© Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research. 2021. 13(1):4–19
DOI: 10.25285/2078-1938-2021-13-1-4-19

THE CORPORATION IN RUSSIA. *Introduction*

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This special issue of Laboratorium *began as papers presented at a 2019 conference made possible in part by a Carnegie Corporation of New York grant to Yale University's Program in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (no. G-19-57117). The Edward J. and Dorothy Kempf Memorial Fund and the European Studies Council at Yale University provided additional support. "The Russian Corporation/The Corporation in Russia" conference took up early modern and imperial corporations as well as the Soviet and post-Soviet corporations featured in this cluster, and I hope a group of articles on those topics will appear in another journal in due course. In composing this introduction, I have benefited from the memorably spirited engagement at the conference itself—interdisciplinary, international, and with expertise spanning four centuries—and the specific comments and suggestions of Elena Adasheva-Klein, Veronica Davidov, Egor Lazarev, Renata Mustafina, Agnieska Pasieka, and Lauren Woodard. The statements made and views expressed here remain my responsibility.*

Aleksei Naval'nyi's early 2021 investigative film "Putin's Palace: The History of the World's Largest Bribe" unravels threads of corruption that, he and his investigative team allege, have built a mind-bogglingly ornate Black Sea estate for Russian President Vladimir Putin.[1] In the film's narrative, a 30-year-old network of people—friends, coworkers, family members, lovers, and others, many holding the highest offices of the Russian government—funneled money out of the pockets of ordinary Russians and into vineyards, aquatic discos, and high-end Italian furniture. But Naval'nyi does not just spin a tale of powerful personal networks and the state. "Putin's Palace" spends an extraordinary amount of time on the dozens of corporate entities that mediate and make possible these relationships. Corporations regularly interpose themselves among people in the film's many diagrams, channeling money, ownership, and management, popping up and then disappearing as the years unfold. Indeed, without the material traces of corporations—tax filings, registrations of incorporation, lists boards of directors or shareholders, offices that are mysteriously unoccupied, names of corporations in the fine print of wine bottle labels—there would be

[1] "Dvorets dlia Putina: Istoriia samoi bol'shoi vziatki," Aleksei Naval'nyi YouTube channel, posted January 19, 2021. Video, 1:52:50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipAnwilMncI.

very little evidence for Naval'nyi's claims.[2] Unsurprisingly to seasoned observers but nonetheless strikingly for the analysis of the place of corporations in Russia, some of the Russian state's accusations against Naval'nyi also include improper relationships with a corporation—a timber company in Kirov Oblast from which Naval'nyi is alleged to have embezzled. The European Court of Human Rights judged the transactions in question to be "indistinguishable from regular commercial activities,"[3] but we might note that, quite apart from the truth of the matter, accusations and counteraccusations about proper and improper relationships between persons and corporate entities have become central to the very grammar of Russian politics.

The role of corporations in Naval'nyi's narrative invites some questions: What are some of the particular characteristics of Russian corporations and corporations in Russia, and how might we theorize and historicize their embeddedness in the social and cultural imagination, in the governance of populations and its contestation, and in the context of global transformations of the corporate form in recent decades?[4] Answers to these questions have been scarcer than one might wish for in existing scholarship, at least in part because scholars of Russia have long been consumed with understanding the Russian state and its power. There are good reasons for this focus, starting with the brute fact that agents of the Russian state have long been consumed with deploying its power. The articles that follow, however, make the collective case that this long-running focus on the state has occluded the important and distinctive role played by corporations in Russia—in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. A range of corporations feature in the articles that follow, from household names like Aeroflot and Nike to the less well known Rosgaz, Cherkizovo, and Miratorg. Collectively, I suggest in this introduction, these articles on the Russian corporation point to some productive areas of research in a variety of ways: by offering new frames for old questions, by exploring new analytical directions inspired by recent work on corporations in other parts of the world and other historical periods, and by linking areas of research commonly treated as distinct under a common interest in the corporation.

