Baku: Oil and Urbanism should earn wide readership and admiration among scholars of Soviet and post-Soviet cities. More than this, though, the Soviet oil/urbanism nexus it charts is at once unique and highly illustrative, and scholars attending to other entrants in the global register of oil cities, from Abu Dhabi to Lagos and beyond, would do well to consult this masterfully-assembled book.

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Visions of Development in Central Asia: Revitalizing the Culture Concept. By Noor O'Neil Borbieva. Lantham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019. xxi, 229 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. $95.00, hard bound.
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Before the field of international development "discovered" the new country of Kyrgyzstan following the Soviet collapse in 1991, seventy years earlier Moscow had socially engineered a new Central Asia into their own image of progress. Moscow had invented new languages to divide the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples, and to further separate the clans, by gerrymandering new borders to create republics based on their highly reductionistic conceptions of their respective cultures. Sending hundreds of social scientists to Central Asia in the 1930s, the Soviets had created their own version of EPCOT, an acronym created by Walt Disney in 1966, which stands for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. They had reduced the complexity of Kyrgyz history and everyday practices to Soviet tropes.

In her recent book, *Visions of Development in Central Asia*, Noor O'Neill Borbieva tackles the ways in which international development has similarly reduced the culture concept in Central Asia during the first decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Borbieva argues that the international development field brought a compressed understanding of Kyrgyz culture. She struggles like all anthropologists who attempt to explain the many layers of history, language, and culture. Her ethnography takes us on a winding journey through the history of the field of anthropology and its "culture concept," as well as Borbieva's own *CliffsNotes'* version of the history of Central Asia before she begins to tackle the problem of international development in Kyrgyzstan. She takes the reader on through the west's and Moscow's engagements with Central Asia, setting the stage for her ethnography. For those who have never been on this journey, Borbieva gives a credible overview, and offers some new insights for those of us who spent years studying this region.

As with many of us anthropologists, research begins with our own story and why in the world we end up in such remote and often fragile spaces for so very long. Borbieva opens her narrative with her two-year commitment in the Peace Corps in southern Kyrgyzstan, (which in turn, inspires her eventual doctorate in anthropology at Harvard). Opening her work with dialogue vignettes that she has with her host family, Borbieva sorts out the meaning of "security" in her new country and the complicated concept of "independence" in that rural region. She signals that culture is a negotiation between the observer and the observed.

Throughout the book, I appreciate Borbieva's straightforward effort to set her own research agenda when she writes, "I believe an ethnographer must allow their data to guide them to the most appropriate theories, rather than choose their theories in advance" (1). She traverses the problematic anthropological conception of Culture Matters Thinking (CMT) and contends that this fraught understanding of how human

societies organize themselves has become the default setting for international development institutions that in turn reduce the complexities of human systems to the basic assumptions.

As an anthropologist who wrote my dissertation two decades ago on Kyrgyzstan, and then went on to consult with the World Bank on the problem of rural poverty in this post-Soviet country, I find Borbieva's arguments convincing. She astutely estimates the various ways in which many economists have sought a compressed understanding of culture versus the very messy arenas that most ethnographers try to explain through theory and narrative.

Borbieva contends that international development and its CMT approach in Central Asia entered their equation into the context of Kyrgyzstan with flawed assumptions, including that cultures are "bounded entities." Instead of being shaped by a political boundary, she states emphatically that the many identities any one citizen holds are at the heart of significance to the meaning of culture. In addition, Borbieva challenges the overly-prescriptive international development approaches that do not allow for diversity and simply assume that such a citizenship means homogeneity. Finally, she asserts that international development's simplification of culture ends up reifying it.

Borbieva concludes her volume by seeking to answer the question of how to integrate an expansive understanding of any cultural context without losing its complexity and diversity. With this in mind, Borbieva should take her argument one step further and build a conceptual bridge that allows international development experts and anthropologists to meet upon and together sort through the culture narratives. This bridge could be built by Borbieva herself by reaching out to international development journals to offer her critique, especially the *Journal of International Development* or the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. In doing so, Borbieva will not only expand the vision of development in Central Asia but also help create better development solutions for the future.

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Ivan the Terrible: Free to Reward and Free to Punish. By Charles J. Halperin. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019. xii, 365 pp. Notes. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Plates. Map. $40.00, hard bound.
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Charles J. Halperin notes that Ivan the Terrible is a figure seemingly so familiar to us as the epitome of a blood-thirsty despot that the modern word gave his name to a guard at the Treblinka death camp during World War II and the particularly destructive Hurricane Ivan in 2004. But then Halperin reconsiders what we actually know about Ivan. He readily admits Ivan's culpability for the violence carried out throughout the Oprichnina, the 1571 military campaign against Novgorod and other cities in northwest Muscovy, the tsar's failure to protect Moscow from the Crimean Tatar raid of 1571, the killing Metropolitan Filipp and the Staritskie, and Ivan's other offences. But close, careful reading of the primary sources leads Halperin to argue convincingly that many accounts of Ivan's other, alleged atrocities are unreliable because they were either biased—written by enemies (Poland-Lithuania or other opponents during the Livonia War) out to blacken Ivan's name—or else were composed long afterwards or far away from the events recounted to be at all trustworthy. He shows that some supposed episodes of Ivan's cruelty are, in fact, taken directly from legend and