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CHAPTER EIGHT

SOCIAL SECURITY, CARE AND THE "WITHDRAWING STATE" IN RURAL RUSSIA

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This chapter presents the development of a research project, exploring the ways in which social security is produced and experienced in rural Russia. Based on a case study of Burla village¹, the project investigates the ways in which caring practices and material support are provided by and exchanged within a range of formal and informal, state and non-state, community and kinship structures. Burla is the district centre of Burla district, situated in Altai krai and bordering Kazakhstan to the west. The economy of the district is almost exclusively agricultural. There is one relatively successful large agricultural enterprise still functioning locally as well as a number of smaller scale enterprises and private farms. Efforts have been made recently to develop commercial ventures and small-scale tourism around the district's many lakes, with varying degrees of success. In general economic terms, after years of decline, things have been getting slightly better over the last few years. However, many of the larger enterprises are struggling to avoid bankruptcy, especially in the face of the current economic crisis. In terms of household economies, much of the

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¹ I have considered changing the name of the village in order to protect the anonymity of key respondents who are easily identifiable by their professional roles. However, discussions with these same people during my fieldwork made clear that they were bemused and, if anything, rather insulted by such a suggestion. As they impressed upon me, one of the motivations for them in participating in my research was that it would tell the story of *their* village. Anne White (2004, 10) reports a similar experience in her work in small-town Russia. And so I have decided to use real place names and first names and patronymics for these respondents. Other research participants are referred to by pseudonyms and anonymized as far as possible.

population is still heavily reliant on subsidiary agriculture, as well as on fishing and foraging, the results of which are sometimes sold to commercial buyers travelling between Kazakhstan and the larger urban centres of Altai krai. Burla village has a population of 5,000 within a district of 14,000. As the district centre, it accommodates the majority of social services and administrative structures; a high percentage of the population is employed in the public sector. The standard of living is somewhat higher than across the district as a whole and Burla is considerably larger than most villages in the district. In addition to a number of reasonably successful villages with populations of over 1000, there are other villages in the district which are on the verge of dying out—the smallest having a population of just 17.3

This chapter begins by exploring the theoretical and contextual frameworks for the study through a discussion of theoretical approaches to understanding "social security", "care" and "the state", followed by a review of existing literature on welfare, social security and rural life in contemporary Russia. It then goes on to present and discuss early findings from fieldwork conducted in March 2008 and April 2009.⁴

Understanding Social Security, Care and the Withdrawing State

In recent decades, neoliberal reforms, processes of retrenchment and privatization of welfare services have impacted on the relationships and distribution of responsibilities between states, markets, families and

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² Although wages in the public sector have been notoriously low and unreliable since the 1990s, in recent years considerable efforts have been made to end delays in the payment of wages, and in rural areas, public sector wages are generally viewed as favourably stable and are considerably higher than those available in what remains of the agricultural sector. In April 2009, public sector workers in Burla were guaranteed a minimum monthly wage of 4,300 roubles, whilst seasonal workers in the remains of the local state farms could be paid as little as 800 roubles a month and could expect to be laid off completely over the long winter months. The average subsistence minimum for Altai krai in the first quarter of 2009 was 4864 roubles.

³ This decline in population is attributed primarily to out-migration, birth rates having exceeded death-rates locally for all but the last 2–3 years of the preceding decade.

⁴ This project is funded by the British Academy Small Grants Scheme: project SG-51772 Social Security, Care and the 'Withdrawing State' in Rural Russia: a Case Study from Altai Krai.

communities for the provision of care and access to material support in many countries of the world (Kingfisher 2002; Pierson 2006). Different ways of conceptualising social security and understanding its relationship to welfare and other forms of social provisioning have been required as the foci of responsibility for ensuring against risk and securing people's present and future well-being have shifted away from the state and society in general, towards smaller communities, families and individuals (Rose 1996, 327–331). Anthropological understandings of social security, developed originally on the basis of ethnographic research in developing countries, have focused on the ways in which people mitigate risk and produce securities (social, economic, personal and cultural) by creatively drawing on public and private resources and relationships, formal and informal networks and practices, state and non-state institutions and structures (Benda-Beckmann et al. 1988; Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann 2000). More recently, economic and political developments in advanced industrialized countries have demonstrated the wider relevance of such complex theorizations of social security. These broader frameworks for understanding social security are perhaps particularly relevant to the post-socialist region where such reform processes have been especially intense (Thelen and Read 2007).

