodox Church—which sees itself as opposed to neoliberal/market logics—unintentionally supports neoliberal ways of living.

<sup>42</sup>One brochure includes testimony from a local World War II veteran, who expressed his delight and amazement at these young people, who were doing work that would have been impossible ten years ago.

<sup>43</sup>The Federal Pensioners' Union is quite politically active. It has long lobbied to make *dety voini* (children of the war) a new category of *l'gotnik*, which would entail extending symbolic recognition to an entire generation of (younger) pensioners. In recent years, they have won the attention of the federal and regional authorities and have been granted symbolic recognition, but they have not yet been able to secure actual benefits.

<sup>44</sup>The subbotnik was a form of state-mandated voluntarism, where citizens gave up their Saturdays to engage in neighborhood clean-up or maintenance projects, or to undertake agricultural work such as harvesting potatoes.

<sup>45</sup>*Timur and His Squad* (1940) was a popular book for children that eventually became part of the Soviet school curriculum. It told the tale of a group of children who secretly undertook good deeds, helping Red Army families and undertaking unskilled work. A few months after its publication, the official Soviet children's film agency, Soyuzdetfilm, released a film based on the book, which served to popularize it and ensure its "legendary" status (Hutchings 2005:63). The book, or more likely the film, inspired subsequent generations of children to undertake good deeds and launch countless "Timurovite movements." The size and extent of these "movements" is difficult to determine, as is the extent to which they may have emerged spontaneously.

<sup>46</sup>It appears that the majority are l'gotniki, those who found themselves relegated to the regions (pensioners, etc). Some Vazhnoe Delo clients may be people who are not entitled to l'goty at all.

<sup>47</sup>As Tumarkin puts it, "the idealized war experience was a reservoir of national suffering, to be tapped and tapped again to mobilize loyalty, maintain order, and achieve a semblance of energy to counter the growing nationwide apathy and loss of popular resilience of spirit" (1994:133).

<sup>48</sup>Kathleen Smith (2002) traces how World War II was central to the "myth-making efforts" of Yeltsin era intellectuals and political actors. During the 1990s, Communist "patriots" were able to successfully convert powerful memories of the Second World War into currency for political conflicts. Under Putin, this project is extended. Here, we see the controversial decade of the 1990s equated with the World War II; the activities of international lending institutions and foreign governments are presented as an analogous threat to the nation's stability and integrity as Nazi Germany. This parallel is widespread in popular discourse; it is particularly marked in the work of the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi (Ours). See also Oushakine (2009:79).

<sup>49</sup>According to Tumarkin (1994), "shame" was never a very successful hook. Rather, it resulted in ironic and resentful attitudes towards the older generation.

<sup>50</sup>Some other pro-Putin youth organizations make this explicit. The pro-Putin political youth movement, Nashi, explicitly invites youth to model themselves on the heroic generation of World War II veterans (Hemment 2009).

<sup>51</sup>The Putin-era revival of the war cult attends to the hurt feelings of veterans who felt the discreditation of the USSR especially sharply. Tumarkin (1994:188) documents how many Russian people experienced the velvet revolutions of Eastern Europe as a rebuke to the Soviet people who fought and lost their lives.

<sup>52</sup>This Foucauldian scholarship has brought a governmentality lens to examine social welfare contexts in the United States. It examines how neoliberal logics have been inculcated in volunteering subjects, case-workers and the clients they serve.

<sup>53</sup>I am grateful to Suvi Salmenniemi for helping me advance this analysis.

<sup>54</sup>See also Kipnis 2008.

<sup>55</sup>Haney (2002) also shows how similar stigmatizing processes were in motion in Hungary through the 1990s and that "social distance" between social workers and their clients dramatically increased as a result.

<sup>56</sup>I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for helping me advance this analysis.

<sup>57</sup>As Lisa Hoffman has noted, many definitions of neoliberal governmentality "presume an opposition and perhaps incompatibility between neoliberal projects of 'individual' improvement and self-enterprise, and notions of 'social' progress, solidarities and values" (2006:552).

<sup>58</sup>See Cook (2009), Rivkin-Fish (2010)

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