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The Practices of 'Privacy' in a South Russian Village (a Case Study of Stepnoe, Krasnodar Region)¹

Some preliminary remarks

Before beginning to consider my main subject, 'privacy' in Russian villages, I should like to say something about the questions – which I see as central ones – of data collection and in general of the organisation of research in the field, issues that lie at the heart of the project presented here.

The village of Stepnoe lies in Krasnodar region, southern Russia. It has been studied by members of the Krasnodar Centre for Anthropological Research during the whole course of the *Fernab der Städte* project. This village was not selected for study fortuitously. Before the beginning of the project, I had already had quite intensive contacts with many residents of the village over many years, and I had even conducted folkloric and ethnographic research there (1995), accompanied by archive work on the history of the

¹ This article was written as part of the *Fernab der Städte: Leben auf dem Lande in Osteuropa. Ländliche Lebenswelten in Rußland, Estland und Bulgarien* project, with financial support from the German Research Fund (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*). [The terms used in the original Russian discussion are *privatnost* (privacy) and *publichnost* (publicness). Both are characteristic of academic, rather than vernacular, usage. The decision to use the terms 'privacy' and 'publicness', rather than, say, 'public sphere' and 'private sphere' is because the author is precisely concerned with modulating *practices*, rather than denominated *spheres*. Editor.]

village's formation. Most importantly, I believed I had a good idea of the issues of importance in the village; my acquaintances there knew I was an academic, and we had quite often discussed various topics of scholarly and political interest. It could be said that I was already partly incorporated into the everyday life of some residents of the village. This point was decisive in my choice of Stepnoe as an object of study.

Before beginning my field work, I told the people I knew in the village about it, and received their permission to 'study them'. But it was quite difficult to persuade local residents to make contact with other members of the group, as well as with me. This 'closed' character is typical of villages and *stanitsas*¹ in both the steppe and the mountain districts of the territory. Only on the Black Sea coast, where village residents are actively engaged in receiving tourists in the warm season and have become accustomed to the presence of outsiders both in their homes and in the streets of their villages, are things a little different. We, however, could not avoid being treated by locals as 'government officials' or 'journalists' when we arrived in Stepnoe: even an article about us in the district newspaper changed little. That is, we were firmly associated with people who 'poke their noses into other people's business' – people in front of whom you shouldn't talk. (I am only describing my general impressions and those of other members of the research group. Of course, we also encountered people who made contact easily and spoke openly about everyday village life from the moment we met them. There were very few of these, however, and their 'openness' can itself be viewed as a 'dis-course of openness', a presentation strategy.) There is no 'social niche' in the village for researchers; villagers are not familiar with the practice of anonymisation of informants, required by the ethics of field work; they do not understand who could possibly need to study them, and why; if they give a recorded interview, they imagine they are addressing the entire world. All these factors made the realisation of field techniques much harder, but at the same time made our work more nuanced.

We began by working only with those local residents who expressed trust towards us and our activities, i.e. with pre-prepared informants. Subsequently we came to use some of them as 'mediators': the mediators themselves found new informants for us, explained our interests to them, and themselves arranged meetings and introduced us to new people. In the course of the first two months of field work we did not use recording devices or video cameras: we only started recording interviews when our informants had become accustomed

¹ *stanitsa*: Cossack settlement. [Editor].

to us and had stopped feeling anxious if their words were taken down by recording devices. We tried not to meet new people 'in the street' (as is accepted practice, for instance, in ethnographic fieldwork). Encounters with locals were only made in situations with a 'quasi-public' character. Thus, we made the acquaintance of our neighbours, of people we had given a lift to in our car, of hairdressers, shopkeepers, etc. The researcher in the field is 'privatised' by his or her informant, and is subsequently viewed by other locals only through the prism of his or her acquaintance with that informant. In this connection, we had to pay considerable attention to maintaining our neutrality (which cannot, naturally, be done completely in a village: whatever happens, you are always on someone's side).

Of course, mistakes inevitably happened, and these prevented us from gaining the trust of some very interesting individuals; and in some cases, people refused to establish contact with us altogether. Nonetheless, the use of a field technique involving the employment of mediators had a significant result: we quickly entered into warm and friendly relationships with representatives of the most varied social groups and professional communities. As time went by, local residents themselves began trying to invite us to visit their homes 'as guests' or to attend various family or work events, including those that took place outside the village. Thus we tried to realise a 'multidirectional' entry into the field: so that people would treat us not as someone's guests or relatives, but actually as researchers, who were not included in any of the local communities. Sometimes an understanding of our autonomy did arise, but in the majority of cases our friendships in the village nonetheless played a very weighty role (for good or ill) in how willing informants were to meet with us.

This 'field approach' bears a direct relation to the question that interests us, because it indicates, even if only in part, the place of the researcher in the privacy of the village, a privacy that is so complex and so tense (even hostile) in the face of external interest, yet which is ready at any moment to be transformed before the eyes of the researcher into an equally impenetrable publicness.

Constructing the object of study

The topic of the present investigation was originally formulated as 'the relations between private and public spheres in the village'. But observations of village life, and the 'socially sensitive' organisation of our fieldwork, led me to conclude that the only form of 'publicness' we observed in the village of Stepnoe was 'generated' by our research group itself. Further, only a few situations in the village's communicative space can be viewed as contexts and conditions for interactions that resemble the 'urban publicness' with which we are familiar. This conclusion demanded a certain modification in the

focus of our research, and a refinement of the object of study as a construct. In the analysis presented here, this object is the practices relating to privacy, and the activity that I denominate as *the coordination of a privatised publicness*.

The categories of 'private' and 'public' are so fluid and multi-dimensional that the spheres we have defined could equally successfully be the object of study in a whole variety of scholarly disciplines.¹ Besides this synchronic breadth, the concept of 'privacy/publicness' has significant diachronic depth and becomes relevant for European thought quite early: Arendt, for example, traces the distinction between the two, like the division between the household and the political sphere, to the ancient world, arguing that these distinctions emerged, at the latest, around the time of the emergence of the city-state [Arendt 1958]. In our case the relevance and mobility of the boundaries between private and public in the communicative space of Stepnoe village have, as indicated above, been the background for our field research work: wherever the researchers might be, whatever relationships they might form with local residents, a boundary was always constructed to separate the existing communicative field from 'privacy' when this unexpectedly made itself felt. We can say, using Dan Graham's metaphor, that when the researchers tried to peek through the window into the sphere of the private, they generally provoked a closing of the curtains.²

Many years' experience observing social interactions in urban and rural settings have led me to the conclusion that, in analogous circumstances, urban and rural residents justify their communicative choices differently. This difference, in my opinion, is directly derived from their stable and typical ideas about everyday life.

What we understand by *privacy* is the field of relationships, contacts, and things (in their functions and meanings) where actors interact in their capacity as *unique persons*, and where statuses obtained in other fields as the product of *seriality* (as it is understood by Baudrillard) are irrelevant to the given interaction and are consequently ignored.

