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1
Introduction: Post-Socialist Peasant?

Pamela Leonard and Deema Kaneff

> 'We have a goat!', Kalinka told me in a recent phone call. She was visiting her parents who live in a medium-sized town in north-central Bulgaria. Just completing her fourth year at university in Plovdiv, Kalinka had come home for the Easter break to find the goat grazing behind the flowerbed in the back garden. We joked over the idea of Kalinka's mother trying to milk the goat; she added in a tone indicating both amusement and distaste, 'It's becoming like a village here.'
>
> Yang Zhengui made it clear to me that he never engages in any agricultural work. He felt it was beneath him. The son of a village landlord, he was at the bottom of the social heap – a class enemy – during the Maoist period. This meant that he had to haul more manure buckets to the agricultural fields than his fellow villagers. Not surprisingly, he was one of the first in the village to seize the new economic opportunities that came with Deng's reforms, and with the help of an able wife and sons who now do the farm work, he has freed himself of the necessity of doing any agricultural labour. Nevertheless, he still lives in the same old wooden house and dresses in the same blue clothes as his most conservative neighbours. No one in China, meeting him on the street, would hesitate to call him a peasant.

In the decade since the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and market-oriented reforms in China and Vietnam, changes in lifestyle such as those described above are frequently noted; the old boundaries that marked rural from urban have radically altered. This book explores of the concept 'peasantry' in the

context of changing post-socialist rural–urban relations. We begin with an initial assumption that the term 'peasant' expresses relations of power between rural and urban identities. While there are many dimensions to the rural–urban relationships that underpin the concept, we focus on three groups: rural inhabitants, intellectuals and representatives of the state. It is the relationships among these three groups, and the implications they have for the concept 'peasantry', with which we are concerned. Our fundamental orientation is the rural – from this vantage point we look 'out' to the urban periphery.[1]

The setting

The three regions from which the papers are drawn – East Asia (China and Vietnam), the former USSR and Eastern Europe – provide the spatial context of the work. While the areas display considerable diversity, they also present significant commonality – in terms of the main theme – justifying their placement within the same work. In these regions agriculture has played and continues to play a significant role in the lives of the people. Indeed the majority of the population in post-socialist states maintains connections to the land, a situation quite different from that in 'the west'. These regions have also been the geographical source of much of the literature on 'peasantry' published from early this century to the present – and more recently, the subject of important social, economic and political reforms.

If we consider the post-socialist changes in their widest framework, they are an attempt to dismantle the centralised state system founded on Marxism–Leninism, replacing socialist ideologies – in their divergent manifestations – with principles of the free market. The now symbolically important date of 1989, or 1991 for the Soviet Union, signifies the point at which a critical upheaval of the political and economic landscape occurred. In many cases, however, the reforms were initiated several years earlier. Gorbachev's perestroika was begun in the mid-1980s, while in China 1982 marked the beginning of widespread agricultural and market reforms (which were significantly extended in the early 1990s). In the same period, capitalist countries have also taken steps towards dismantling the welfare state and privatising once nationally owned services, but these policies have not involved such massive shifts in the state's aims and its ideology. Post-socialist governments are now adopting principles once associated exclusively with capitalism – that is, large-scale privatisation of property and the free-market economy. In these states people are reassessing models of progress and

development that, in turn, have implications for economic and political policies, as well as for the nature of social relations. The totality of the change has been aptly described as a 'reordering of . . . meaningful worlds' (Verdery 1999: 35).

Of course the specificities of the reform process that make up the temporal context of the work vary greatly among Eastern Europe, the former USSR and East Asia. Perhaps most significantly, China's reforms to date claim to be primarily economic in nature, whereas in the former USSR and Eastern Europe there are formal changes in political as well as economic institutions. In China and Vietnam, the Communist Party has maintained its dominant position, while the former USSR and Eastern Europe have established multi-party systems. Yet, even in this respect, differences are not what they may seem; for in China economic reform has eroded the power of the one-party state, many citizens referring to the party as communist in name only. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the former Communist Parties have re-emerged to play a significant role in the political arena, largely as a result of strong rural support. Thus while we recognise that the term 'post-socialist' is itself problematic, the shared context of transforming state controlled markets informed by socialist ideology justifies unified treatment of these countries.

Although policies of political liberalisation in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union might be a significant factor when considering the way they have implemented economic reforms, the nature of the changes among all three regions remains similar. The cornerstone of the economic reforms – decentralisation and privatisation – has been experienced, in the rural areas, largely through the decollectivisation of agricultural production. In fact the single most important change affecting rural inhabitants is the devolution of responsibility for land proprietorship.[2] After fifty years (or more) of rural 'backwardness' being defined through reference to a 'small-holding peasantry', there has been an effort to return to this very pattern of smallholding. In some East European countries, land restitution and privatisation laws have explicitly aimed at restoring ownership to pre-World War II patterns (for example, Bulgaria, Romania and Czechoslovakia). In all regions, reformers have derided collective-type organisations as economically inefficient, inappropriate and even 'undemocratic'. Thus state policy, especially in the early stages of reform, showed an explicit preference for private farming above collective endeavours, a decision that was less economically informed than politically driven (Verdery 1995; Hinton 1991).

While some governments favourably received the attempt to create an agricultural landscape dominated by private individual business enterprises or peasant smallholdings, the cooperative working of the land has not disappeared. Particularly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, private ownership has not brought about a commitment to individual forms of agricultural production (see Perrotta, Humphrey and Kaneff, Chapters 5, 6 and 8, this volume). Indeed, rural inhabitants have frequently responded to new policies that have resulted in the fragmentation of property by re-establishing collective agricultural organisations, which for them are not just economically sound, but also central in providing a variety of social, political and other benefits. Even in China, where private farming has been more generally embraced and the agricultural sector is a relative success story,[3] rural inhabitants often comment that the state was too extreme in privatising formerly collective resources, and they sorely miss many of the social and economic benefits of the Maoist state. Requests for state involvement in agriculture and the benefits it brings, is also a view echoed in Poland where collectivisation of farming was never carried out.[4] In all the regions, such views reflect the trauma caused by the withdrawal of administrative, resource and monetary aid. The wide range of services, provisions and benefits once provided by the communist governments have shrunk and along with it the 'safety net' on which many had grown to depend.

Decentralisation has also had an impact on informal rural–urban interactions. Direct links in Eastern Europe and the former USSR between rural and urban regions are growing as unstable prices, unemployment and high inflation force city inhabitants to fall back on their rural contacts for help. New contacts take several forms: for example, rural inhabitants may send food packages to urban kin or urban folk may increasingly rely on land plots they cultivate in order to meet household subsistence needs (Perrotta, Humphrey, Czegledy, Chapters 5, 6 and 9 this volume). Nevertheless, significant migration into rural regions, or in the reverse direction, has not occurred. China too, has undergone changes in its urban–rural relations in the wake of reforms. Unlike the situation in the other two regions, however, large numbers of Chinese villagers are moving to the cities in search of new employment opportunities. The cities have been the locus of the high rates of economic growth in China, while many rural areas have remained relatively stagnant. Given the relative terms of trade between the two sectors, the rural sector is growing increasingly dependent on the urban to make ends meet, while the urban economic boom depends

on cheap labour from the countryside. The effect in all three regions includes: migrating populations resulting from unemployment, low prices paid for agricultural products, changing laws and increasing regional differentiation.

Growing interdependency between rural and urban peoples in a context of an expanded market economy is leading, in turn, to the 'commoditisation' of social relationships, a phenomenon true for relations within rural areas as between them and 'outsiders'. Everyday activities once carried out as 'favours' – long-term exchanges between kin and friends – are now given monetary form or at least reciprocated with a valued precision which once would have been offensive to all parties involved.[5] At the same time, rural and urban inhabitants everywhere comment on the moral disintegration they are witnessing, on growing crime rates and on the deepening gap between rich and poor.

Since collectivised agriculture was not merely a means of production with economic importance, but embedded in political and social relations (Hann 1998, Hivon 1998), the withdrawal of the state from rural areas through decollectivisation has implications far beyond the strictly economic. Apart from those points noted above – increasing connections between rural and urban regions and commodification of social relationships – economic instability has also provided a framework for rising nationalism and anti-western feelings. These tendencies are symptomatic of the general disruption and destabilisation of social networks. Decollectivisation has resulted in an increase of a wide variety of tensions, including those associated with ethnic, generational, and gender inequalities (see Bridger and Pine 1998). The divisions indicate a 'process of individuation', where the pursuit of individual property rights has made fragile many of the solidarities of the socialist period (Verdery 1994: 1108). Furthermore, greater village autonomy, arising from the state relinquishing its command and control over agriculture, has also meant a shift in political dynamics. Local figures now running agricultural production are important actors with significant influence and power in determining production and the control of community resources. Most often these leaders are not accountable to anyone further up the political hierarchy, as they were during the socialist period.

Thus, decollectivisation has resulted in political, social, economic, as well as physical upheaval, with far-reaching and often unintended consequences (Bridger and Pine 1998: Introduction). In this book we focus on one of the many inequalities which have come sharply into focus as a consequence of post-socialist reforms: the growing polarisation between

rural people and urban-based reformers developing post-socialist policy. Indeed the regions covered in this volume present a common irony: just at the moment when the old stereotypes that defined rural and urban difference have been undermined – with rural people increasingly involved in the wider economy, rarely exclusively agriculturist – fractions between rural and urban groups are intensifying. Such fractions are related to differences in the way rural and urban sectors are positioned with respect to the new state policies that often appear pro-urban. Critical in this dynamic are patterns of migration and new elements of dependency between the sectors. The increase in competition and contact has resulted in expressions of tension and conflict that have served to demarcate urban and rural identities in a more intense manner than was previously the case.