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[2] Navalnyi's second most viewed video as of this writing, "Don't Call Him Dimon" (made in 2017), on former Russian President Dmitrii Medvedev, follows a similar evidentiary narrative linking people, corporations, and the state, although it includes offshore corporations and charitable organizations to a much greater extent than "Putin's Palace." "On vam ne Dimon," Aleksei Naval'nyi YouTube channel, posted March 2, 2017. Video, 49:38. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrwlk7_GF9g.

[3] Case of *Navalnyy and Ofitserov v. Russia* (Applications nos. 46632/13 and 28671/14), paragraph 115, European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, Austria, February 23, 2016.

[4] In posing the question in this manner, I intentionally bypass prescriptive and/or epistemological theories of the corporation that offer no place for embeddedness, particularity, transformation, or context. Certain law and economics scholars, for instance, consider the corporation to be nothing more than a "nexus of contracts" entered into by rational actors. For all practical purposes, "nexus of contracts" approaches, which have old roots (e.g., Coase 1937) but rose to prominence in the United States beginning in the 1980s (e.g., Easterbrook and Fischel 1991), offer no points of contact with the understandings of the corporation that inform this cluster of articles.

THE CORPORATE FIELD

Although not yet as visible in Russian and Eurasian studies as it might be, the study of corporations has lately been of increasing interest to scholars working across disciplines, parts of the world, and historical periods. Grietje Baars and André Spicer's compendium *The Corporation: A Critical, Multi-Disciplinary Handbook* (2017), for instance, begins with nine disciplinary overviews—ranging from sociology to accounting to legal studies—that collectively chart a massive upswing in research on corporations. A capsule and partial genealogy, keyed more to the articles that follow than to a comprehensive overview, will help orient readers in the research agenda that this cluster of articles sets out.

By the late 1980s and 1990s, "the state" was firmly on the agenda of Western social science. In historical sociology and political science, *Bringing the State Back In* (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985) was doing just that—if not without controversy—while in anthropology the discipline's decades-long pivot away from its ancestral focus on small-scale, present-day units of analysis found new moorings in the study of colonial, postcolonial, developmentalist, and, by the 1990s, socialist and postsocialist states. States themselves played no small role in this process, for they excel at "stating" in the sense of moralizing, speaking, claiming, tracking, and otherwise hailing their subjects. States are verbose and often logomaniacal, their bulging archives powerful magnets for those looking for new theories of power, culture, and society. Even most so-called state secrets leave documentary trails, although declassification can take quite a while—as scholars of the formerly socialist world know well. Across a sprawling multidisciplinary landscape and encompassing many approaches and debates—on the institutional coherence of states, on the merits and combinations of economic and culturalist approaches, on the import of Michel Foucault's, Antonio Gramsci's, and later Giorgio Agamben's writings on power and on performative, discursive, material, national, welfare, affective, theatrical, magical, pronatalist, and other incarnations—the state had become unavoidable.[5]

But a curious thing happened as a generation of graduate students steeped in these theories of the state began their own research: they often found states under assault and in retreat, privatized, reformulated, ostentatiously ceding ground to "markets" or otherwise effacing or dismantling themselves. A kaleidoscope of approaches to globalization and neoliberalism emerged—and within it increasing attention to newly prominent corporations. On the one hand, the study of states could provide some lingering inspiration. Marina Welker's "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the Corporation" (2016), for instance, revisits Philip Abrams's justly famous "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State" (1988) to argue that Abrams's concept of the "state effect," coined to capture the ways in which manifestly disorganized,

[5] Illustrative of this landscape are works such as Adams (2010), Coronil (1997), Geertz (1981), Kligman (1998), Steinmetz (1993), Stoler (2007), and Verdery (1991). See Steinmetz (1999) for one of the best overviews of this analytical terrain. Scholarly concern with the state shows no sign of slowing, as the ongoing proliferation of riffs on James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (1999) attests: *Speaking Like a State* (Ayers 2009) and *Feeling Like a State* (Cooper 2019) are but two.

internally warring, and institutionally diverse state agencies nonetheless appear as real, singular, and powerful, could be usefully carried over to the transnational corporation. Corporations, Welker argued, must also be "enacted" on a daily basis in order to have any coherence at all (see also Welker 2014). On the other hand, corporations are generally not as loquacious as states—their personnel more secretive, their intellectual property jealously guarded, their archives more scattered and less likely open to researchers even after decades. Scholars have, of some necessity, congregated around those areas in which corporations tend toward saying more: in branding and other representation efforts (Foster 2014; Shever 2010); in corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, and "good governance" programs (Rajak 2011; Rogers 2015; Sawyer 2004); and in legal wrangling and decisions (Coleman 2014; Kirsch 2014b; Sawyer 2006).