¹ Thus, the mutual relations between state institutions (= public) and the non-state sector (= private) in the economy, politics, and the cultural and social spheres of the state are studied and interpreted in the framework of a 'political science' paradigm (see, e.g., [Barsukova 1999]). The 'jurisprudence' paradigm studies the sphere of the state and the law; the establishment and implementation of rules in the spheres of private and other property; secrets of various kinds; so-called 'private life', etc. The 'gender' paradigm provides for research into the harmonization of the private with the feminine and the public with the masculine [Okin 1991]. And so on.

² Cf. [Graham 1993]: 'Public versus private can be dependent upon architectural conventions. By social convention, a window mediates between private (inside) and public (outside) space. The interior seen defines or is defined by the publicly accepted notion of privacy. An architectural division, the house, separates the private person from the public person and sanctions certain kinds of behavior for each. The meaning of privacy, beyond its mere distinguishability from publicness, is more complexly connected to other social rules.'

Similarly, *publicness* is the field of contacts, relations, things, and interactions where actors appear as manifestations of *seriality*, i.e. what is important is not a given person but his or her status, legitimised publicly (i.e. by the state). Finally, quasi-publicness (which will also be discussed here) is an area of privacy that has been transformed or deformed as the result of a strategy one might term *playing at publicness*. Here *play* as a manipulation of meanings has a key significance, because actors do not lose their personality in interaction. As far as *quasi-publicness* is concerned, this kind of interaction arises in the course of a private interaction when one of the actors demonstrates his or her public status and tries to abolish the personal in him- or herself and in his or her partner. (Such situations can arise both on an initiative 'from above', and on one 'from below'.)

Thus the present scheme can be considered a development, with due corrections, of Erving Goffman's proposition: 'The characterization that one individual can make of another by virtue of being able directly to observe and hear that other is organized around two fundamental forms of identification: the *categoric* kind involving placing that other in one or more social categories, and the *individual* kind, whereby the subject under observation is locked to a uniquely distinguishing identity through appearance, tone of voice, mention of name or other person-differentiating device. This dual possibility-categoric and individual identification-is critical for interaction life in all communities except bygone small isolated ones, and indeed figures in the social life of some other species as well' [Goffman 1983: 3-4].

Relevant, in my opinion, for the description, analysis, and interpretation of practices in the everyday life of the villagers is the concept of *coordination*, recently proposed by Laurent Thévenot and understood by him in the perspective not of a 'stabilised order' but of a focus of creative dynamics.¹ Refining Thévenot, I would say that coordination is non-stop experimentation, when the actor in any arbitrarily-chosen point of his/her social trajectory checks the changes taking place in his/her own position in relation to the X-Y-Z axes, etc. Coordination is a kind of *bricolage* in a space defined by social engineers and appropriated by a novice *bricoleur* (with all the novice's customary expenses and bonuses in terms of status.)²

¹ 'We need a notion of coordination which is much more open to uncertainty, critical tensions and creative arrangements than the ideas of stabilised and reproductive orders. I feel suspicious of the use of such notions as values, collective representations, rules or habitus, when they serve to ascertain order. The characterization of modes of coordination should point to their dynamics, not to the resulting orders' ([Thévenot 2001: 406]).

² In the ideal case, this actor finally adopts the position of a social engineer and tries to transform the trajectory of his/her coordination into a strategy. Those who have accepted the model he or she proposes as being a strategy are less attentive in following minimal social changes along these very

I have no right to exclude (either methodologically or in fact) my presence, the presence of the observer, from the scenes of everyday life I have observed; I am not in any position to annul the reception of local practices solely through the prism of the researcher's own socialisation and of the discourses that form *his own* life-world;¹ but I have nonetheless tried to realize the desire *to see the lifeworld through local residents' eyes* in a *presence/participation* format.²

I. The syntagmatics of privacy

First of all, I shall briefly describe the public (and quasi-public) context in relation to which village practices might be seen as private and which villagers use to be in a condition to 'be public' in principle.

The macro-perspective of communications

By a macro-perspective we understand the very smallest scale of the social map, characterised by the totality of public interactions carried out by residents of Stepnoe within a certain space where the village marks one point only. Firstly, this refers to interactions with human agents who cannot be assigned to the local community, and on territory that does not belong to it. And, secondly, it refers to interactions we might call 'exported', i.e. a fragment of the network of interactions is exported by its participants outside the limits of the village, either on to territory outside any settlement or into other settlements (with or without the possibility of external contact). If the first case is thoroughly satisfied by the criterion of publicness that I gave above, since the vector of communications has a centrifugal direction, then I would classify the second case, where the vector of communications is centripetal, as 'quasi-publicness' (i.e. public interactions are not excluded, but neither are they necessary).

axes: they know what they want and they know how to obtain it, they have a strategy, and a successful one. (Of course, errors are always possible: see Ervin Goffman's work *Frame Analysis* [Goffman 1974: 31-35, 441 sqq.].) Here, it seems to me, is the difference between *strategy* and *coordination*, which are entirely comparable on the levels both of terminology and of practice. But coordination cannot be viewed as a manifestation of reflexivity (on which more will be said in the appropriate place).

¹ It is indicative that even Talcott Parsons felt it necessary to introduce into his system constructs the 'subjective viewpoint' (based on Max Weber's concept of *Verstehen*) in order to describe the role of the researcher as an actor within the field he or she observes [Parsons 1961]. For a recent Russian discussion on this topic see 'The researcher and the object of research' // *Antropologicheskii forum*. 2005. No. 2. Pp. 7–134.

² Records cited below from field notes represent in part the researcher's interactions 'as they took place', i.e., as he perceived them, as they were impressed on his memory and transferred *post factum* onto paper; but in part they are records that *generalize* on the basis of observations and reflections, that draw conclusions as to some current state of experience in the field.

According to our observations, many local residents carry out regular trips outside Stepnoe (although there are also those who say it is a long time since they have travelled anywhere outside the village).

Journeys for extended periods. People travel furthest, and for the longest periods, for reasons connected with working outside the region. *Variant 1.* A local family leaves the village for many years (as a rule, to travel north), and members of the family return to their native village when they retire.¹ *Variant 2.* One member of the family (normally a man) leaves ‘to earn money’, returning only for holidays from work.² *Variant 3.* Study outside the region: school graduates apply to both regional universities (for instance, in Ivanovo or Ryazan regions) and to those in the capitals (Moscow, St Petersburg), with an uncertain prospect of returning; but they do visit the village during the university holidays.

Regular journeys. A significant part of the working-age male population, and an insignificant part of the female, are employed or in education outside the borders of the village administration; in this case local actors regularly leave the village and return to it. *Variant 1.* Employment in remote districts of the territory, or work trips around the territory, permit return home only at weekends and on public holidays. *Variant 2.* Employment within the district or in neighbouring districts, or in the city of Krasnodar, makes it possible to return home every day, which is not always done (for instance, when temporary accommodation is available at the workplace). The same category includes education in the district centre, Nizhnyaya stanitsa, Dalnyaya stanitsa, the town of Yarsky, and the city of Krasnodar.

