

Risto Alapuro

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Risto Alapuro. Address for correspondence: Department of Social Research, Unit of Sociology, University of Helsinki, PB 24, Helsinki, 00014, Finland. risto.alapuro@helsinki.fi.

It is a commonplace to say that voluntary associations in Russia, and Russian collective action more generally, do not fulfill the requirements of democratic political culture (Evans 2002). They allegedly fail to promote generalized reciprocity (Putnam 1995). This form of reciprocity means that the involvement is open to all who fulfill a general criterion related to a concern or a cause, that those who enter the association are equal as bearers of this quality, and that they are detached from other ties in pursuing common objectives (Gellner 1995).

Anna Colin Lebedev's book about Soldiers' Mothers seems to confirm this pessimistic view. She writes: "The complaints by the soldiers' mothers do not aim at establishing a connection with a cause—the defense of rights—but with a person whose affection they are longing for. This way of establishing a tie is very far from the ideal-typical figure of an individual who must detach himself from the ties of dependence in order to engage in collective action furthering the common good" (115). Yet the author does not approach her theme from a pessimistic (Western) perspective that would stress the lack or the absence of something worthy or valuable. Her great merit is that she is able to recast the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, certainly the most extensively studied instance of associational activity in Russia, from a perspective that makes the personal dimension of the organization understandable in its own right, not as a distraction or a deficit but as an integral part of action along with the civic dimension. Important for this reevaluation is that, more seriously than the other students of the movement, she includes in her analysis not only activists and volunteers working in the Committee but also those people, mainly mothers, who have addressed letters to the organization. The claimants were mainly women from fragile families, with scarce economic or psychological resources, and anxious about the treatment of their sons in the military service. Usual themes of complaints were the brutal utilization of conscripts in armed conflicts (the "first Chechen War" from 1994 to 1996 gave a powerful impulse to the movement), the excessive violence against them, ensuing desertions, inexplicable cases of death or disappearance of conscripts, and the damage the son's military service did to the family.

For her study, Colin Lebedev analyzed a sample of nearly six hundred letters out of the tens of thousands sent to the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers in Moscow between 1990 and 2001. Over five years she also spent several periods of observation on the premises of the organization.

Claimants have been neglected in earlier research, says the author, because the predominant theoretical approaches are insensitive to the complexity of *participation* in social movements. The perspective based on frame alignment processes, for example (see Benford and Snow 2000), directs attention to the collective level, to the creation of general categories or a common frame, at the expense of the underlying processes that lead to a convergence. As Colin Lebedev puts it: “[In that perspective] it is difficult to understand the process through which concrete personal concerns transform themselves into general interpretative frames that draw people into collective action” (105). In other words, that perspective does not help in answering the key question: how can a claim based on personal concerns and proximity, like the anxiety of mothers, give rise to action in the public sphere, and how can it be combined with the civic pursuit of (human) rights, proper to public action?

There are two logics here: the logic of civic action and the logic of proximity. They are graphically expressed in the name of the organization. It is a *committee* but a committee of *mothers*, the group including the whole continuum of people from claimants to volunteers to activists. To analyze the relationship and interaction between these two logics, Colin Lebedev invokes the so-called French pragmatist sociology, developed notably by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (2006). In their conceptualization of orders of worth (*les grandeurs*) or “worlds of justification,” concerns are transformed, in different ways, into generalized arguments that count as acceptable in the public disputes and other public debates. Two orders of worth are especially relevant for Colin Lebedev’s analysis: the civic world, in which arguments are based on equality and solidarity, and the domestic world, in which what is considered just stems from the trustworthiness entrenched in personal and local ties, proximity, and dependence.

From this perspective the author examines the *compromise* the organization has succeeded in providing in the public sphere between the civic order of worth and the domestic order of worth. The Committee’s objective is to find for mothers a way to intervene in the military sphere in a manner that translates the solicitude for soldiers and their close relatives into a right. In the author’s view, the case of Soldiers’ Mothers shows how a combination of the maternal dimension and the civic dimension can bring about a particular mode of collective action in the public sphere.

The relationship between the two logics, and the tension between them, is approached with other analytic tools as well. The notion of the “rise in generality” refers to a process, in which the Committee strives first to adopt legitimate categories in an internal discussion, starting from individual concerns, and then to use these categories in the public sphere. More significant still is the distinction between the ethics of justice and the ethics of care. It is important because Colin Lebedev shows how maternal care, deeply rooted in the Soviet tradition, continues to be influential in Russia. In Soviet ideology and politics the mother was a central figure, and her role was based on the significance of care (*zabota*) and not on rights. Care was not a right but an obligation, sealed by a promise made by the paternalist state. Through the

mother a close tie was established between the Soviet regime and the family. According to the author, this particular connection has powerfully contributed to a combination of civic argumentation and an attachment to the state based on domestic grammar in the Russian mode of claim making.

One could perhaps argue that the appropriateness of Colin Lebedev's approach is limited because the continuum of participation—from claimant mothers to volunteers and activists—is atypical even in Russia and because the relevance of care as an attribute of the Russian state has faded since the end of the Soviet Union. As to the latter issue, Colin Lebedev herself recognizes the change that has taken place. Yet it would be hasty to assume that cultural structures linked to state paternalism could be easily erased. As to the former argument, one could argue that it is exactly the skillful combination of civic and domestic logics that has made Soldiers' Mothers so pivotal as a form of contention in Russia. As Colin Lebedev says, her case study shows that in order to be successful, civic action in Russia must make a detour via care. Viewed from this perspective, her study manages to describe highly expressively the tension between justice and care, a central feature in Russian political culture.

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