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Introduction: From Hegemony to Pragmatic Pluralism

Moscow of any period is not commonly thought of as an example of urban pluralism. Moscow's past century has been viewed until recently through the lens of the revolutions and civil wars of the early twentieth century (1905–7, February 1917, October 1917, 1917–21, 1928–32).[1] Late-imperial Russian history is being re-examined now that the meaning of this authoritarian revolutionary heritage has become more ambiguous. Placing Russia's urban experience in comparative perspective may help to clarify a number of issues in the emerging postcommunist debates over Russia's pre-Soviet past.

The difficulty in coming to terms with Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century—as at the beginning of the twenty-first—is that there was—and is—no single Russian reality. Numerous Russias coexisted: rich Russias and poor Russias, cosmopolitan Russias and provincial Russias, market-oriented Russias and feudal Russias. . . . The majority of the Russian population lived in peasant villages, yet a few million Russians inhabited two of the world's largest cities. Many more Russians lived in small cities and towns, each with its own peculiarities.[2] No single explanation can convey what happened to all of these Russias. Such past multiple Russias have often been captured better by the great literature

[1] This observation was forcefully set out by Ronald Grigor Suny in a seminal article. "Historians have understandably had difficulty," Suny wrote, "separating their political preferences for or abhorrence of the Soviet Union from their treatment of the complexities of the revolutionary years. Frequently, history has been written backwards, beginning with the knowledge of the single-party dictatorship, Stalin, collectivization, and the Great Purges and retreating in time toward the heady days of 1917 [and before] to find what went wrong." Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," *American Historical Review* 88, no. 1, pp. 31–52: 31.

[2] Such communities are the subject of Daniel R. Brower's important monograph, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

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of the period than by subsequent social science. Russia, to borrow from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, had become a series of archipelagos. How can one make sense of all of these inherent contradictions a century later, especially in the light of several overlapping and, at times, seemingly incompatible story lines?

One strategy, employed here, is to relate distinct Russian realities to a broader comparative context. Many observers of the Russian scene have greeted such approaches with skepticism. Russia, after all, is a very particular place. It has long been caught between European-oriented modernizing visions on the one hand and traditional attitudes and aspirations on the other. Russian cities of the era reflected both sides of a national identity torn "between tradition and modernity."[3]

This volume does not challenge Russia's many peculiarities, for every society and culture is unique to some degree. Rather, it seeks to extend understanding of what made Russia exceptional by coming to terms with the ways in which Russia was not so very different from the world beyond its borders. It does so by comparing Moscow during the half-century prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 to two other cities that, in many respects (though not in every detail), were similar: Chicago in the United States and Osaka in Japan.

This study is a response to the many historians who have begun to call for a post-Soviet renewal of the study of the Russian city. One such historian, Louise McReynolds, notes that "[s]tudies written from the hindsight of 1917 have given a disproportionate amount of space, especially when compared to non-Russian urban history, to impending class conflict and/or the inability of local leaders to effect meaningful civic reforms. . . . How effectively did civic consciousness challenge the class consciousness about which we already know much?"[4]

McReynolds and other historians of a similar mind are not posing a binary, "either-or" question when inquiring whether or not civic consciousness was able to challenge class consciousness in the late-imperial

[3] This duality is the subject of Brower's powerful study. Ibid.

[4] Louise McReynolds, "Urbanism as a Way of Russian Life," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 2 (February 1994), pp. 240–51: 250. Interestingly, McReynolds's observations about the extent to which local historiography on Russia emphasized labor issues and class conflict were prefigured a decade and a half earlier by Kathleen Neils Conzen in a review of U.S. local historiography. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History," in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 270–91. Conzen argued that the best such work "represents a creative blending of urban history with a labor history tradition" (p. 283). The study of Russian local history has only sporadically produced such "a creative blending."

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Russian city. These historians instead delve deeper into the social dynamics of the era for more textured explorations of what was taking place in the years leading up to 1917. The result is a historical approach that highlights process more than—but not to the exclusion of—classification.