Rethinking the State

Such approaches to understanding social security also offer useful insight into the contested nature of the state, which is again, perhaps, particularly relevant to ongoing debates in post-socialist studies. Rather than measuring the scope and assessing the impacts of differing levels of state provision, these perspectives encourage us to view states as multilayered entities, made up of a range of actors and institutions which interact with other public and private sphere actors in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. As Herzfeld has pointed out states are, in fact, integral to rather than separate from or outside of social life (Herzfeld 1997, 5). Moreover, "politicians, civil servants, professionals and intellectuals are 'ordinary people' too [--] the tribe of politicians is a collectivity that consists of different people doing a variety of things" (Herzfeld 1997, 11– 12). This collectivity is, however, neither singular nor homogenous. Loyalties, cultures and interactions may vary markedly at different geographical scales (local, regional, national) and between different subsets of this tribe.

Thus, the boundaries between state and non-state entities and activities may be expected to be blurred and permeable and it is not surprising to

find that they are spanned in the strategies and networks of various individuals, groups and organizations. These complex social relations and interactions impact directly on the production of social security in many post-socialist contexts:

Local state actors [have] utilized the period of accelerated change to construct a safety net of wealth and power for themselves and their families, and at the same time created patronage networks that constitute the social security arrangements for villagers (Thelen et al. 2008, 11).

Boundaries and hierarchies within or between different parts of the state apparatus impact significantly on the ways in which local social security arrangements emerge and develop.

The development of what might be termed "new welfare actors" in Western as well as post-socialist contexts also raises questions about the professed clarity of state-non-state boundaries and the various ways in which these are negotiated. Of course one should be wary of implying the existence of a singular Western model of welfare arrangements or indeed of relationships between state and non-state actors. Corporatist, liberal and social democratic welfare regimes and their differing implications for stratification, social solidarity and modes of citizenship have been extensively explored and discussed in the academic literature (Esping-Andersen 2006, 165–169). The Anglo-Saxon model of civil society, conceived primarily as made up of organizations independent from the state and able to mediate between citizens and the state (Wedel 1994, 232). dominated much political and academic debate during the 1990s regarding the development of non-state organizations and civic activism in the postsocialist region. Yet this model has long been subject to critique as an "ideal of social organization that seems to bear little relation to current realities" (Hann 1996, 1), even in those western countries from which it is claimed to originate. Meanwhile, other Western models of state-society relations, particularly with regard to welfare and citizenship, conceive of these boundaries rather differently. In the Nordic social-democratic model, for example, "the state is perceived as a tool for solving social problems" (Siim 2000, 111). As a result rather than viewing their role as one of opposing or holding back the state, voluntary organizations and social reform movements in countries, such as Denmark, have in fact been the source of demands for "more state" (Kolstrup 1996, 454, cited in Siim 2000, 111) and the notion of close cooperation between state and non-state actors is neither new nor alarming.

In contemporary Russia, the structures which provide social services to the population and the ways in which these are accessed and combined

into other less formal systems of support and security frequently ignore, manipulate or transcend state and non-state boundaries. Increasingly, these boundaries are straddled by a range of initiatives, centres and groups (Thomson 2000; Richardson and Taraskin 2006; Schechter and Kulianov 2003). Some have deliberately set up dual "shadow" structures which allow them effectively to function as legitimate actors in both sectors simultaneously (Kay 2007, 56–9; Johnson 2007, 54). A multiplicity of formal and informal networks, personal and institutional resources, knowledge and relationships are involved in providing, regulating and accessing the services which these new welfare actors offer. Thus, the state's ongoing involvement in the production of social security cannot be explained simply in terms of either intrusive paternalism or abandonment and withdrawal, nor can the responses of local populations be understood simply in terms of either passivity and dependence or entirely self-sufficient and increasingly individualized coping strategies.

Care and Emotional Aspects of Security

On both sides of the former East-West divide, questions of care, need and entitlement have been frequently evoked in public/political and academic debate about welfare reforms and the redistribution of responsibilities for securing families, communities and individuals against poverty and risk. Arguments in favour of a reduction in state provision point to problems with the quality of institutionalized care–especially, but not exclusively in the context of state socialism-criticize a lack of consumer choice, and identify dependency and passivity as outcomes of overbearing, interventionist and paternalistic state welfare regimes (Cook 2007, 44). It has been suggested that communities, families and other non-state actors, including charities, self-help groups or volunteer projects are better at providing authentic and empowering forms of care and breaking cycles of dependency (Kittay and Feder 2002). Yet, feminist scholars, amongst others, have pointed out that care both as a concept and as a practice has tended to be marginalized and undervalued economically, socially and politically. Both a consequence and a cause of this marginalization is that responsibilities for the provision of care in both state and non-state contexts are gendered, classed and ethnicized (Tronto 1993).