Irregular and one-off journeys. Trips that are not connected with work: trips to see relatives (including in other regions of Russia); visits to markets in the district centre, the town of Yarsky, Krasnodar; visits to see friends and acquaintances in nearby settlements or in Krasnodar; trips to ‘nature’ or to the seaside (in summer) (having participated in such trips, I would allocate them exclusively to the category of quasi-public); visits to healthcare facilities, etc.

Journeys to the outskirts of the village belong entirely to the private sphere. It seems to me that journeys to the immediate surroundings of the village are most typical for local residents. To be precise,

¹ The social security agency informed us that this circumstance explains the high number of pensioners living in the village (Interview with Anastasia F., born 1962, conducted by the author.)

² Gold miners who worked previously in Bolivia, now in the Russian Far East (Kasyanova’s field notes), oil workers working in the far north (author’s field notes). As far the gold miners are concerned, there is a certain ‘quasi-public’ perspective here too: the brigade was formed of men originally from Stepnoe, and, by the nature of their occupation, they have very little contact with the ‘outside world’, since they are located a significant distance from the nearest settlements.

villagers might have a number of different reasons for leaving Stepnoe: (1) to work the fields and maintain agricultural equipment and various structures in the fields (this takes place during working hours and refers to those who work for the Association of Peasant Farms or on private farms); (2) to prepare hay for livestock (on a few meadows and on territories alongside the field roads); (3) to visit lakes and water courses (for fishing, swimming, picnics); (4) to enter the forest (for picnics, rendezvous); (5) to hunt. All these categories have a seasonal character. Points (3) and (4), and also in part (5), are difficult to differentiate: a picnic can be combined with fishing (or hunting) and can take place on a riverbank in a forest, but each of these activities can take place separately. It should be noted that fishing and hunting are purely recreational activities for some residents of Stepnoe, while for others they are a significant element in their economic life¹ (here, too, combinations are possible in some cases).

The micro-perspective of communications

Institutionally, the social space of the village differs little from that of the city. Of course, no-one is likely to come across such institutions within the village infrastructure as a theatre, a large factory, a hotel, or a golf club.² On the level of employment, the dominant scheme until recently was that one village area would have one or two agricultural enterprises, including stock-raising farms and processing, etc., subdivisions. On the level of 'recreation' practically all functions (theatre, cinema, museum, library, discothèque, hobby groups for particular interests, sports groups, etc.) were and still are carried out by the village House of Culture, and also by the school. Medical facilities are weakly specialised and have a limited range of specialists. Communications departments function little. Technical, judicial, tax, financial, religious, and other institutions are located in the

¹ From author's field notes: 'Morning. 9.00. I return from the district centre to the village. At the stop in the district centre I acquire a travelling companion, a woman aged about 55, carrying empty buckets. During the journey I find out that she has been at the bazaar. She succeeded in selling her fruit: a bucket costs 30 or 40 roubles more than it would in the village. This does not often happen. I ask her what she sells.

Sometimes I take apricots, sometimes apples... [I take] whatever there is. Plus, my husband and my brother-in-law go fishing, and I'll take fish as well, sell that.

Where do they fish?

On the reservoir. They've got their nets there. Day before yesterday, in the evening, they went there, took in the nets, and there was enough for fish soup, some to cook, and some to sell as well. Yesterday I sold fish. (She smiled.)

Don't they get chased away [by the conservation authorities, for using nets]?

Yeah, but whether they get chased away or not, what are you going to do? You've got to live somehow...' [Author's field notes].

² But such institutions can exist (and do) in district centres that are classed as villages.

district centre. It would be possible to continue this institutional comparison between the city and the village, but that would be a matter for a separate investigation.

There are not many places in Stepnoe village where communications reach a high intensity. Among them are the two markets (plus two markets on *khutors*);¹ the buildings of the village administration and the Association of Peasant Farms (the former collective farm board); the House of Culture (plus the two Houses of Culture on *khutors*); the kindergarten, the comprehensive secondary school (plus three primary schools on *khutors*); the post office (plus three on *khutors*); the polyclinic, the hospital (plus three MMPs² on *khutors*), the pharmacy, the militia station, shops, the hairdresser's shop, three café-bars, the library, and bus stops.

It should be borne in mind that all these institutions have strictly defined opening hours (the bus stops fulfil the function of places of intensive communication only immediately before the arrival of the bus, with the exception of the two stops nearest to the exit from the village in the direction of the district centre, which are visited practically all the time during daylight hours by villagers hoping to catch a lift).

According to our observations, the most heavily visited places are the shops, and for young people also the cafés, which latter are also open at night. Out of all these places, only the 'big' market structurally resembles 'publicness' in an urban sense. The 'little', everyday market marks one of the centres of the village, where some of the village shops are concentrated (both private shops and state-owned ones). It is basically local residents who visit the 'little' market, both as sellers and as buyers. The 'big' market, which is held weekly, takes the place of the 'little' market on Fridays. Traders from various districts of the territory, and from the Adygeya Republic, regularly travel to the 'big' market. For this reason, relations between buyers and sellers on the floor of the market approximate to 'publicness' in the city sense.³

Yet the places of intensive communication listed above can be called public only in a very specific sense. What is 'public' in a typical urban sense is irrelevant, I think, to such places in the village. Commercial, medical, and educational institutions are all without exception drawn into the network of private practices. In some cases (e.g., in the hos-

¹ i.e. a farming settlement. [Editor].

² MMP: Medical assistant and midwife point [i.e. somewhere providing first aid and basic medical treatment, but not staffed by a qualified doctor – Editor].

³ We have no doubt that the practices that characterize urban publicness are familiar to villagers and are mastered by them, since there is not going to be any family in the village that would not visit markets in town.

pital or the school) administrative and hierarchical practices are present, but in a reduced form: there is a certain kind of playing at publicness. Thus, villagers who know one another do not entirely abolish the demand that one address people by name and patronymic: they address respected people in the second person plural (but they very easily go over to the second person singular) and by the patronymic alone—Vladimirovich, Petrovna.¹ But the involvement of an outsider (e.g., the researcher) in villagers' interactions provokes the construction of a public situation. In the presence of the author of these lines, the chief of the administration addressed an entrepreneur of high status by name and patronymic (and in the second person plural), while on another occasion I happened to witness a conversation between the same two people where I noticed that they used the second person singular and first names;² in both instances, they were discussing problems of village administration. As far as the shops and cafés are concerned, interactions between staff and customers / visitors bear an entirely private character (second person singular, first names), because there is no administrative hierarchy in this field. Therefore, based on these facts, one can say that a public dimension easily arises in private interactions that are superficially observed from without, as soon as circumstances require it. To the extent that private forms of address are typical in quasi-public places, one should see them above all as a manifestation of personalistic relations (relations based on the ready capital of the person and his/her family, i.e. where the actor's role is 'marked' in some way). The construction of publicness takes place not just in the presence of an outsider (i.e. an 'unmarked' actor), but also in the event of one interlocutor addressing another not as a person, but in terms of his/her public status, and where communication is mediated through state or economic power.³

Additional arguments for viewing village 'public' places as sub-spaces of the private sphere are provided by the following characteristic episodes from village life (taking the relationship between buyer and seller as an example.)

