This book does not pretend to be and is not encyclopedic. And some topics are addressed in more and others in less detail and depth. To the delight of this reviewer, Small provides an extensive and interesting analysis of the racial politics of major European museums, as well as the changes to these politics that have been achieved through Black mobilization. While large sections of the book are devoted to identifying external barriers to the advancement of Blacks in Europe, much less attention is given to the internal fissures and tensions, along class, linguistic, and gender lines (among others), that impede Black political organizing. But the book's passion, and Small's work teaching at and developing Black summer schools for academics and activists, for which this book was originally written, should motivate Black and non-Black scholars to extend Small's work by taking up where the book leaves off.

20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe is informative, analytical, and clear. My only reservation about using it in university courses is that the editing is a bit loose—not a good example for students. According to the author, the text is about to be re-edited and expanded for an electronic edition scheduled to appear in summer 2019 and a second print edition shortly thereafter. The expanded edition will include new material on the social media, young people, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, and Brexit. As a non-Black scholar who teaches and does research on social inequality, political sociology, race and ethnicity, and human rights, I recommend this book, and I am assuming that by the time this review is published, the second edition will be available.

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Fragile Conviction: Changing Ideological Landscapes in Urban Kyrgyzstan, by Mathijs Pelkmans, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2017, 232 pages, $85.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1501705144; $26.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1501705144

During the course of 20 years, the sculptural centerpiece of Bishkek's Ala-Too Square was, until 2003, Vladimir Lenin, followed by the Erkindek (*Freedom*) statue symbolizing the country's aspirations for a liberal post-Soviet economic and political path, and, finally, the statue of Manas, hero of a Kyrgyz epic poem and symbol of the historic Kyrgyz nation. Mathijs Pelkmans posits that this succession of monuments purporting to symbolize core values of the Kyrgyzstani state and society is closely tied to the country's struggle to discover a unifying idea or set of ideas in the post-Soviet period. While some have contended that post-Soviet Eurasia exists in an ideological vacuum, where societies have become irretrievably cynical, Pelkmans argues that the region exhibits ideological excess, in which the multitude of possibilities is associated with the inability of a single ideology to predominate. Kyrgyzstan, in particular, serves as a "laboratory for testing out ideologies," sociopolitical instability having severed extant ideologies from institutional foundations and made their tenets less self-evident. Post-Soviet experience has made questionable the "dominance of dominant power" (7–9).

Pelkmans, an anthropologist, helps his readers to understand Kyrgyzstan through the lens of a particular post-urban locale, Kokjangak. The author spent time in the field on and off from 1998 to 2014 and has the advantage of experiencing this site in multiple roles, first as a United Nations volunteer and later as an academic researcher. In the Soviet period, much of Kokjangak's local economy was dependent on the operation of a coal mine, with locals remembering the city as a modern, industrial oasis featuring all of the comforts of socialist urbanity. With the dissolution of the USSR and closure of the mine, what had been a model city in the midst of an underdeveloped region became an origin point for labor migration and a den of alcoholism and drug use. The "wild market" produced by the economic reforms originating in Washington Consensus orthodoxy

swiftly hollowed out state institutions and produced qualitatively novel forms of corruption. Kokjangak residents came to understand public officials not as guardians of stability and relative comfort, as they now remember Soviet administrators, but as "parasitic predators backed by fake documents and a corrupt legal system" (67). Dangerous informal coal mining practices came into vogue among underemployed local men, serving as a fitting symbol of the chaos and uncertainty roiling Kyrgyzstani society.

Capitalism and democracy were in the 1990s particularly strong "empty signifiers" promising a better life. Yet it progressively became clear that the welfare state demolished by policies of post-socialist economic reform was not to return and that the new order was instead structured by networks of clientelism and patronage (42). The first post-Soviet president of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, showed himself to be prone to nepotism and self-dealing in a way that belied his professions of democratic reform and liberalization, culminating in his ouster in the 2005 Tulip Revolution. As Pelkmans argues, the chaotic and incomplete transition to a system neither liberal nor democratic, but similarly lacking the former ideological apparatus of totalitarianism, supplied space for new belief systems to develop and thrive.

Kyrgyzstan has cultivated a fragmented ideological marketplace within which each potential system of understanding proved quite delicate in light of lived experience. Pelkmans particularly emphasizes the processes by which groups of people come to share structuring beliefs about the world. The first stage of belief, he suggests, is the initial impulse, provided by the presentation of novel modes of understanding. This is followed by the interaction of a set of ideas with the social field into which it is placed. The pull of an ideology often rests on this "frontier"—the gap between what is promised by ideological precepts and the reality that one perceives. An ideology, be it capitalism, socialism, or a given religion, is at its base an aspirational project the full realization of which is likely neither possible, nor wholly desirable. Pelkmans posits, moreover, that it is most often the failure to meet one's goals through the embrace of an ideological construct that leads to loss of conviction. This fragility is both destructive of conviction and a crucial element in producing and maintaining it, as the "tension [between reality and the ideal] remains productive as long as the object of desire remains unfulfilled yet within reach" (179).