Where caring duties, which had been seen as the responsibilities of a welfare state, are shifted to the private or non-state arenas of homes, families and communities, this can further add to the invisibility, low status and exploitation of carers (Waerness 1984; Ungerson 1990; Kittay and Feder 2002). Thus, processes which privatize responsibilities for care

often work against principles of gender equality, social justice and the equitable distribution of income and resource. In the contemporary Russian context, as in much of the post-socialist region, such tendencies are particularly stark, since rapid changes in state provision have coincided with experiences of widespread insecurity, rapidly expanding socioeconomic inequalities and explicit calls for a revival of traditional gender divisions between feminine caring roles and masculine responsibilities for income generation in the family (Gal and Kligman 2000; Kay 2006).

Care is also an integral aspect or dimension of the wider anthropological understandings of social security outlined above. In seeking to understand how people experience social security in specific local contexts, ethnographic studies have found that feelings of trust, integration into communities of care and informal networks of support, as well as emotional or existential forms of security, are equally as significant as material aspects of security (Benda-Beckman and Benda-Beckman 2000, 7). As Thelen and Read point out (2007, 6), "often it is not simply access to material resources that makes people feel secure, but a network of social relations to which they can appeal in times of crisis and need". This seems to be particularly resonant with the findings of a wide range of studies in Russia and the post-socialist region and may go some way to explaining what some have seen as the "economic irrationality" of household survival strategies (Clarke 1999, 177-179). Informal networks of reciprocal support and care and creative combinations of formal and informal, state and private economic activities which enabled people to navigate the shortcomings of the planned economy under state socialism have played perhaps an even more crucial role in overcoming the challenges and insecurities of post-socialist transformations (Pavlovskaya 2004; Pine and Haukanes 2005). As Anne White noted in her study of the intelligentsia in small-town Russia, the sense of community and emotional support offered by friends, colleagues and relations can play a crucial role in warding off the physical damage which may be caused by stress (White 2004, 135-137).

Welfare and Social Service Provision in Post-Soviet Russia

The above presented multiple perspectives on social security are missing from or only partially addressed in much of the existing literature on welfare and social service provision in contemporary Russia. Currently research in this field tends to be polarized between macro-level studies with a strong focus on the state and formal provision of material benefits and services (e.g. Cook 2007; Field and Twigg 2000) and micro level

studies focusing predominantly on non-state actors and informal networks of support (e.g. Caldwell 2004; Kay 2000; Hemment 2007).

The Withdrawing State?

The state is most frequently found to be engaged in a process of retrenchment and liberalization, defined as "cuts in benefits and entitlements that reduce payments or restrict eligibility", and "deep changes in the structures of the welfare state, the dismantling of public programs and administration and their replacement by social insurance markets and privatized social services" (Cook 2007, 10). These images of state withdrawal and relinquishing of responsibility are mirrored in micro-level studies focusing on the experiences of new non-state actors struggling to offer support and assistance to the needy. Here the dilemmas and feelings of abandonment of those involved are often highlighted (Hemment 2007, 16). There is no doubt that a sense of abandonment by the state has shaped many people's experiences of post-socialist transformation (Pine 1998, 116), nor is there any question that many of the social guarantees, securities and services previously provided by the state have either been lost or have become more expensive and less reliable. Yet, this picture of unmitigated withdrawal fails to capture the fact that in certain areas the state has had to take on new responsibilities, developing previously unknown benefits and programmes of social assistance in order to deal with unprecedented numbers of unemployed, impoverished and otherwise vulnerable citizens (Thelen and Read 2007, 9; Thomson 2002). Many of these programmes were implemented over the course of the 1990s, in tandem with processes of decentralization which delegated an array of new responsibilities to regional and local state authorities. This has been followed more recently in Russia by a secondary process of partial recentralization (Young and Wilson 2007). Thus, the nature of the state and its engagement with the processes of producing social security is complex, fragmented and at times contradictory: it cannot be explained solely in terms of withdrawal.

Where the relationship between state and non-state actors in the provision of social services is addressed, particularly where this is analysed in relation to the development of civil society and processes of democratization, clearly defined boundaries and a separation of roles and activities are often assumed as guiding principles and a measure of good practice. Nordic models of cooperation between the state and civil society have not generally been considered (cf. Kulmala, in this volume). On the contrary, collaboration between state and non-state sectors is implicitly

viewed as evidence of widespread corruption and latent authoritarianism within post-socialist states and societies (Wedel 2001, 111–113; Johnson 2007, 54). Yet, as Hemment argues, the reconfiguration of civic organizations as "'partners' of the state, stepping in to take on the responsibilities it divests itself of', can also be seen as part of a wider neoliberal project, which emphasizes the responsibilities of the individual and the empowering qualities of voluntary work and self-help strategies (Hemment 2007, 52–53). Drawing on the work of Susan Hyatt, Hemment shows that, in the USA as well as in Russia, this aspect of neoliberalism "gives rise not to the state's retrenchment but to its subtle extension. Civil society and the relations and institutions it fosters are not separate from the state, but instead are intimately entangled" (Hvatt 2001, 204; Hemment 2007, 53). Meanwhile, a range of studies focusing on the micro level experiences of the activists, volunteers, members and clients most directly engaged in these processes, whilst noting that blurred boundaries raise questions about organizational autonomy and the "scope to push for change", also point out that "partnership" between state and non-state sectors can be effective in getting things done and can promote the credibility and sustainability of projects (Thomson 1999; Schecter and Kulianov 2003).⁵