These, however, are far from the exclusive areas in which scholarship on corporations is thriving. Considering only categories that might be situated roughly within trajectories out of the wide-ranging focus on states that characterized the historical and humanistic social sciences by the 1990s, we find, for example, new or revived interest in early modern trading and chartered companies and their entanglements with early modern states (Cavanagh 2011; Erikson 2014; Philips and Sharman 2020; Stern 2011; Turner 2016); corporations and the growth of capitalism in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States (Roy 1997); the twentieth-century transnational corporation as vector for configurations of race, ethnicity, gender, and empire (Colby 2011; Enstad 2018; Esch 2018; Giersch 2020); and the spread of the corporate form into once-unexpected areas such as indigenous or ethnic corporations (Cattelino 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009) and cities (Kanna 2010).[6]

Where, in this expansive and expanding field, might we situate the corporation in Russia?[7]

SOCIALIST FIRMS AND/AS CORPORATIONS

Despite drawing on few and hard-to-come-by sources—at least compared to research on most other parts of the world at the time—twentieth-century Western "Soviet studies" produced an extensive literature on the nature and workings of socialist enterprises and firms. The classics of this genre ranged from broad overviews of Soviet-style centrally planned economies at various times and places (e.g., Dyker 1976; Nove 1977) to more focused treatments of the relationship between local Communist

[6] In addition to Baars and Spicer (2017), readers interested in more thorough (but anthropology-centered) accounts of recent studies of the corporation will find useful the following: Benson and Kirsch (2010); Urban and Koh (2015); and Welker, Partridge, and Hardin (2011).

[7] In the context of this introduction I can do no more than acknowledge and pose as research questions some of the complexities this phrasing invites. In addition to the topics I discuss below, for instance, considerable attention might be paid to the different implications of studying *rossiiskie* (pertaining to the Russian state) and/or *russkie* (pertaining to Russian nationality or ethnicity) corporations. Post-Soviet corporations outside of Russia are also likely to have their own dynamics; see Bobick (2011) for an example from Moldova.

Party organs and factories (Hough 1969) and the crucial role of the enterprise manager in the never-ending negotiations that moved people and things through the system in ways that both fulfilled and subverted the plan (Berliner 1957).[8] By the 1980s these studies were joined by a growing body of scholarship, often produced by dissidents and often in Eastern Europe, that added insiders' perspectives on what Hungarian economist János Kornai (who exemplified this strand of research) called "economies of shortage" (1980). Intersecting with and drawing on this scholarship about the inner workings of Soviet-type economies was a more theoretically oriented scholarship that asked how central planning and socialist-style enterprises compared to their capitalist counterparts (Rutland 1985), whether the two might be "converging" as part of a global process of modernization (e.g., Inkeles 1968), or what the appropriate terms of comparison for enterprises should be.[9]

Steven Harris's contribution to this cluster of articles returns to a Soviet-era enterprise with fresh insights gained from more recent studies of twentieth-century corporations. Aeroflot, Harris shows, was both a Soviet state enterprise and an international corporation that tangled with, learned from, and in some ways outdid its capitalist corporate competitors. Not unlike the Bánki machine parts factory in Hungary, site of Michael Burawoy's late socialist shop-floor ethnography (Burawoy and Lukács 1992), Aeroflot often proved itself more adaptive and innovative than its Western competitors and counterparts (a Chicago factory's shop floor for Burawoy, Pan Am for Harris), confounding stereotypes about the lethargy and innovation-stifling ways of socialist political economy. Indeed, Harris succeeds in showing, Aeroflot quite adroitly became "a corporation in the West's political economy" (p. 23, this issue).