As these historians have demonstrated, civic and class consciousness competed not only within urban society but also within each and every urban resident. Russian townspeople carried multiple identities, defining themselves by a variety of characteristics such as class, region, gender, religion, ethnicity, and hometown or neighborhood, depending on the circumstances at a given moment.

A number of historians thoughtfully explored various aspects of Russia's urban history long before McReynolds's essay.[5] Their studies have shed considerable light on how late-imperial Russia functioned on a daily basis. Their debates and discussions over the role of representative institutions and a nascent public sector have expanded understanding of precisely how governance in the Russian empire simultaneously succeeded and failed. Their collective message is ambiguous; they have identified points of friction and irremovable conflict between representative institutions and governmental officials on the one hand, and moments when participatory politics were becoming institutionalized on the other, and have sought ways in which local city politics succeeded or failed in shaping national policies.[6]

The case studies presented here would have been unimaginable were it not for the noteworthy work of these esteemed colleagues. Their scholarship deserves renewed attention, especially as their impact on general perceptions of Russian history has been far less than their accumulated wisdom. This study will be a success if it directs greater attention to the excellent work on which it is based.

[5] James Bater, Joseph Bradley, Jeffrey Brooks, Daniel Brower, William Chase, Katerina Clark, Timothy Colton, Barbara Alpern Engel, William Gleason, Michael Hamm, Patricia Herlihy, Robert E. Johnson, Diane Koenker, Stephen Kotkin, Joan Neuberger, Thomas Owen, Alfred J. Reiber, Robert W. Thurston, James L. West, and David Wolff, as well as McReynolds herself, are but a few of the more prominent American and Canadian scholars who have pursued urban themes in their research on Russia. The Bibliography provides basic information about these scholars' works.

[6] These observations are also put forward by Mary Schaeffer Conroy in her introduction to a volume on emerging democratic institutions during the late tsarist period. See Mary Schaeffer Conroy, "Introduction," in Mary Schaeffer Conroy, ed., *Emerging Democracy in Late Imperial Russia: Case Studies on Local Self-Government (the Zemstvos), State Duma Elections, the Tsarist Government, and the State Council Before and During World War One* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1998), pp. 1–29.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Russia of a century ago is widely held to have been different from the societies of Europe and North America. Russia, it is said, was a society without a middle class, without "authentic" cities, without an autonomous private sector. Such assertions of difference do not, in and of themselves, produce understanding. Comparison becomes necessary for a more fulsome appreciation of precisely those peculiarities so often seen as lying at the core of Russian being.

Comparative examinations of Russian development have looked first and foremost to Europe. "Despite frequent claims of detachment and objectivity," Ronald Suny complained nearly two decades ago, "scholars often make their judgments about the revolution [of 1917] and the Soviet Union against the standard of quite different European and American experiences."[7] As Suny's comments imply, analogies with Europe might not constitute the most agreeable framework for analysis. Other societies caught between modernity and tradition, such as Meiji and Taisho Japan, may offer more informative similarities and contrasts. A study of a single Russian city cannot resolve grand methodological concerns. Yet an attempt to place the life of one major Russian city such as Moscow within a comparative context facilitates meaningful discussion of Russia at large in relation to the world outside.

Chicago, Moscow, and Osaka are ideal sites for the sorts of explorations of continuity and difference required to bring fresh perspectives to the study of Russia. The 1860s were a decade of wrenching political reform and social change in the United States, Russia, and Japan. The Civil War and the accompanying economic boom and constitutional revisions in the United States, the Great Reforms in Russia, and the Meiji Reforms in Japan set all three societies on new social, economic, and political paths. Wars—victories and defeats—reshaped the national economies in all three cities' host societies, bringing wealth—and, in the Russian case, eventual ruin—to local manufacturers and financiers.