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- ¹ It seems that the only exception to this use of patronymics alone is represented by the village teachers. At any rate, members of several generations of villagers recall their first teacher (one and the same person) with great piety and refer to her exclusively with respect, as Anastasiya Ivanovna.
 - ² Goffman calls such presentations 'team performances' [Goffman 1959: 77-105], but what is important here for me is the fact that this duality is only characteristic of the town in cases where an official encounters personal acquaintances in the course of professional work; in the village, by contrast, where all the residents are to a greater or lesser extent personal acquaintances of the chief of the administration and other officials, the situation of duality arises only when an outsider is present.
 - ³ We cannot find a better term here than 'economic' in the sense of *relating to an enterprise*, meaning an enterprise that might be either public or private. But in both a private and a state enterprise, the same means are used to construct publicness in interactions between marked actors, from which we can conclude that the mediating force that gives participants in communication a status at different levels of the hierarchy, and that is relevant only in publicness, is actually state power in both cases.

1) A unique case when a customer in one of the private shops was dissatisfied with the service and wrote an entry in the complaints book took place on the initiative of Elena V., a university lecturer from Krasnoyarsk who had bought a house in Stepnoe several years previously to spend the summer holidays there. Elena, feeling that she had received poor quality service, acted as she would have done in a public situation in a big city. But a little later, evidently recognising the ineffectiveness of making an entry in the complaints book, she decided to employ a personal acquaintance and informed the shop's owner about the incident. As far as we know, nothing was said even verbally to the shop assistant concerned.¹

2) The daily 'little' market, as noted above, is characterised by the fact that both traders and customers are local residents, i.e. it is private relationships that are realised at this market. So it is no surprise that we observe the practice of interest-free credit, guaranteed by the personal 'reputation' of the customer. We know many villagers on low money incomes who make efforts to buy goods at this market, where expensive items are not usually sold. They can always rely on the fact that the stallholder will let them have the goods on credit for a period of several months (which is also characteristic of the shops, but with smaller sums and for a shorter credit period: no more than one month). The fact that it is the personalistic approach that prevails in such interactions is demonstrated, for instance, by a case where a close relative of a customer who had bought some clothes 'on tick' died. The stallholder, hearing of this, allowed the customer not to pay the agreed sum that month, and resume payments the following month.²

3) One of the sales assistants at a private shop admitted that she tried to find out as much detail as possible from each visitor about his/her plans for the day. She does this so that if anyone asks her 'Where's auntie Masha? Where's Petrovich gone?' she will be able to give an exhaustive answer. That is, as the informer emphasises, she 'has to work like an information office', otherwise, as she thinks, fewer people would visit the shop.³

These examples could easily be multiplied. At the same time, evidence of manifestations of publicness either in these quasi-public places or in genuinely private places (e.g., the home) is very sparse and seems always to be linked with the process of constructing new groups of the village elite.⁴

¹ Author's field notes.

² Interview with Nadezhda S., born 1965, conducted by A. Kasyanova.

³ Author's field notes.

⁴ See [Kasyanova 2006].

The data given refer to a sphere of communications that is external to the greatest possible degree, where both typical (traders) and atypical (researchers) unmarked actors can appear without posing any threat to the community – which easily restructures itself in a public key, and successfully parries outside interest by recourse to a language associated with publicness in the outside world. But if we bear in mind that an extreme degree of privacy can be given by a paradigm like ego-ego communication (or 'interior dialogue'), then there might be an unlimited number of 'steps' between such the manifestation of privacy and that which was described above; and on each 'step' privacy is transformed along with the transformation of identity and local social boundaries (e.g.: father – neighbour – senior doctor – the elected representative), while nevertheless remaining 'privacy' of a kind.

It seems impossible to give a thoroughgoing description of these 'steps', because the boundaries between them are flexible and permeable, and the very act of fixing such boundaries is no more than the whim of the observer. We will do no more than noting some fields of privacy that can easily be observed in the course of villagers' everyday life (though ease of observation does not necessarily generate ease of understanding).

We should note that it is not only the above-mentioned quasi-public places in the village that are places for meetings and communications between villagers. Any locus of a quasi-public character can become such a place – for example, the street, where any of the villagers can meet and enter into communication. The space of the street is ordered in an uneven manner, with regard to its quasi-public characteristics. We can identify as the most intensive loci of communication the streets that are near those institutions that form the centre both of the village and of the area. In addition, we should point to the bus stops already mentioned, and also the benches along the yard fences, put up specially for such quasi-public meetings (in the warm season, of course) with neighbours and passers-by sharing the quasi-public space of the street.¹ The benches are also used for games by the children, who form groups by neighbourhood.

Villagers communicate no less intensively in shops (see, e.g., the shop assistant's opinion adduced above). Communication arises both among visitors and also between buyers and sellers. At the stage when the members of the research group were still not known to the shop staff, any of us who entered a shop where there were no other customers found him- or herself in something like a 'public' realm in

¹ I have once already described and analysed data relating to groups of women who assemble in village yards [Manuylov 1998: 47–49].

the urban sense. But as soon as the researcher became 'known' to the shop staff, situations (initiated by the staff themselves) began to arise which could be classed as related to local practices of privacy.

To give an example: I went into a shop to buy some bread and, not finding any bread on the counter, I asked the shop assistant whether there was any bread for sale. She told me that there wasn't any bread, but she could sell me one loaf, and pulled out a loaf of white bread from under the counter. On another occasion she advised me not to take the stale bread from the counter and instead sold me fresh bread she had put aside 'for her friends'. A few times shop assistants couldn't find change and suggested that we bring the money in later, when we had changed a big note (but they let us take our shopping). Finally, one evening I was looking around the shops for raw potatoes (one of the members of our research group had decided to cook some potato dish, because we were expecting some villagers for 'a visit'). But in the village you can only buy potatoes at the morning produce market, and they are not sold in shops at all. One of the shop assistants offered to sell me her own potatoes (which her family grows on a private holding as a sideline). An hour later I went into the same shop and the assistant had already fetched me 5kg of good potatoes, which she sold me at a very reasonable price. One more example: I had decided to have my car serviced by the local 'shadow' mechanic, who was also employed as goods manager in the local private car shop. The service included replacing various parts of the steering and of the braking system. The mechanic telephoned the seller and said exactly which spare parts he needed to find and sell me (he had chosen higher-quality versions of the parts). In one instance he couldn't find a good-quality replacement, so he took me in his own car to the town of Yarsky, where there are several car shops. There the mechanic picked out the necessary brake discs and we went back to Stepnoe to continue the service. When the work was finished I asked him how much it cost him, and he said, 'As much as you don't mind paying.' Of course, I didn't know the going rate, and at random, so as not to offend him, I suggested 500 roubles. I think the mechanic was satisfied with that payment. Before then he had provided minor maintenance services (regulating the clutch, charging the battery, etc.) and refused any payment at all, with the phrase 'For people I know it's free'.¹

These examples show that private practices edge out public ones if personal relationships exist between the actors. In the village, the shop staff are personally acquainted with the majority of residents (and, if they don't 'know the face', they can easily establish the

¹ All materials given concerning privacy in shops are from the author's field notes.

customer's status and relationship to themselves through family or network affiliation, once they enter into communication), so their relation to local customers is formed not by practices intrinsic to publicness – which would demand that the customer-actors be unmarked and that the shop staff relate in the same way to all the shop's customers when communicating with them, but by practices of privacy, demanding the selection of 'friends' and the provision for them of more favourable conditions for obtaining goods and services.¹

I am far from intending to portray Stepnoe village as a 'community of friends'. More than once we were the witnesses of conflicts, which in some instances were resolved by fights. The reasons for these conflicts were sometimes on the surface, and sometimes remained a mystery. But in all the cases we encountered where conflicts were resolved, the opposing sides acted on the basis of what social capital stood behind their opponent.

