

'I am an important and needed person.' A study of a support group movement in post-Soviet Latvia

1

Agita Lūse, Senior Researcher, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (University of Latvia)

In 1992, while on a visit to his country of birth, a Canadian psychiatrist of Latvian origin gave an interview to a weekly in which he claimed: 'I think that the Communist system has destroyed a human being's inner harmony, people have become insecure, lost their self-worth, self-esteem, and do not trust each other' (Ukrina 1992). A year later, a doctor, one of the first in Latvia to have acquired the qualification of a psychodynamic psychotherapist, echoed this view: 'The Soviet system cultivated a kind of person who remained psychologically immature' (Mukāne 1993). A psychologist added: 'The Soviet regime might have deliberately cast whole generations of people in a passive mould thus attempting to ensure its future power' (Voitkāne 1997:31).

From the early 1990s onwards, statements about the psychological consequences of the Soviet period on Latvia's population re-surfaced in public discourse. The character of people who grew up during Soviet rule in Latvia has been described as 'passive', 'insecure', 'servile', with low self-worth and self-esteem and a low level of mutual trust. These character features have been retrospectively attributed to the need to accommodate to an oppressive political regime that denied its subjects both the freedom of expression and choice and brought about a sense of distrust as well as apathy (Tüters 2001). Among other factors, the Soviet family model was blamed for inhibiting growth of personal autonomy, initiative and responsibility. Observers from the Latvian diaspora in the West noted 'the lack of awareness and skills of appropriate marital and parental roles' (Gulens 1995). In 1995, some representatives of the diaspora initiated a project, called the Family Support Co-ordination Center, aimed at helping their compatriots in Latvia to 'bring about healing of the interested society in the period of post-communism' (Abula 1997).

In this chapter, exploring that project, I seek to examine the considerations that have led many people to portray not just particular individuals but the whole society of post-socialist Latvia as in need of 'healing'. Relationships in Latvian families, in particular, were considered as 'wounded' by the Soviet regime and thus requiring healing. Allegedly distorted patterns of interpersonal relationships acquired through early socialization were held responsible for many other psychological and social problems. Such a perspective on a wounded body social (cf. Lock & Scheper-Hughes 1990) undoubtedly manifests an implicit concern with gender roles and responsibilities. Therefore I will analyze in what ways the family support project initiated by Western Latvian diaspora has contributed to reshaping gender identities in Latvia, particularly those of women who, in general, responded to the project with much more enthusiasm than men did.

As one of my analytic tools I will use the concept of *gender regime* that Connell (1987) introduced to refer to the state of play of gender relations in a given institution whereby everyday behaviour is ordered or organised around sexual distinctions and role expectations (ibid.: 20). The relationship between different gender regimes – or "the current state of play in the macro-politics of gender" (ibid.) according to Connell constitute the *gender order*. The two concepts advanced by Connell largely overlap with that of *gender cultures* used to describe sets of expectations and guidelines that tell how male and female individuals in the respective society are expected to perceive, think, feel and act (Helman 2001: 110). My intention is to examine the interplay between the dominant gender regime in Latvian families in the 1990s, the corresponding gendered notions

of the self held by Latvian women, and the challenges that the Western psy discourse[i] posed to both the gender regime and gender identities. I contend that a person's identity can be viewed not only as an outcome of socialization or a cultural construct: from the performative perspective it can also be seen a 'project' of the self and the respective practices of gender may be shifting during an individual's life course (Lupton 1998:105).[ii] I will demonstrate that the transformations in gender regime and gender cultures in post-Soviet Latvia reveal the self as something to desire and work on purposefully. Such a turn towards 'self-care', I will argue, reflects not only changing patterns of interpersonal relationships but also a broader and more far-reaching transformation in the post-socialist political and ideological space, namely, advancement of neo-liberal rationality.[iii]

A contest over the 'de-mobilized selves'

Although unarticulated until the 1990s, the resentment at the lack of psychological well-being in Latvia for many years fed the population's reservations about the Soviet political regime and eventually erupted in the mass opposition movement of the late 1980s. As Stukuls Eglitis writes: 'In Soviet Latvia, there was a potent sense that the Soviet order was not normal, that it was illegitimate, illegal, artificially imposed, and contrary to the national "way of life"' (2002:13). The construal of societal order of the state socialist societies as 'abnormal', however, has not been limited to anti-Soviet ideology. It is also to be found in the academic literature dealing with socialist societies. Thus, Klumbyte (2003) notes that among the conceptual tools developed to explain socialism, ideas of duplicity and hidden transcripts have been quite common suggesting divided consciousness and living a double life. In a similar, yet a more appreciative vein, Hankiss ascribes 'ironical freedom' to the state socialist societies. East Europeans, even though deprived of civil rights and subjugated by coercive regimes, he claims, had 'the freedom of not identifying themselves with the system' (Hankiss 1990: 7). Nevertheless, discussing one particular case, namely, that of the post-WWII Hungary, Hankiss characterizes it as a 'paralyzed society':

The ruling élite in Hungary must have been convinced that by disintegrating and atomizing society, by forcing people to withdraw into their private lives, and by disrupting social networks, it would be easier for it to dominate the country and to push society in the direction determined by the élite's vision of the future and of a new type of society (ibid.: 32-33).

Hankiss argues that to protect itself against the ruling élite's oppressive strategies, Hungarian society deployed strategies of self-demobilization: withdrawal into inner emigration, consumerism, political indifference or anomie, as well as escape into illness and alcoholism. He characterizes such reactions as pathological and self-destructive. Hankiss' attempt to account for the psychological malaise of people in a state socialist society has a strong affinity with the views I quoted in the introduction. However, in both cases, too rigid a boundary is drawn between two sets of abstract entities, the ruling élite and the people, the public and the private, thus conjuring a dichotomous vision of two completely separate social worlds. Such accounts tend to simplify the complex configuration of the private versus the public in state socialist as well as post-socialist societies. They construct abstract social and political entities and expose their interrelationship as 'pathological', 'aberrant', at the same time dismissing the need for analyzing subjectivity and agency that may help understand the ways in which state socialist societies actually functioned.[iv]

At times the 'pathologizing' perspectives have been extended from a discussion of the socialist past to a portrayal of the post-socialist present. Within this framework, whole societies,

though liberated from an oppressive regime, are characterized in terms of deficiency. Thus a German sociologist, writing on mutual aid programs in the territory of the former GDR, laments that the health service monopoly under state socialism 'often led to reduced personal initiative, a lack of sense of responsible action and self-determination, and a basically indifferent attitude, all of which are tendencies dangerous in a free-market oriented society' (von Appen 1994: 100). The Estonian sociologist Narusk claims that under the conditions of 'closed information system' people have acquired a 'kind of learned helplessness in the gathering and use of reliable and operative information for social rearrangements' (Narusk 1997: 115).

Commentators in the West, in their turn, have expressed a certain disappointment about the ex-socialist countries' weak response to the newly opened opportunities for civil mobilization. Sampson (2002: 2) observes that both Western authors of democracy assistance programs and their partners in Eastern and Central Europe tend to ascribe the difficulties encountered while implementing a 'civil society' there to local actors' lack of initiative or laziness. Western feminists, in turn, have been perplexed about anti-feminism and the 'absence' of a women's movement there (Watson 2000, Einhorn & Sever 2003, cf. Neimanis 1999: 9). In response to this, Watson reminds us that ex-socialist societies have been challenged not just by a political and economical but also an ideological 'transition'. One of the ideological discourses they are expected to embrace is that of 'civil society' and the accompanying ideas of 'empowerment' and 'control'. Within this discourse, the situations in which people feel increasing stress and loss of control having encountered the post-socialist transformations appear accidental and surely avoidable if only they would take the initiative. Watson points out that an ideological transition of this kind involves re-writing the very rules of perception so that resolution of socially problematic situations is no longer left to the state but viewed in terms of the qualities of selves, such as readiness to take personal initiative (Watson, 2000: 200; cf. Skultans 2003).