Despite being embedded in distinctly anti-urban national cultures, all three cities influenced national politics and policies. All three were among the fastest-growing in the world as the new century dawned.[8]

[7] Suny, "Toward a Social History," p. 32.
[8] This point is developed further in Joseph Bradley, *Muzhik and Muscovite: Urbanization in Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 3–5; as well as in Henry D. Smith II, "Tokyo as an Idea: An Exploration of Japanese Urban Thought until 1945," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1978), pp. 45–80.

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Metropolitan Chicago's population leapt from 493,531 in 1870 to 3,394,996 in 1920.[9] Moscow's population grew by some 300 percent, from just over 600,000 in 1871 to just under 2 million in September 1917.[10] Osaka similarly blossomed from a town of some 350,000 residents to a city of approximately 2.2 million residents during roughly the same period.[11] Driven by industrial, commercial, transportation, and technological revolutions that would transform the world economy in the decades to come, all three cities absorbed new arrivals by the tens of thousands.[12]

Chicago, Moscow, and Osaka stood at the top of the era's global urban hierarchy. According to contemporary estimates, Chicago was the fifth-largest city in the world when World War I broke out in August 1914, while Moscow was the ninth.[13] Osaka was left out of such lists at the time, but probably ranked among the world's top dozen cities based on population size.

All three metropolitan centers were, in today's concepts, points of connection between national and global economies. Their tethers to an emerging international capitalist economy; their reliance on the latest technologies in electrical engineering, transportation, communication, and construction; their combination of age-old greed and enormously diverse local economies driven by private interest—all of these factors made them twentieth-century cities before the twentieth century. They dominated their North American, Central Eurasian, and Kansai

[9] Irving Cutler, *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent*, 3d ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1982), Appendix A.

[10] Robert W. Thurston, *Liberal City, Conservative State: Moscow and Russia's Urban Crisis, 1906–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 197–98; Adol'f Grigor'evich Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811–1933gg). Statisticheskie ocherki* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1956), p. 115.

[11] Anthony Sutcliffe, "Introduction: Urbanization, Planning, and the Giant City," in Anthony Sutcliffe, ed., *Metropolis, 1890–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 1–18: 7.

[12] The importance of a number of simultaneous revolutions in transportation technology cannot be underestimated in the cases of Chicago, Moscow, and Osaka. Transportation appears in several of the chapters that follow, often confirming William H. McNeill's arguments about the significance of transportation for the emergence of modern economies. See William H. McNeill, "The Eccentricity of Wheels, or Eurasian Transportation in Historical Perspective," *American Historical Review* 92, no. 5 (December 1987), pp. 1111–26; and William H. McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," in Philip Pomper, Richard H. Elphick, and Richard T. Vann, eds., *World Historians and Their Critics* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 1995), pp. 8–26.

[13] A. Mikhailovskii, "Munitsipal'naia Moskva," in N. A. Geinike, N. S. Elagin, E. A. Efimova, and I. I. Shitts, eds., *Po Moskvie. Progulki po Moskvie i eia khudozhestvennym" i prosvietitel'nym" uchrezhdeniiam"* (Moscow: Izdanie M. i S. Sabashnikovykh", 1917), pp. 121–58: 121.

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hinterlands even as political power resided elsewhere in their nations' political capitals—Washington, St. Petersburg, and Tokyo. They represented what was distinctive and particular about their societies even as they were sufficiently similar to one another to make comparison possible.[14]

By exploring these three cities a century or so ago in relation to one another, this study seeks reinterpretation of each community in order to expand general understanding of the Russian urban experience and to urge more comparative urban scholarship. This volume highlights the considerable extent to which social fragmentation—frequently viewed as an obstacle to democratic development—actively fostered what might be called "pragmatic pluralism" by denying any single group access to unlimited power. It argues that fragmentation—combined with a modicum of accumulated wealth, the absence of de jure or de facto central control, the upheaval of a social and economic transition, and a pragmatic leadership style among key local elites—can establish the necessary conditions for pluralistic public policy.