Modern city-dwellers are well aware of the model of dividing one's personal time into public and private: there is a public space at work, and a private space at home. I have several times encountered the opinion that a person's reason for hurrying home will be to change his/her situation, to be with people – close relatives – whom he/she likes and loves. Or it can be the other way around: someone isn't in a hurry to get home after work, because he/she has more intimate forms of private communication, such as the company of friends, a lover, etc. Thus there are boundaries between these fields, expressed in temporal, spatial (topographical), and role categories. In the social space of Stepnoe, according to our observations, such boundaries can be established with great difficulty if at all.

In speaking of the temporality of privacy we should consider that the village certainly does know the category of 'working hours', but on closer examination this category looks fictional, because 'working hours' can arise at any moment when someone needs the services of some specialist (or indeed if someone needs to work on their own account – in cases that the economic literature terms 'self-employment'). A friend of mine, the local veterinarian, Dmitry V. (b. 1963), was 'on a hospital note'² but it was almost impossible to catch him at home. At any time of the day or night his fellow villagers might come and call him away in connection with various problems that had arisen with their animals. It is quite a large village, so making the round of all the necessary addresses can sometimes be difficult. But Dmitry never refuses anyone, even

¹ Of course, such patterns of relationships are characteristic also of shop staff in town, but there they are not fundamental and they have a somewhat different structure.

² Which officially gives its bearer time off work with pay; usually issued by a local therapist.

when he is 'on sick leave'.¹ In another case the schoolteacher Tamara Z. (b. 1976) complained that the head had told her off for visiting a local private café 'outside working hours', on the basis that an educator should not be seen in a place that has a 'doubtful' reputation.² As we see, within the social space of the village, public interactions assume the character of private ones, and private that of quasi-public (if they are assessed on the basis of one's experience of urban publicness).

II. The paradigmatics of privacy

Let us turn to a more detailed analysis of social relations in a private organisation: the limited company (OOO) Aist ('Stork'). OOO Aist is engaged in retail trade and has several shops in the villages of Stepnoe and Lesnoe and the *khutor* of Vostochnyi. About 60 people work in the organization. The leadership of the organisation is made up primarily of relatives (see Table 1).

Economic and family relations in this group are so intertwined that it is impossible to say whether any situations exist in which anyone from the group carries out *exclusively* economic practices. The superimposition of economic onto family roles is typical of modern Russian small business. Here we can discern above all economic profit: a greater proportion of the wage fund returns to the family. The director in his interview cites, as another plus of this superimposition, mutual trust and simplified control by means of extra-economic connections. But an important minus, in his (and my) opinion, is the possibility of family conflict that might put the enterprise in the firing line.³ In this connection I would like to pause briefly and analyse such a protracted conflict, which can lead both to the breakup of the group and to a division of the enterprise.

OOO Aist was established by Aleksei K., who died in 1999. His business was formally inherited by his widow, Natalya K., but it appears that her children—Viktor K. and Irina S. — are the *real*

¹ Author's field notes.

² Interview with Tamara Z., b. 1976, conducted by A. Manuylov.

³ 'Can yours be called a family organisation?

Hm... yes... Yes, in principle you could call it that. A family organisation, family enterprise, because all our administrative structures [laughs], all our responsible positions are occupied by relatives.

Is that a policy, or did it just happen that way?

You know, well, it's probably a policy, more than anything else, because it couldn't just have happened that way. It was done deliberately, because we're a family. It's just, anyway, some problems you can solve easier in the family, in your own circle, than with someone you don't know. Trust, control's simpler, because you don't need to keep such a strict control on your relatives as with an outsider. But you know, however friendly everyone is, you do need some control. Money splits everyone up, whatever you do' (From an interview with Viktor K., b. 1971, conducted by A. Manuylov).

Aleksandr Manuylov. The Practices of 'Privacy' in a South Russian Village (a Case Study of Stepnoe, Krasnodar Region)

Table 1

Personal composition of the leadership of OOO Aist

Name	Status	Relationship						Vasily
		Viktor	Igor	Natalya	Irina	Valentina	Pyotr	
VIKTOR	Director		brother-in-law	Mother	sister	Wife	—	fellow godparent
IGOR'	Deputy director	brother-in-law		mother-in-law	wife	brother-in-law's wife	fellow godparent	—
NATALYA	Deputy director for supply	son	son-in-law		daughter	daughter-in-law	—	—
IRINA	Chief accountant	brother	husband	mother		sister-in-law	fellow godparent	—
VALENTINA	Deputy chief accountant	husband	sister-in-law's husband	mother-in-law	sister-in-law		—	fellow godparent
PYOTR	Goods manager	—	fellow godparent	—	fellow godparent	—		—
VASILY	Filing clerk	fellow godparent	—	—	—	fellow godparent	—	

owners of the organisation (no-one tries to clarify their shares, they only emphasise the equality of Viktor and Irina¹).

Some of the lands bought to extend the company, and the commercial premises built on them, belong jointly to Viktor and Irina, some jointly to Viktor and Natalya K. (his mother), and some to Viktor alone (although it is hard to establish the proportions of the three). As we see, the mutual 'trust' that Viktor proclaims as a positive factor in the leadership of the organisation leads to an extreme confusion and uncertainty concerning individual contributions and individual shares of the capital. The fact that the enterprise belongs to Natalya and the land to Viktor, Irina, and their mother Natalya, does not at all mean that these individuals have contributed their own resources in proportion to the property they hold. Financial investments in erecting new buildings and repairing old ones, buying land and equipment, etc., pass through the prism of family 'trust' and give a picture of property that does not correspond to the investments themselves, if viewed from an economic perspective. It seems that this fact does not satisfy another important actor in the group: Irina's husband Igor S., who is the deputy director, i.e. deputy to Irina's brother Viktor. Igor himself is from a family that we classify as part of the local 'collective farm'² elite: the family's reputation in the village in the post-Soviet period has depended on the strength of one or another discourse. Igor has two higher education qualifications, which already distinguishes him from a group where all the members (except Vasily and Natalya, who have secondary technical education) have nothing beyond a university leaver's diploma. Conflict within the organisation began under the old owner: one side was represented, unsurprisingly, by Igor, the other by his father-in-law, the owner of the company, Aleksei. Irina, Igor's wife and Aleksei's daughter, seems even then to have adopted the position of a mediator, aimed essentially at supporting her husband. It is interesting that at that time relations between Viktor and Igor were, they admit, very warm; but as soon

¹ Indicative in this connection are the relations between the brother / director and the chief accountant / sister (as presented by the sister):

'But you have to tell Viktor somehow that you're not going [to work]?