In the perspective of theories of identity transformation advanced by Rose (1997, 1998) and Watson (2000), I examine how the participants of the program developed by the Family Support Co-ordination Center (henceforth: FSCC) in Latvia between 1995 and 2003 have attempted to 're-write the rules of perception' and re-define their selves and gender identities. More specifically, I examine how the program, offering a series of techniques and practices, facilitated re-definition of the participants' identities not only vis-à-vis family relationships and social networks but also in relation to divergent gender cultures and gender regimes. I discuss the FSCC project as an example of the way in which particular categories of people in Latvia came to embrace a Western-style psy disciplines (cf. Miller & Rose 1994, Rose 1998, Lupton 1998) and technologies of the self (cf. Foucault 1988).

I structure my discussion in the following way. After briefly characterizing my fieldwork focus and conditions, I outline the developments that brought into existence the FSCC. Then I look at the ways in which the FSCC founders portray the social and moral environment of rural Latvia of the mid-1990s as exigent and requiring intervention. I analyze this portrayal in the perspective of the concurrent changes in the gender order, or 'the macro-politics of gender' (Connell 1987), that were underpinned by a neo-traditional ideological discourse and involved 'de-socialization' of women. Subsequently, drawing on the FSCC program contents and the group participants' responses to it, I explore this project as a vehicle for bringing about a transformation of social and gender identities, and, implicitly, for challenging the dominant gender order in Latvia.

Fieldwork in a network

The discussion in this chapter is part of my doctoral research (Luse 2005) and is based on fieldwork carried out over a six-month period between 2002 and 2003 among the people associ-

ated with the FSCC. The FSCC participants come from a wide range of occupations and social and educational backgrounds, have been variously situated towards the local, national and transnational power structures and hence, have diverse sets of local knowledge of the socio-economic and political transformations of the 1990s. The network thus provides a fruitful case for exploring various perspectives on the notions of individual and societal 'healing' in a post-socialist country.

By the time I embarked on my fieldwork, the FSCC had existed for seven years and had turned into a non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Riga, activists in a number of towns and villages throughout the country and some of the board members in the Western Latvian diaspora. At the core of my fieldwork was participant observation/listening in workshops for the network activists and interviews with activists and members of both former and current groups in different parts of the country. To trace the FSCC origins, in July 2003 I took part in a one-week summer camp called 3x3. There I was able to interview some of the founders and supporters of the FSCC, most importantly, the author of the whole project, the American Latvian Līga Ruperte.[v] I also interviewed four other co-founders of the FSCC, one of them by correspondence. These interviews, as well as documents I found in the FSCC archive in Riga or on related websites, enable us to catch a glimpse of the origins, ethos, and evolution of the family support group network.

The family support program as a mission

As soon as the liberalization of the Soviet regime began in the late 1980s, many Latvians from the West started actively forging links (or intensifying the existing ones) with people and institutions in Latvia. Having observed the societal situation in their country of origin, a number of them expressed their readiness to help accommodate a mental and moral re-orientation of inhabitants of Latvia. These efforts acquired a particular salience in the early 1990s, when society in this ex-socialist country seemed somewhat paralyzed by the introduction of a free market economy.

In June 1995, six enthusiasts, both from the Latvian diaspora and from Latvia, came together in Riga and laid a foundation for Ģimenes Atbalsta Koordinācijas Centrs (the Family Support Coordination Center) setting the following goals: 'To radically enhance the self-organizational capacity of the society and to develop a healthy self-esteem and the sense of social security by promoting a family support movement throughout Latvia.'[vi] For subsequent years, the project was sponsored by Pasaules Brīvo latviešu apvienība (the World Federation of Free Latvians, henceforth WFFL), an organization uniting Latvians in exile (i.e., those who emigrated to the West before or during the World War II, as well as their descendants). Over the years, the WFFL sponsorship to the FSCC accumulated to almost half a million dollars.[vii] By 2003 (which, though, became the last year of this support) about two thousand people from all over Latvia had completed a forty-hour training program focused on managing family relationships.

The main initiator of the FSCC project was Līga Ruperte, a social worker and family counselor of Latvian origin from the United States. In the early 1980s she had initiated a family summer camp movement, called 3x3, intended to help Latvian families in the West sustain their ethnic identity.[viii] As the Iron Curtain fell in the late 1980s, Ruperte established contacts with representatives of the Latvian intelligentsia who began visiting their compatriots in the West. The idea of the 3x3 movement was soon endorsed in Latvia, and from 1990 onwards, summer camps were held also there. Since 1992, two yearly camps have drawn between 400 and 600 people from all corners of the country and from abroad (Celle & Krūmiņa 1996).

Ruperte has been traveling from the United States to be present at every camp held in

Latvia. During these events, jointly with Māra Tupese, an American Latvian schoolteacher, she facilitated a series of workshops called *ģimenes semināri* (family seminars) to discuss issues of interpersonal relationships. Since 1991 both have also been regular contributors in the training of students and the continuing education of teachers and social workers in Latvia.[ix] Providing courses and seminars in numerous towns around the country Ruperte also gained some insight into the problems encountered by families, particularly in rural areas: difficulties of social and economic character as well as distressing interpersonal relationships. It was around 1994 that the idea of a support group movement was born. The responses to the 3x3 family seminars gradually prompted Ruperte to consider support and self-help groups as a way towards solving many problems that the seminar participants had reported.

What motivated Latvians in the West to provide assistance to their country of origin in the form of a support group movement? In other words, what prompted the diaspora to provide counseling to their compatriots? First, it needs to be reiterated that the goals of the FSCC corresponded to the concerns expressed by many of its Western supporters, namely, their dedication to help bring about 'healing of Latvia's society' emerging from an oppressive rule. Secondly, there is a certain power dimension in the relationship between donors and recipients. Ideas and resources do not simply flow: they are directed, channeled and monitored in order to promote a system that is believed to be the best (Sampson 2002, cf. Herloff Mortensen 1999: 23). The proposed goals of the FSCC fitted in well with the priorities that the WFFL set in the 1990s: 'With the renewal of Latvian independence, the WFFL has become involved in helping to build the foundations for true democracy' (WFFL 2003). Vaira Paegle, a leading Latvian politician from the Western diaspora and a supporter of the FSCC, emphasized in one of her speeches the role of family in maintaining or subverting a particular political system. Delivering her speech on the day of the 60th anniversary since the Soviet forces invaded Latvia, Paegle asserted: 'We know well enough that the main goal of the annexation was to diminish our nation's developmental potential, to destroy Latvian people and their state through destroying family' (Paegle 2000: 3). Accordingly, strengthening of the family was seen as a way to eliminate the consequences of Soviet rule and establish a democratic political system in Latvia. In my conversation with Ruperte in the summer of 2003, she explained what prompted her to devote her time and energy to educating people in Latvia back in the early 1990s: 'There was little understanding, or knowledge of psychology, and people were not aware of the family as a value.'[x] Her co-worker Tupese had a similar impression:

