

Nashi, Youth Voluntarism, and Potemkin NGOs: Making Sense of Civil Society in Post-Soviet Russia

JULIE HEMMENT

By interrogating Putin-era civil society projects, this article tracks the aftermath of international development aid in post-Soviet Russian socialist space. State-run organizations such as the pro-Kremlin youth organization Nashi (Ours) are commonly read as evidence of an antidemocratic backlash and as confirmation of Russia's resurgent authoritarianism. Contributing to recent scholarship in the anthropology of postsocialism, Julie Hemment seeks here to account for Nashi by locating it in the context of twenty years of international democracy promotion, global processes of neoliberal governance, and the disenchantments they gave rise to. Drawing on a collaborative ethnographic research project involving scholars and students in the provincial city Tver', Hemment reveals Nashi's curiously hybrid nature: At the same time as it advances a trenchant critique of 1990s-era interventions and the models and paradigms that guided democracy assistance, it also draws on them. Nashi respins these resources to articulate a robust national-interest alternative that is persuasive to many young people. Moreover, rather than a static, top-down political technology project, Nashi offers its participants a range of registers and voices in which they can articulate their own individualized agendas.

Placing Faith in Development: How Moscow's Religious Communities Contribute to a More Civil Society

MELISSA L. CALDWELL

The development-oriented work of Moscow's religious communities is examined in this article, with a focus on how a core group of faith organizations present themselves as offering an alternative vision of intervention and improvement that seeks to protect Russian citizens from what proponents suggest are the shortcomings of previous democratizing and civil society ventures. Staff and supporters within Moscow's faith-based assistance sphere contend that religiously affiliated assistance organizations are successful, not only because they parallel secular development programs in promoting values and practices of capitalism, democracy, and global human rights, but more importantly because they also claim to move beyond these approaches to tend to the well-being and transformation of the entire human being. Consequently, proponents argue that faith-based organizations are more attuned to values of humane treatment and civility, thereby making them better positioned to build a new Russian society that brings citizens and the state together in productive and caring relationships. Ultimately, this attention to the perspectives and ideals of religiously oriented development organizations provides a different vantage point for reconsidering the promises and consequences of Russia's neoliberal and democratizing transformations.

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Empowering Muslim Women: Independent Religious Fellowships in the Kyrgyz Republic

NOOR O'NEILL BORBIEVA

In this article, Noor O'Neill Borbieva presents research on the work of Muslim female activists in the Kyrgyz Republic and on the religious fellowships they organize, revealing these groups as important but neglected civil society actors. These religious fellowships are "hybrid," neither complicit with coercive interests nor fully independent of them. Borbieva explores how the religious sensibilities of her informants inspired unique responses to the institutions and discourses that otherwise shape their lives as Muslim women and Kyrgyz citizens. These women are engaged in more than a struggle for female empowerment; they are crafting a response to national and international power structures, a response informed equally by their gendered identities and their spiritual sensibilities.

Doing the Democracy Dance in Kazakhstan: Democracy Development as Cultural Encounter

SEAN R. ROBERTS

This article explores democracy development efforts in the former Soviet Union as a cultural encounter between the producers and consumers of development assistance. Drawing on literature in both anthropology and development studies, Sean R. Roberts suggests that the divergent worldviews of these different actors in the development process problematizes their interaction, often leading to unintended results. Highlighting a case study of U.S. assistance to Kazakhstan's 2004 parliamentary elections, Roberts also suggests that, although democracy assistance does foster change, this change is both gradual and unpredictable. More generally, Roberts argues that the challenges of democracy development are less related to technical issues than to cultural factors. Furthermore, democracy development efforts in the long term are likely to produce a contested arena in which to negotiate the meaning of "democracy" or acceptable "good governance" in the context of globalization and today's increasingly multipolar geopolitics.

Soviet "Blacks" and Place Making in Leningrad and Moscow

JEFF SAHADEO

Movement from the USSR's margins to Leningrad and Moscow, among groups ranging from traders to professionals, intensified in the late Soviet period. Using oral histories, Jeff Sahadeo analyzes the migration and place-making experiences of migrants from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Asian RSFSR, all of whom were often referred to then as well as now by the Soviet host population as "Blacks." Sahadeo argues that the "two capitals," despite being closed cities, became critical to advancement strategies for citizens unionwide, inextricably binding Soviet periphery and center. Sahadeo explores how race emerged as an important factor

in place making but argues that this can only be understood through its interplay with class, gender, professional status, and other categories of identity. Soviet “Blacks” externalized experiences of difference as they sought incorporation into host societies while maintaining links between their adopted and native homes. Place-making strategies led them to see Leningrad and Moscow, not as Russian-dominated cities, but as modern spaces of Soviet progress.

“Swarm Life” and the Biology of *War and Peace*

THOMAS NEWLIN

In the spring of 1863, Lev Tolstoi, newly married and soon to be a father, began to conceive of the work that would eventually become *War and Peace*. That same spring he also took up beekeeping. While in practical terms his “bee passion” proved relatively short-lived, it was an exceptionally intense engagement with a miniaturized and uniquely observable biological and social universe. In this article, Thomas Newlin explores how Tolstoi’s dual enmeshment in “swarm life”—that is, in the biologically fraught realms of marriage and beekeeping—influenced both the unconventional form of *War and Peace* and its equally unconventional ideas (in particular Tolstoi’s linked conceptions of the nature of history and of consciousness). The implications of a “swarm” model of history ultimately troubled Tolstoi, however; his doubts about the imperatives of biology do not play themselves out fully in *War and Peace* but instead lurk just beneath its surface.

Burghers versus Bureaucrats: Enlightened Centralism, the Royal Towns, and the Case of the *Propinacja* Law in Poland-Lithuania, 1776–1793

CURTIS G. MURPHY

In the eighteenth-century, European rulers embraced a common policy of enlightened centralism aimed at undermining the prerogatives of local self-government, a trend that even reached the decentralized Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In this article, Curtis G. Murphy investigates an example of an Enlightenment centralist policy that failed. A new reformist king sought to convert the burghers’ right to produce alcohol, known as *propinacja*, into a state-controlled monopoly, but the effort produced only chaos and the diminishment of self-government. Contrary to the center’s complaint that insufficient force undermined a beneficial effort, Murphy argues that the law failed because the priorities of the locals did not align with the government’s goals and the habits of self-government clashed with the bureaucratic methods of enlightened centralism. Historians of Poland have often praised the centralizing reforms of the late-eighteenth century, but the case of the *propinacja* law questions whether such efforts justified the costs of destroying self-government in the towns.