The above discussion has aimed at making clear our reasons for considering Eastern Europe, the former USSR and East Asia within the same work. It offers justification for considering the chosen regions together, as places where parallel dramatic economic and political reforms have occurred, affecting rural–urban relations and pointing to the need to re-examine the concept of peasantry. A closer look at this concept will reveal insights concerning the dynamics of identity formation and power relations in the new post-socialist contexts.

Perspectives on the peasantry

Theories of the peasantry, like all theories, tell us as much about the circumstances and conditions of the analyst, as of the subject being described. It is with this spirit of reflection that this volume takes up the category of peasantry. Of particular interest to the papers collected here are the interactions, commonalities and differences between western social scientists on the one hand and political and intellectual élites who determine policy in Eastern Europe, Russia and China and Vietnam on the other. There has been some remarkable overlap in concepts used by these distinct groups, although they have rarely used the same concepts at the same time. The peasant emerged as an important sociological category as theorists worldwide sought to construct models of social progress and come to terms with the growth of capitalism. 'The peasantry' have been a problem for these theorists; they embody a mode of production and way of thinking that was felt to be antithetical to capitalist and socialist development alike, while at the same time, their subordinate class position and their sheer numbers have made them an important revolutionary force that could not be ignored.

The common thread in all classical theories of the peasantry is thus the view that the peasant is the antonym of progress.[6] The teleological orientation of Marxist–Leninist theory posits a process of proletarianisation where the surplus from agricultural production is harnessed to industrialise society. The peasant in this framework is a historical dead end, squeezed out of existence either by the inevitable processes of social differentiation (see below) or by deliberate policies aimed at creating communist forms of social relations. Western non-Marxist theory has its own developmental agenda, based on notions of 'economic rationalism' and increasing levels of production and consumption. Capitalist ideology also locates 'the peasant' – a small producer not oriented toward economic expansion – as external to its own progressive goals. Influenced by the evolutionism of the early twentieth century, the concept of the peasantry in western anthropology began in the works of Redfield[7] and Kroeber[8] as a consideration of a polarity between rural and urban communities, with 'the urban' representing progress and change. As with socialist theory, the peasant mode of thought and behaviour in anthropological theory has been represented as a developmental cul-de-sac. The papers in this collection explore the sense in which the concept of the peasantry derives its significance from an idea of development where urban and rural progress is defined against peasant stagnation. In other words, we view the concept of peasantry as an artefact of a specific Enlightenment ideal of progress common to both socialist and capitalist thinkers.[9] We also explore the way in which the term has been taken up and given new meanings by those labelled as peasant. In some senses this project follows in the tradition of Oscar Lewis, who recognised the limitations of Redfield's rural–urban, folk–urban continuum, raising questions as to the usefulness of such distinctions (Lewis 1953, 1965; also Hauser 1965).

The specific elements defining a backward peasant consciousness have been re-assessed in socialist countries in the context of ideological and political change; approaches to the peasantry have altered with the vogues of state-sponsored development discourse. In the socialist period, rural resistance to collectivisation inspired the conclusion that peasants were backward and conservative. Now, ironically, in the new market ideology adopted by Russia, its ex-republics, and Eastern Europe, rural people have again been given the same label but for the opposite reason, for their attachment to collective agricultural production.[10] Old models of the peasantry are finding new currency in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, and China as the rural – sometimes migrant – population appears, once again, out of synch with the new ideas about

development spawned in the urban capitals. If collectivisation of agricultural production undermined family-based production – the centrepiece of most definitions of the peasantry – reform has attempted to bring it back (the exceptions are Poland and former Yugoslavia). Where policy is focused on economic development through market reform, collective enterprises remain useful symbols of backwardness against which new development strategies are defined. Since rural responses have been characterised in a negative way by state agents irrespective of which ideology is being followed, we conclude that it is rural inhabitants' perceived or real opposition to state political-economic programmes that underlie this depiction. This fact suggests that discourse on the peasantry, and the implementation of policies rooted in such discourse, is a means by which consecutive socialist and market-oriented regimes have attempted to establish control over their (potentially) rebellious rural 'other'.

Further, the particular way in which the peasant has been defined in the theoretical models of both intellectuals and politicians has had a significant impact on the way rural populations have been encountered. Models of the peasantry, developed by urban and educated élites, have had important repercussions for the lives of the rural populations; peasants have been variously idealised and vilified as revolutionary heroes, as petty capitalists in need of forced collectivisation, and as a conservative drag on economic progress in need of 'liberalising' reform or rationalising order. Post-socialist representations of the peasantry as backward and conservative provide state representatives with 'explanations' as to why rural inhabitants are opposed to the new pro-capitalist changes. In each period, rural dwellers, as much as other citizens, have been expected to reject the previously held ideals and political alliances and to alter their relations of production.

The following chapters explore the manifestations of this ideologically loaded, politically determined relationship between rural and urban groupings. How is this relation created, by whom, and why? What are the histories behind the terms used for the 'peasantry', how were they defined and developed, in what context and with what political consequences? In the process, the roles of state agents and 'intellectuals' are analysed. Even the terms and oppositions we have employed, such as rural and urban, city and village, representatives of the state and intellectuals, are problematic requiring critical examination. We might justify their use since they have had real historical value as the basis of ideological constructs that have been practically applied. Nevertheless, in looking at how these categories are deployed in specific local contexts, we hope to demonstrate some of the pitfalls of such generalising terms.

There are innumerable definitions of peasants. Most of these emphasise – apart from a particular economic status and an underdog position, both culturally and politically – an opposition between city and countryside.[11] We view the concept of peasantry as signifying a relation between the categories of rural and urban – typically it is an urban, state-sponsored construction of a rural 'other'. The concept of peasantry creates a hierarchical opposition which individuals and groups use to define themselves. Michael Lipton (1977) has described the persistent way in which state agents tend to be aligned with urban interests with the result that policies consistently discriminate against rural interests. In line with this thinking, we feel that the peasantry is a concept that embodies the political dimension of this opposition between rural and urban. But what to make of the fact that the rural–urban opposition is itself a construction (with practical implications), one that is ever more blurred as the expansion of suburbs, exurbs, the increase in rural factories, urban farming, and rural–urban migration make clear?[12] Why does the urban–rural distinction persist despite these changes?

Ching and Creed (1997), in their study of rural–urban dichotomies, state that the distinctions endure because they are important dimensions of identity and hierarchy – a hierarchy which is part of a cultural war (as opposed to Lipton's political economy) that consistently values urban over rural. They point out that even when rural people try to invert the hierarchy, unless the power structure itself is questioned, resistance in the form of assertions of a positive rural identity will backfire; the very symbols of a positive identity embraced by rural peoples will be turned back and used to oppress them. Their answer is to insist on 'a place for rusticity within those areas of scholarship which purport to challenge existing canons and cultural hierarchies . . .' (1997: 30). Our approach is compatible with this stance but we give greater prominence to local politics. We feel it is important to recognise that cultural constructions of rural and urban and their implied hierarchies persist in part because they refer to practical political differences – that is, the fact that policy planners tend to have urban identities. It is also important not to overgeneralise; rural estates of gentry and urban slums of workers are important historical exceptions to the stereotype that urban classes unequivocally rank higher than rural classes. Lastly, we do not wish to gainsay the effectiveness of rural political organisation, including positive constructions of identity emanating from the countryside. After all, when considered from a rural perspective, strategies of resistance may appear more successful than their typical portrayal in the academic literature.[13]

Our position – tailored to dealing with a particular manifestation of rural–urban relations, the concept of the peasantry – connects identity to a constellation of political relations and histories on the one hand and the particularities of place, on the other. The term 'locality' is an attempt to reflect our analytical orientation: without any necessary (read essentialist) hierarchies, 'locality' views rural and urban as constructions with historical and political implications. The association between ruralness as a socially constructed category and a universalised *type of place*[14] is not assumed. We do not, therefore, presuppose that rural or urban identities are necessarily connected to a particular kind of place at all (for example, see Abrami who discusses peasant migrants, Czegledy on urban peasants Chapters 4 and 9, this volume).

If we question our own assumptions about political hierarchies, the nature of progress, and the meaning of development, it becomes evident that developmental models can benefit from considering a variety of rural viewpoints. While the events of 1989 have inspired some circles to declare the triumph of capitalism and the failure of socialism, a careful examination of politics in the post-reform period demonstrates that what citizens of these countries actually seek is a new order that cannot be easily summarised by either of these terms (Hann 1995, Hann and Dunn 1996). If the 'revolutions' of 1989 were once broadly understood as movements toward 'democracy', emerging conflicts in these regions have made clear that there is less than universal agreement on what democracy is, who will receive its benefits and who is entitled to its privileges. Reform has generally widened the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', as economic restructuring has unevenly redistributed the advantages available to different localities, to different ethnic groups, and to different genders and generations (Pine 1996; Bridger and Pine 1998). As a result of these new inequalities and the increased pressures of a global economy, locality is becoming an increasingly important social and economic signifier. Because the rural–urban dichotomy is emerging as an important battle line in these processes of polarisation, the peasant question remains central. In order to understand the full significance of the peasant construction, we must explore the different ways in which rural people have responded to urban-based policies/categories/definitions; and have even adopted the category of the peasantry for their own purposes.