Pragmatic pluralism may be seen within Moscow even though the broader pattern of Russian autocracy was arguably to enforce social isolation and fragmentation as a means for denying access to power to anyone not already in the tsar's circle of counselors, advisers, and ministers. What would today be labeled a "civil society" was emerging in Moscow by the early years of the twentieth century.[15] As will become apparent in the discussion to follow, the tsar's governance strategies ultimately thwarted the maturation of autonomous social groups, frequently leading to gridlock, polarization, and eventual systemic collapse. As Christine Ruane perceptively observes, one of the many paradoxes of the late-imperial period in Russian history is that "the government's reforms undermined the very social system they were intended to perpetuate. What could have been a sustained cooperative effort between state and society to create a modern industrialized nation became a continual struggle of the government and old privileged elite against the newer elites."[16] Moscow was one of several arenas for

[14] This combination of exceptionality and representativeness is forcefully explored in relation to Chicago in Karen Sawislak, *Smoldering City: Chicagoans and the Great Fire, 1871–1874* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 9–11.

[15] The case in support of an emerging civil society at the time of the outbreak of World War I has been forcefully argued most recently in relation to the Russian art scene in Aaron Joseph Cohen, "Making Modern Art National: Mass Mobilization, Public Culture, and Art in Russia during the First World War" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1998).

[16] Christine Ruane, *Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Russian City Teachers, 1860–1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), p. 4.

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Ruane's sustained battle between new and old in turn-of-the-century Russia.

The complexities of urban life in Moscow nonetheless forged pragmatic coalitions and inclusive municipal management strategies. At times social fragmentation promoted cooperation among diverse elements within the Moscow social and political scene. Again, to draw on Ruane's work, the notion of a public sphere was so new in Russia at the time that the shape of that public domain constantly changed and evolved in the face of persistent challenges from many directions within Russian society.[17] This book purposefully highlights instances when Moscow functioned more like many other metropolitan communities around the world than might be commonly thought.[18]

The chapters to follow do not pretend to examine the distribution of power per se. Nor, for that matter, do they speak to the issue of internalized values, thoughts, or feelings. This volume focuses on external behavior. The formation of a coalition is sufficient for the argument here, even if such an alliance did not change what was taking place in the participants' hearts and minds. This study merely seeks to illustrate how even those with massive political and economic resources at their disposal were stymied in the exercise of their power by the complexity of the communities in which they lived. Simply put, the most powerful Muscovite—like the most powerful Chicagoan and Osakan—could not always force others to do that which they otherwise would not have chosen to do. Power was divided, dispersed, and contested. Moscow, when viewed from this vantage point, becomes a much less particular urban phenomenon.

The first approach for coming to terms with Moscow within a comparative context that extends to both Chicago and Osaka is to consider all three cities through writings in urban theory and history. They were, after all, cities, among the largest in the world, in fact. The literature on comparative urban development establishes some initial terms for intellectual engagement.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN SIZE

About a century ago, a seemingly new urban form—the giant industrial city—came into being. Very large cities had been around for some time,

[17] Ibid., p. 195.
[18] This study thereby builds on the research of Robert W. Thurston, who initially explored commonality between Moscow public administration and that of other cities of the era in such works as *Liberal City, Conservative State*.

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of course. The giant city, as Anthony Sutcliffe has reminded us, "has been a component of human civilisation for several thousand years."[19] But these new "metropolises" horrified many observers. The speed of their growth, the ease of their communications, the mobility of their populations, and the "tense standoff between bourgeois and proletarian values"[20] appeared to be unprecedented. Traditional social, political, and cultural institutions collapsed under the weight of uncommon challenges.