There was a great lack of information on questions of psychology, as well as of the capacity of creative problem solving. Many people kind of expected that the government would solve their personal problems. I think that a lot of people were perplexed at that time and were feeling insecure about their place in the new, independent Latvia, as well as depressed about their financial difficulties.[xi]

An official from the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia (for some years also a board member of the FSCC) endorsed these impressions in one of her speeches: 'Maybe we have not gained that experience from our parents: how to build relationships ..., solve conflicts, what is going to happen once a baby is born' (Pauloviča 2000: 2). As both Ruperte and Tupese observed, the participants in the courses and seminars held in Latvia were initially quite reluctant to share their personal concerns with others: 'People were shy and insecure about discussing their problems. It was often related to feelings of inferiority, as well as to a lack of information.' [xii]

Gradually, though, many participants came to appreciate the egalitarian environment created by the two American Latvian group facilitators. As a participant of the FSCC program writing on behalf of her group about their novel experience formulated it in a feedback letter in 1995:

'Many were astonished by the form of the sessions, namely, that the participants are not just members of the audience, listeners, but are expected to actively think along others, to learn to formulate and express their own opinion.' Participants in the seminars learnt that during the sessions they were not only expected to engage personally but could speak quite openly about various aspects of their relationships. Alternatively, they started sharing their problems with the seminar leaders in personal conversations. Ruperte recalls:

Those participants of the Family Seminars said: "We feel really well during this family seminar, for we can speak about our distress, we don't have to be afraid that somebody might blame or ridicule us!" And: "What are we going to do once you are gone back to the States?" I said: "You'll speak one to another!" They said: "Oh, no! In no way can we speak one to another! For one must not share one's distress with a neighbor." (..) And I thought: "How terrible! To live in one parish for all your life and have this feeling that you cannot trust anybody!!"

These conversations, as well as the many letters that she received from the family seminar participants persuaded Ruperte that something might be done about this situation:

And it was then that idea of the FSCC occurred to me, namely, that such support centers could be formed... in the countryside... In order to help people understand that they are not alone in their distress and that it is possible to create a climate in which people do not ridicule or judge, or shame one another but lend a shoulder to lean against.

Local knowledge

One may ask to what extent the insights articulated by two American educators seemed relevant to the potential recipients of the proposed aid in Latvia. Let me quote the FSCC project collaborators in Latvia. Aina had for years traveled to facilitate support groups throughout Latvia. In 1999, in an interview with a women's magazine, she sounded pessimistic: 'For many the curve is at its lowest in the given economical circumstances, they are merely passing the "winter"' (Balode 1999). Or, as Estere, a former primary school teacher, now a social worker, who volunteered as a support group coordinator in a small town in east Latvia in 1997, put it:

When those great transformations took place in our country and collective farms were dissolved, only a tiny proportion of people were able to start something new on their own. Those who had lived and worked under somebody's guidance were not able to adapt to the new circumstances, thus they just began to wither.

According to Arnolds, another group facilitator, the mid-1990s was '[a] period of a typical decay in the Latvian countryside. There were practically no buses, and snow was not being cleared from the roads in winter. ... We were traveling in our cars like in bulldozers during those first years.' Estere, who had coordinated FSSC groups in her village since 1997, encouraged a number of countryside people, especially women, to join a support group: 'Say a person had just been living in her farmstead and had almost no contacts outside it. Then they said: "Oh, I know nothing anymore: neither how to dress myself nor how to behave!"'

In sum, both the founders of the FSCC network and local activists painted a grim picture of the situation in rural Latvia in the 1990s: a general decay of the economy, represented by closed down collective farms, unemployment, disoriented and poor people, cut-off communications

and social disintegration manifest in the dissolution of Soviet collectives (*kolektīvi*) [xiii], physical isolation of people in remote villages and farmsteads and a widespread lack of trust among neighborhood people. Relegated to the private sphere women, in particular, appear in these accounts as socially isolated and therefore lacking resources for coping with economic adversity.

Coupled with a pervasive sense of 'withering' and 'wintering' (metaphors that Aina, Estere and Arnolds used in the above-mentioned quotes to describe the situation) the above enlisted tendencies seemed to suggest a general condition of anomie, or the absence of collective morality, as Durkheim used that term. These representations of the countryside in the 1990s help us understand why the FSCC program was specifically oriented towards the rural areas. It was here that the population appeared to be insecure socially, most deprived economically, and most desperate morally.[xiv] Yet the impression given in these accounts is in fact not as uniform as it might seem. Particularly striking is the etiology of the psychological problems, i.e., whether they stem from the socialist past or the post-socialist present. The FSCC project collaborators from Latvia typically stress the material and social difficulties faced by rural dwellers in Latvia as a result of *post-Soviet* transformations. The project designers from the West, on the other hand, focus on the moral and psychological aspects of the situation that they perceive as largely rooted in Latvia's state socialist past. For the most part, they phrase their observations in a psychological vocabulary pointing to such characteristics of individuals as 'adaptation difficulties', 'lack of capacity for creative problem solving', 'shyness', 'feelings of insecurity, inferiority and depression' as well as the 'state of perplexity' and 'mutual distrust'. These latter articulations present a picture that justified urgent intervention. The differences in the way in which two groups of FSCC people accounted for relationship difficulties remind us that knowledge is inevitably local. There is no ground to assert that the program designers from the West, qualified and experienced counselors, represented some kind of universal knowledge about the nature of interpersonal relationships whereas the project collaborators' knowledge, being shaped less by formal training in counseling and more by observations and local idioms, were more limited. As Geertz emphasized in one of his last works, the opposition 'is not between "local" knowledge and "universal", but between one sort of local knowledge (say, neurology) and another (say, ethnography). As all politics, however consequential, is local, so, however ambitious, is all understanding' (Geertz 2000:134).

As the North American and basically liberal ideology of self-enhancement and self-help that lay at the core of the very idea of the FSCC was being adapted to the circumstances of rural post-Soviet Latvia, it very much drew on local notions of personhood and the participants' symbolic capital. As a result, at least three sets of local knowledges – the project initiators' psychological concepts and techniques, the group facilitators' understanding of local circumstances and relationship patterns, and the program participants' 'ethnopsychological' notions – were synthesized under conditions of the therapeutic site, that is, the FSCC group meeting. Such a synthesis made the support group movement quite distinct from its ideological matrix.

Further in this paper I will demonstrate that prior to embarking on the FSCC program, the participants held views similar to those of the FSCC project collaborators from Latvia, namely, they tended to interpret most of their distress as caused by external factors, such as conflicts in the family or economic difficulties. Upon completion of the program, however, their way of thinking had changed in that they had begun to attribute most of their difficulties to their own attitudes and adherence to allegedly old-fashioned relationships patterns. In other words, as they mastered a new kind of local knowledge and begun to phrase their concerns in a psy vocabulary, the participants' perspective had become more attuned to that espoused by the FSCC project designers from the West. In this paper, however, it seems apposite to refer to still other local knowledges, namely, a number of sociological studies on the psychosocial conditions of the first post-socialist decade that prompted women in particular to reflect on their relationship pat-

terns, in the family as well as in the wider society.