The case of Aeroflot may appear idiosyncratic and unrepresentative, far from the paradigmatic Soviet industrial operations that interested Jerry Hough and Joseph Berliner, but the analytic path that Harris follows is anything but. By tracking concrete connections rather than isolating and comparing bounded units across a presumed capitalist/socialist divide, Harris is very much in step with recent scholars in a variety of fields who have turned their attention to the traffic in people, ideas, and objects that, Iron Curtain notwithstanding, linked the Soviet economic system to the rest of the world far more than was appreciated at the time (e.g., Bockman 2011; Collier 2011; Engerman 2018; Rogers 2014; Sanchez-Sibony 2014). Harris's focus on the corporate form is distinctive even within this expanding scholarship. Note, for instance, the multipronged approach to the corporation embedded in his claim that "Aeroflot often took on key features common among corporations in the twentieth century, including limited liability, predatory pricing, branding campaigns, public disclosure of assets, status in courts of law as a legal person, ability to buy and sell property, and an operation that outlasted its creators" (p. 26, this issue).

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[8] Nearly all of this scholarship emerged from the disciplines of economics and political science as they were configured in the heyday of Cold War "area studies." Caroline Humphrey's *Karl Marx Collective* ([1983] 1998) is a rare example of a study shaped, instead, by political and economic anthropology.

[9] David Engerman's comments at the 2019 "The Russian Corporation/The Corporation in Russia" conference have helped me to situate this topic within Soviet-era scholarship.

Harris is entirely correct that too often our default understandings of the corporation revolve around profits and profit making. This profit-centered notion of what corporations are and do owes much to a particular era in the history and theory of corporations, one closely linked to the geopolitics of the twentieth century. Milton Friedman's massively influential claim that "there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits" (1970; see also 1962) was unapologetically an argument that any other vision of the goal of corporations—such as "social responsibility"—constituted socialism and unfreedom—or at least the slippery slope thereto. Although not always as closely linked to specters of socialism as in Friedman's pronouncements, the "revolution in shareholder value" that has gripped Wall Street and the capitalist system since the 1980s also foregrounded corporate profits (e.g., Ho 2009) and, for a time at least, narrowed the ways in which we conceptualize corporations.

This focus on profit above all else limits our understanding of what corporations are and have been as social, cultural, political, legal, and economic forms. Indeed, as Karen Ho's *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street* (2009) argues, Western corporate CEOs of the mid-twentieth century were accustomed to balancing multiple constituencies—labor force, consumers, local communities and politicians, and shareholders—rather than resolving all of the above into the increasingly short-term profit expectations of shareholders. If we take a broader view of corporations, then Harris's study of Aeroflot appears not as exception but as invitation—an invitation to return with new eyes, strategies, and sources to some of the topics first taken up in twentieth-century Soviet studies. The more we uncover various, convoluted, and connected corporate forms across the world in the twentieth century, the more we might, without overlooking their differences, begin to see socialist enterprises as members of a large family of twentieth-century corporate forms. Indeed, if we follow Harris's lead, Soviet enterprises like Aeroflot might be particularly generative sites from which to theorize the close entanglement and interpenetration of firms and states in the twentieth century.[10]

INTO AND OUT OF THE 1990S

Turning to corporations in Russia from the 1990s to the present requires double vision, with one eye focused on a familiar regional narrative and one eye on the broader scholarship on corporations outlined above. In the story highly visible to scholars of the region, the sprawling Soviet and Russian federal state apparatus was laid low in the 1990s, its monopolies on violence and even on the rouble as a national unit of currency hanging by a thread (Volkov 2002; Woodruff 1999). In this context, a major

[10] If it was possible for a Soviet enterprise to succeed in taking on some of the trappings of a Western corporation, one reason for this result might be found in new insights into the history of Soviet political economy. In unpublished work presented at the 2019 "The Russian Corporation" conference, Adam Leeds argued that the architects of the Soviet economic system from the beginning modeled it on the corporations, holding companies, and cartels of late nineteenth-century Germany.

body of scholarship, largely but not exclusively in political science, took up relationships among agencies of the Russian state and emergent businesses, often at the regional level. Some of the most compelling comparative portraits of political and economic life "on the ground" in the Russian 1990s emerged from this literature and its quest to identify the factors that sent "transition" spinning in different directions in different regions.[11] In the first two decades of the twenty-first century the pace of this once highly productive area of scholarship has slowed considerably in the face of the new century's overarching plot line, the "return" of the Russian central state under the presidency of Vladimir Putin.