The openness and accelerated pace of urban expansion differed from the slower and more organic growth of medieval and early-modern towns.[21] Metropolitan expansion often placed burgeoning industrial towns at odds with the surrounding countryside and national governments. A constant back-and-forth between metropolis and national government was evident even in the relatively young United States, where a restive business class sought unrestrained political and cultural power against previously entrenched local and vernacular interests.[22] Metropolitan society everywhere was not only germinal, but was also becoming increasingly diverse—and fragmented.[23]

The city of the nineteenth century remade the urban form. Industrial machinery drastically altered the physical layout of the nineteenth-century city within just a generation or two.[24] Factories, commercial avenues, rail yards, and tenement blocks produced an urban environment that was disorientingly mutable. As a number of observers then and since have noted, impermanence became the trademark of the

[19] Anthony Sutcliffe, "Introduction: The Giant City as a Historical Phenomenon," in Theo Barker and Anthony Sutcliffe, eds., *Megalopolis: The Giant City in History* (London: St. Martin's, 1993), pp. 1–13: 1. This volume is a collection of essays developed from panels at the International Historical Congress convened in Madrid in 1990, at which the theme of the giant city over time was a major focal point for research.

[20] A turn of phrase used by Henry Francis Mallgrave in his introduction to a new edition of Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture. A Guidebook for his students to this Field of Art*, intr. and trans. Henry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1988), pp. 1–55: 11.

[21] A point made by Peter Hanek in his essay, "Urbanization and Civilization: Vienna and Budapest in the Nineteenth Century," in Peter Hanek, ed., *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3–43: 3.

[22] As argued by John Bodnar in *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 35.

[23] For a concise and perceptive examination of the reception of industrial metropolises, see Peter Hall, "Metropolis, 1890–1940: Challenges and Responses," in Sutcliffe, ed., *Metropolis*, pp. 19–66.

[24] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin, 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 28–29.

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"modern" city.[25] Sustaining a civic consciousness beyond group identity in an age preoccupied with speed and velocity was no humble task.

The new metropolis was so large and differentiated that no single social, political, economic, or ethnic group could dominate local politics for long. The giant city was not "a discrete historical actor." Rather, "its great aggregate wealth [was] divided into multiple ownerships. The result [was] *diversity*."[26] As Peter Hall has noted in his monumental history of urban civilization, *Cities in Civilization*, the issue is not merely that great cities are large. Rather, bigness implies complexity. Big cities, according to Hall, not only have more people living in them, but also "contain so many different kinds of people, different in birthplace and race and social class and wealth, different, indeed, in every respect that differentiates people at all."[27] For the more decorous elements of society, the late-nineteenth-century large industrial town, as Elizabeth Wilson reminds us, became a "cesspool city" marked by "the promiscuous mingling of classes in close proximity on the street."[28]

Social groups in these new giant cities were forced to choose their ground carefully, moving to protect interests only in those areas that really mattered for their survival or well-being. A new era of metropolitan pluralism began to take shape, disrupting previous understandings of power and political efficacy both locally and nationally. Municipal politics became at times a forced accommodation of competing private interests precisely because the metropolis had become so contentious.[29] Politics required a spectrum of accommodation as policy choices could no longer be reduced to simple either-or choices. The cost of not accommodating others was too frightful to bear, as would become painfully apparent for many in Russia following the collapse of the imperial regime in 1917.

Chicago photographer Sigmund Krausz left a document that both suggests the medley of late-nineteenth-century metropolitan life and captures the prejudice of the era's bourgeoisie.[30] Krausz's "character studies"

[25] See, for example, such works as Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992); and Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).
[26] Sutcliffe, "Introduction," p. 3.
[27] Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), p. 612.
[28] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 29.
[29] Carl Abbott, "Thinking About Cities: The Central Tradition in U.S. Urban History," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 6 (1996), pp. 687–701: 698.
[30] Sigmund Krausz, *Street Types of Chicago: Character Studies* (Chicago: Max Stern and Co., 1892).

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1. A peddler selling feather dusters, Chicago, 1891. From "Street Types of Chicago," Sigmund Krausz, 1891. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society, ICHi-09274.

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