No, of course not.

No?

Well, you understand, he's the director of the enterprise, but I realise that for us that's just a formality. He's not answerable to me, I'm not answerable to him. He and I are equal owners, so why should I answer to him?' (From an interview with Irina S., b. 1977, conducted by A. Kasyanova).

² In the present case the term 'collective farm' refers not to a collective as such, but to the collective period of the village's history. The elite of that period included not only the leadership of the collective farm, but also the party and administrative leadership and the directors of various state enterprises that were not part of the collective farm.

as Viktor became director and co-owner of the organisation, Igor entered into a state of conflict with him. From his exposition it is already possible to conclude that Igor is only interested in power, while the K. family (actually his wife's family, not his) cannot and does not intend to include him in the list of real owners of Aist, just as they do not intend to support his ambitions for power (whether financially or socially¹). The most he could get from the K. family (thanks to his wife's support) was the post of deputy director.

So what does Igor do to satisfy his desire for power? In 2000 he stood as an independent candidate for the district local authority. But he was not elected,² which he himself ascribes to the fact that he chose an incorrect strategy, made a number of tactical mistakes, and was up against strong rivals. Soon after his election defeat his activity won Igor the public status of chair of the street cooperative: he started to deal with questions of gas provision and water pipes and to advise representatives of other cooperatives and help them tackle problems. At the following elections (in 2004) he decided to prepare more effectively. Igor joined the United Russia party and received instructions to form a party cell in the village (which he did form and of which he became the leader) and became a member of the party's district political council. By the time of the elections he had access not only to organisational capital and capital inherited from his

¹ Igor nonetheless does receive symbolic support from the K. family, which is defined by his high position in the family enterprise and by the very existence of family and friendly relations within the group, which although they might not be actualised are still well-known in the village.

² *'So the first time was three years back, yeah? [...] So I stood, right, for local councillor, so to speak. Well, hm, I was inexperienced, I ran over there, of course, to be the first one to register, I thought I wouldn't make it, and I made a lot of silly mistakes. [...] Although, I'm saying, a group of electors (five people) nominated me, an initiative [group], they call it; 'nominated by a group of electors', well, that sounds a different thing altogether. Then, we didn't get it quite right with the leaflets, the photos and so on. I picked some campaign workers who weren't right—you know, that's still the face of the candidate. Well, that cost finances as well. They don't give out finances. The idea is, the law is, they've got to give them it, but nobody does, of course. [...] And on your own finances you won't get far, there's the family as well, so even it's not the right level. [...] So to speak, it's tough for a simple mortal to get anywhere. So the first time I lost. Well, there were candidates from Fatherland, Kondratenko's party, Papa Kondrat, so to speak, [they had] a lot of support. [...] Well, we had twenty-seven, twenty-eight [candidates] for five seats. Yes. [...] Well, and people who weren't standing for the first time. Well, I tell you, politics here is all the same techniques just like in Moscow, it's the same here. So whether it's there or here there was underhand stuff as well, plenty of that too.*

And what happened then? From what I know, Petrovich and Pasha got in, didn't they?

Petrovich got in. He got the very first place. Well, I'll put it this way, people here hadn't learnt how to choose yet. Petrovich: what's he popular for? Well, all his life he's cured people, you understand, he's saved their lives, so he had this popularity. Plus he was from Kondratenko's Fatherland, he was first. But people don't get it that they're not electing someone to cure them, you understand, they're electing someone to deal with concrete questions. There's people who are pessimists on these questions, and there's people who are optimists, you understand? That is, it's a completely different line of work, deputy-ing, it's not the same. You understand, if it's someone, so to speak, of course, I don't want to find fault, but [Petrovich] is a pessimist all his life. [...] Everyone's got his own thing, right? What's he doing being a deputy!' (Interview with Igor S., b. 1974, conducted by A. Manuylov).

father's family,¹ but also to 'social' capital acquired from his work as chair of the street cooperative, and, finally, political capital derived from party membership.²

The legitimisation of his status in the latter two fields had demanded initiative and leadership capability from Igor. As a result, he did obtain his coveted position as a councillor, by winning in 2004. Thus we see that Igor's overall status consists of: (1) the high status of the families with which he is connected (by birth and marriage); (2) his high public status (as deputy director of the village's largest private organization and chair of a street cooperative); (3) his high political status (as head of the area party cell, member of the party's district political council, and councillor). But Igor has very weak capital in the financial and economic fields. Consequently, the conflict with director Viktor results from Igor's desire to receive high status in these fields and, at the same time, acts as a mechanism to obtain financial and economic power.

How he will carry out the seizure of these fields and the legitimization of his status within them, time will show. The only thing that can be said is that the very process of this seizure is bound, I think, to take

¹ It should be borne in mind that the family from which Igor comes are considered by locals to be 'indigenous' (i.e. his ancestors were among the first settlers of Stepnoye village). Those who belong to such families will say as much with undisguised pride. Yet Viktor's family are new arrivals: both Viktor and his sister (Igor's wife) were born in the Altai Territory, and Viktor's wife is originally from Armavir. Thus Igor's family are accepted in the village as 'old, respected folk', while Viktor's family have no local history at all and cannot boast of any 'glorious ancestors'. Both these families could be ascribed to the village elite, but if Igor's family belongs, as already noted, to the 'collective farm' elite, Viktor's family belongs to the new trading elite. In connection with this, Igor accumulates in himself the capital of both these elites (or, since it is not a question of any great personal merit of his, it is better to say that the capital of village elites of two distinct types is incorporated into his person), which for the village under study seems to be unique.

² It is important to note that Igor wanted to join the party of the authorities, which includes the most influential part of the district leadership. But when asked about the reasons for his choice – whether it was the party's relation to the authorities or its political programme – he indicated, rather incoherently, that his motive was the political programme:

Igor, listen, can we say that if a different party had been the most powerful, you'd have used that one?

Well, what can I tell you...

That is, it's not your party allegiance itself that moved you, it's the fact that...

No, well, there's also a sense that their ideology satisfies me, right?

That's exactly what I'd wanted to ask.

If Papa Kondrat had a purely communist orientation, right, practically, well, maybe not entirely, but the basic orientation, then United Russia [...] order, that's their orientation. They've taken something from the communists, something from the democrats. They call them centrists, well, now, maybe, in a way leftists, but their ideology at the moment it's closer to me, it satisfies me. Order's got to be order, everyone's already sick of this chaos and so on, so the ideology of this party satisfies me. What's more, I joined before the elections, almost six months before, even more. I didn't know yet what would happen, the polls were changing over the course of a month, so to speak. So even though they were predicting it, everything could change, like, you know? Like Spain, with the parliament' (Interview with Igor S., b. 1974, conducted by author).

place exclusively through private practices, or else any capital that Igor had somehow managed to achieve would never be seen as legitimate in his home village.

