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Is the traditional town-versus-country opposition still relevant to understanding transformation in post-Soviet countries? This is the main topic of the book *Far from the Cities: Life of the Post-Soviet Village*. The book argues that the difference between town and country, which is usually analyzed as an opposition between tradition and modernity, is no longer valid. The authors defend the idea that villages fully participated in the post-Soviet transition process and cannot therefore be examined as something "outside" of modernity. Four aspects of the transition process are examined in this book: the various forms of capitalism, the modernization process, the process of individualization, and the process of self-identification by the villagers.

Regarding the question of the various forms of capitalism, Ingrid Oswald's chapter "The Industrialized Village: Toward the Transformation of a Rural Way of Life in Postsocialist Societies" proposes a comparative analysis of postindustrialization processes in Bulgaria, Estonia, and Russia to counter the theory of modernization as a linear, one-way process. She argues that the three countries have experienced similar processes of industrialization aimed at removing the differences between cities and villages. Despite this common heritage, the transformation process took different forms depending on the nature of informal relationships concerning the transfer of property rights, the specificity of the human capital of rural workers, and the origins of rural migrants. Oswald demonstrates that villages try to organize themselves in an "institutional vacuum." This means that, in the Russian case, the rural population adapts to formal rules imposed by national authorities by developing or maintaining informal reciprocity between villagers. In contradistinction, in Bulgaria and Estonia top-level reforms allowed local governance to reemerge and promote local policies to sustain rural population. However, I wonder if Oswald did not overestimate the homogeneity of the Soviet institutional heritage underlying these transformations. Indeed, the different heritages of the three countries could better explain the divergence in their transformation processes.

Oane Visser's contribution, "'Empty' Rights, Social Obligations, and Work Relations: Are Labor Relations Developing or Stagnating in the Agricultural Enterprises?" interrogates the forms of capitalism within everyday labor practices. The author demonstrates that the traditional Soviet relationship between the boss and his employees, based on the execution of planned tasks, has been preserved in contemporary Russia. He explains this as a consequence of institutional changes (in terms of

property rules) regarding the privatization of farms and the expropriation of land. However, Visser observes that managers do not exercise total control in practice. In the context of a labor shortage, they have to reach a compromise with their employees to guarantee their cooperation in the production process.

Sergei Karnaukhov and Natal'ia Cheremnykh's essay, "Is the Patient Likely Dead? Story of One Siberian Agricultural Enterprise," directly mirrors Oane Visser's piece. Through a study of one enterprise in the Irkutsk region, they show that the post-Soviet period was very unstable from the point of view of labor relations. A conflict between the manager of a large farm and his workers led to "parasitic symbiosis" (Nikulin 1998) between household plots and the large farm. The manager turned a blind eye to the practices of his workers in order to keep control of the production process.

"The Phenomenon of Multiform Economies in Siberian Villages" by Ol'ga Fadeeva shows that the differentiation of farms (in terms of size, structure of property, etc.) is related to the specific transformations implemented on former collective farms. In Siberian villages, the farms faced a precarious situation after 1991. Individual farms took advantage of this situation through their access to land. They developed some credit cooperatives for their investments and social grants for the rural population. Fadeeva concludes that the resilience of Siberian villages can be explained by looking at their creativity.

Concerning the question of the modernization process, Anna Papian's "Women-Leaders in Armenian Villages" uses semistructured interviews to analyze the opinions of villagers on the capacity of women to govern a village. She demonstrates that whereas Armenian society continues to represent women as incapable of governing, some Armenian villages appear more "modern" in their practices. Admittedly, the qualities required to be mayor are more numerous for women than for men and the risks are more significant, but experience has shown that women in politics are recognized and legitimated. According to Papian, this recognition exists because women highly value social policy and external relationships and because they fight against stereotypes by overworking. Papian underlines that, among other reasons, their density of social ties can explain why women in politics are more successful in the village than in the city.

"'Dealers of Beauty': Notes on the Rebranding of an Estonian Village" by Elena Nikiforova interrogates the ability of Estonian villagers to rethink their economic and social roles. She introduces the concept of "community building" to analyze the transformation process brought about by cultural entrepreneurs. She concludes that farmers are looking to the future by developing tourism infrastructure as a remedy for unemployment in the countryside.

Ivan Gololobov's piece, "Village as Nonpolitical Community: Social (Dis)organization of the World of 'Proper Names,'" argues that the village should be analyzed not as a nonpolitical area, where the population is opposed to norms seen as coming from the city but as a site for other norms and policies. He analyses the discourses of the rural population, demonstrating that in the village each person lives in a common and indivisible world where people interact with others through interpersonal

relationships (the world of "proper names"). In this world, people do not pay much attention to the social position of each person in the group. The village is cut off from the power and status system of the city, which is based on impersonal relationships.

Elena Bogdanova's "Anthropology of the Rural Two-Story Apartment Building: From a Study of the Dwelling to Research on a Community" wonders whether the two-story apartment buildings constructed during the Soviet period influence understandings of domestic space among villagers nowadays. She compares single-family homes and two-story apartment buildings and concludes that the single-family home is more adapted to the post-Soviet context. It allows rural people to have privacy from others, to avoid dealing with the management of collective property, and to renovate and decorate their homes. However, the two-story apartment buildings have also been reappropriated by villagers. They have transformed their flats, particularly the balconies, to fit their emerging needs, screening themselves from the eyes of the neighbors. Bogdanova concludes that villagers have been able to integrate the Soviet flat within the new society.

In her two essays, Tat'iana Timofeeva also interrogates the transformation of rural areas through the lens of individualization. She describes the social relationships that emerged during a period of water shortage in a post-Soviet village. This shortage improved interfamilial networks and created opportunities for socialization in a context where collective farm work no longer exists.

Finally, Ol'ga Brednikova ("The Village Is Dead? Long Live the Village!") deals with the question of villagers' self-identification. Through interviews and narrative analysis of newspapers, she interrogates the ways in which the city is defined in opposition to the village by villagers themselves. She proposes two distinct approaches to analyzing constructions of "the village": taking an urban point of view by focusing on what villages lack or looking at the village in its specificity. She adopts the second method. In her perspective, the village is not a "non-city" but rather an "exotic area." She identifies four characteristics of the village. Firstly, villagers perceive work not just as a way to make money but also as a combination of tasks to be accomplished. Rural people attach greater importance to solidarity and mutual assistance, which gives them resilience in a face of the collapse of social and economic infrastructures. Villages also have a specific temporality: the village slows down when agricultural activities decrease, to the benefit of the tourist industry. Finally, the distinction between public and private spheres is less important in the village. The author concludes that the crisis transformed understandings of the village: from an area of agricultural production and life in a closed community to a natural area where interpersonal networks develop across its boundaries.

The authors of this collection attach importance to identifying the institutional heritages that structure elements of the current transformation. The project then allows us to understand the specificity of the post-Soviet rural world and to make this specificity the key to grasping the institutional changes. Reading this book allows one to escape conventional outsiders' representations of the village. By identifying the stakes of everyday life within the village, it explains its capacity for resil-

ience and self-transformation. Besides the empirical data that are sometimes a bit outdated (especially for the ethnography, see for instance the work of Spoor [2013]), this book offers a solid qualitative analysis of institutional changes at the village level.

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