Post-socialist constructions of the peasant, whether from academics or politicians, are building on the old, and cannot be understood without

reference to past events and theories. The following two sections deal with theories developed before the reform period and are divided into socialist theories of the peasantry and constructions of the peasantry emanating from social science in the west. It is necessary to include both these bodies of knowledge since approaches in the post-socialist period are rooted in both capitalist and socialist social science and the histories that underlie both types of state ideologies. We seek to demonstrate that social sciences and political histories have followed parallel tracks that have at times reinforced one another. The final section looks at the post-socialist period when the marketplace has gained unprecedented prominence with policymakers. It is in this current period that intellectuals, amongst others, within post-socialist states have rediscovered the concept of peasantry just as western anthropologists seem to be questioning the enduring relevancy of the concept.[15] These differences, once again, relate to different underlying definitions of the meaning of social progress, a question we argue is best explored by including local ideas, a task taken up in more detail by the following chapters.

The socialist lineage from Marx to Mao

The theoretical wellspring of both socialist and social science traditions lies in Marx. In the 'Eighteenth Brumaire', Marx portrays French smallholder peasants as representing both the conservative and revolutionary extremes of political activism. Marx asserts that French peasants during their 1848 insurrection demonstrated themselves incapable of effective political organisation. He felt that because the peasantry tends to be unable to function politically on their own behalf, their politics has an authoritarian bent, symbolised by their support for the role of emperor:

> The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasant; not the peasant that strikes out beyond the condition of his social existence, the smallholding . . . not the country folk who want to overthrow the old order through their own energies, linked up with the towns, but on the contrary those who, in stupefied bondage to this older order want to see themselves and their smallholding saved and favoured by the ghost of the empire. It represents not the enlightenment, but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgement, but his prejudice; not his future, but his past . . .
>
> (Marx 1978: 609)

Marx's judgement of the French peasantry has its foundation in his commitment to a particular idea of historical progress. He judged the

peasants as superstitious, prejudiced and backward-looking, because they failed to grasp the need to adopt a new form of property relations, fundamental to the realisation of the historical goal of communism. According to Marx, the French peasants were undone by their stubborn attachment to the freehold, a form of property that had revolutionary origins, but which had outlived itself. Their material conditions of productive existence were both atomised and self-reliant. The freehold was impoverishing and an impediment to their ability to organise politically; it made them *a class in but not for themselves* (Marx and Engels 1968: 170–1). They would thus need the leadership of the workers to recognise their exploited status.

While it is clear that Marx saw peasants as acting out a conservative and narrow-minded political agenda, he did not believe 'the peasant' was necessarily so – conservatism and revolution represented the two poles of potentiality. Peasants were inherently conservative in that their political activism proceeded from the material conditions of their existence, yet Marx also recognised that they have the potential to be free-thinking progressives – not all contemporary social commentators would be so generous. The negative epitaphs Marx bestowed on the peasant of his day – conservative, superstitious, lacking judgement, backward – surface again and again in intellectuals' assessments of the peasantry the world over; and almost as frequently they are considered intrinsic to the peasant's nature. The assessment that the peasant is a conservative force in history acting against social and economic progress has taken many forms over the course of the twentieth century. The persistence of this position is ironic given the frequency with which peasants have played a critical role in the social revolutions that have led to the establishment of socialist regimes around the globe. Even more surprising is the fact that this conclusion is as often as not drawn directly from analyses of the peasant's role in these revolutions. Thus for Marx, peasants had been a progressive force in overthrowing the feudal order only to be undone by their attachment to the smallholding form of property arrangement. For many socialist thinkers from Marx onward, the ultimate interest of the bulk of the peasantry is judged to conform with urban proletariat interests in the overthrow of the *status quo* of capitalism. Nevertheless, 'the peasant' is consistently seen as unable to follow through in creating a new order due to the limitations of his/her revolutionary consciousness.

The development of peasant theory by political leaders of the Marxian tradition was influenced by a necessity to translate Marxist theory into revolutionary action. Russia, Eastern Europe and China all faced the

same problem: the contradiction of at once claiming to be led by the party of the proletarian class, yet being forced to draw on a base of support that was overwhelmingly composed of the rural sector. Lenin in particular elaborated on how capitalist penetration acts to squeeze the old peasantry out of existence, creating a rural bourgeoisie and rural proletariat. In identifying the bourgeoisie peasantry as petty commodity producers (1956: 175–6), Lenin locates them as an antagonistic class to the proletariat – that is, to those responsible for realising the transformation of the capitalist system into the historical goal of communism. He wrote, 'the Russian community peasantry are not antagonists of capitalism, but, on the contrary, are its deepest and most durable foundation' (1956: 175–6).

The predominantly rural – peasant – population, whether participating in wage labour activities or living purely off small land plots, were viewed by Lenin as a feature of a capitalist system and ultimately a threat to the potential development of a communist order. Although he advocated a strategy of working with the proletarianised peasants to effect social development, using workers to educate peasants to see their true class identity, he also believed small farm life generated a mentality and habit that would take generations to remould (cited in Kelliher 1994: 391). The best hope was to reorganise production, to alter the conditions that create the peasant:

> In order to abolish classes it is necessary . . . to abolish the difference between factory worker and peasant, to make workers of all of them . . . It is not a problem that can be solved by overthrowing a class. It can be solved only by the organisational reconstruction of the whole social economy, by a transition from individual, disunited, petty commodity production to large-scale social production.
>
> (Lenin 1968: 497)

Since antagonistic classes were seen as components of capitalist development, the elimination of urban–rural differences (class differences) was viewed as a necessary move in the pursuit of communism.

Stalin went further than Lenin in his suspicion of the bourgeois character of peasant political consciousness, believing that a strong peasant presence in Party ranks would undermine the revolution. If socialist revolutions were to rely on peasant political power, strong Party leadership was needed to keep the revolution on track. This emphasis on Party leadership disadvantaged rural inhabitants as much as Stalin's extensive industrialisation policy, which prioritised the

urban-factory sector above the rural one. While surplus profit from agricultural production was channelled to the prioritised area – industry – rather than being reinvested in agriculture, the position of rural inhabitants was nevertheless aided by state investment, carried out through collectivisation and the 'modernisation' of agriculture.

Such an approach underlined socialist policy, not only in the USSR, but also after World War II, in the East European countries and China as well. The close association between Moscow and the East European Communist Parties originates from the inter-war period, when all but the Czechoslovakia Communist Party were forced into illegality (Schöpflin 1993: 51). It was under the USSR-controlled Comintern that material resources were passed on to the East European parties. The Comintern set policies, fostered closeness between the parties and expected them to follow a Marxist–Leninist (Bolshevik) type of socialism. The pressure of Bolshevism especially in the initial inter-war period, was an important component in the development of the communist parties in Eastern Europe (Schöpflin 1993: 47–51). Via the Comintern, Soviet Marxism was given out as the true Marxism to Communists worldwide. 'And it was still a scientific interpretation, only now it was the vanguard group, the Communist Party (of the USSR) which was equipped with the scientific understanding of history' (*Marx and Beyond*, 1973). The parties never freed themselves from Soviet influence, although arguably the period of de-Stalinisation allowed limited scope for diverging developments (for example, the cases of Hungary, Poland or even Romania).[16]

The fact that the East European Communist Parties were closely bound to USSR dictates was clearly evident in the policy area with which we are most concerned – agriculture and the 'peasantry'. Although the countries entered the post-World War II period with differing levels of development, the East European Communist Parties modelled themselves on the Soviet Union form of Marxism–Leninism that gave priority to industrialisation. Rapid industrial development both in heavy and light industries was dependent upon the cooperative organisation of agriculture, relying on the use of modern technology and industry. In Eastern Europe, agricultural collectivisation provided a surplus labour force that was absorbed by industry. The commitment to industrialisation programmes thus created a huge population shift, as once predominantly rural countries became urbanised. Thus the predominantly rural-located populations of the pre-World War II period were reversed by the 1980s.

Agricultural production based on cooperative organisation was viewed from the perspective of Marxist–Leninist ideology as decreasing

the class distance between all working people – between the urban proletariat and the new agricultural workers in rural areas. The latter, now enjoying conditions similar to the urban proletariat (including pension schemes, holiday periods and so on), were placed on an equal footing as regards the means of production, at least in the eyes of the law, if not in practice. 'Agricultural Workers' became a term signalling the merger. Such policies improved conditions for the peasant population as a whole and contributed to the better opportunities available for particular individuals of peasant background to climb up the political ladder. The improvement in the peasant social standing was so pronounced, that some commentators felt the revolution had been coopted by the rural population, transformed into what was then termed 'peasant socialism' (Tepicht 1975). Closing the gap between the urban proletariat and agricultural workers was believed to provide the main condition for the establishment of socialist equality, based on the elimination of class difference. Ultimately this provided the means of transition of the socialist state into communism.

Despite the differing means of creating collective agricultural enterprises – from state-owned collectives formed by the nationalisation of land in the USSR, to the legally privately owned land in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary which was worked cooperatively – all were driven by the same concern to create particular relations of production that would allow the historically inevitable development of society. This vision of social development necessitated the elimination of the 'peasantry'. An effect was to negatively position the 'peasantry', even the newly termed 'agricultural workers', with respect to the more modern, higher living standards of the urban proletariat who represented a more advanced stage of Marxist–Leninist development. The discourse of difference in terms of the town/village, urban/rural contrast was a way of speaking about class relations (Kaneff forthcoming); while the concern to eliminate distinctions between categories, to bring about class unification, was viewed as a historical necessity. Interpretations of rural workers as 'backward', 'conservative', 'resistant to change', 'insular' and 'uneducated' – amongst other negative labels abundant in academic and other socialist writings of the pre-1989 period – logically followed from their location in a Marxist–Leninist history.

