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Unlike scores of other books about postsocialist Russia's social structure that simply report on growing disparities or shifting hierarchies, *Rethinking Class in Russia* makes a serious and quite successful attempt to chart a new direction. The contributors to this volume, culturally inclined social scientists from Finland, UK, and Russia, are not in the business of churning out "new data" on differences in income or consumption to give more "proof" that social differentiation and inequality exist in Russia today. They, and the volume's editor Suvi Salmenniemi, seek to reconceptualize what class means in post-Soviet Russia but also in the wider contemporary world dominated by neoliberal ideology and, on this basis, to reevaluate social relations and hierarchies in terms of control and power—political, economic, moral, or symbolic.

One might disagree with Salmenniemi's early contention that a class perspective has been absent from studies of contemporary Russia (1). She is, however, right in saying that, more often than not, class is understood and therefore studied in Russia as a static and uniform—across time and space—set of "objective" categories and "actually existing" groups; such studies also usually ignore the power or domination dimension of class relations (2–3). Salmenniemi develops—and the volume's other contributors substantiate in their respective case studies, some more successfully than others—a conception of class as "a process of making social classifications, struggles over these classifications and their legitimacy, and the institutional consequences and lived experiences brought about by these classifying practices" (3). Such an approach seems especially prudent and fruitful for the examination of a society that in the last two decades has undergone major ideological, political, and economic shifts and whose cultural practices, moral codes, and symbolic orders remain, as a result of those transformations, in flux to this day.

The eleven case studies that comprise the volume are distributed into three parts, each conceptualized along a distinct analytical level of class. The first part examines how various public discourses—from self-help literature (Suvi Salmenniemi) and popular media (Saara Ratilainen) to social welfare agencies (Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov) and political party programs (Sirke Mäkinen)—depict and address class (be it dominant, middle, or "disadvantaged"). The second looks at "classed practices," or at how class plays out in the legal system (Vikki Turbine), labor market (Anna Rotkirch, Olga Tkach, and Elena Zdravomyslova), and clothing consumption (Olga Gurova). The last group of essays tackles the implications of class differences for the personal identities and subjectivities of college-educated (Elena

Trubina) and working-class (Charles Walker) youths, middle-aged men (John Round), and health-conscious but often health-poor Russians (Marja Rytönen and Ilkka Pietilä). This tripartite framing of the book, particularly its last two components, must have been inspired, in part, by Pierre Bourdieu's differentiation between class positions and dispositions (e.g., Bourdieu 1985), even though in this particular respect Bourdieu's influence is not acknowledged in this otherwise quite explicitly Bourdieusian volume. But it is also reminiscent of the middle two of Ira Katznelson's "four connected layers of theory and history [of class]: those of structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action" (1986:14). While the study of class discourses, practices, and dispositions in today's Russia, especially when done in such a sophisticated, qualitative way, is long-awaited, *Rethinking Class* could have given an even fuller picture of the country's class life had it included a section dealing with class-based collective action or class-based politics. The fact that it did not, though, might mean not so much that such studies have not been done but that class in Russia has not matured sufficiently to yield such action and such politics.

Politics, of course, is not the only way to get to the question of power, as several chapters demonstrate. Power relations are also established through symbolic or moral domination. For example, Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov show how the country's social services promote middle-class family morality and parenting culture and, by doing so, marginalize single-parent families or families with many children, which are often lower-class, as "unfortunate" and undesirable for the society. On the other hand, according to Rytönen and Pietilä, "health practices are tightly interwoven with values that ... signify moral decency, responsibility and control" (195), but, as it turns out, in the eyes of many Russians "health is a privilege of the highest class" and a "healthy lifestyle is perceived as a luxury commodity" (194). Poor health is simultaneously a sign of the lower class's lack of resources and self-discipline and, more generally, a failure to "adapt" to a market economy. The recently imported genre of self-help literature also extols the "legitimacy and moral worth of wealth and success": as Salmenniemi details, the books of two bestselling Russian authors not only depict "wealth as an effect of a healthy self" but promote the idea that the "upper-class lifestyle [is] accessible to everyone through the practice of self-transformation" (79).

The fact that *khoziain zhizni* (the master of one's life) who is firmly in control of his or her (upward) social trajectory, an aspiration promoted in the self-help books analyzed by Salmenniemi, has "displaced the heroic worker of the Soviet iconography as an idealised figure" (11) is evidence of a sure "success" of the country's adoption, if not of capitalism and democracy, then of neoliberal ideology. Another sign of the strong footing of neoliberalism in today's Russia, or at least in Russians' conceptualization and practice of class, is a very firm and near-universal perception, distinctly coming through in several of the volume's studies, that one's economic success and social position—one's destiny more generally—are entirely under one's own control and are the result of personal qualities and individual choices and not of social factors. An important consequence of this "individualisation of social inequality" (226) is the rejection of class not only as social but also as political category, which in a perverse way makes neoliberal capitalism and Soviet socialism similar.

Contemporary Russia is at the intersection of capitalism and socialism in other ways too. For example, an independent and successful career is an important part of the newly rich Russian woman who is not a “sponsored housewife” or a “female escort.” As Ratilainen, who examines depictions of these women in popular novels and television series, concludes, “the idealisation of entrepreneurship has replaced the idealised images of the working women, activists and Stakhanovites central to Soviet public discourse” (57). Likewise, Trubina argues that recent college graduates, with surprising homogeneity, use the conceptual language of both Soviet Marxism (relationship to property and type of employment) and neoliberalism (individual-centered discourse of resource acquisition) to make sense of their class positions and trajectories and class relations in Russia more generally. Gurova shows that clothing consumption and the overall lifestyle of today’s middle class are informed as much by hedonism made possible by the free market as by Soviet notions of taste and “culturedness” as well as appreciation for thrift, as opposed to conspicuous display, and the use-value of things, rather than simply their appearance.

The authors of different chapters disagree on how salient class is to Russians today. As Walker, in his study of employment inequalities among working-class young Russians, remarks, “class may no longer ‘work’ as a social identity but it does not go away as a social division” (226). There is hardly a chapter in *Rethinking Class* that does not support the latter part of his quip, but several contributions also seem to contradict the former and suggest that at least for some people sometimes, class is also a social identity—although, as the examples show, one that is always constructed in relation to others. In other words, the language of class is used infrequently, according to Rytkönen and Pietilä, but “[w]hen it is used it typically refers to *other* people, but obviously at the same time it importantly defines and describes the speaker him/herself as not belonging to that category” (193). In what is probably one of the most interesting chapters of the book, exactly because it explores the establishment of interclass boundaries and the formation, as a result, of class identities, Rotkirch, Tkach, and Zdravomyslova demonstrate that while the middle class in Russia “has no universal social script,” “one way to achieve middle and especially upper middle class status is to be able and willing to employ domestic workers” (130). Their chapter once again underlines the main theoretical point of the volume: “class is in continual production” (129) and such production happens relationally.

The confluence in post-Soviet Russia of socialism and capitalism, with their purportedly classless ideologies, perhaps prevents class from being the dominant “principle of social vision and division” (Bourdieu 1985:726). But *Rethinking Class in Russia* convincingly illustrates “that class continues to matter ... as an analytical concept and a central vector of inequality” (16) as well as in everyday discourses and practices, however nascent and reluctant they might be for now.

REFERENCES

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