Gender and de-socialization in the post-socialist space

A number of studies have demonstrated that women in particular have been disadvantaged by the post-socialist transformations, in the countries of East and Central Europe as well as in the former Soviet Union. 'The disproportionately high female share of unemployment, together with a widespread revival of nationalist and traditionalist ideologies, has had the effect of relegating women once more to the domestic sphere' (Einhorn & Sever 2003:164). In post-Soviet Latvia as well, women's de-socialization was promoted by a 'neo-traditionalist' discourse. As Stukuls-Eglitis (2002) notes, attempts to (re)create normality in social life brought about a gender regime underpinned by women's 'domestication' and commodification. At times women themselves supported the vision 'that going home is, after the mandatory employment of the Soviet period, liberating' (ibid: 189, cf. Einhorn 1993: 64). Under the harsh economic conditions of the 1990s that forced both partners to work, rather than renouncing 'gender equality' women's wish to stay home may have masked their desire for a less difficult life (Neimanis 1999:9).

Changes in labor market and political participation in Latvia of the 1990s reflected a marked shift in the society's gender order. According to official estimates, as many as 25.7 per cent of working-age women (20 to 59 years of age) were unemployed in late 1995 (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 1996, quoted in Stukuls Eglitis 2002: 213), compared to the average 18.1 per cent among all economically active population for that year (Latvijas Republikas Ekonomikas ministrija 1999). Unemployment involved more than a loss of financial independence – it also brought with it a loss of social status insofar as women had a key role in maintaining informal networks (cf. Bridget and Pine 1998). Once jobless, the women thus lost considerably more of their status and identity than men. Their ideologically inspired retreat into the domestic realm occurred precisely at the moment when the private sphere lost the cultural and economic significance that it once had as a substitute for civil society (ibid). By the mid-1990s, women's political activity in Latvia had declined in all forms of political participation with the exception of elections (Ostrovskā 1997: 36-37). The third sector in Latvia, having begun to form in the 1990s, initially exerted little influence. Thus, during a household survey in 1998 [xv] only 3.6 per cent respondents stated that they had received assistance from NGOs during the previous year (Gassmann & Neubourg 1999:60). Participation in such organizations in Latvia has been generally low, and even more so for women. Church groups were the only type of public organization in which the numbers of female participants increased during the period between 1990 and 1995 (Ostrovskā 1997: 38-39). By and large, the studies discussed above confirm the insights that the authors of the FSCC project had gained about the psychosocial conditions in post-Soviet Latvian rural communities. Now, what procedures did the FSCC designers envision to remedy the tendencies of de-socialization?

The FSCC program: re-mobilization attempts

According to the FSCC program, twice a month, a two-hour session had to be conducted in each family support group. The group sessions were planned for forty hours that initially were spread over nine months (a four-month cycle was introduced in 2000). The program was subdivided into four phases or steps. During the First Step the group rules would be discussed, an agreement would be reached on the principles of activity, and goals would be defined. Also mutual trust had to be developed and a benevolent microclimate built during this phase. The Second Step involved a 'discussion of the theoretical basis of the family system and related psychological aspects.' [xvi] Interaction between group members would be developed, experiences, views and

emotions exchanged. The Third Step was to encourage application of acquired insights in concrete real-life situations. Finally, the support group was to become self-sufficient, thus creating a support system in the community.

Participation in the groups was free of charge and open to anyone, regardless of age, marital status, gender or nationality. What were the people on whom the FSCC put such great hopes as agents of change? Arnolds remembers:

Basically already since the beginning the people who came to our groups were not completely hopeless as a social category. ... In those days they were even the best, the most creative agents of their local parish. And that vision of ours has been that through those people, we could somehow influence the environment. They then are the ones who are in touch with the others. For example, it might be his neighbor who is completely socially hopeless but with whom he interacts, that's how it was intended.

Because the project was first announced in a seminar for teachers and later during the 3x3 camps, in which people working in education have always been well represented, the majority of the early volunteering coordinators were schoolteachers or kindergarten nurses. A progress report on the first half-year of the project documented that the 20-40-year-old age group was best represented and that the majority of participants were women. 'That demonstrates the problem so characteristic for Latvia, that most often it is women who perceive cherishing family relationships as their interest and responsibility. Men more often tend to occupy a passive or a dilatory position.' [xvii] The number of participating men did not considerably increase during the following years.

Reasons for joining

About a month after each group's initial meeting, the participants were invited to confirm their intention to attend in writing. Here is what villagers from a central part of Latvia wrote in their application forms in 2000 and 2001. The applicants' 'presenting problems' (as the FSCC staff described the reasons for joining the support group) can be grouped into four basic categories. Relationships with family members constitute the largest category of complaints. Most often reported is a lack of mutual understanding between spouses. A forty-year-old housewife [xviii], married with three children, writes: 'My husband, a driver by occupation, does not allow himself to get involved in conversation. There is no possibility to discuss problems in our relationship.' The entry written by another forty-year-old mother of three, who at the time worked as a head of a nursery and pursued her studies, is very brief: 'The disharmony of souls between my husband and me'. In some cases, the main cause of distress is the relationship with adult children. Thus, a grandmother of two, currently working in an NGO, is concerned about the marriage of her eldest son.

The second largest category of 'presenting problems' refers to unrealized dreams or unfulfilled needs. One entry sounds particularly somber: 'Have grown up without a father, do not know what a real family is. It's a cheerless time.' The writer is a forty-nine-year-old woman trained as a veterinary technician but at the time working as a stoker. In spite of the fact that she has given birth to two children and has four grandchildren, this person seems to lack a real sense of belonging. As a contrast, a forty-three-year-old unemployed woman, a mother of two sons, ever since getting married has been a housewife and is longing to find fulfillment elsewhere: 'Own place in life, fulfillment has not been properly found.' A forty-four-year-old woman, a mother of three currently working as a gardener, wishes to find another job. A man of thirty-two, divorced with

two children and working for a public utility, wants to know how to find a suitable partner. Just two applicants report their problems in psychological terms, one mentioning stress, another a wish to enhance self-esteem.

The third group of problems explicitly refer to economic difficulties. A thirty-year-old unemployed mother of two is concerned about her joblessness and lack of money. A forty-eight-year-old mother of three working as a veterinarian views her problem – lack of money that limits her desire to pursue education – from a more embracing perspective: ‘our country’s chaotic legislation, lack of support for farming and entrepreneurship.’

Finally, not infrequently people encounter economic difficulties concurrently with the problems caused by alcohol abuse. Thus, a thirty-year-old mother of three reports: ‘My husband is unemployed. I am worried about alcoholism among the people around me.’ The misery caused by alcohol has not spared the people who used to have good jobs and standing in the Soviet times. For example, a forty-three-year-old mother of three, a former trade-union leader working as a schoolteacher, now laments: ‘My husband is an accomplished craftsman, a good father. Once he is under the sway of alcohol, all that vanishes. Children are distressed by that, they don’t blame me but I have been too indecisive.’

Redefining the self

In February 2002, upon completion of the forty-hour program, fifteen remaining participants of the group (all women) whose entry forms were just quoted were given a feedback form on which they were asked to complete several unfinished sentences one of which began: ‘When I came to the family support group I was feeling...’ It is noteworthy that only one woman recalled being interested and intrigued about the new kind of activity. Others reported having felt ‘lonely, chaotic, idle’, ‘shy, withdrawn, unable to express my thoughts’, ‘abashed, with low self-esteem’, ‘ignorant about interpersonal communication’, ‘at times lacking confidence’, ‘insecure and abashed’. Two respondents recall being ‘very downhearted’ (ļoti nomākta).