Questions of Care and Emotional Support

Whilst generally missing from more macro-level assessments of state welfare programmes and benefit transfers, questions of emotional care and of people's intersecting use of formal and informal networks and resources are often discussed in some detail in micro-level studies. Here interpersonal relationships between those providing and those receiving care and assistance are an important part of the analysis (Rivkin-Fish 2005, 10; Caldwell 2004, 62–63). Nevertheless, the complexity of these cross-cutting relationships of care and their resistance to clear-cut categorizations as state or non-state, formal or informal, material or emotional, often provoke a sense of disquiet or a need for justification. In her study of maternal health care in St Petersburg for example, Rivkin-Fish discusses what she terms the "personalising strategies for change" employed "when doctors and patients strive to transform the public, bureaucratic character of the health care setting by personalizing it-replacing official, standardized protocols with the obligations and

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⁵ These experiences are not, of course, unique to the post-socialist region (e.g. Rose 1999, 347).

interactions of kinship and friendship". She moves quickly to state, "I stress here however, that personalizing strategies must not be summarily dismissed as instances of "corruption" for they are often perceived by participants to be evidence of higher moral activity than many official practices" (Rivkin-Fish 2005, 10). My point here is not to idealize informal networks or to deny the existence of corrupt or nepotistic practices, but rather to suggest that this is not all that is going on. Further exploration and analysis of these kinds of relationships and interactions must also explore their emotional dimensions. As others have pointed out, there is a need "to theorize socially productive forms of practice that are otherwise glossed [and dismissed] as failure, apathy, anti-politics and corruption" (Gilbert et al. 2008, 11).

A final feature of the literature on welfare is that whether focused at the level of the state or looking at the work of third sector organizations, it is overwhelmingly urban in focus. As discussed in the following section, research conducted in rural settings has tended to focus on processes of state withdrawal and abandonment and to assume an absence of third sector activity, creating the impression of a social security "vacuum" in rural towns and villages. The broader, more holistic theorisations of social security discussed above, which I have used to frame my study in Burla are helpful in pushing us to explore in detail the practices, relationships and strategies which rural people doubtless do employ in order to mitigate risk and produce as much social security as they can for themselves and their families. As we shall see the resources, networks and structures involved in these processes are drawn from a mixture of state and non-state, personal, private and public sources.

Rural Realities in Contemporary Russia

Developments in rural areas of Russia since the early 1990s have often seemed to epitomize and embody discourses of collapse and state withdrawal following the end of state socialist system. There can be little doubt that in the first decade, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, rural areas experienced a marked acceleration of negative economic and demographic trends which had existed for many years (Bridger 1997). Recent research has contested characterizations of rural Russia as resistant to reform and failing to adapt to the new economic and political context (Wegren 2004; Lindner 2007). Nonetheless, the absence of the state, the loss of previous guarantees and certainties leading to endemic and "networked" poverty (Shubin 2007) and infrastructural collapse remain central themes (Lindner 2007, 503).

Without challenging this picture of state abandonment, ethnographic accounts have suggested that mixed economies and "symbiotic" relationships between the remnants of state-run agricultural enterprises and local populations have provided frameworks within which people are able to live, work and maintain a sense of community in spite of the absence of the state (Gambold Miller 2003). The remaining large farms and agricultural enterprises are described as heirs to the former collective and state farms. This is in part because that they continue to control land resources and the management of agricultural production, but also because they continue to offer at least a minimum of social assistance and guarantees. Of course, this function was an integral part of the farms' former incarnation as the institutional link between the state and the rural population. Yet in post-Soviet Russia, the continuation of such activities is neither financed nor decreed by the state and is explained most often as a vestige of the past, anomalous, if endearing, in the new economic climate and, as such, perhaps unlikely to endure (Serova and Zviagintsev 2006, 11; Bogdanovskii 2003). Ethnographic and anthropological studies refer more explicitly to concepts of care, reciprocity and social responsibility to explain interactions which do not follow the logics of neoliberal market ideologies. Gambold Miller (2003, 14 and 17), for example, wrote about the "maternalistic care of the village", demonstrated by the director of a former kolkhoz, and quotes her as saying "I could not just let the peasants, especially the pensioners who have worked here all their lives, suffer".