It is unfortunate that the post-Soviet 1990s have not crept very far into the view of the scholarship now trained on corporations and the corporate form worldwide. There are likely two reasons for this. The first is purely temporal: As discussed above, most of the interest in the corporation as a self-conscious field of scholarship arose in the early twenty-first century. The second has to do with the shifting disciplinary configurations of the Western social science of Russia and the former Soviet bloc. After the end of the Soviet Union, the great weight of Western social science and policy expertise focused on the region was concerned with theorizing and guiding a "transition" to capitalism and markets, especially by creating what these experts saw as a normal role for privately owned businesses—that is, corporations. Against this powerful, future-oriented, analytically self-assured, and frequently triumphalist current anthropological and related accounts of privatization and decollectivization generally insisted—as did their interlocutors in the region—on the continued relevance of the economic, social, cultural, and moral worlds formed in the socialist period. In other words, and with some exceptions, the corporate forms of most interest to anthropologists of the 1990s were, paradoxically, those of the socialist period as they were recalled and, often, deployed against the forces of "transition."

On the one hand, then, we find a regional scholarship in which the focus on business and corporations has steadily decreased while, on the other hand, we find a global scholarship on corporations that is ascendant but largely overlooks Russia and the rest of the former Soviet bloc. From today's vantage point, a major task of studying the corporations that grew out of 1990s Russia is to merge these fields of vision. As an initial step, we might begin to see the 1990s as a period of incorporation and reincorporation rather than focus so much on "privatization" (see also Rogers 2015). After all, the early 1990s across the former Soviet bloc surely saw one of largest, most dramatic, and most concentrated periods of corporation formation that the world has ever seen. Every single enterprise restructured itself into a new corporate form, most did so more than once (often *a lot* more than once), and scores of new kinds of corporations sprung up, faded, reemerged elsewhere, or disappeared from the landscape. The time when it made sense to focus primarily on the socialist heritages in-

[11] Barnes (2003), Frye (2000), Orttung (2004), and Pickles (1998) are representative of this literature, which has tapered off to some extent, although see Szakonyi (2020) for a recent excellent example.

forming these new corporations has passed, and new possibilities for analyzing post-socialist corporations present themselves.[12]

CORPORATIONS AND PERSONS

One of the most instructive studies of corporations in the 1990s comes not from Russia but from Poland—an analytical strategy made possible by some of the commonalities of Soviet-type economies and their immediate postsocialist trajectories. Elizabeth Dunn's *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (2004) presented a classic 1990s scenario: a major Western firm (Gerber Baby Foods) seeking to solve its own market share problems by looking East, taking over a socialist enterprise (Alima) in a murky joint venture and attempting to transform the firm in its own image. Dunn relates the story of Alima's privatization not just as the transformation of a state-owned enterprise but as the "privatization of persons"—of factory workers' disembedding from the familiar interpersonal networks of the socialist period. Indeed, in Gerber's Total Quality Management–inspired plans for the shop floor and supply chain, the company began treating workers like the carrots they were processing: both could be broken down into a defined set of qualities that could be measured, regularized, and improved. Dunn tracks the fate of workers' expectations about the socialist firm closely, including a wonderfully instructive reading of an event at which Gerber management staged a mock Polish wedding between the two firms as an illustration of good will, leaving Polish workers with the very faulty impression that their new management viewed itself as having some kinship-style obligations to them.