It is quite revealing that on indicating the reasons for joining four months earlier, these same women did not relate their difficulties to negative moods or emotions. Instead, they mentioned problems in their immediate environment, such as unsatisfactory family relationships, alcoholism of a spouse, joblessness, or lack of means for developing own business or pursuing education. When embarking on the program just two of eighteen applicants described their situation using psychological terms. Thus, the comparison between the vocabularies in which the participants spoke about themselves prior to the course and after having completed it reveals a noticeable shift of focus from extrinsic conditions to the intrinsic processes of the self. This finding clearly confirms the thesis advanced by Rose that notions of self are being shaped by psy discourses.

Building on Foucault’s analysis of techniques that human beings use to understand themselves, Rose (1997) has examined the ways in which the notion of self has been elaborated in contemporary Western culture. He argues that ‘the relation to ourselves which we can have today has been profoundly shaped by the rise of the psy disciplines, their languages, types of explanation and judgement, their techniques and their expertise’ (ibid.: 226). Psychological description of individual conduct ‘hollows out a certain kind of self, locates certain zones or fields ‘within’ that are of significance, requires us to speak of ourselves in particular vocabularies’ (ibid.: 234). Rose emphasizes that rather than being configured through the meanings implied in language alone, the modern self is also assembled through a series of techniques and practices, such as diagnosing, interpreting, assessing, classifying, and treating. These practices, in turn, are located in particular sites and carried out through a series of procedures, such as a therapeutic session, a social work interview, or a radio phone-in program.

The shift of the FSCC group participants' focus manifests itself in their reflections on transformation that they seem to have undergone. How have the participants articulated that process? The format of the feedback that they have left about the FSCC program varies from year to year. No special forms existed during the first couple of years. Members of a support group formed in a small town in 1997, all of them women, offer several pages of feedback in their response forms. Their comments, which resemble personal letters, complement each other. Here are some quotes.

Last autumn, when the group was being organized, my inner world was so unstable that I took this chance in order to save myself and my family. ... Initially, during the first sessions I was a bit reserved. The group leaders being so simple, humane, and erudite, however, soon dispelled my mistrust. ... Did I acquire anything for my life and my family? Definitely yes! I began to see many things from almost an opposite point of view, I became more balanced, and I gave more thought to how I was going to act. It became easier to make decisions. I became more self-confident.

Another woman had come to the group in a similar state of distress:

For five years I had been living in despondency (nomāktībā) and in frequent fits of depression (depresija). Even though I cannot deny that I have been subject to depressions also during the past year, I am now able to control them. I can look at things from many vantage points. I now dare to say a lot of things that I was not able to say a year ago. I have become more self-assured. ... During this year, I acquired a feeling that I am an important and needed person. I had a place to come to. Not just to come to but to feel that I am welcome.

A fellow participant remarked that the course made her start caring more for herself as a person: 'I do my best to take into consideration, at least a little, myself, my feelings and needs, for until recently I was taking into consideration only my children and my husband.' A member of the same group wrote an article for a regional newspaper in which she summarized the lesson learnt during the course:

At the moment, we are a group of 11 women who have become friends. What have we acquired? As it turns out, the majority of women in Latvia suffer from an exaggerated sense of responsibility. We wish to appeal to them: "You are not going to manage everything on your own anyway! Now take off your boots and your apron, have a rest, and give your husband an opportunity to care for you!"

Devoting more care to themselves, though, did not imply becoming less responsive to the loved ones:

I now dare to be unsophisticated and am not afraid to blush, to be weak, while at the same time looking for a source of strength. I endeavor to live so that there would be less pain (lai mazāk sāpētu) (and not just to myself). I do not take on another person's responsibility and do my best not to carry another person's burden. For in that way I feel stronger and am able to help my loved ones.

Of all entries left by this group of eleven women, one stands out thanks to the richness of its imagery:

So many of us are suffering, and we endeavor to hide our pain behind nine locks, not only because we do not want to solve our problems but because we do not know how to do that. I appreciate the form of work that you have chosen because a maximally free and unconstrained atmosphere is being created and a person is being taught to articulate her problem. The sound of an uttered word differs quite a lot from that of a heavy, heavy stone weighing down one's heart.

One cannot help noticing in this quote the idioms derived from Latvian folklore as well as terms in which Latvians have traditionally spoken of distress. The phrase 'a heavy, heavy stone weighing down one's heart' (*sirdī nēsāts smags, smags akmens*) is semantically linked to the terms *nospīestība*, *grūtsirdība* used in Latvian throughout the 20th century to refer to a heart overburdened with sorrow. It is also reminiscent of a Latvian folk song that advises one to bury one's woe under a stone and to carry on with life singing. Locking something with nine locks, in turn, is reminiscent of a magical spell also found in *dainas* (Latvian oral poems). Now, the folk song does not tell us what happens to the stone once a woe is buried under it. The author of the feedback, however, has not left her sorrows on a roadside but taken them with her, along with a stone that firmly locks her overburdened heart. Her singing would sound sad in spite of the seemingly optimistic tone of the folk-song. Therefore, the woman has found it relieving to unlock her heart, contrary to the folk wisdom.

Not all feedback comments, however, are unanimously positive. Their style as well as the assessment given to the FSCC program varies from group to group. Thus a Russian-speaking woman from a year 2000 group confesses: 'I was hoping to solve some personal problems, and in particular, my relationship with my children. Unfortunately they remained unresolved all the same. Still, I did understand a few things better.' Her group-mate, having learnt to articulate her situation, now claims that she has more control over her life:

I am able to speak freely about my feelings now, and have become more confident and independent. I get on well with my children as well as my pupils. At times, I nevertheless still feel wounded, for the problem of co-dependence is still there. The person whom I regard as the closest from among family members still now and then hurts me with his carelessness. ... I am still very emotional.

Discussion

Overall the feedback forms accumulated over eight years indicate that most group participants, as a result of the FSCC program, have gained some fluency in a psy discourse. Since the self has been posited primarily as a psychological entity, relatively independent of everyday contexts of work and family relationships, the program participants have begun to pay more attention and time to themselves as persons worthy of consideration and care. They have acquired special techniques aimed at boosting self-esteem. They also have mastered the nuances of psy vocabulary and begun to articulate their problems and insights using such terms as 'emotional' (*emocionāls*) as opposed to 'balanced' (*līdzsvarots*), 'co-dependent' (*līdzatkarīgs*) and depressed (*depresijā*) (two terms that only recently gained currency in Latvian) as opposed to 'self-assured' (*drošs*) and 'self-confident' (*pašpārliecināts*) (the meaning of the latter term in Latvian has lately shifted from a rather negative to a positive meaning), and such expressions as 'exaggerated sense of responsibility' or 'feeling wounded'.

At the same time, the FSCC program participants have also drawn on more traditional idioms and terms in which Latvians have spoken of mental suffering. The context and style in which

distress is articulated has been subject to a significant change, yet quite often the language of distress has remained anchored in longstanding semantic associations, as, for instance, when participants opted for *nomāktība* instead of the Latin-origin *depresija*, to describe their feelings of despondency. The adjective *nomākts* in Latvian refers to being overburdened, subdued, or feeling 'a heavy stone weighing down one's heart.' Thus the most significant change in the way in which relationship problems are being dealt with has not been adoption of a completely new (psy) vocabulary but introduction of new social contexts where distress can be shared and its causes addressed as well as an increasing reliance on the help of specially trained counselors. For many of the FSCC course participants, a family support group eventually proved to be just one of numerous activities in which they could acquire new ways to understand unsatisfactory social relationships by developing new vocabularies for self-expression. Also consultations with specially trained counselors or embarkation on a psychotherapy course or even training are increasingly being seen as socially valued ways of dealing with different life crises.