Studies focusing beneath the level of the farm or enterprise highlight the roles of households and informal networks of kin, neighbours and friends in providing access to various forms of practical and material assistance and emotional support and care (Lylova 2002). Subsidiary farming activities, access to and ability to work the land are often emphasized in studies of this kind. Pallot and Nefedorova's (2007) extensive study of subsidiary farming activities and household production points out that this is not only about survival but can be, for some, a successful form of income generation drawing again on a range of resources from sources including surviving large agricultural organizations, local authority controlled land and kinship or local community labour pools. Like earlier studies of social security in the "developing world", studies of life in contemporary rural Russia seem to imply that people are producing social security with little, if any, support from the state.

In the overwhelming majority of studies of the post-Soviet Russian countryside then, the state is notable for its absence or plays an obstructive or destructive role (Wegren 2004). Local administrative authorities are usually marginal, if present at all, in accounts focusing on the micro level.

They may be acknowledged as playing a role in the distribution of resources, in particular access to land, which allows rural people to survive, or even flourish, in spite of the absence of the state. However, the authorities, namely those local people who are vested with power through the administrative structures which certainly do exist at the local level, tend to be described above all as acting in a corrupt or self-serving manner. As such their actions are not those of a legitimate state but instead feed into the informal "shadow economy" (Pallot and Nefedorova 2007, 5–7), which thrives due to the weakness of the central state (Lindner 2007, 404 and 503) and within which people must fend for themselves. At the national level, the activities of the state are analysed primarily in terms of formal regulations and changing legislation regarding the organization of agriculture and the (non)maintenance of rural infrastructures (e.g. O'Brien, Wegren and Patsiorkovskii 2004). Some chapters make direct appeals to the state for intervention, but these tend to focus primarily on the need for the state to regulate the rural economy and stimulate local labour markets (Serova and Zviagintsev 2006). Few if any contemporary studies focus specifically on the ways in which local state structures feed into the process of producing social security amongst rural populations (Thelen et al. 2008, 12). Whilst not setting out specifically to study the state per se, my research in Burla has focused primarily on the activities of a statefinanced and state-managed structure: the district Centre for Social Assistance for Families and Children (CSA). As discussed below, this structure is very much embedded within and an important contributor to intersecting local networks and relationships, which transect and blur state-non-state boundaries, and are involved in imperfect and uneven, but nonetheless significant, processes of producing social security for parts of the local population.

Producing Social Security in Burla Village: Initial Findings and Emerging Themes

The remainder of this chapter presents findings from fieldwork, conducted in Burla in 2008 and 2009, focusing primarily on the activities of the CSA. The CSA is part of the state financed social welfare system and was established in 2001 as part of a federal programme aiming to improve the delivery of services to local populations. It is one of 61 such district level Centres operating in Altai krai. The CSA's work focuses primarily on the provision of services for children, young families and pensioners, mirroring national social policy priorities and wider social understandings of vulnerability and constructions of deserving need which help to shape

access to the provision of formal services. The CSA has developed specific programmes for children with psychological or behavioural problems and for children with physical and/or learning disabilities: it runs non-residential summer camps for children from deprived families, incorporates a social-work division providing home care for the elderly and infirm, and hosts a club for pensioners and support groups for unemployed women and for women in "difficult circumstances".

My first visit to Burla was brief. I was there for just a few days in March 2008 when I spent most of the time in the CSA talking with the director, Tat'iana Semenovna, her staff and some of their clients about the Centre's work and programmes. I also conducted interviews with a number of representatives from the district level administration, including Sergei Anatol'evich, deputy head with responsibility for social protection, and the heads of sections for education, culture, and youth and sport. Finally, I took part in a round table discussion with a range of participants, including the heads of administration from two outlying villages, members of clubs for pensioners and for young families run by the CSA, members of the local veterans' councils, head teachers, a journalist and a school psychologist. In April 2009, I returned for a longer, four week, period of fieldwork. Again the CSA formed the main focus of my research, although I also visited and talked with staff at some of the other social and cultural structures, functioning in Burla, and four of its surrounding villages, including schools, kindergartens, cultural centres, libraries, museums, a sports centre and children's art and music schools. I also travelled to CSAs in a number of nearby small towns and district centres. At the Burla CSA, I undertook interviews with staff and engaged in participatory observation at Centre activities, including exercise classes with the pensioners' club and art therapy sessions with the support group for unemployed women.

