

Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons

DOUGLAS ROGERS

This is the introduction to a cluster of *Slavic Review* articles that argue for retaining and expanding the analytic rubric of postsocialism beyond the era of “transition” and beyond the conventional borders of the former Soviet bloc. With primary attention to recent developments in anthropology, Douglas Rogers outlines and evaluates three strategies for unbinding postsocialisms: exploring connections and circulations that lead outward from the formerly socialist world; embarking on new kinds of critical projects that call categories of western social science into question; and developing new varieties and vectors of comparison, especially among socialist and postsocialist contexts around the world. Each of these strategies builds upon and extends the work of the first two decades of research on eastern European and former Soviet postsocialisms. Each also points to significant areas of recent scholarship that new research on postsocialisms is primed to join.

Kinship and Crisis: The Embedding of Economic Pressures and Gender Ideals in Postsocialist International Matchmaking

JENNIFER PATICO

The rise of the international matchmaking industry has been particularly rapid and noticeable in the former Soviet Union, where the end of the Cold War has intersected with daily socioeconomic pressures to make cross-cultural romance and marriage newly possible and newly desirable for some women of Russia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet states. Less acknowledged than the role of economics in women’s decision making, however, is the fact that postsocialist financial strains are not experienced in social vacuums but are mediated by ideals of gender and marriage, such that the search for a foreign spouse is unlikely to be experienced as a simple desire for increased material comfort. Instead, discourses of gender “crisis” in the home country inform the desires for transnational kinship for both women from the former Soviet Union and men from the United States. When both women’s and men’s narratives of “crisis” (and how transnational marriage might alleviate it) are taken into account, they significantly complicate our understandings of east-west relations of “commodification” and power.

“There’s Nothing Anyone Can Do About It”: Participation, Apathy, and “Successful” Democratic Transition in Postsocialist Serbia

JESSICA GREENBERG

This article investigates *non*participation in politics as a rich set of moral, political, and cultural engagements. Contrary to the idea of apathy as an

absence of political and social progress, Jessica Greenberg argues that nonparticipation can be an expression of complex and sophisticated responses to changing sociopolitical contexts. Greenberg also examines how such responses are affected by the global deployment of normative models of democratic success and failure. Starting with both policy and academic discourse about civic participation and popular Serbian narratives about politics and European belonging, Greenberg integrates the ethnographic material from her fieldwork in Serbia to illuminate the context in which such ideas reinforce understandings of democratic policies as elitist, corrupt, morally suspect, and disempowering. In conclusion, she suggests that researchers and practitioners should interrogate their own roles in creating and deploying frameworks for political success and failure and the impact these frameworks have on the lived experience of democracy.

Rural Reform and the Gender Gap in Post-Soviet Russia

STEPHEN K. WEGREN, VALERY V. PATSIORKOVSKY,
AND DAVID J. O'BRIEN

Using survey data from 900 rural households, this article assesses the degree to which Soviet-era workplace inequality between rural males and females has been remediated by the introduction of democratic and market reforms. The overall effects of reform institutions are mixed. Concerning male-female workplace inequality, three continuities were found with the Soviet period. First, rural males have larger total incomes than do rural females. Second, equal pay for equal work does not exist: females holding similar positions to males earned less in all categories of employment. In addition, males continue to dominate numerically the ranks of farm managers and leaders. Third, managers and leaders of both sexes are the most entrepreneurial, measured by income from private business. Male managers, however, have over three times the income from private business as do female managers. Concerning intragender inequality, it was found that females with advanced education and specialized knowledge or skills have significantly higher incomes than women with lower skill sets.

Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis

TARA ZAHRA

Since the birth of mass political movements, European nationalists have lamented the failure of their constituents to respond to the siren song of national awakening. This article explores the potential of national indifference as a category of analysis in the history of modern central and eastern Europe. Tara Zahra defines indifference, explores how forms of national indifference changed over time, probes the methodological challenges associated with historicizing indifference, and examines the intersections between national indifference and transnational history. Making indifference visible enables historians to better understand the limits of

nationalization and thereby helps to challenge the nationalist narratives and categories that have traditionally dominated the historiography of eastern Europe.

The Ministry of Asiatic Russia: The Colonial Office That Never Was But Might Have Been

WILLARD SUNDERLAND

The late tsarist state was a colonial empire, Willard Sunderland argues, yet it never established a colonial ministry like the other colonial empires of the era. Sunderland asks why this was the case and proposes that, while there are many explanations for Russia's apparent uniqueness in institutional terms, historians should also consider how the country's institutional development in fact approximated western and broader international models. The late imperial government indeed never ruled through a colonial ministry, but an office of this sort—a Ministry of Asiatic Russia—might have been created if World War I and the revolution had not intervened. Sunderland sees the embryo of this possibility in the Resettlement Administration, which emerged as a leading center of Russian technocratic colonialism by the turn of the 1900s.

“In Accord with State Interests and the People’s Wishes”: The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia’s Resettlement Administration

PETER HOLQUIST

In this article, Peter Holquist traces both the institutional culture and personnel of one key late-imperial era agency, the Resettlement Administration, based within the Main Administration of Land Management and Agriculture. Holquist examines the technocratic ethos of a close-knit set of officials within the Resettlement Administration's central office, a group who from 1906 to 1917 oversaw plans to develop the empire's peripheries as well as incorporate territories annexed during World War I. Crucial to all their plans was a commitment to the rational and scientific administration of the empire's people and resources under the aegis of the central state. This ethos informed policies during the last decade of the old regime and throughout World War I, and both this ethos and this cohort of officials influenced the state policy of Red and White governments during the civil war and laid the foundation for the Soviet state's colonization programs in the early 1920s.