The participants' response to the FSCC program illuminates divergent discourses of the self. The program was launched in a period when multiple dimensions of identity were being actively renegotiated in Latvia. As the support group participants' initial comments on the session format suggest, during the Soviet period the abilities, competences and viewpoints of individuals had been ideologically undervalued, and particularly so within the public domain. Within the private sphere, the specific configuration of power had worked through people being in many ways dependent on each other as well as on the necessity to exchange favors. Women, in particular, had typically mastered their roles as care-givers for family members and intermediaries in existentially crucial informal networks. The process of reconfiguring identities therefore rendered women vulnerable: in the 1990s they began losing their valued status in the sphere of private networks while their status in the sphere of public exchanges was ideologically devalued. The FSCC as a movement acquires a particular salience if viewed against the background of the tendencies of 'domestication' of women in the early post-Soviet years.

For a considerable number of FSCC participants, especially in rural areas, the family support program became the first step on a way towards renegotiation of their gender identity, say, from an identity of a housewife with an 'exaggerated sense of responsibility' to a self-confident person who 'takes off her boots and her apron' and tries to find fulfillment in her life. The ways in which the FSCC program prompted the re-positioning of the gendered self in relation to the private and the public conveyed an implicitly feminist direction to the attempts at the societal 'healing'. Participants perceived the support groups as an opportunity to construe new meanings for a broad range of experiences that sometimes had remained unarticulated for many years. Attendance at a support group offered them an opportunity to share and jointly make sense of their problems, concerns and uncertainties related to having to navigate their way through times of social and economical upheaval and moral confusion. As a result, not only did they find new ways of coping with the profound changes. The program helped them to redefine themselves as individuals, and as women, helping them to reevaluate relationships in both the private and the public realm. However, while support groups have served well as a resource for personal empowerment, all in all they failed to become instrumental in advancement of collective interests.

When the idea of the Family Support Coordination Centre was conceived in the mid-1990s it was envisioned that the project would bring about a change at a societal level, namely, that a movement of support groups would spread out and encompass large segments of post-Soviet Latvia's population, particularly the socially and economically most disadvantaged groups. The desired changes were captured by the metaphor of 'healing of society'. However, unlike a number of Western psy experts (quoted in the introduction) who saw the post-Soviet societies as consisting of 'distorted personalities' and advocated individual treatment, the FSCC project designers proposed an intervention at a societal level because to them it was the way in which the society

in Latvia was functioning that appeared to be 'sick', not the individual people. Namely, as the main initiator of the project had observed, people more often than not were afraid to share their concerns with their neighbors, acquaintances or even relatives, and jointly seek solutions for the problems in their families. Moreover, the project designers from Western Latvian diaspora saw the family, namely, the basic social unit in their country of origin, as 'wounded' by the Soviet regime and its demographic policies. What the FSCC program offered as a solution was not just to educate interested people about the ways in which relationship difficulties in their families could be tackled but also to encourage them to co-operate and support each other on a regular basis. The program participants, however, came with their own local knowledge and understandings and made their own choices. They soon acquired a psy discipline but overall failed to develop a broad support group movement as a way towards societal 'healing'.

The reluctance to act collectively in the post-Soviet context is a complex topic and may be addresses from a number of vantage points. Here I propose two ways to tackle it. In the particular context of family support initiative, one explanation for the participants' choice to look for individual 'healing' at the expense of seeking collective solutions could be the 'double burden' that women in Latvia had been carrying since Soviet times. Having for a long time held responsibility for both earning the family income and looking after the children and the elderly, very few women were eager to take on still additional tasks in their local community. Another, maybe a more promising way to account for the failure to mobilize collectively, however, is to look at the power of discourse, namely, at cultural and ideological tendencies of the current stage of global capitalism that have radically reshaped patterns of thought and action as well as meanings of the concepts society and individual in post-socialist Latvia.

The culture of neo-liberalism, as Comaroff and Comaroff point out, has reframed persons as consumers in a global marketplace rather than producers from particular communities and 're-visioned' them as 'ensembles of identity that owe less to history or society than to organically conceived human qualities' (2001: 13). A vivid illustration of these processes is, for instance, Portelli's recent study (2008) on the demise, during recent decades, of the modes of identity determined by locality, class, vocation and family in Italy, a demise prompted by unforeseen shifts in circulation of multinational capital. The emphasis on organic, a-historical dimensions of identity, often articulated in terms of sex, age or race (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001), has rendered psy experts particularly instrumental in advancing neo-liberal mode of governmentality.[xix] Psy disciplines and neo-liberal technologies of power have joined their efforts in normatively constructing individuals. According to the normative ideal, the self is expected to aspire to autonomy, to strive for personal fulfillment, to embrace its destiny as a matter of individual choice and responsibility, to assert meaning in its existence (Rose 1998: 151, cf. Brown 2003: 5). This ideal of the self, however, is clearly at odds with the postulated nature and tasks of civil society. No wonder that the latter lately has come to be known primarily by its absence (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:40): as in the late 18th century, also nowadays the idea of civil society makes its appearance 'just as the fabric of the social, the possibility of society (..) and the essence of identity are being dramatically challenged (ibid: 44).

Paradoxically, those were the FSCC group participants in Latvia rather than the Western designers of the project who opted for seeking solutions primarily at the individual rather than the societal level. Drawing on their decades-long experience of collective action for the sake of survival as an ethnic minority within bigger nations, project initiators from Latvian diaspora in the West seem to have been inspired by the modernist idea of civil society as an emancipating force. They were enthused to introduce their compatriots in Latvia to civil mobilization as a means to compensate for what were seen as deficiencies of a post-totalitarian social order. Project participants from Latvia, on the other hand, were for the most part relatively unfamiliar with both the experience of emancipating collective action and the notion of a public will interpolated in the

space between the citizen and the sovereign polity (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 42). Not least due to the impact of the neo-liberal ideology that had come to dominate the mass media in Latvia in the 1990s, the psy discourse had gained popularity at the expense of other approaches to bringing about significant changes in a person's or group's life-world, such as, for instance, attempts to promote a group's needs and interests collectively, through sociopolitical initiatives. True, the FSCC group experience have proved to be an empowering factor in the lives of many family support program participants: it prompted them to re-examine their relationship patterns and to re-negotiate their social and gender identities. It remains a question to be addressed by further studies, however, whether greater 'self-care' increases one's capacity to bring about desired changes not only in one's person, marketable skills and the mode of feeling in the world and but also in one's social and political environment.

Note

I would like to thank Vieda Skultans, Steven Sampson, Līga Ruperte, Daiga Kamerāde, Nerīnga Klumbyte, Lydia Lewis, and Dace Dzenovska for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this article.

References

Abula, B. (1997) '3x3=100!!!', in J. Dūšelis (ed.) *3x3=100. Pārdomas, pārskati un statistika par pirmajām simts 3x3*. Trīsreiztrīs Austrālijas padome. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.3x3.lv/3x3-100-parskats.html>> (accessed 23 June 2004).

Ådahl, S. (2007) *Good Lives, Hidden Miseries. An Ethnography of Uncertainty in a Finnish Village*, Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Annist, A. (2005) 'Communities in rural Estonia', paper presented at the Fifth Nordic Conference on the Anthropology of Postsocialism: Uncertainty and Freedom: Second-Generation Change in the Postsocialist World, Oslo, Tyriheim, April 2005.