The role of intellectuals in this project of socialist development is complex.[17] Populist variants of Marxism are particularly noteworthy as alternative formulations ultimately persecuted out of existence. In Russia, the term populist (*narodnik*) was applied in reference to a group of intellectuals who were encouraged to 'go to the people' after being

driven from the University of St Petersburg in 1861. The resulting engagement with Russia's large peasant population led to the creation of a political group who called themselves populist and who differed from Marx in their belief that Russian peasants would not require an intermediate bourgeois revolution (Bourgholtzer 1999: 14–15). This position and the practices they advocated led to an eventual split with the Marxism of Plekhanov and his disciple Lenin. Later, A. V. Chayanov, an important theorist of peasant economic behaviour was branded a 'neo-populist' when targeted for persecution by the Bolsheviks in 1930. While the early populist viewpoints became heterodox as a result of disagreements over the mechanics of the revolution, Chayanov sustained a role as a leader of the Russian cooperative movement in the 1920s. He held his position due to an effort on the part of the Bolsheviks to appease the rural population in the wake of devastating famines (Bourgholtzer 1999: 18–19). Nevertheless, while most Marxist economists supported the large scale concentration of agricultural production in order to mirror the tendency of capitalist development (Kerblay 1987), Chayanov's (1966) careful study of peasant economics and work incentives (the organisation and production school) foresaw limits to the advantages of such a course. Chayanov's understanding of social differentiation in the countryside as a product of life cycle changes in the peasant family also differed significantly from Lenin's account of social differentiation in the countryside as a product of capitalist commercialisation of the agricultural economy.[18] Such differences resulted in Chayanov's eventual arrest and he died in prison some nine years later. Other populist versions of Marxism, in other countries,[19] suffered similar fates: ultimate political persecution at the altar of communist revolution.

Circumstances in China, driven by a Maoist rendition of Marxism–Leninism designed to specifically address Chinese conditions, resulted in greater attention being paid to 'the peasantry'. The greater attention to the (potentially constructive) role of rural people was seen as a necessary modification in a predominantly rural society. Viewed as smallholding producers, the peasants were subject to all the narrow conservatism, short-sighted egalitarianism and acquisitive capitalism considered typical of the petty bourgeoisie and as such were considered a suspect class (Kelliher 1994: 391). As semi-feudal small producers, they were a threat to socialist development. At the same time 'the peasantry' was also seen to have a revolutionary instinct. Both dimensions constituted the 'dual nature' of the Chinese peasantry – positing peasant personality as short-sighted, acquisitive yet revolutionary – and pro-

vided the basis of their representation by Chinese state officials as well as intellectuals throughout the twentieth century (Kelliher 1994; Flower Ch. 2 this volume).

Apart from the greater preoccupation with the revolution, including the maintenance of its momentum, and considerable emphasis and elaboration of issues associated with the 'peasantry', Maoism held in essence the same common features as the Bolshevik model of Marxism–Leninism. As with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, collectivisation of the land – begun in 1956 – and industrialisation had considerable importance in Chinese policy. However, this was not accompanied by a major demographic shift from the rural to urban areas. A high population – both in urban and rural areas – meant that industrialisation did not result in a transfer of surplus ex-rural labour to the cities. Instead, Maoist planning – most famously in the policies of the Great Leap Forward – developed industry in a decentralised form, integrating it with agricultural production. It is only in the last decade that significant movement from rural to urban regions has occurred.

Maoism adopted the 'worker–peasant alliance' from the Bolsheviks. It was a concept used throughout the USSR and Eastern Europe, but elaborated to a greater degree in China. This alliance 'gave the Party a rationale for pursuing rural revolution while defusing the awkward issue of being a Marxist organisation with a peasant base' (Kelliher 1994: 394). The alliance, led by the Party, amounted to a proletarian leadership of the peasant masses. It maintained the position of the peasant as subordinate to the workers, made evident in the less attractive conditions granted to the former. Workers were privileged over peasants in a strategy of urban development through appropriation of agricultural surplus, unlike in Eastern Europe and the USSR where rural workers had attained relative equality in terms of working conditions. Ironically, however, peasants enjoyed advantages which were greater than those of intellectuals, in terms of social position, due to their inferred revolutionary consciousness.

The case of Vietnam is somewhat different, having its own particular mixture of Maoism and Marxism–Leninism. With a short thirty-year history, the general image of communist Vietnam is one of a 'soft' state not capable of doing much in terms of socialist state-building, more preoccupied with the exigencies of fighting the war. This is particularly true of the rural sector, where many of the cooperatives and later collectives were so in name only. Unable to subsidise its workers or restrict migration to the degree found in China, for example, the divisions between city and countryside were not as extreme in Vietnam.

Indeed, most Hanoians, as with the citizens of many Eastern European cities, are only second generation 'urbanite' and regularly visit their native places. Due to the weakness of the communist state in Vietnam, the market-oriented reforms should be seen more as an attempt on the part of the state to gain control of the market than to create one. Therefore, the social divisions resulting from the reform process have been manifested more clearly in terms of 'citizen' and 'the state', than along the rural–urban continuum.[20]

In all three regions under discussion, the Party determined socialist development toward the same historical goal of communism. The pervasive role of the state, the priority given to industrialisation generally favouring urban interests above rural and the collectivisation of the land, were all factors which served to determine rural conditions in the socialist countries. At the same time, peasants did receive some significant benefits under socialism relative to their capitalist counterparts: there were social advantages from being of relatively 'good class background' (i.e. poor and exploited) and there were material benefits from being a target of state development policies. When exploring the parallels between post-socialist states and 'the west', however, some important similarities become evident. For socialist orthodoxy was not unique in its assigning industrialisation paramount importance over traditional agriculture, in advocating central leadership over local control, or in making the terms of trade favourable to urban proletarian classes. Policies aimed at extending capitalist penetration have been at the core of the 'development' strategies implemented by western nations, with the tacit if not explicit backing of western social science. These same western models of 'progress' provided the cornerstone of the reforms adopted by the post-socialist governments. In this sense, twentieth-century theories of social and economic development, whether capitalist or socialist, have followed a common thread.

Social science in the west

If the peasant class posed problems for Marxist theoreticians, who responded by insisting on the need for enlightened Party leadership, similar sentiments have been evident in the writings of western social scientists who have also questioned the ability of peasants to represent their own political interests. In the west, peasant studies came of age in the wake of a groundswell of peasant movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[21] Theodir Shanin and Eric Wolf were among the first scholars within western social science to take a new look at the theme of peasants from a political perspective and Shanin, in particular, looked

at the position of peasants under socialism.[22] Academics, no less than the political figures we have looked at, focused on peasants because they saw in them a means of creating their own social engagement with the themes of class conflict, colonialism, national liberation and revolution. Whether they are of a socialist bent or not, the overall tenor of studies of peasant rebellion in western social science parallels socialist political theory in that peasants are considered to be unable to successfully represent their own interests. As Scott writes of peasant rebellions:

> The vast majority are smashed unceremoniously. When, more rarely, they do succeed, it is a melancholy fact that the consequences are seldom what the peasantry had in mind. Whatever else revolutions may achieve – and I have no desire to gainsay these achievements – they also bring into being a vaster and more dominant state apparatus that is capable of battening itself on its peasant subjects even more effectively than its predecessors.
>
> (1985: xvi)

This view, shared by many theorists, raises the questions: is the weakness of peasant political movements a social fact, or is the problem that many theorists judge the peasant movements according to their own idea of what constitutes a social revolution? What exactly are the criteria for effective political action?

Too frequently peasant political movements are held up to the improbable standard of wholesale rejection of capitalism in the abstract and/or a sublime resolution of class conflict. James Scott has recognised that such an abstract approach is alien to the village context; it is 'too remote', and fails to 'capture the texture of local experience' (1985: 348). For this reason Scott concludes that resistance by subordinate classes 'begins close to the ground, rooted firmly in the homely but meaningful realities of daily experience' (ibid). This focus on the quotidian may be closer to judging peasant political action by the actors' own criteria, but does Scott's focus on resistance, with its stress on class oppositions, leave us with a one-dimensional account of peasant political life? If the argument against peasant revolutionary consciousness is tautological, with change measured by the terms of the analyst, rather than by the peasant's own categories, then perhaps we need to appreciate the particularities of peasant moral codes, worldviews and historical schema that lie behind their revolutionary political actions. As Evans (1986: 40–1) has noted, 'While the content of the peasants' vision is the raw material of his analysis, it is never the aim of Scott's analysis and so the "good

life'' is never taken to mean more than petty struggles for small material gains.' The shift in emphasis from revolutionary consciousness to everyday resistance seems to reproduce the idea that the peasants have no larger sense of where they are headed.[23]

Cultural and material analytical frameworks

Clearly this brings us back to the point that theoretical approaches affect the way we encounter the rural 'other'. How are we to assess the content of rural political activities and what are the implications of differing theoretical frameworks in addressing this question? Theories of peasantry vary in terms of how they ground their definitions – some emphasising a political or economic dimension, others preferring a cultural definition – and these various constructions have implications for how one locates the peasant in history. Cultural definitions have tended to imply that the peasant operates outside and in opposition to the mainstream of history, while political and economic models have implied that the peasant is responsive to the same basic variables as any other class of petty capitalist entrepreneur.

While it would be impracticable to attempt a comprehensive review of peasant theory,[24] a closer look at two traditions in peasant studies identified by Sydel Silverman (1979) sets the stage for the approach taken by papers in this collection. Silverman links a concern with meaning and values to the work of Redfield, for whom the central problem was how 'the quality of life and the quality of human relations are shaped in different communities and in different phases of the human career' (1979: 54). This she opposes to the work of the students of Julian Steward, whose use of political economy led them to see meaning as a function of a people's 'stakes within a structure of power, wealth and authority' (Mintz quoted in Silverman 1979: 64). These two different ways of approaching questions of meaning have evolved into different ways of assessing the worth of a rural point of view.