Pelkmans examines three fascinating case studies of emergent systems of belief in Kyrgyzstan. In each instance, he illustrates through the words of his respondents both the initial impulse that drew them toward new ways of thinking, followed by an explanation of the ultimate ephemerality of his subjects' convictions. With independence, the relative religious liberalism of Kyrgyzstan—particularly in contrast to neighboring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—supplied the conditions for entry into the country of various foreign missions espousing a multitude of Islamic practices. Among these groups were the Tablighi Jamaat, the primary activity of which are *dawats*, or proselytizing excursions conducted by small groups of men for as long as four months. The men generally stay at mosques or madrasas to which they have been invited by local mullahs, often outside of their own town or village, effectively separating them from their everyday concerns. Through the shared experiences of traveling, conversation, and an inclusive social leveling, Pelkmans observes an intensification of religious conviction among the *dawatchis* (104). Yet the characteristic of *dawat* that supplies its success—isolation from worldly troubles—also holds the significance that the conviction accrued during the experience is short-lived once the men return to their daily lives.

Pelkmans contrasts the experience of the *dawatchis* with the observance of miracles among Kyrgyzstani Pentecostals. Unlike with Islam, women and internal migrants are particularly likely to be represented in Evangelical and Protestant congregations. These are populations that face unique challenges in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, and, Pelkmans argues, it is precisely this positioning "on the edge" that permits them to develop conviction through instances of miracles. Many approached Pentecostalism as a last resort after seeking to be cured of illness or addiction through more formal institutions, and successful instances of miraculous healing were actively circulated among the congregation and interpreted as divine will enacted through prayer (134). However, the fragility of conviction in this case rests on the fundamental role of miracles themselves, as the chasm between

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the reality of congregant's lives and their desired outcomes—Pelkmans's "frontier"—was often so great that failure was inevitable.

Given the fragility of convictions associated with institutionalized religion in Kyrgyzstan, Pelkmans reflects on the emergence of less formal systems of belief. The popularization of what the author terms "spiritual beliefs" (fortune telling, traditional shamanistic practices, etc.) began in the 1990s and expanded in the 2000s, often gaining a following in areas of particular socioeconomic instability. Rather than missionaries attempting to convince others of an absolute truth, both the spiritual practitioners and those who came to them operated within a space of "multilayered uncertainty" (151). Spiritual healers attempted to demonstrate their effectiveness and necessity by telling clients about past successes and informing them of the severity of their illnesses or personal crises. When a result did not take hold, healers often claimed that clients failed to follow the directions given or that another spell had been cast on the client (165). Conviction delivered through spiritual practices was ultimately unstable owing to an absence of institutional legitimacy and, further, the persistent challenges to spiritual authority inherent in the larger Islamic context within which healers worked.

Pelkmans provides a valuable addition to the growing body of knowledge about post-Soviet Central Asian society through his descriptions of the processes by which individuals gain, and subsequently lose, conviction in systems of belief. His detailed conceptualization of this pattern allows readers to understand more deeply the phenomenon of ideological fragmentation in Kyrgyzstan and, in turn, throughout much of the postcommunist world. The framework provided will also enable future scholars to begin exploring and contrasting with these fragile ideological constructs the emergence of new, hegemonic ideologies. This book is of interest not only to scholars of post-Soviet Central Asia, but also to those with a broad interest in political transitions and their impact on social psychology.

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When Informal Institutions Change: Institutional Reforms and Informal Practices in the Former Soviet Union, by Huseyn Aliyev, Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2017, 284 pages, $80.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-472-13047-4

Informality is omnipresent—from rural microeconomics to international politics, and our knowledge of many phenomena is incomplete without an understanding of their informal components. Informal practices are particularly pervasive in the countries of former Soviet Union (FSU), shaping most of the region's social and political processes and institutions. Yet, despite a somewhat recent growth of the literature on the topic, in-depth studies of the phenomenon are far and few between, and the study of informality in most academic disciplines falls below the radars of mainstream research. Huseyn Aliyev makes a valuable contribution to the study of informality by corralling multiple strands of fragmented and contrasting literature into an insightful review of the phenomenon. His conceptual exploration is supplemented empirically by three case studies showcasing how, when, and under which conditions democratic reforms affect informal institutions in the FSU region.

Aliyev draws a particularly helpful distinction between informal institutions, networks, and practices, while highlighting how the three are inextricably intertwined and how they converge with formal institutions and processes. While various academic disciplines commonly prefer one of the three concepts over the others as units of analysis, Aliyev emphasizes the importance of transcending a single-dimensional view of informality (as either an institution, a network, or practice) and