Dunn's study is archetypical of the transitology/anti-transitology era, showing how Polish notions of family and firm had continued relevance and were largely invisible to Gerber managers and designers of Polish privatization in general. Although the book's research and writing largely preceded the upswing of interest in "the corporation" specifically, it nicely sets up some ways in which there is utility in looking again at the post-Soviet 1990s. If we follow Dunn's conviction that a key site for interactions on the corporation-personhood axis is the workplace, then what are we to make of the rising popularity of the *korporativ* (loosely, the corporate party) as a social event in Russia—a practice that has a long history but much newer ties to "workplace culture" in a neoliberal key?[13]

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[12] In 2021 the term *postsocialist* has distinctly retro feel to it, and scholars have identified any number of new and compelling directions and/or organizing rubrics for future scholarship (Müller 2018; Ssorin-Chaikov 2019a, 2019b). Here, I mean to suggest only that the historical moment once known as "the transition" generated enormous and as yet understudied materials—but far from the only materials—through which scholars of Russia might engage the larger scholarship on corporations. Specific research questions posed with this scholarship in mind would, I think, generate a multiplicity of new and interesting answers to the questions of change versus continuity and of common versus divergent experiences, that thread through meta-discussions about the adequacy and fate of "postsocialism."

[13] Ethnographic studies of labor, management, and factory shop floors have grown scarcer since the days of Dunn's *Privatizing Poland*, but see Cohen (2015) for one terrific exception based at Russian company the author calls Consumcorp.

Additional possibilities for extending Dunn's analysis lie in the direction of corporate personhood. Dunn's discussion of embedded and disembedded personhood draws inspiration, in part, from anthropological studies based in Indonesia and Melanesia, where cultural understandings of what makes "a person" have long challenged Western assumptions about the primacy and unity of "individuals." Marilyn Strathern's classic *Gender of the Gift* (1988) was a key touchstone for Dunn, and more recent scholarship that describes and amplifies indigenous challenges to corporate activities in Papua New Guinea continues to provide some inspiration. For instance, the Yonggom communities and activists, whose lawsuits against BHP Billiton (in response to ecological destruction caused by tailings from the company's Ok Tedi gold and copper mine) Stuart Kirsch (2006, 2014b) follows, open up a question with broad relevance for the study of today's corporations: what happens when the transnational legal understandings of corporate personhood that inform mining companies—with all of their assumptions about limited liability and institutional coherence, not to mention their embeddedness in peculiar Western notions of the legal subject—encounter long-running Melanesian (or, indeed, any number of) notions of the person as "partible," "dividual," or otherwise embedded in relationships of exchange that make them responsible for the constitution of others? What, that is, happens when different notions of personhood tangle on the terrain of the "legal fiction" that corporations are persons (see also Bashkow 2014; Golub 2014; Kirsch 2014a)?

We do not yet have much in the way of ethnographic or historical investigations of corporate personhood in the former Soviet bloc, but we have some in the making. No shortage of studies of the Russian and broader postsocialist 1990s examine, in the same vein as Dunn's *Privatizing Poland*, shifting notions of personhood and subjectivity. A smaller but healthy number link these changes to the trajectories of socialist firms and enterprises, but none that I am aware of do so by analyzing the underpinnings and varieties of corporate personhood that were born out of the conjunctures of the 1990s. By what paths did we get from early 1990s privatization to the present day in which any Russian citizen setting foot in a corner Sberbank might encounter separate queues for "physical persons" and "juridical persons," the latter category featuring (but not being limited to) corporations and calling out for its own social, cultural, and historical analysis in the Russian context? What has come of the entrepreneurial subjects described by Alexei Yurchak (2001) in 1990s Saint Petersburg, at that point shaped significantly by techniques of governing themselves and others that they acquired as members of the "last Soviet generation," in light of ongoing, worldwide processes of neoliberal subject formation? This remains, after all, a mobile field and one closely tied to transformations of the corporation. In Ilana Gershon's (2018) ethnography of California job seekers, for instance, we find that corporate personhood has scaled new heights: attendees at a resume-writing workshop learn to see *themselves* as corporations, looking to enter into a business-to-business relationship with a potential employer.