For Redfield, urban centres were more likely to host the interactions of class and culture; therefore, new ideas (and thus progress) emerged with greater frequency from cities. While culture in the remote areas was more fully integrated, innovation in these areas was for the most part a function of the introduction of new ideas from outside.[25] Redfield followed Kroeber's well-known definition of peasants, 'Peasants are definitely rural – yet live in relation to market towns; they form a class segment of larger populations which usually contains urban centres, sometimes metropolitan capitals. They constitute part-societies with part-cultures,' ((Kroeber 1948: 284) quoted in Redfield 1956). For Red-

field, the peasant represented 'Little Tradition' in contrast to the 'Great Tradition' of the cities (Redfield and Singer 1971). Such views demonstrate the legacy of diffusionist anthropology of an earlier time, the attempt to preserve the dualisms of Durkheim's anthropology,[26] and an implicit teleological evolutionism that equates industrialisation with modernity, evident also in socialist political theories about the peasant. The opposition between rural stagnation and urban innovation was also related to another opposition according to Redfield: rural communities had well-developed systems of symbolic meanings, while urbanised areas were more instrumental in their use of cultural forms (1962). The symbolic-centred approach to the study of rural forms was relativistic in as much as it encouraged the ethnologist to take these alternative modes of constructing meanings on their own terms. Yet the fact that the constructs of the actors were not seen to be grounded in any wider political concern, but in reference only to their own internal structure, left room for the assertion that rural ways of interpreting reality were in fact backward and out of time.

The opposition between progressive urban ideas and rural peasant stagnation, as it was cemented to a meaning-centred concept of culture popular in the 1960s and 1970s, is seen clearly in the works of F. G. Bailey and of George Foster. These authors used this concept of culture to explain the failure of western or urban styles of development in the countryside. Foster asserted that a peasant worldview sees increases in wealth in the context of a zero-sum equation, making peasants (wrongly) resistant to projects that aimed at improving their conditions. Bailey, observing that the fundamental categories of thought are impervious to direct ideological attack, concluded that 'the moderniser' needs to provide novel experiences in order to change patterns of thought that stand in the way of his/her objectives. Thus in both Foster's work on 'Peasant society and the image of limited good' (1965) and in Bailey's 'On the peasant view of the bad life' (1971), the superior intuition of reality is assumed to be the lot of the urban progressives, with the agenda of 'the moderniser' adopted uncritically. Since these writers did not see culture in the countryside as an expression of actors' own interests,[27] but rather as a more passive outcome of received tradition, they assumed that the peasant had little reason to be sceptical of the programmes of the moderniser. Peasant attitudes were the result of a fundamental cultural conservatism. As Bailey writes:

> It makes little sense to ask why people hold these values, in the hopes that, discovering the causes, we can bring about change. At this level

> values and categories of thought are ultimate and given; they have no causes and they cannot be further reduced.
>
> (1971: 295)

Thus the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of the 'modes of thought' debate which considered the question of whether 'science and rationality' was a qualitatively different way of interpreting reality, separating its adherents from the rest of the primitive world (Horton and Finnegan 1973; Wilson 1970). This 'us and them' division reproduced the older opposition between superstitious and backward peasants and rational and progressive modernisers. As Flower demonstrates in Chapter 2 of this volume, it is an approach which still has currency with Marxist social scientists in China today.

In a political economy framework, however, this cultural division dissolves. The focus on relations of power gave the political economists, such as Eric Wolf (1969) or Sidney Mintz (1973), a more dynamic approach to meaning which put all belief systems on a more equal footing. For political economists, cultural constructs are seen as a reaction to changing circumstance rather than simply the inherited values characteristic of an ancient way of life. Cultural meaning is no longer idiosyncratic but rather has a universal basis defined by the pursuit of economic and political interest.

This perspective as it relates to peasantries has had a most articulate and sophisticated proponent in Eric Wolf. Although Wolf's earlier work on peasants (1955, 1966) was focused on delineating peasant social types from ethnographic example, in his later work (see below), he emphasised the processual nature of culture formation. He stressed that culture, even so-called traditional culture, should be seen as a process, not a given (1982: 387), and thus the persistence of cultural practices required explanation as much as the advent of new forms (1969: xiii). Here, cultures are conceived of as responses to identifiable determinants (1982: 388). In *Europe and the People without History* (1982), Wolf's anthropology examines the implications of modes of production for understanding social classes, advancing an approach focused on the exercise of power. He explored particular modes of production such as those based on kinship, tribute, and capital, their attendant power relations and intrinsic contradictions, looking at the ways in which they have tied people together for better or worse. His project, moreover, was to look at the world as a whole, a totality, a system (1982: 385). Importantly, he states that modes of production represent neither stages nor even types, but rather represent ways of thinking about key strategic

relationships that form the context of human lives (1982: 100). This refusal to reduce people to the typologies that inform social scientific analysis means that Wolf avoided the worst pitfalls of an essentialising discourse.

Nevertheless, because of his earlier work, Wolf has been placed alongside Scott as a 'moral economist', an approach that asserted that peasant society was a distinct type of moral community. Wolf asserted that peasants typically aim to keep the destructive aspects of market penetration at bay; and where they are self-provisioning closed corporate communities, they can be somewhat successful in this effort (1966: 44–8; 1969: xiv). For Scott, it was specifically the peasant's economic position on the brink of survival that committed him/her to communal over individualist strategies which were better able to address the urgent priority of risk aversion (1976: 1). Wolf and Scott both assert that as new forms of social relations attending market formation are accepted to various degrees, traditional aspects of peasant life come under siege (Wolf 1966; 1969: 48; Scott 1976: 1–11). Capitalism progresses by playing to tensions already present within the peasant communities, for example the interests of provincial élites against others; and ultimately, market development means peasants are displaced as land is commoditised (Wolf 1969: 280–3). This notion of social opposition has a strong resonance with Lenin's model of social differentiation articulated in his work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1956). In Lenin's view, increasing commercialisation in the countryside was transforming the bulk of peasants into a proletariat in opposition to a class of large-scale capitalist agricultural producers. Scott (1976) explains that the peasant tends to look back nostalgically to tradition because, in contrast to the new relations of production, it was a system which guaranteed the right of subsistence, just as Wolf (1969) interprets peasant political movements of the twentieth century, (frequently found in the form of socialist revolutions), as backlash efforts to stave off the destructive aspects of capitalism and preserve traditional rights. Both Wolf (1969: 275) and Scott (1985: 346) quote Bertold Brecht: 'it is not communism that is radical but capitalism'. From this perspective, socialism and peasantries have a natural alliance in their opposition to the transformations of the market-place.

Popkin (1979: Ch. 1) asserted that such views of peasant behaviour made Wolf and Scott (as well as Polanyi and Hobsbawn) moral economists as opposed to political economists. He set out to demonstrate that peasants are ultimately just as individualistic, self-interested and calculating as the shrewdest corporate players, possessing no special claim to moral frameworks. By questioning the risk-averse characterisation and

their special attachment to collective norms aimed at ensuring welfare, Popkin's peasants embody no special contradictions with capitalist modes of development. Despite Popkin's assertion that Scott falls short of the political economy label, however, the mode of analysis Scott employs in his moral economy approach shares with Popkin the underpinning of economic calculation. They are all part of an enduring tendency within most modern literature on peasant studies to understand the significance of peasant thought and action as reducible to an economic bottom line.[28] True, old debates in anthropology between the 'formalists' and the 'substantivists' tended to concentrate on the nature of the cultural 'filter' which determined actors' responses to the market. But even for substantivists such as James Scott, the significance of this filter lies in its role as a mediator for class interests, where a variety of interests are defined, rather than as a determinant in its own right. By default, then, where a political economy framework has been employed, the question of what characterises interest has been left at the level of economic rationality.

Viewed from a culturalist standpoint, political economy tends to reduce cultural content to a function of utilitarian desire for material gain. Whether located at the collective level (for example Scott 1976) or the individual level (Popkin 1979), political economic approaches have focused on the common concern with economic rationality, attributing to peasant mentality a universal logic and transparency. A culturalist critique of political economy has been articulated in the work of Michael Taussig (1980), who highlights the way in which such a theoretical concern with utility is ethnocentric and reproduces the logic and culture of the theorist, rather than savouring the meaningful content of the people under study. In Taussig's view, cultural meanings represent creative responses to change, permeated with historical significance; and are indeed the very symbols of that history and experience. In this sense cultural meanings are seen as the particular outcomes of particular experiences and are worth considering in their own right, not merely as instances of a more generalised theory of a universal peasant consciousness. Taussig's project, like that of Scott, is not content to leave these observations at the level of the particular, but uses specific meanings to make more general assertions about the differences between peasant and market economies as sociological *types*.

Gudeman and Riviera are critical of researchers with predetermined models who use ethnography to verify their ideas (1990: 1). They emphasise the importance of anthropological fieldwork as a means to expand and diversify models of economic experience that are discussed

by 'the core', as well as a means to better understand processes at 'the periphery'. By juxtaposing native models with theories from 'the core', they hope to inspire new ways of thinking about the economy, rather than create a single definitive or hegemonic model of economic behaviour that might exclude other voices (Gudeman and Riviera 1990: 190). They apply the trope of the 'conversation' to emphasise what they feel should be a conscious open-endedness in academic modelling. Their book *Conversations in Columbia* (1990) portrays 'the house model' of economic behaviour employed by rural Columbians, but shared by older western sources. The house model gives guidelines for strategies of subsistence beyond the margin of profit, as an alternative to the pre-eminent corporate model of profit-taking. Neither the corporate model nor the house model are definitive models of types of human behaviour, but coexist as competing institutions, albeit with differing levels of associated social power; the corporate model is associated with the core and the house model is associated with the periphery. The core/periphery trope is itself relational; it is used at times to refer to the opposition between industrial city and rural subsistence-oriented farmers, or even different kinds of agricultural units in the countryside – the large hacienda versus the smallholder. It is instructional to learn how rural Columbian's models of the market emphasise what they feel the market ought to be (just and fair), rather than how it actually appears to them (unreliable and exploitative). Gudeman and Riviera's account encourages other anthropologists to present their findings from the periphery in order to enable the core to move beyond the corporate model of economic profit-taking taken as a human universal. By encouraging such multivocality, they provide a satisfactory balance between models that emphasise culture and models that emphasise economic rationality.