This history shows how capital outside the field of family communications is formed and expanded in order to foster struggle within the private sphere and achieve victory in this struggle. Igor uses all means at his disposal to get outside the framework of privacy into publicness, which for residents of Stepnoe is embodied by the big city (Krasnodar) and also by the district centre. But even those interactions that would seem to be furthest from the village and to demand most publicness return him to the village, return him to private village practices. Thus, when he wanted to join the United Russia party, Igor did not approach the district organisation, but applied for membership to the regional organisation, based in Krasnodar. Yet, although he had joined the party in the city, they recommended him to register with the district organisation, where he was instructed to form a party cell in Stepnoe. In this case, Igor employed his own family and business capital and invited Pyotr and Vasily (see Table 1) and their wives to join the party branch, which is once again explained by his ability to put pressure on his colleagues / party members through work and family. Other villagers (five more people) also joined the party cell, because they knew Igor as an energetic 'public worker'. As for the political council, Igor was recommended as a member of it thanks to his father's authority: elderly members of the district council knew his father well from joint work in the 'collective farm' period.

As we see, this person, who does not enjoy absolute power in the K. family (his wife's family) and in the firm, wants control over both the family and the organisation: to get it, he accumulates statuses in other fields, where he can have recourse to state legitimisation. 'The representative of the state is the repository of common sense: official nominations and school certificates tend to have a universal value on all markets'; while various certificates accord that someone 'is appointed to produce a point of view which is recognized as transcending individual points of view' [Bourdieu 1990: 136–137]. Igor understands perfectly that in the public (state) sphere he has almost no chance to win the struggle for mastery in the family and the enterprise, but he is developing a force accessible to few in the village for conducting this struggle in the private sphere itself.

This situation has another element as well. According to my and my colleagues' observations, there are two people in the group represented in Table 1 who might be described as 'speakers' (unlike the others, who are 'listeners'). One of these people is Vasily B's wife, Anna B. Her activity is directed chiefly at the women of this group [for details

see Kasyanova 2008]. The second person is Igor, who makes use of the right (since having arrogated it) to speak both within the male section, and throughout the group. (Here we should add his dominating position in his own nuclear family. Irina, one of the people the group recognises as owning the company, thus falls under a 'triple strike' of discourses translated and produced within the group.) Igor's seizure of the position of 'speaker' within the group led to the fact that he also came to appear externally as the spokesperson for the interests of the group. The conflict between Igor and Viktor, the director, arose for the same reason as the previous conflict between Igor and Aleksei, the previous director, Viktor's father: Igor disagreed with the course of entrepreneurial activity undertaken by the firm. To defend his position, Igor needed the right to speak. It should be noted that the head of the firm – Viktor – says very little about the character of what his organisation does, and only discusses plans for its development if I ask him a question (and the plans he does describe have little to do with the resources he currently possesses). It seems that Viktor does not have even an approximately clear opinion of his own concerning Igor's activity in the firm, and he tries not to discuss their conflict at all. With the director thus remaining silent, his deputy (Igor) is able to form discourses about the organisation both for 'internal' and for 'external consumption', and his leadership role is manifested in the very act of speaking about the organization.

At the present time, Viktor and Igor's routine duties in the work of Aist are divided roughly equally: each of them serves four trading points, but the restaurant¹ that was recently opened in a neighbouring village is under Igor's patronage. Igor himself conducts employment policy on his 'own territory', decides each day's order for the filing clerk, long-term orders to suppliers, etc. And I would not say that Igor, in our conversations, crossed the boundaries of subordination. He does not challenge Viktor's leadership status and his role as the 'boss', but he employs all means to demonstrate a strong interest in the effective work and successful development of the Aist firm.

Thus all the resources available in the village, acquired in various fields, excepting those fields for control of which a struggle is under way, are concentrated in the person of Igor. Functionally (in decision-making within the organisation) he has equal rights with those of the director, who nonetheless is responsible for taking decisions directed outside the company, and in addition Igor – through speech – presents himself in all respects as the 'face' and

¹ It has now been decided to close this restaurant, which has existed for about a year, because it is not making a profit.

'brain' of the organisation. On the face of it, little now stands in his way: the K. family must, in time, recognise him as the unquestioned leader of the group and grant him a status in line, i.e. access to economic capital and the right to take decisions on behalf of the organisation as a whole. Any factors that might hinder this line of developments would only emerge were one to do extensive further investigation.

Some closing remarks

In the present article I have chosen to assign a crucial role to the types of connection between signs (syntagmatics and paradigmatics) that have been developed by structural linguistics and semiotics, founded on a concept of structuredness that is not only (and not chiefly) characteristic of structuralism itself, but rather of the poststructuralist paradigm. For 'never has structure been the exclusive *term* – in the double sense of the word – of critical description. It was always a *means* or relationship for reading or writing, for assembling significations, recognizing themes, ordering constants and correspondences' [Derrida 2001: 17]. Out of the whole multiplicity of meanings of the terms 'syntagmatics' and 'paradigmatics', those that are important for us are, 1. for syntagmatics: the interdependence and intercomplementarity of elements of the syntagmatic series [see, e.g., Lotman 1970: 58], and also the fact that 'syntagmatic relations hold *in praesentia*'. They hold between two or more terms co-present in a sequence' [Saussure 1983: 122]; and 2. for paradigmatics: the systemic character of a paradigm that unites various elements that belong structurally to 'different levels', the escape from the framework of being present 'here and now', in relation to which the elements are always '*in absentia*' [Saussure 1983: 122].

The syntagmatics of privacy is thus understood, in the first section of my article, to apply to villagers' manifestation of the village's social structure in the presence of, and in communication with, a researcher or researchers from outside. When employing fieldwork techniques, I am presented with the facade or 'front' of village privacy, as it is displayed to me in interactions, and it is displayed to the extent that local actors have an interest (sometimes desired, sometimes coerced) in conveying something about themselves and others. Just as Alan Westin has defined it, privacy is the 'claim of individuals, groups or institutions to determine themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others' [Westin 1967: 7]. I have tried to show what kind of relations make up everyday village life, and in what the unity of village communication consists – i.e. what might be defined in abbreviated terms like this: *an interaction will not take place if both sides do not bear its private character in*

mind.¹ Here by ‘interaction’ I mean not any mutual action, but interaction on the part of residents of *this* village, among *local* marked actors. No public practices operate in the village that have not previously been brought into line with private practices. The village is at once the subject and the object of privatisation, it privatises itself, and it is this very process of ongoing, self-consolidating privatisation that creates the village as an ensemble of communities. For a public space to appear in the village would require the presence of a certain number of faceless and unmarked actors, who would nonetheless not occupy the marginal positions of outlaws, dropouts, temporary residents, travelling traders, etc., but would have permanent and fully valued status in the village. I can confidently say that there are no such actors in Stepnoe today. Any arrivals who intend to live permanently in the village (and there are more than a few of them) make efforts to coordinate their activity so as not to be ‘outsiders’, i. e. they enter into a multitude of private relations with local residents, which itself is the guarantee of their successful ‘acclimatisation’ into one or other community, on the one hand, and acceptance by the community, on the other.² Thus the syntagmatics of privacy comes into being.