DECENTERING THE WESTERN CORPORATE FORM

Sergei Peregudov and Irina Semenenko's many works on corporate citizenship provide a second instructive path out of 1990s. Between an overview of global trends in corporate citizenship (as, for instance, embedded in United Nation's compacts) and an extensive case study of Lukoil's relationship with Perm' Oblast, their *Korporativnoe grazhdanstvo: Kontsepsii, mirovaia praktika i russkie realii* (*Corporate Citizenship: Conceptions, World Practice, and Russian Realities*; Peregudov and Semenenko 2008) stops to consider multiple global models, discerning overlapping US/Canadian, European, Latin American, and Asia-Pacific (or Japanese) variants. This typology sets up their subsequent contention that the family-and-loyalty focus of the large corporations that emerged in the early 1990s in Russia, especially in the oil and gas sector, point "not to the Soviet or Western [models], but to the traditional Japanese model" (259). In their view, this was a transitional phase, on the way to a more specifically (post-Soviet) Russian model of corporate citizenship. Peregudov and Semenenko's use of Japanese corporations as points of comparison for Russia contrasts sharply with Western observers' tendency, at the time, to turn to the European feudal era for inspiration, as in Katherine Verdery's writings on "the parcellization of sovereignty" (1996) and Caroline Humphrey's on "suzerainties" (2002). Verdery's and Humphrey's research on rural areas, as opposed to Peregudov and Semenenko's focus on massive industrial operations, clearly lends some shape to these different comparisons, as do Peregudov and Semenenko's appeals to organizational and management theory.[14]

Peregudov and Semenenko's analysis also serves the crucial purpose of decentering Western models of the corporate form in Russia, a task that has only become more important as the 1990s turned into the 2000s and a much wider array of global corporations became active in Russia—and Russian corporations engaged ever more broadly around the world. Whether or not we accept Peregudov and Semenenko's division of the world into region-based models, a more global and multipolar perspective than that informing most Soviet-era and 1990s-inflected studies offers great promise on a number of fronts. There is no reason to look only westward, for instance, to gauge the place of "the corporation" in various Russian cultural imaginaries, a topic with many interesting leads—including around concepts of ownership, mastery, and belonging (e.g., Davidov 2017; Rogers 2006) and collective and *kollektiv* (e.g., Humphrey 1998, 2002; Kharkhordin 1999)—but that awaits more comprehensive treatment. Relatedly, again from this more global comparative perspective, how should we understand the proliferation, structure, and experience of state corporations in Russia, especially but not exclusively the "Ros-" and "Rus-" corporations such as Rosneft, Rosatom, and Rusnano? Beyond this, though, *types* of state participation in corporations made available in Russian corporate law are more varied and intricate than is often assumed, running the gamut from "state corporation" to regional "unitary corporation," each of which is different from the (also common) configuration in which the state holds a majority

[14] Indeed, although I have focused in this article on the study of corporations as it has developed the US-based academy, some of the closest scholarship in Russia proceeds under the banner of the "anthropology of organizations" (e.g., Bogatyr 2012).

of shares in a joint-stock company. Investigation of these issues, in ways informed not just by trajectories out of the 1990s but by a robust theorization of the globally morphing corporate form—and by ethnography or other empirical research—would contribute significantly to our understandings of what I identified at the outset as the centrality of corporations to the grammar of Russian politics.

TECHOPOLITICS, THE BODY, AND CLASS FORMATION

Susanne Wengle's, Ben Krupp's, and Dominic Martin's contributions to this cluster of articles point to still more ways in which a focus on corporations has much to offer. Wengle's *Post-Soviet Power: State-Led Development and Russia's Marketization* (2015) was an especially compelling contribution to the questions of state-business relationships in the post-Soviet period. It followed the material logic of particular geographic-cum-economic conglomerates, arguing for the centrality of "regionally specific development deals" to the course of marketization. Wengle's contribution here uses the innovative lens of technopolitics to explain the meteoric rise of Russian agroholdings in the past decade. Analyses that track the flows of money between Russian state agencies and companies—whether those flows are licit, illicit, or somewhere in between—are legion, but Wengle demonstrates the importance of *technology* to this relationship. Whether in the use of GPS trackers, new imported models of tractors and combines, or biotechnological innovations in the use of antibiotics, the state-corporate field in Russia's contemporary agricultural sector is very much a technopolitical field. Imported Western technologies have, in their very materiality and the kinds of agriculture they do and do not enable, thus lent significant shape to the route by which farms and fields have been stitched together into enormous agroholdings. To fully understand the phenomenon of agroholdings, the place of the agricultural sector in the Russian state, and even how Russians eat, Wengle's focus on technopolitics suggests, requires attention to the seemingly mundane technologies by and through which corporations do their work.