Appen, U. von (1994) 'The Development of Self-Help in Germany's New Provinces (Former East Germany): The Case of Schwerin', in: F. Lavoie et al (eds) *Self-Help and Mutual Aid Groups: International and Multicultural Perspectives*, New York and London: Haworth Press Inc., 97-116.

Balode, S. (1999) 'Nav izejas? Dzīves kūleņi' [an interview with Aina Poisa and Arnolds Cerbulis], *Santa*, No. 3: 54-56.

Baltijas Sociālo zinātņu institūts, LR Naturalizācijas pārvalde (2001) "'Ceļā uz pilsonisku sabiedrību 2000": Pētījumu un rīcības programma', Rīga, 2001. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.np.gov.lv/index.php?lv=info_lv&saite=cups2k.htm> (accessed 24 June 2004).

'Pētījumu un rīcības programma "Ceļā uz pilsonisku sabiedrību". Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja', 2000. gada novembris. Atskaite, 2001.

Bridger, S. and Pine, F. (1998) 'Introduction: transitions to post-socialism and cultures of survival', in S. Bridger and F. Pine (eds) *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, London: Routledge, 1-15.

Brown, W. 2003. 'Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory and Event*, Volume(1): 1-19.

Bruvers, I. (1996) 'Alternatives for Latvian Economic Development at The Turn Of The Millennium', *Humanities and Social Sciences Latvia: Transforming Latvian Economy*, 5 (10). Online. Available HTTP: <<http://vip.latnet.lv/hss/bruvers.html>> (accessed 14 June 2004)

Celle, O., Krūmiņa, I.(1996) 'Latvijā', in *PBLA Forums*, November 1996. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.3x3.lv/3x3-100-parskats-latvija.html>> (accessed 25 November 2003).

Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J. L. 2001. 'Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming', in J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff (eds.), *Millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism* 1-55. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Connell, R. W. (1987) *Gender and power: society, the person and sexual politics*, Cambridge: Polity in association with Blackwell.

Dudwick N. et al. (1998) *Listening to the poor - a social assessment of poverty in Latvia. Report on research findings* (March – June 1998). Riga: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1998. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.undp.lv/publications.php>> (accessed 12 June 2004).

Eglīte, P. et al. (1997) *Spatial Differences of Health and Mortality in Latvia. Population Projection up to 2015*, Riga: Institute of Economics, Latvian Academy of Sciences.

Einhorn, B. (1993) *Cinderella goes to market. Citizenship, gender and women's movements in East Central Europe*, London, New York: Verso.

Einhorn, B. and Sever, C. (2003) 'Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5 (2): 163-190.

Family Support Coordination Center (1999). Available HTTP: <<http://www.iclub.lv/gakc>> (accessed 14 June 2004).

Foucault, M. 1988. "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self. A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Edited by L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton, pp. 16-49. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Gassmann, F. and Neubourg, C. de (1999) *Coping with little means in Latvia. Quantitative Analysis of Qualitative Statements*, Riga: UNDP Latvia, June 1999. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.undp.lv/publications.php>> (accessed 12 June 2004).

Gassmann, F. (1998) *Who and where are the poor in Latvia? An exploration based on existing data*, Riga: UNDP Latvia, June 1998. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.undp.lv/publications.php>> (accessed 12 June 2004).

Geertz, C. (1984) "'From the native's point of view.'" On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding', in R. A. Shweder and R. A. LeVine (eds) *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 123-36.

Geertz, C. 2000. *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Goddard, A. V. (2000) 'Introduction', in A.V. Goddard (2000) *Gender, agency and change. Anthropological perspectives*, London: Routledge, 1-31.

Gulens, V. (1995) 'Distortions in Personality Development in Individuals Emerging From a Long-Term Totalitarian Regime', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 26 (3): 267-284.

Hankiss, E. (1990) *East European Alternatives*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Helman, C. (2001) *Culture, Health and Illness, 4th edition*, London: Arnold.

Herloff Mortensen, M.-A. (1999) 'The Latvian Thing. Narratives of Place and Identity among Local and Diasporic Latvians', masters thesis, Institute of Anthropology, Copenhagen University. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/M/Mortensen_M_A_H_01.htm> (accessed 22 June 2004).

Kharkhordin, O. (1998) 'First Europe-Asia lecture. Civil society and Orthodox Christianity', *Europe-Asia studies*, 50:949-968.

Klumbyte, N. (2003) 'At the Margins of Post-socialisms: Self, State, and Nation in Two Village Communities in Lithuania', paper presented at the First Baltic States Anthropology Conference *Defining Ourselves: Establishing Anthropology In The Baltic States*, Vilnius University, 3-5 October 2003.

Ķelle, I. (2001) 'Vīru domas', *Sveiks un Vesels*, 1: 56-59.

Latvijas Republikas Ekonomikas ministrija (1999) Ziņojums par Latvijas tautsaimniecības attīstību. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.lem.gov.lv/Lv/News/Reports/99/1/>> (accessed 22 June 2004).

Liepiņa, I. (2003) 'Various Aspects of Linguistic Behavior by Men and Women in the Newspaper Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze: Analysis of interviews (1992, 1993, 197, 1998)'. in *Communication. Acta Universitatis Latviensis*, 655: 186-216.

Ledeneva, A. V. (1998) *Russia's Economy of Favours. Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lill, Bruno (2003). Investments in Latvia. Basic information. Available HTTP: <http://www.balticdata.info/latvia/macro_economics/latvia_macro_economics_investments_basic_information.htm> (accessed 19 June 2004).

Lupton, D. (1998) *The Emotional Self. A Sociocultural Exploration*, London: SAGE Publications.

Luse, A. (2005) 'Changing discourses of distress and powerlessness in post-Soviet Latvia', unpublished thesis, University of Bristol.

Miller, P., and N. Rose. 1994. On therapeutic authority: psychoanalytical expertise under advanced liberalism. *History of the Human Sciences* 7:29-64.

Muiznieks, N. (1997) 'Latvia: restoring a state, rebuilding a nation', in: I. Bremmer and R. Taras (eds) *New States, New Politics: Building a Post-Soviet Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 398-403.

Neimanis, A. (1999) *Gender and Human Development in Latvia*, Riga: UNDP.

Online. Available HTTP: < <http://www.un.lv/down/gender/En-CONT.pdf>> (accessed 23 June 2004).

Ostrovskā, I. (1997) 'Barriers to Political Mobilization of Women', in I. Koroleva (ed.) *Invitation to Dialogue: Beyond Gender (In)equality*, Riga: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 34-44.

Paegle, V. (2000) 'Runa par vardarbību ĢAKC un LĢAGA konferencē', *Tu un Es*, 11: 3.

Pauloviča, I. (2000) 'Valsts atbalsta politikas izstrāde ģimenēm ar bērniem', *Tu un Es*, 11: 2.

Pine, F. (2000) 'Kinship, gender and work in socialist and post-socialist rural Poland', in A.V. Goddard (ed.) *Gender, agency and change: Anthropological perspectives*, London: Routledge, 86-101.

Portelli, A. 2008. 'Memory and Globalization: Thyssen Krupp controversy in Terni, Italy, 2004-2005', *Oral History: Migration And Local Identities*, University of Latvia, Riga.

Pranka, M. (1997) 'Family Networks', in I. Koroleva (ed.) *Invitation to Dialogue: Beyond Gender (In)equality*, Riga: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 337-347.