Formal Provisions

As suggested by the description of fieldwork interactions above, Burla and its surrounding district has a rather extensive network of structures and activities which might be broadly referred to as involved in the distribution of social assistance and production of material, cultural and social securities. The head of the local administration, Aleksandr Nikolaevich, claims to have made a priority, since his election in 2006, of protecting existing social support structures as far as possible and reviving those which had fallen on difficult times during the 1990s. These include a medical centre/hospital in Burla, and schools (at least to primary level) in almost all of the district's villages, as well as kindergartens in some of

them. Burla itself also has sport facilities, children's art and music schools, a library, a museum and a house of culture which hosts regular concerts, weekly discos and sometimes acts as a cinema. The smaller and more outlying villages of the district are clearly less well provided for; however, each of those which I visited had a school, a kindergarten and a clubhouse, a library and/or a museum.

All of these services and structures receive core funding from the state. However, the process of transferring financial and executive responsibility for a range of social programmes to the regional level as required by the reform of local self-government (Young and Wilson 2007) was still ongoing in 2008. By 2009, the mixture of local, regional and federal funding and the lines of accountability and decision-making control were a rather confusing maze. The CSA, for example, was set up as part of a federal level initiative, but one without federal level financing. The premises were originally property of the district administration but have now been transferred to the regional level where the budget for upkeep, core activities and staff salaries also comes from. At the children's art and music schools, the situation was even more complex: wages are paid from the regional budget, yet the premises belong to the district. Repairs, maintenance and utilities bills must be paid from what is now a very tiny local budget.

It was clear from comments made during my stay in Burla that this mixture of responsibilities and relationships of power is far from straightforward and its parameters and implications are not always clear to all parties. As such, it is a source of some friction between the local and regional administrations. It also complicates relationships at the local level between members of the village or district administrations, who may still be looked to for leadership and to resolve problems on a day-to-day basis, and the directors and staff of social sector establishments who sometimes find it more difficult to establish comfortable working relationships with their more distant "bosses". At present, in terms of financing activities, various projects are cofinanced with premises and staff funded from a combination of local and regional budgets. Increasingly, projects and activities are funded externally and on a competitive basis, either through grants (some of which also come from the regional and national levels of the state), or through sponsorship and the development of "social partnerships" with local enterprises. Thus, relationships between the different levels of the state are complicated and sometimes conflicting. Programmes are designed, funded and implemented in ways which transect and blur boundaries between state and non-state organizations. Members of the administration clearly draw on formal and informal relationships and networks of acquaintance and reciprocity in order to secure funding for their programmes and projects.

Informal Networks and Access to Resources

Ouestions of charismatic leadership and interpersonal relations, which have been highlighted in studies of third sector activity in Russia (Sperling 1999; Hemment 2007), are an important underlying factor in the apparent success, or at least high level of activity in the field of what might be described as local social service provision in Burla. Sergei Anatol'evich, the deputy head of the local administration, prides himself on being an active leader, a model of hard work and commitment to the development of the social sector. He makes a point of attending events organized by the CSA and he and Tat'iana Semenovna, the Centre's director, have known each other and worked together for many years. Whilst not formally responsible for the work of the CSA, Sergei Anatol'evich chairs the district commission for juvenile affairs, which may identify families and individual young people as "at risk" and assign them to counselling, therapy and advice sessions or other activities at the CSA. He and Tat'iana Semenovna often discuss issues relating to the Centre and its activities on an informal basis and both are happy to use the resources at their disposal in order to help the other. The offices of the local administration are housed just opposite the CSA and Sergei Anatol'evich pops in quite regularly to chat, and sometimes, after a particularly stressful day, to use the massage and steam bath facilities. When a group of social workers and psychologists visited the village to attend a seminar organized by the administration, Sergei Anatol'evich arranged with Tat'iana Semenovna that the CSA would provide lunch in its well-equipped, bright and welcoming kitchen, "it's the one place in the village where you can be sure you won't be ashamed to take visitors", he said. This close relationship also offers Tat'iana Semenovna the opportunity to discuss problems, to ask for advice and to access support and resources from someone in a position of relatively high power and status locally.

Such blurred boundaries between formal and informal relationships, whilst not particularly surprising in a rural Russian context, bring with them questions about the sustainability of service provision and about the operation of hierarchies of power and authority in the village context. Tat'iana Semenovna explained that she had become director of the CSA at

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 $^{^6}$ Cf. Thomson (1999) for a discussion of the impacts of (un)sympathetic regional political leaders on the development and provision of social services.

the direct request of a former head of local administration and that her first response had been one almost of despair: "I came here and there was nothing, just empty rooms, crumbling walls and broken windows!" Since then however, largely through a process of hard work, constantly pursuing her contacts with those in positions of authority and garnering good relationships with local entrepreneurs, she has managed to refurbish and repair and even extend the premises, installing a kitchen, shower, washing machine, various pieces of gym equipment, and a massage room complete with an individual steam bath. Getting and keeping those in positions of power on side has clearly been an important strategy.