Perhaps Ranger (1985, 1987) comes closest to offering an approach that sets the framework for our own project. He reflects on how the introduction of a concept of 'agency' in historiography in the late 1970s finally acknowledged that peasants have a pro-active role in the creation of their own history (1987: 311–12). His own work examines how peasants in Zimbabwe have constructed their own identities from a range of alternative possibilities of their own making and suited to their own interests. This focus on identity makes clear that history is particular and that the differences between peoples and places are more striking and more important than similarities when considering how to create policy (1987: 327). The point is demonstrated in this collection by the different responses to the reform policy of

land privatisation. With his appreciation of the particularity and variability of social experience, Ranger, like Gudeman and Riviera, offers the possibility of doing away with lingering tendencies to define history along a single axis, an axis which has tended to box off peasants as a problematic anomaly antithetical to social progress, or alternatively, to assume that their historical trajectory and their interests are of the same form as has guided the growth of capitalism in the west.

As observers of post-socialist contexts, what strikes us is the variety of the arrangements that make up the modes of production in the post-socialist states. Neither socialism nor post-socialism can be seen as preserving pre-capitalist modes of production. In the post-socialist states (as in other political systems, including capitalism), ownership of land is rarely fully commoditised, but it has fundamentally changed since the pre-socialist period. Agriculturalists include profit as well as moral and/or subsistence concerns among their many motivations. Significantly, however, the papers in this collection demonstrate that desires to keep market forces at bay are not exclusive to rural agriculturalists (Czegledy's urban peasants) and there is ample evidence that particularistic relationships have blossomed in both the city and countryside *in reaction to* the deepening of market influences.[29] While Wolf's work addressed a need to see the connections between societies engaged in a common global process, the current context of expanding markets calls out for greater appreciation of the variety of reactions to this process. Highlighting this variety becomes a difference of emphasis in our work rather than opposition to Wolf's theory. Focusing on economic interests helps anthropologists see the common connections between 'us' and what was perceived as a radically different 'them'. Now, looking at how interests can be defined in ways that go beyond simple economic rationality (by focusing on identity and native models of social change) gives us a greater appreciation of the diversity of the economic systems engendered by post-socialist realities, at a time when policy-makers too easily assume that everyone has gone capitalist!

The current context of peasant studies

Both western and socialist political theories have thus contributed to a general perception that there is an essential peasant nature despite the

fact that the concept of peasantry is 'ever more out of alignment with reality' (Kearney 1996: 6; see also Cohen 1993). Myron Cohen has described how the term 'peasant' (*nongmin*) was adopted in China with Marxist and non-Marxist western notions of the peasantry 'putting the full weight of the Western heritage to use in the new and often harshly negative representation of China's rural population' (1993: 156–7, also Flower Chapter 2, this volume). Cohen is a champion of the peasants/farmers against their unfair characterisation – as 'backward', 'feudal' and 'stagnant' – at the hands of the Chinese élite who, he points out, persist in the stereotype despite the fact that many rural areas have undergone rapid economic diversification, mechanisation, and modernisation.

If the peasantry is a politicised concept it is not surprising that sources differ on its enduring relevancy. Chinese applied anthropology continues to adhere to a Marxist evolutionary schema while western anthropologists perceive this approach as having a primary aim of assimilating 'primitives' into Han civilisation (Guldin 1994: 247). Cohen, for his part, argues that intellectuals would do well to replace the essentialised peasant cultural identity with an approach to Chinese economic culture based on the 'family as a corporate unit creating, deploying, and managing its human resources and its property in a highly commoditised environment so as to provide for family survival or enhance family welfare' (1993: 165). Cohen's suggestion that we abandon essentialised notions of peasant culture cuts to the heart of the matter. We are less comfortable, however, with his suggestion that the old notion be replaced with a definition so narrowly focused on family economy. While it is certainly true that 'enhancing family welfare' leaves plenty of room for subjective pursuits, we are concerned that positing this kind of economic identity makes it an attractive tool in the hands of economic reductionists; a means to undermine consideration of the substantive content of the political visions and cultural practices of the people we study. It seems preferable to develop an anthropological perspective that neither assigns to the peasant an essential identity outside of history, nor assumes his/her views are of the same logic and same intent as that which drives capitalist economies. The point here is not that rural inhabitants renounce wealth or the hope of economic progress, but rather that their critiques of particular programmes for progress have content worth considering in their own right.

Our focus on identity is an attempt to look at rural–urban relationships in terms of rural people's broader goals. Whereas economic experts and policy-makers initially predicted a quick and smooth transformation to market capitalism, the fact that socialist forms have persisted

demonstrates the complexity of social concerns that are not resolved by the introduction of neo-liberal market individualism (Hann and Dunn 1996: 8–9). We try to emphasise the way in which economic relations are embedded in broader political and moral frameworks, as well as other wider social and cultural concerns. Unfortunately, there are many scholars and policy-makers who continue to reduce peasant behaviour to little more than an attempt to gain resources and strategies for economic survival, without considering how economic relations are shaped by family and community ties, political interests, environmental concerns, aesthetic tastes, desire for long-term stability or religious commitments.

Modern anthropological treatments of identity have tended to operate with a constructivist logic that, like its common associate, political economy, presents its own set of problems. One of the chief values of the constructivist approach lies in its capacity to question the foundations of beliefs in essentialised identities by portraying them as contingent and 'invented'[30] positions adopted strategically in response to prevailing power relations. This is valuable because there is a general perception that such beliefs, seen in the construction of nationalisms or of cultural others, have hampered cross-cultural understanding and complicated the political process from time immemorial. Deconstructing a cultural concept, however, necessarily entails identifying the 'real' determinants of particular cultural concepts in an alternative narrative generated by the anthropologist. This raises the question of who is the authorised reader of culture; how is it decided whether a particular narrative interpretation is or is not legitimate? Constructivist interpretations have tended to see cultural phenomena as inspired by the desire to create strategic expressions of economic interest and/or cultural resistance.[31] This tendency toward certain themes in analysis indicates the sense in which not even the anthropologist can escape categorical predispositions (itself a form of the essentialising tendency). Moreover, as a political stance, deconstructivism can be problematic when it undermines the political position of the very people the anthropologist wishes to support.

In an effort to address this problem, our focus on people's constructions of identity is an attempt to understand why particular issues are important to people, not just in terms of what they stand against but also in terms of what they stand for. Thus, while we advocate a constructivist approach, we realise that constructivist descriptions themselves imply particular social values and that the critical tools of anthropology, including the focus on resistance, political-economic interests[32] and rationality, can only be part of the story. We aim to use

the concept of identity to go beyond these categories for interpreting social realities, and to create a space for the appreciation of the sincerity and depth of cultural stances.

Post-socialist peasant?

Many of the papers in this collection explore the qualitative issues engaging social actors in the post-socialist states. As Humphrey so insightfully phrases it, 'identity does matter, because it affects motivations and strategies in the real world' (Humphrey, Chapter 6 this volume). How the term peasant is used, by whom, and when, reveals much about people's self-conception and how they see themselves as fitting into fundamental historical processes.

Looking at the concept of peasantry as a strategic component of identity construction, reveals that it can operate either as a set of positive ideals or as a negative reference. Flower's (Chapter 2) contribution details how Chinese intellectuals have constructed a negative peasant category abstracted from history. The peasant in the discourse of Chinese intellectuals becomes an essentialised embodiment of the very qualities – characteristics such as a 'small producer mentality' – that the intellectuals would like to see purged from the national soul, an inverted image of those qualities that they, as intellectuals, aspire to lead their country toward. This fact has unfortunate implications for how intellectuals actually encounter rural people in their everyday lives. While Flower makes clear the detrimental impact of the intellectual's abstracted constructions, he does so through an appreciation for the historical experience of Chinese intellectuals that has inspired their viewpoints. Recognising that the peasant construction is a dimension of intellectual's political activism, an effort to effect a break with a painful past, Flower also makes clear that the result adds to the dangerous and growing division between rural and urban realities and values in China, realities which are engaged in a 'contest for the national soul'.

Abrami (Chapter 4) by contrast, shows how being a peasant can represent a somewhat privileged category, one that is felt to have a historical and moral right to engage in otherwise suspect activities. She examines the context in which street traders in Hanoi refer to themselves as 'just peasants'. Being peasants implies that they are off-season agricultural labourers engaged in trade, not for capitalist-style profit, but in an effort to meet basic subsistence needs. The significance of traders referring to themselves as peasants is partly to be found in the fact that this label does not fit with the reality of their livelihoods (urban

and non-agricultural); partly that they use this label strategically to resist periodic efforts to remove them from the streets; in part, also, their choice of this label indicates that despite their entrepreneurial activism, they are cultivating a moral conception of society that extends beyond market individualism.