If Wengle focuses our attention on the technological materiality of the corporation (see also Rogers 2012) in the agricultural sector, Krupp's ethnography of fitness and *fizkul'tura* in Moscow explores the material intersections of corporation and state in the body. The line of investigation into corporations and corporeality is centuries old: bodies politic, corporate, and physical were, after all, very much on the mind of Thomas Hobbes when he warned, in *Leviathan*, that the new trading companies of his era were "lesser Commonwealths in the bowels of a greater, like worms in the entrails of natural man" ([1651] 2006:187).[15] The bodies of interest to Krupp,

[15] See Barkan (2013) for a fascinating genealogy of the centuries-long mutual dependency of states and corporations in the West—a relationship that, Barkan suggests, has had far more implications for the workings of sovereignty and governance than is often appreciated. The history of corporate charters—and, indeed, of sovereignty—is very different in Russia than in the Anglo-American history that Barkan explores, but his nudge to see states and corporations as mutually implicated in the practical unfolding of sovereignty is nevertheless worthy of investigation in the Russian case.

however, are not metaphorical. They stretch and lunge in time with the fitness programs provided by Nike apps, sweat through pickup basketball games on Nike-sponsored courts, and work out on the relics of Soviet exercise infrastructure. Branding is omnipresent, both seductive and suspicious.[16] To inhabit a fit body, or to desire one, Krupp shows, is to find oneself confronted with the embodied stratigraphy of neoliberal Moscow. Health and the body are, at once, ever more corporatized and internationalized, subject to new attentions of the state in the Putin regime's periodic programs of state-sponsored fitness, and, in both contexts, never as far as one might expect from Soviet-style *fizkul'tura*.

In its consideration of the fate of Western corporations, projects, and personnel as they move East, Krupp's ethnography of Nike in recent Moscow revisits and updates some of the themes that concerned Dunn in her analysis of the 1990s encounter between Gerber and Alima. Dominic Martin, however, artfully reverses this common West-to-East flow and examines a more recent phenomenon: the movement of Russian corporations, projects, and personnel in increasingly international circuits. Martin's study opens in England, where a series of connections has provided him with a part-time job tutoring the children of Russian oil and gas elites stationed abroad. Martin discerns in his tutoring and other interactions the making of a new and distinctive incarnation of Russian "estate society" enabled by elite education and analyzes it with the help of Pierre Bourdieu's studies of class and distinction. It turns out, however, that Martin's employer's employer is also one of the chief corporate players in the region around Bol'shoi Kamen' in the Russian Far East, where Martin had previously conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork. The company is also heavily involved in education there, although in a very different form and manner of class formation. It is precisely a transnational corporate chain—perhaps predictably in the hydrocarbon sector—that enables Martin to link processes of class formation and distinction on the edges of an Oxbridge college and in the oil and gas company—sponsored schools of Bol'shoi Kamen' and, thereby, to provide an uncommon window into the global nature of corporate forms today.

In each of the following articles, corporations feature as remarkably complex and intricate objects of analysis. This complexity was no less characteristic of the corporations of the Soviet and early post-Soviet eras, but those corporations have often seemed to observers to be exceptional, "transitional," uncertain, chaotic, or otherwise abnormal. Today's Russian corporations have their particularities, of course, but it is increasingly clear that they are very much part of a global story of ongoing transformations of the corporate field. Technopolitics, embodiment, and class formation are parts of that field—in Russia and elsewhere—but hardly define it. The more we see today's Russian corporations as very much embedded in—rather than exceptional to—these global trends and transformations, the more it will make sense to follow Harris in seeing their Soviet predecessors as also—if differently—caught up in global processes. And the more scholarship on corporations around the world takes account of Soviet and Russian corporations, the richer it will be.

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[16] On postsocialist corporate branding, see especially Manning and Uplisashvili (2007).

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