Several years ago, Tat'iana Semenovna wanted to begin a programme of support for men, focused particularly around issues of men's health and non-violent, constructive ways of coping with stress, prompted by a wave of suicides amongst young men in the district. She began by organising a two week intensive programme explicitly for male leaders—heads of village administrations, heads of section in the district administration, the director of the bank, etc. This, she explained, had been a deliberate and ultimately successful strategy:

I must say that not everyone, how can I put it, responded positively straight away [--] many leaders said that, after all, there's no need for work on men's health. Men are the strong sex. [--] [But] on precisely the third day, the men realized that they couldn't do a lot of the exercises, that they couldn't be calm and so the seminar was very successful.

The head of one village administration, whom I met in 2008, referred to his experience of this programme as having convinced him of the importance of this kind of work. He went on to explain that he had since brought boys from the higher classes of his village school for intensive sessions at the Centre.

On the other hand, such processes can be a drain on resources and raise questions about in/exclusion and access to services. Tat'iana Semenovna explained that she frequently provides massage and other therapies to members of the administration free of charge, despite the fact that this is the only part of the Centre's work which normally incurs a small charge. Sergei Anatol'evich's request for lunch required members of staff not only to do the cooking but to shop for ingredients, or bring them from their plots and gardens. This is clearly a drain on energy, time and resources; yet in other, perhaps more legitimate areas of the Centre's work, local people have been turned away due to lack of resources. For example, the pensioners club has a waiting list of pensioners wanting to join; however.

they have been refused for now due to lack of time, human and financial resources.

Informal networks and overlaps with other (non-state) organizations also play a crucial role in extending or denying access to facilities and the sometimes less tangible forms of support offered, for example, by the pensioners club. The initial group of members was formed by a process of informal networking starting from the head of the district veterans' council and spreading through acquaintances and friends inviting others to join. Similarly, a self-help group for women in "difficult circumstances" is primarily made up of medical professionals from the local hospital and veterinary clinic who come together to use the gym equipment in the evenings and talk about the stresses and anxieties of their work and family lives.

Emotional Support and Integration into "Caring Communities"

A further dimension of these overlaps between formal activities based around the centre and informal networks of support and friendship is in the development of "caring communities" amongst the centre's clients. Perhaps the group of clients I came to know most well during fieldwork were the members of the pensioners club. I attended the club's weekly meetings which combine exercise with a chance to socialize and chat, and visited a couple of members in their homes. I also interviewed Alla Ivanovna, the staff member responsible for leading the club. The club often celebrates holidays such as Victory Day, Labour Day, and New Year, together and always marks members' birthdays with a card and a present. Towards the end of my visit in 2009 we celebrated May Day together: there was singing, team games and a feast of home baking and home brew accompanied by speeches, toasts and general hilarity.

One of the most noticeable aspects of all the group's interactions was the amount of laughter involved. Members teased and joked with each other incessantly and there was clearly a lot of affection in the group. Those who arrived looking weary or stressed invariably left in a better mood. If someone failed to turn up unexpectedly, the group would discuss whether anyone knew if there was a problem and sometimes someone would be designated to phone or visit the individual in question to make sure they were ok. Talking about the club, members repeatedly stressed its importance as a "big family" and a way of overcoming the threat of encroaching loneliness and isolation in old age. After one of the sessions, Alla Ivanovna enthused to me about the group saying, "They're a great group. I always feel really good in their company. It's brilliant. We can

talk about anything and we do. We talk and talk, about our health, our families, even about sex. They're all just great!"

This overlapping of informal networks and access to formal provision, however, has an exclusive as well as an inclusive function. As Rose (1996, 347) has pointed out, whilst locating "care" in "communities" may have positive impacts in overcoming isolation and loneliness, communities also frequently suggest a certain moral order and set of shared values, which may lead to the extreme marginalization of "those attached either to no moral community or to a community of anti-morality". In Burla, on the one hand, informal networking seems to be helping to promote activities which rural residents might otherwise find unusual or assume are irrelevant to them. Where networks extend to draw in those in positions of local influence and authority, the impact can be significant in terms of the wider population reached. These processes show the significance of personal connections, questions of trust and collective practices in the ways in which social security is produced locally drawing on a range of resources.

And yet on the other hand, as Rose has warned, such processes simultaneously demonstrate the potentially exclusive power of "moral communities" and raise questions about how "need" and "deserving need" in particular are understood in the village context. In much of what I was told about support and services in Burla, there were subtextual references to deserving and undeserving need. These often mapped fairly neatly to personal networks, with services as well as membership of caring communities being extended to others who are "like us", and not to "others" who are not. I heard frequently from those in positions of control over access to social support and entitlement that "some people just drink and don't want to work and want everything handed to them on a plate, and that there's nothing you can do for them". Almost all of the people I spoke with, particularly those involved in the provision of services and the distribution of resources, spoke about the need to "wean" people off "dependent attitudes" (izhdivenchestvo). It seemed clear that there was little sympathy or support for those whose needs were seen as "undeserving".