Humphrey (Chapter 6) demonstrates that while the notion of peasant embodies some characteristics admired by Russian farmers of today (such as identification with or a sense of ownership of the land), it hardly represents the social ideal to which farmers now aspire or even consider possible, given intervening changes in the production system. Despite the fact that post-socialist policies have intentionally sought to recreate a peasant economy, nowadays running a farm in Russia is not about working the earth but rather it is about how to organise and make money and how to realise intellectual and managerial potential. Since Russian farmers are concerned by the uncertainty of the present, the salient comparison for them is not the pre-socialist peasant past. Rather they draw inspiration from the relative security they experienced during the socialist period. During socialism the people Humphrey writes about left behind their peasant identities to become specialists within the cooperative structures; and the continued sense of themselves as specialists, as part of a larger whole, Humphrey asserts, acts (ironically in terms of Marxist theory) as an inhibitor to their political activism. These rural people do not wish to recreate the peasant past – and for urban people engaged in farming, the vegetable plot is an expedient to feed themselves, not a way a life. The variety in the social reality belies the peasant model.

A return to peasant or private farming remains both undesirable and an unpractical alternative in post-socialist Russia. Perrotta (Chapter 5) details the economic and social realities that inhibit a move away from collective agriculture. Off-farm factors, such as the supplier and processing monopolies created in the socialist period in an effort to realise economies of scale, make re-peasantisation a losing proposition. And while trading in commodities such as cigarettes may not fit the old Russian peasant stereotype, it is part of the reality of making ends meet on the farm in the post-socialist period. Thus the failure to generate more interest in private farming is not, as some would have it, a failure to push the free-market model at the household level, but rather is a function of the everyday realities of the modern economy.

While an examination of the disjuncture between urban-based reform ideas and rural realities must include a consideration of economic constraints on farming practice, even the most quotidian details of what are

thought to be questions of economic efficiency possess within them aspects that speak to questions of social value. Leonard (Chapter 3) reasons that because rural people express their identity through concrete and particular choices when engaging in agricultural production, the choice to grow hybrid or native corn – new or old, respectively – is a significant issue. The preference farmers show for planting old corn is not only an economic choice but also makes sense in terms of socially determined aesthetic criteria (old corn tastes better) and labour arrangements (new corn requires intense labour over a short period, something unsuitable for many households). The practical consequence of such views is to reinforce the historical, economic and social splits between farmers and officials who have an ideological commitment to production and science. Leonard reveals, therefore, how the choice of corn ultimately implies different ways of valuing community and is central to reinforcing rural identity against that of urban people.

Whereas models of the peasant moral economy have emphasised that rural people are more likely to play-up community-sustaining factors in their economic calculations, Czegledy (Chapter 9) demonstrates that not even urban people should be seen as narrowly economic in their reasoning. Czegledy discusses 'urban peasants' who have no economic need to engage in agriculture, yet are as deeply involved in producing food on their private plots as many of their rural counterparts. In so doing they create meaningful social relations and reaffirm their sense of national identity in an increasingly globalised economy.

The importance of work and labour in rural–urban relations is suggested in a number of the papers (especially Leonard, Czegledy and Pine) and this theme is given central stage in Kaneff's Chapter 8. She suggests that rural–urban tensions evident over the last century in a rural Bulgarian community can be attributed to city-based 'attacks' on both the conditions of rural work and the products of local labour. Post-1989 reforms demanding the liquidation of the socialist cooperative – an institution constructed by villagers using their own resources and labour – was thus viewed as an assault on the very heart of local identity. However, 50 years of centralised state rule has resulted in villagers being much better versed in how to successfully deal with city-based officials. Thus, rather than practising open resistance, the collective, formal response shown to current reforms by the community has been one of compliance. In this way, villagers have successfully managed to retain their cooperative institution, while simultaneously not souring – at least formally – their relations with urban pro-reform state officials.

At least in one of the two regions of Poland given attention in Pine's Chapter 7, opposition is not at issue – rural people show genuine ease in their relations to urbanites. While in this Lodz region the city/country dichotomy holds little relevancy and the city is not portrayed negatively, the Gorale, from southwestern Poland, represent a very different case. In the latter instance, the city is perceived as far away and the village is always at the social and economic centre of the rural people's world. Pine's comparative perspective emphasises how the urban–rural distinction has been expressed differently at various times in different regions according to patterns of integration with the central state. She reminds us of the value of the rural–urban division, a distinction which acknowledges distance and inequality and is therefore useful in understanding the 'metaprocesses' influencing local identity: issues of place, problems of boundaries and relations of power.

Failure to consider issues related to identity may explain why economists and reformers have tended to overlook the enduring nature of socialist institutions and values. Yet, as this volume demonstrates, commitment to socialist forms is expressed by rural citizens in a number of ways: past ideologies are used to further interests; pre-1989/1991 times are viewed with nostalgia, citizens displaying a degree of appreciation for the previous political system that was not evident earlier; and socialist institutions have been given new significance and value. Abrami (Chapter 4 this volume) explores the way in which socialist ideologies have become a 'resource' used by Vietnamese seeking to justify their activities. The street traders she describes ground their practices firmly within socialist moral values which legitimate small-scale, as opposed to large-scale, trading. And they portray their primary concerns as agricultural rather than market-oriented. In many areas throughout the post-socialist region, rural inhabitants speak with fondness about the socialist period, pointing out the ways in which their standard of living or quality of life was far higher under the previous system. A consequence of the security provided by socialism is seen in the reluctance to dismantle the agricultural collectives across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Humphrey, Kaneff and Perrotta each highlight some of the specific economic, political and social advantages of maintaining cooperative forms of agricultural production from the viewpoint of local actors. In some instances, socialist forms of organisation have also been attributed new meanings. As Czegledy shows, self-provisioning which existed in Hungary as a coping strategy for socialism's shortages, persists among wealthy people.

Interestingly, a number of the papers indicate that moral frameworks appear to be an important part of how rural inhabitants construct their distinctive rural identities (Abrami, Czegledy, Kaneff, Leonard). And perhaps it is because control over the means of production was such a central and politicised concept in signifying both the advent of state socialism and its demise, that the notion of 'work' appears central within these moral codes. Abrami's traders assert that their status as peasants gives them a moral entitlement to engage in the otherwise morally suspect world of trading. Leonard makes explicit a connection between Chinese rural identity and the nature of agricultural work. The introduction of what are perceived to be morally inferior new types of corn is directly associated with changing labour patterns, increasing dependency on chemical fertilisers leading to greater dependency on the state; and ultimately, greater engagement in the cash economy. (A dependency that, as Humphrey shows for the Russian case, is useful in understanding the politically passive stance of rural people.) For Bulgarian villagers, the physical labour that characterises their activities is a means of claiming moral superiority: rural inhabitants see themselves as hard working and not afraid of 'dirtying their hands' (Kaneff). This same grounding of moral virtue through hard work is also evident in urban Hungarians' desire to maintain their links to the land. As Czegledy notes, urbanites view agricultural work as a means to maintain social cohesion between family members through joint participation in cultivation. Further, through agricultural work, urban people engage a national identity that is 'rooted in the soil' in a long tradition that involves particular distribution and consumption patterns which require the sharing of agricultural produce. This is a far cry from the Russian situation described by Humphrey, where agricultural work is no longer viewed as a pleasurable enterprise by many urbanites. Rather, economic hardship – at levels well exceeding the Hungarian case – have transformed the degree and type of work carried out by urbanites. The extra burden is viewed with disdain and rather than cementing relations, it causes rifts within households.

These papers demonstrate that the term 'peasant' conceals more than it reveals (Abrami). By looking at the issues of identity, the following chapters display the diversity that characterises rural inhabitant's lives and the complexity of their relationships. Kinship ties connecting urban and rural families (Humphrey and Czegledy), changing patterns of migration (Abrami, Pine), mixed occupations that combine agricultural pursuits with trading or other activities (Pine), problems of defining

subsistence (Abrami), and the difficulties of establishing private individual farming (Perrotta, Humphrey), are all factors which serve to muddy the notion that the concept of peasantry can be fruitfully applied to the post-socialist context. Where peasants are described in abstracted terms, the concept obscures an understanding of history (Flower).

At the most simple level, the peasant concept works against outsiders' understanding of rural viewpoints. Notions of peasants as 'backward', 'lacking in education' or 'conservative' tend to blind reformers to expressions of political resistance (Kaneff, Leonard). If farmers in China prefer to plant less productive old corn, there are officials who have misconstrued the phenomenon as backward peasant thinking prevailing against progress. They failed to grasp how past policies focused on agricultural production may have left a bad flavour, or that the icons of wealth seen blossoming in urban areas might be wholly beyond the reach of agricultural people (Leonard). In short, the peasant paradigm obscures the fact that rural folk are thoroughly modern people with their own priorities appropriate to their unique positions. As Pine reminds us, rural people harness the rural–urban distinction for their own purposes: they use it to place themselves at the centre of the social world and to manipulate their political and economic relations with others. What the peasant concept *does* reveal is something of the self-conception, political ambitions and agenda of those who apply it or avoid it, be they rural or urban people.

In reading the following chapters, we are struck by the different values and degree of ambiguity attributed to the peasant label by rural and urban folk alike. In the ethnographic cases, the term is shown to convey a multitude of values, ranging from the negative to the positive. Highly skilled in manipulating the peasant label for their own purposes, rural inhabitants apply the term to themselves when it suits them (Abrami) and distance themselves from it when they feel it is not appropriate (for example, Humphrey, Pine). As in the case of successful middle-class Russians who have built their livelihood on the successful manipulation of foreign donor agencies (Bruno 1998), so in this case we witness the skill of rural folk in the way they negotiate their relations with urban folk through the use of the peasant concept.