The paradigmatics of privacy was analysed by me on the basis of an example of the escalation of incorporated capital of different types (political, economic, social, etc.) in the pursuit of a power struggle in the private sphere. In 1956, Eisenstadt proposed that different societies be viewed as types on the basis of the criterion of the

¹ This definition has a mass of ‘buts’, and in practice what operates is frequently not the definition itself but an exception to it. Nonetheless I insist on its relevance to the complex and ambiguous social relations of Stepnoe village.

² In one interview our informer, listing her work colleagues, described the majority of them as ‘locals’, while we knew that they had all arrived from outside. When we tried to be specific about individuals, who was local and who was from outside, the informer gave contradictory replies:

‘People from outside, we’ve got [...] probably just Anna B., they moved here from Grozny. And... who else moved here? Probably that’s it.

Well, look, Nina—she’s not local, is she?

She’s lived here all her life. Look, when she got married, she was... her son’s already twelve...

So she’s already counted as local, is she?

Well, yes, she’s already lived here nearly twenty years. Yes, probably, no-one remembers any more that she moved here. Imagine, it’s such a long time.

And the Vasilyevs?

The Vasilyevs, they also moved here. From Barnaul, they’re both from Barnaul. Biisk or Barnaul, somewhere like that.

I was just talking about some of the people I know here. The director’s from outside, isn’t he? I mean, do you think of people like that as being local by now?

*Well, we probably do. But... well, you know, in principle we do. I think of them as outsiders for a year or two, and then they fit in, they get to be one of us. But **people probably always remember** that they moved here from somewhere. They didn’t use to be here. That is, they’ve moved here’ [Interview with Tamara Z., b. 1976, conducted by A. Manuylov; my emphasis—A.M.].*

presence or absence of links between family and social status. He distinguished three types of societies, which might be represented thus: (1) high family status implies high social status, (2) high social status implies high family status, and (3) these two types of status are independent [Eisenstadt 1956: 54–55]. I would not attribute such a strict structural dependence to a whole society, but with regard to the situation presented above it can be said, extending this scheme from objective reality to subjective reality, that Viktor (the director) clearly stands by a discourse corresponding to Eisenstadt's first type; Igor stands by a discourse that he himself has produced, which might correspond to the second type; and all the other members of the group realise practices that might arise from a discourse about the absence of such links – which explains why they do not attempt to consolidate or raise their status in any way. Igor's move into publicness acts as a paradigm both of the village social structure as a local construct and of his communicative choices. The village is thus integrated into external social formations (through a representative) and at the same time, these social formations themselves are incorporated into village life and infuse this from within. Igor is the person who represents publicness in the village (in OOO Aist, in the party cell, in the street cooperative, and in the K. family), while at the same time he is the representative of the village (i.e. of the syntagmatic village privacy) in government and in politics, which are beyond the reach of actors within the village (even if government is realised *in the village*, even if it is *the village* that elects a deputy, it is impossible for government to be legitimised without publicness coming into existence).

Using Niklas Luhmann's conception of means of communication in its application to the theory of power, we might designate Igor as an actor who puts into practice a selection of complexity. 'For whatever reason, *alter* has at his disposal more than one alternative. He can *produce and remove* uncertainty in his partner when he exercises his choice. This deviation via the production and reduction of uncertainty is an absolute precondition' of power and a condition for 'generalization and specification in a particular communication medium' [Luhmann 1979: 112]. In conversation with Viktor, the director of Aist, one might form the impression that it was he who had initiated the decision to divide leadership in Aist with his deputy, Igor, that it was Viktor who decided 'as an experiment' to leave his firm entirely in Igor's hands for a month and go and visit relatives in the Altai (Viktor recalled saying of Igor: 'I think he'll cope. And he too needs to learn [how to lead the organisation]¹'). Thus we see how, in full agreement with Luhmann's model, the choice in fact made by Igor

¹ Author's field notes.

was converted, in Viktor's speech act, into Viktor's own decision to hand over power voluntarily (a choice that, practically speaking, was difficult to motivate, albeit that the surrender of authority was partial, temporary, and clearly without any *de jure* confirmation). Viktor's exercise of choice, that is, depends on the choice made by Igor. As in Luhmann's model, the selectivity by the Alter [= Igor] permits communication only under definite and narrowly prescribed conditions, and thus limits the possibilities for selectivity on the part of the Ego [= Viktor]¹ [Luhmann 1979: 116].

If we look at the pragmatic relation of the village with 'publicness' in a large sense, as expressed in the types of communication outlined above, then, from the village-private point of view, 'publicness' includes justice² (just authorities), 'big money' and 'a decent life', big opportunities ('if you have connections'), good healthcare, etc. This village discourse about publicness also has negative parameters, but in practice they can all be reduced to one: the absence of privacy. By extension, the role of mediator in relations with publicness (such as the role of Igor) is seen in terms of access to private contacts in various fields associated with publicness, 'knowing the right people',³ the ability to 'fix yourself a position' in governmental bodies, etc. If we look at the same paradigmatic relation from the other side, that of publicness, then people from communities with genealogical-total privacy often try to 'get ahead fast' and, as far as possible, to privatise the field into which they have 'got ahead' and install 'their people' at all key points. In other words, village actors have little difficulty in privatising publicness, and creating favourable and even comfortable conditions for their own existence.

In those Russian regions or even districts where a so-called agrarian lite exists, whether this is actually in power or simply engaged in a struggle for power, these forms of coordination in actors' activity are also strong. In effect, actors try to construct privacy in all fields accessible to them. The struggle for power thus becomes a privatisation of power in the village manner, and this in turn is possible only with the establishment of (and/or the utilisation of

¹ As Lyotard points out in *The Postmodern Condition*, that 'a narrative tradition is also the tradition of the criteria defining a threefold competence – "know how," "knowing how to speak," and "knowing how to hear" [*savoir-faire, savoir-dire, savoir-entendre*] - through which the community's relationship to itself and its environment is played out. What is transmitted through these narratives is the set of pragmatic rules that constitutes the social bond' [Lyotard 1984: 21].

² 'I'll go all the way to Tkachov [the governor of Krasnodar region], but I'll force them [the village authorities] to supply water to us on the first floor! I'll write a letter! **I know someone at the [regional] administration, she'll pass it on to Tkachov!**' [Author's field notes, 'a commotion at the water tap after the water had been turned off'].

³ These qualities were also ascribed to the members of our research group, so we were simply snowed under with requests from people who had plans for employment or for their children's education, or relatives in the city, or those who were trying to resolve some problems of theirs by appeal to 'publicness'.

already existing) private practices in other (non-governmental) fields. This privatisation conflicts directly with the declared values of publicness, as constituted by government, and practically cannot coexist with the institutions of civil society. The realisation of power hence becomes, above all, the pursuit of private values, accompanied by the manufacture of specific discourses 'to pull the wool over people's eyes'. This form of coordination among political actors easily transmogrifies and becomes detached from its original roots – those of 'village privacy' – without thereby losing its specifically private institutional character.

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Translated by Edmund Griffiths