Ethnicity, gender and class play a role in the ways in which needs and vulnerabilities are mapped onto categories of entitlement. My previous research into the provision of social support services for working age men in Altai for example, showed that one of the biggest obstacles to the development of such services are the powerful discourses of hegemonic masculinity which maintain that "real men" are neither "vulnerable" nor "needy" (Kay, 2007; also Pietilä and Rytkönen 2008). A discussion with

Sergei Anatol'evich about local migratory trends provided an example of how discourses of ethnicity might also be used in defining deserving and undeserving groups.

We had a lot of Russian Germans here. [--] They were wonderful people! Real hard workers. But [--] bit by bit they began to leave to Germany. And then they left practically en masse. [--] Those who left [--] had worked hard for many years and helped to build up material wealth. [--] But in their place came refugees [--] from Kazakhstan and so on. And it was far from the best who came! [--] So the district got a whole new wave of people who [--] weren't needed in those other countries. And where could they find an easy life? Well let's go to Russia. [--] "Russia won't throw us out, she'll help us".

New narratives of entitlement in the contemporary context draw both on neoliberal discourses of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency and on Soviet-style references to the intrinsic value of work and the importance of contributing to the collective good. This strongly suggests that certain groups of people are likely to be viewed as "undeserving" and excluded from social security systems, possibly at multiple levels simultaneously.

Duties of Care-Gender and "Family"

"Weaning" people away from dependence on the state is also likely to increase the burdens of care within families, which almost inevitably feeds into gendered inequalities, in terms of both caring responsibilities and access to care. 14 care workers, all of them women, are employed in the section for home care within the CSA, providing assistance to around 75 elderly and/or disabled people across the district. I visited several of these clients during my stay in 2009 and met with the care workers for a group interview and discussion. Both clients and care workers talked a lot about the emotional aspect of their relationships, describing it as a long term commitment and one which in many ways replicated family relationships. As one of the care workers put it, "We're everything to them-mum, dad, children and grandchildren all in one". However, the care workers also pointed out that this could be very draining and that they experienced it as much more of a one-way street than might be expected in a "real" family: "We do everything for them and they talk about us as their daughters, 'the light of their lives', but if one of their own children turns up, even though they do nothing for them on a day-to-day basis, it is very quickly clear what our place is". These women, whose jobs involved much more direct care-giving than the more managerial roles of some of the other staff of the CSA, also felt that they were seen as relatively marginal and unimportant in the centre itself, reflecting feminist theorizations of care as marginalized and undervalued (Tronto 1993).

It was no coincidence that care workers and their clients saw their relationship in terms of pseudo family. The state also views this form of provision as a substitute for caring duties normally carried out within the family and Polina Nikolaevna, head of the section for home care, explained in 2008, that a major task in the past year had been the removal of those elderly people with relatives in the same or neighbouring villages from their roll. This, she stated, was "in accordance with family law which states that children are responsible for the care of their parents as well as vice versa". There was no acknowledgement in this process that it might be too much for some families to combine work, household production, care of children and care of elderly and possibly infirm relatives, nor was their any recognition of the gendered nature of such burdens. Meanwhile a headline in one of the newspaper cuttings kept in the Centre pronounced "Women, take care of your men and children" leaving little doubt as to where these additional burdens of care are expected to fall within families.

In Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical and contextual frameworks for and presented early findings from the research project. The theoretical approaches to social security outlined at the start of the chapter, offer a helpful framework for exploring the practices and relationships, which people in Burla draw upon, in order to mitigate risk and produce securities. They assist us in unpicking the complex relationships and structures which make up the state at the local level and the interactions between this level and the more distant regional and national authorities. They also offer useful theoretical insight into the importance of emotional as well as material security and the ways in which care, despite its crucial role in the production of social securities can be marginalized and undervalued. Local definitions of "deserving" need and the ways in which these intersect with access to caring communities, formal services and material provisions are also worthy of investigation and shed light on processes of in/exclusion and marginalization. Unsurprisingly perhaps, gender, class and ethnicity act as categories of identity relating to both need and responsibility which play a role here. Whilst this study, like any detailed local ethnographic research, is in many ways very specific to Burla, its principal themes clearly have wider resonance and may provide interesting insight and additions to our understandings of social security, welfare and care in rural Russia and, perhaps even, other parts of the contemporary world.

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