Urban inhabitants behave in a similar way. Intellectuals have proven themselves skilled at manipulating the concept of peasantry in a way that serves their own political interests. Raising the peasantry as an object of study has, for example, enabled high production levels amongst academics(!). Moreover, as Flower shows in the Chinese case – but the point has far wider relevancy – academics legitimate their own

position of power by distancing themselves from the peasantry. This process of creating a peasant archetype creates a desirable political distance – in both space and time – between urban élites (intellectuals and other state agents) and their rural counterparts. The irony is captured by Humphrey who points to the dominance of the peasant category amongst official circles, while at the same time establishing that most people practising subsistence farming – urban or rural – are reluctant to apply the term to themselves. Wealthy urban Hungarians, on the other hand, may not refer to themselves as peasants, but their continued participation in farming activities reveal their (limited) appreciation of the peasant archetype insofar as it provides them with a sense of identity which has both local and national significance (Czegledy). An important role of the state is to help citizens maintain a sense of national identity in the face of social upheaval and urban degradation. To this end the old-fashioned peasant life is revered as an important source (see Kligman 1988).

As the hybrid corn that was received differently by various sectors of the Chinese community – promoted by state officials, accepted only with qualification by the farmers (Leonard) – so the concept of peasantry has undergone numerous mutations and receptions. Unlike the case of corn, in the end all we are left with is an abstraction at the service of interest groups – state agents, intellectuals and rural people (by no means a unified group) – who position themselves in different ways with respect to the term for various purposes at different times. The process is thoroughly political; a relation of power frequently manifested in terms of the rural–urban split which is constantly under negotiation. State agents and intellectuals may have greater advantages in this power relation, but within this framework there is room for local manipulations. This approach clearly subscribes to the notion that cultural viewpoints are contingent and strategic, but the analysis does not stop there. We must try to search out the meaningful content of various positions in order to understand what they reveal about how people would like to live their lives, searching out the substantive values to which individuals and groups demonstrate commitment.

Our concern in this book should be understood, then, as a means of focusing on the variety of relationships that exist between state agents, intellectuals and those known as peasants. From our perspective, the construction of identity takes on a broad political significance as part of

a process of negotiating power and as constitutive of meaning and value. An approach focusing on the construction of identity at the local level explicitly rejects the macro approaches of economism, avoiding one of the fundamental problems of literature on the peasantry, where the logic of actors is deduced from a priori theoretical assumptions. For the articles in this collection, a consideration of political and economic contexts is fundamental, but we seek to understand recent developments on both social and symbolic levels in order to demonstrate that people at the grassroots have drawn on a wide range of concerns (i.e. not simply economic) to respond dynamically to changing circumstances. National policies, driven by ideological stances of global geopolitics, are realised in specific contexts; local conditions provide the framework within which reform policies are played out. Through the medium of fieldwork, anthropologists bring to the foreground subjects' own qualitative values and conscious reflections on their experiences, thereby taking into account local variability.

The implication is that social science perspectives grow out of political relationships and ideas about the nature of social and economic development. This implies that our own focus on localised identities is by no means an objective viewpoint. In the turmoil that forms the political environment of the post-socialist states, social scientists, national and international élites, as well as ordinary citizens, are political actors with stakes in the process of development. Where there exists a dialogue between western social science and intellectuals in the post-socialist states, the latter may claim that our social distance – what some might call our 'objectivity' and others our 'romantic attraction' to a peasant way of life – is a contrivance designed to veil the political nature of our own partisan position.[33] This viewpoint challenges us to ask the question, on what basis do we presume to 'take the part of the peasant' and what are the larger social costs of the programmes we advocate (Bernstein 1990)? While there is no easy answer to the question of how the current alliance between western social science and local people's political views is grounded, it is surely true that nationalism and economic expansionism continues to perpetuate the dualistic thinking (for example: us/them, developed/undeveloped, free market/centralised state control, primitive/advanced) that underlies the continuation of the peasant category.[34] Attributing priority to local perspectives allows us to begin to get beyond these dualisms and at the same time gain an understanding of some of the realities of post-socialist development.

Notes

1. We are aware that labels such as 'state agents', 'policy makers' and 'intellectuals' mask as much diversity as the term 'peasant'. A number of chapters in this work highlight some of the complexity and variation existent in urban identities. However, for our purposes of understanding the rural perspective, a more detailed exploration of urban categories has to be limited.
2. In the case of China, land has not been privatised, nevertheless, there is individual responsibility for rights over the land.
3. Kovacs 1998: 139.
4. Personal communication, Frances Pine.
5. In an inversion of this process, gift-giving may also be used to create a sense of distance from pervading commoditisation (Czegledy Ch. 9, this volume). See also Flower and Leonard 1996 for an account of traditional gift-giving and the process of increasing commoditisation in the Chinese countryside.
6. In an interesting exception to the portrayal of peasants as antithetical to progress, Humphrey notes that contemporary reformers in Russia called for a return to the old peasant archetype as a model for decollectivisation. It may be worth noting that this idealisation of peasantness took place in a context where there was no living group thought to represent this peasant ideal.
7. Redfield (1947, 1950, 1956, 1962), Redfield and Singer (1971).
8. Kroeber (1948), Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952).
9. See Kearney (1996) for a more complete exploration of the idea that the concept of peasant in social science proceeded out of the dualistic thinking of the cold war era.
10. The case of Poland offers the exception that proves the rule. There it was the peasant's attachment to small family farms that became problematic, since the family farm was the form that prevailed in Poland under socialism.
11. See e.g. Redfield (1956), Shanin (1966), Wolf (1966).
12. An irony also discussed by Cohen (1993), Kearney (1996) and Ching and Creed (1997).
13. The notion that peasants are intrinsically narrow-minded and politically weak is very persistent. On page one of a recent book on Village China, Christiansen and Zhang write: 'Yet we do not wish to take the notion of peasant "power" too far. Kate Xiao Zhou (1996: 12) is right in regarding peasant behaviour as a "spontaneous, unorganised, leaderless, non-ideological, apolitical movement". Her formulation reveals both the strengths and limitations of "peasant power". Peasants are strong because they are spontaneous, unorganised, leaderless and so on, but they are weak for the same reason. They cannot coordinate and aggregate their political interest. They can react only to their different realities, indifferent to and oblivious of the proclaimed policies of the state, and only occasionally respond to them if they intrude into the village reality, or they can bend and break the rules imposed from outside' (1998). For an account of (a successfully) organized political action in the Chinese countryside involving the conscious construction of a positive rural identity see Flower and Leonard (1997).
14. Evident in Ching and Creed's Introduction (1997).
15. For example Kearney (1996) and Cohen (1993).

16. Cf. the marginal position of Tito's Yugoslavia with the compliant position of Bulgaria.
17. Verdery (1991: 88) indicates the tense position of intellectuals in socialist Romania, as a group both necessary to the legitimisation of the state but also posing a potential danger to it. However, the Party's control of culture's means of production (Verdery 1991: 89), and internal competition within the intellectual domain between factions vying for resources controlled centrally (Verdery 1991: 92–4), frequently served to bring about intellectual compliance with Party goals.
18. Lenin offers his critique of the populist position in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1956). See e.g. his comments on how the 'Narodnik economists' got it wrong (182).
19. See e.g. Pickowicz (1994), Hann (1987).
20. We would like to acknowledge Regina Abrami (personal communication) for outlining these differences. Abrami also observed that 'the corrupt' versus 'the society' held significance in Vietnam.
21. See discussion in Shanin (1971: 470). Also see Gamson (1991) for a description of Wolf's invention and participation in the first 'teach-in' on the war in Vietnam.
22. Wolf (1966; 1969) Shanin (1971, 1972, 1987, 1990).
23. See Kelliher's (1992) account of peasant political action in China leading up to the reform.
24. Kearney's recent work (1996) offers a more comprehensive account; see also bibliography in Gutkind *et al*. (1984).
25. See Redfield (1947, 1956 and 1962), also Redfield and Singer (1971 esp. 358–59). For a critique of this position, see Lewis, who recognises the ethnocentrism implicit in the rural–urban dichotomy (1965: 494), the danger of generalisations about the nature of social life in the city (1965: 497), even the limitations of seeing primary relations as less important in the cities than in rural areas (1965: 497); criticisms also discussed in Lewis (1953).
26. Shanin (1971: 471).
27. This may seem ironic given that Bailey is ultimately known as a major proponent of transactionalist theory, a school which analysed human behaviour as consistently based on gaming-like calculations of self-interest (see e.g. Bailey 1971). Nevertheless, in this work he is concerned with discerning calculations of interest as founded on peasant 'cognitive maps' and peasant notions of a 'moral community' of insiders versus outsiders. While the peasant is calculating his interest, he does so from a foundation of potentially misguided cultural notions that may actually confound his interests.
28. It is in this tradition that the rediscovery of the theories of Chayanov by western social scientists can be placed. Chayanov emphasised that his theory of the labour-consumer balance (asserting that peasants limit their self-exploitation when basic subsistence needs are met) should not be seen as 'a sweet little picture of the Russian peasantry in the likeness of the moral French peasants, satisfied with everything and living like birds of the air'. Peasants' behaviour was instead to be seen as a function of the economic circumstances wherein they had to win 'every kopek by hard, intensive toil' such that even if Rothschild 'for all his bourgeois acquisitive psychology' was

obliged to engage in peasant labour, he would obey these same rules of conduct established by the theory (quoted in Bourgholtzer 1999: 44).

29. See Yang (1994) or Flower and Leonard (1996) for examples from China.
30. See Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983), Andersen (1991), and Cohen (1991).
31. The theme of resistance emerges as a particularly salient aspect of anthropological work on identity. See e.g. a discussion in Fischer (1999).
32. In a kindred stance, Harries-Jones (1993) describes how the UK political system encourages positions to be phrased in the language of 'interests' and how this unnecessarily restricts dialogue on environmental concerns and even misses the point.
33. Guldin (1994) for example, has documented the fact that Chinese anthropologists have consistently rejected the wholesale importation of western anthropology characterising it as a bourgeois perspective.
34. See also Kearney (1996).

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