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Conceptualising Soviet Legacies and Revivals in Contemporary Belarus

Three decades after the collapse of the USSR, revivals, defined as elements of the past that have been brought back to life, continue to puzzle scholars who work on legacies in general and Soviet legacies in particular. Yet there is no consensus on what unites and differentiates revivals from legacies, and little prior research into revivals in particular. By using state-affiliated youth organisations of post-Soviet Belarus as a case study, this article develops a framework for analysing the revivalism of communist-era structures. It presents insights from thematic analysis applied to a variety of data, ranging from archive material, organisations' publications, and President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's public statements to interviews with organisation activists and the author's ethnographic field notes. The article argues that a revival is characterised by its dependence on the reviving agent and its reliance on a legacy narrative for the purposes of legitimisation. Although revivals are fragile by default, their impact on contemporary society can be considerable, given their scope and longevity.

Olga Davydova-Minguet, Pirjo Pöllänen, Ismo Björn, Teemu Oivo & Oleg Reut Graveyards as Transnational Spaces

The way we handle the deceased reflects the state of society and its changes. In this article, we examine transnationalism through the study of death in the Finnish-Russian context. We investigate what kind of a transnational deathlandscape is produced by cemeteries in the Finnish capital region, the province of North Karelia, and the Republic of Karelia in Russia. Methodologically, we apply the concepts of transnational subject and the "wrong gaze", as well as ethnographic drifting/derivé. This helps us to see the ways that a person watches, experiences and understands cemeteries from the perspective of transnational everyday life. Cemeteries are seen as particular and affective combinations of public and private spaces. While functioning in national contexts, they simultaneously deal with the universally common phenomenon of death. The public space of cemeteries can be used for the individualisation or nationalisation of people, or for their separation from one another, but people across the various national borders are also united in the presence of evanescent life and private grief.

Jukka Korpela
Age-old Corruption and Russia

Western truth is rational and mathematical measurable. Western Man thinks that a pluralistic and transparent constitutional democracy, which respects human rights, is the absolute goal of the whole of humankind, independent of the culture and history. Historical science explains, however, how all moral values and scholarly learnings depend on their historical time and place. The Western exceptional value system and culture were formed with small steps but purely coincidentally after the high medieval period and were globalised along with the Western economic system during recent centuries. It is, however, possible to use power and create justice in narrow-minded, undemocratic clan systems which favour mysticism and secrecy and discriminate against individuals. These kinds of systems also open perspectives onto great wealth. Russian society appears deeply corrupted and irrational, dominated by criminal groupings and violating human rights. All projects to form a proper democracy in Russia have been unsuccessful. According to the article, it is not possible simply to paste a new mental culture onto the old one, because the basic social structures, which differ from Western ones, were chosen in the far past: the traditional system is legitimate and practical from the perspective of Russians. The article discusses the long history of economy, ideologies and social structures from the early middle ages to the present from this perspective.