Putniņa, A. (ed.) (2004) *Reproductive Health of the Population: Study on the Situation in Latvia 1997-2003*. Riga: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Papardes Zieds. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.un.lv/files/2004/PAPARDES%20%20Zieds%20ENG.zip>>

Rose, N. (1997) 'Assembling the Modern Self', in Porter, R. (ed.), *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, London: Routledge.

Rose, N. (1998) *Inventing our selves. Psychology, power, and personhood*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sampson, S. (2002) 'Weak States, Uncivil Societies and Thousands of NGOs. Western Democracy Export as Benevolent Colonialism in the Balkans', in AnthroBase.com: Searchable database of anthropological texts. Available HTTP:<http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/S/Sampson_S_01.htm> (accessed 15/06/04)

Scheper-Hughes, N. (1994) 'Embodied Knowledge: Thinking with the Body in Critical Medical Anthropology', in R. Borofsky (ed.) *Assessing cultural anthropology*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 229-239.

Skultans, V. (2003) 'From damaged nerves to masked depression: inevitability and hope in Latvian psychiatric narratives', *Social Science & Medicine*, 56 (12): 2421-2431.

Stukuls Eglitis, D. (2002) *Imaging the Nation. History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press.

Stukuls, D. (1999) 'Body of the Nation: Mothering, Prostitution, and Women's Place in Postcommunist Latvia', in: *Slavic Review* 58 (3): 537-558.

Špela, M. (1997) 'Puse dvēseles zaļa, puse – melna. Skolas un vecāku sadarbības sociālpsiholoģiskais fons lauku skolās', *Skola un Ģimene*, 1:26-29.

Trapenciere, I. (1997) "'And They Lived Happily Ever After..." Some Notes on Gender Roles of Cinderella and Prince', in I. Koroleva (ed.) *Invitation to Dialogue: Beyond Gender (In)equality*, Riga: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 348-360.

Tūters, K. (2001) 'Garīgās veselības saglabāšanas iespējas psihoanalītiķa skatījumā', *Latvijas Ārsts*, 7/8: 12-13.

Ukrina, A. (1992) 'Es atgriezīšos' [an interview with Kaspars Tūters], *Atmoda Atpūtai*, 15 April: 2.

UNICEF (1999) *Women in Transition: The MONEE Project*, New York: United Nations. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/monee6/cover.pdf>> (assessed 23 June 2004).

Voitkāne, S. (1997) 'Apgūt brīvību', *Viesis*, February: 31.

Watson, P. (2000) 'Rethinking Transition. Globalism, Gender and Class', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2 (2): 185-213.

Watson, P. (1995) 'Explaining Rising Mortality Among Men in Eastern Europe', in *Social Science and Medicine*, 41 (7): 923-934.

WFFL (2003) 'World Federation of Free Latvians'. Available HTTP: <http://www.pbla.lv/English.htm> (accessed 10 May 2003).

White, G. M. (1992) 'Ethnopsychology', in G. White, C. Lutz (eds) *New Directions in Psychological Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21-46.

Notes

[i] My usage of terms bearing the prefix psy (such as psy experts, psy disciplines, psy discourse) has been influenced by Rose who examines psy disciplines as "techniques for dealing with human difference through classifying people, as well as their capacities and conducts and managing their individuality" (1998: 19). Rose argues that the modes of thinking and acting that he designates with the term psy have made possible the languages, techniques, forms of expertise, and modes of subjectification constitutive of modern liberal democracies (ibid: 16).

[ii] According to Lupton, gender is something we perform: we constantly take up different masculinities and femininities depending on the ways in which we speak, move, present ourselves and

experience and express our emotions (1998: 105).

[iii] Brown (2003) has characterized neo-liberalism as progressive subordination of all social institutions and human actions to the calculus of market values. In a similar vein, Comaroff and Comaroff argue that neoliberalism aspires to replace society with the market: as a result, the organic solidarity of society gradually disperses leaving in its place a 'radically individuated sense of personhood' (2001:15).

[iv] My understanding of agency and subjectivity stems from Bourdieu's theory of practice according to which agency, being filtered through the experience of subjectivity, is not directly observable in habitus (Bourdieu 1990). An outsider who only observes a conspicuous habitus but does not delve into subjective meanings, risks misinterpreting agency for agency is a striving for meaning that is constituted in practical action (cf. Ådahl 2007: 62).

[v] In this chapter, I have retained the real names of the core people of the organization whom also a broader public know as representatives of the FSCC.

[vi] Latvijas Republikas Uzņēmumu Reģistrs. Sabiedriskas organizācijas Reģistrācijas apliecība. Ģimenes Atbalsta Koordinācijas Centrs. 1999. gada 19. maijs. [A registration certificate of the public organization The Family Support Coordination Center. 19 May 1999]. The FSCC archive. Following Latvian Law, the FSCC registered as a public body in the Register of Enterprises in 1999.

[vii] Līga Ruperte, personal communication, 13 July 2003.

[viii] The name 3x3 refers to three generations of the extended family who all are welcome to summer camps where they are encouraged to acquire (mostly) traditional crafts and skills, learn about Latvian folklore, socialize and, above all, speak Latvian.

[ix] For her contribution to Latvian education the Latvian Academy of Sciences awarded Līga Ruperte the title of the Doctor Honoris Causa in 1992.

[x] One can, however, question this assertion. People who later joined the FSCC groups, women in particular, seem to have done so largely because they did perceive family relationships as a value that they wished to harmonize. I am indebted for this point to Daiga Kamerāde.

[xi] Māra Tupese, personal correspondence, 14.02.2004.

[xii] Ibid. In a survey of schoolchildren's parents conducted in a rural district in 1996, three quarters of respondents stated that it was only from their own experience that they learnt how to build a family life (Špela 1997: 27).

[xiii] Both the Russian word kol'ekt'iv and the Latvian word kolektīvs, carry a broad spectre of meanings that stem from the central position that work and school collectives occupied in Soviet citizens' lives.

The kolektīvs had a role to play not only in coordinating certain tasks at workplace or school but also in carrying out multiple educational, political, leisure, amateur, and sports activities. Kharkhordin (1998) notes that Soviet collectives were also checking on their members' worldviews, moral conduct, and private lives.

[xiv] Klumbyte (2003) and Annist (2005) have recently documented similar tendencies in rural Lithuania and rural Estonia respectively.

[xv] The survey was conducted from August to October 1998 by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB). Two-stage stratified random sampling was used. The representative sample consisted of 3200 households, of which 1200 were the regular households participating in the Household Budget Survey (Gassmann & Neubourg 1999: 8).

[xvi] A quote from the document 'The Family Support Coordination Center (FSCC)'. The FSCC archive, the folder 'Atskaites PBLA', 1996.

[xvii] A quote from the document 'Atskaite par darbu Ģimenes atbalsta grupās laika posmā no 1995.g. septembra līdz 1996.g. 1. janvārim.' The FSCC archive, the folder 'Atskaites PBLA', 1996.

[xviii] The word 'housewife' seems to be used here as a euphemism for 'unemployed'. Until the mid-1990s, the vast majority of women in Latvia preferred to go back to work once their paid maternity leave was over. Cf. Stukuls-Eglitis 1999.

[xix] Rose (1998: 151-152) draws on Foucault's concept of governmentality according to which power is the creation and utilization of human beings as subjects rather than being opposed to individuals' capacities.