debated whether or not Communism should be considered something akin to a religion. Communism requires belief, it has a utopian and almost messianic vision of the future, and ritual forms to sustain it. And yet, one cannot reasonably refer to an ideology that is so explicitly and emphatically atheist as a religion. This debate has continued among anthropologists, historians, and sociologists, myself included, who are attempting to understand the resurgence of religion in the post-Soviet world. Sonja Luehrmann's book "Secularism Soviet Style" offers an elegant and more importantly, an extremely productive solution to this impasse by recuperating Max Weber's idea of "elective affinity." Luehrmann focuses on both religion and atheism not as "ideology" but as modes of practice that attempt to effect change in individual lives. She examines the methods and methodology that both atheist propagandists and religious proselytizers used and continue to use in order to convince others of their truths. Once refracted through this lens, the differences and similarities between religious practice and Soviet atheism become brilliantly clear. Atheism and religion share certain elective affinities – convictions about the way in which knowledge will change subjectivities, as well as particular ways of seeing and teaching, but the ends to which these methods are directed are different, and "elective affinities" are not spread evenly across all forms of religious practice.

Luehrmann's analysis is grounded in painstaking archival work and countless hours of interviews in the multiethnic and multireligious national minority Republic of Marij El, a Volga republic that is home to one of the only pagan indigenous communities in Europe. The setting is particularly compelling for two reasons. Throughout most of the Soviet period, national minority republics like Marij El were the focus of particularly intense educational campaigns. One of the ideological justifications of the Soviet regime was its claim that, unlike capitalism, the Soviet Union offered minorities the possibility of full inclusion. Bringing "civilization," which included scientific atheism, to these republics was an important marker of success for the regime. As a result, residents of Marij El experienced more than their share of atheist didactic education. Secondly, since Marij El is a multiethnic and multireligious republic, Luehrmann is able to compare Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Pentecostal Protestantism, and traditional Mari (Chimarij) practices. While there are many post-Soviet ethnographies that examine how particular denominations responded to state-sponsored atheism, there are few that compare across denominations. As Luehrmann shows, comparison across denominations gives us a deeper understanding of the secular framework within which these religions were practiced.

Chapter 1 explores the history of ethnic and religious coexistence in the Volga region through the concept of "neighborliness." She contrasts preexisting modes and limits of coexistence between groups to new forms introduced in the Soviet period. Chapter 2, introduces atheist didactic practices and their post-Soviet transformations, as former atheist educators become religious proselytizers. Chapters 3 and 4 trace "affinities" in the rhetorical methods and institutional structures, that Soviet atheist and Post-Soviet religious projects share. Chapters 5 and 6 trace "fissures" between the practices. Chapter 5 is a fascinating discussion of *nagljadnost* – the capacity of an image to convey information and transform subjectivities. Again, comparison proves key here, as Luehrmann demonstrates differences between the ways in which Soviet atheists and Russian Orthodox icons engage with "visual aids." Chapter 6 explores the differences in pedagogical purposes. While all these practices seek personal transformation, the kinds of transcendence they seek to produce are vitally different. The final chapter reaches back to the first, examining the ways in which secular and religious commitments coexist, within communities and within individuals, on the ground in contemporary Marij El.

Each chapter traces a concept, an "elective affinity," through rich descriptions of how that concept is instantiated in practice across time and across a multireligious social field. The result is new and productive lens through which to understand the relationship between religion and communism. Justine Buck Quijada

**Lynch, Caitrin,** and **Jason Danely** (eds.): Transitions and Transformations. Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013. 270 pp. ISBN 978-0-85745-778-3. (Life Course, Culture, and Aging: Global Transformations, 1)

This book, 270 pages long and divided into 13 chapters with an afterword is grouped into five sections and is the first volume in the new Berghahn Series on the Life Course, Culture, and Aging edited by Jay Sokolovsky under the auspices of The Association for Anthropology and Gerontology and the American Anthropological Association Interest Group on Aging and the Life Course. The series draws attention to the universal extension of the life span and the impact of this demographic transformation on the cultural and institutional organization of the larger society.

The framework for the book is provided by book editors Lynch and Danely and by Bateson. Lynch and Danely show how, as different from geroanthropology's narrower focus on the span between old age and death, the life course perspective allows us to dynamically document the interplay of biography and society as a strategy to uncover change, small and large. Anthropologists have, however, always relied on informants' narrations of personal trajectories from birth to death to understand culture. What I believe to be novel in the 21st century as we add years to the life span is the probabilistic increase of transitions that translate into multi-generational networks. Bateson contributes to framing the issues by adding a new stage to Erikson's life cycle model: Adulthood II which, if repeating issues confronted at earlier stages, is still marked by a search for life's meaning, and thus generativist rather than signaling an end.

It comes as no surprise that close ethnographic scrutiny is the primary method employed by the authors in the collection. The experience of change can be expressed in the body, in both material and social connotations, as individuals struggle to overcome the limitations of conven-

tional pain treatments in a Detroit clinic (Martin); elderly Chinese women insist that irritability expresses persistent social marginality rather than menopause symptoms (Shea); and intergenerational tensions are brought about when adult Mexican men struggle to model masculinity devoid of domestic violence to their children (Wentzell).

Changes experienced when old and new behavioral models blend are contextualized in space and time – Robbins is instructed by aging Poles on how the transformations from a socialist to a capitalist system affected their life course and their response to state policies to promote activity. For Norwood, the private and the public domains interrelate in the Netherlands during the process of decision-making regarding end of life. The curtain-less window becomes the boundary between private and public as a strategy to overcome social isolation while refusing the technology of hospitals. Danely helps us reflect on the spiritual dimension of aging, that connects an individual to generations both living and deceased and provides meaning to a well-lived, "natural," life.

State policies – or the lack thereof – determine the social pressure to transition from the role of relative to that of caregiver of the aged, as De G. Brown discovers in a working-class neighborhood in Brazil. Similar to Poland, Brazilian state institutions promote independence among the elderly but fail to provide adequate home care, relying on the "traditional" model of women as caregivers and transferring state obligations to an unpaid, and already overworked, labor force. Puerto Rican grandmothers in the United States also subscribe to the traditional ennobling meaning of caring as evidence of social usefulness. By admirably articulating the similarities and differences of grand mothering roles, Rodríguez-Galan demonstrates the usefulness of carefully examining each situation's needs to acknowledge complexity, while eliciting categories that could contribute to modelling and theorizing conditions that promote well-being throughout life – such as complying with cultural definitions of social usefulness –, or to measuring the impact of migration on the life course and aging of those that stay behind. Families and social networks contextualize life course transitions, as evident in Gamburd's analysis of the impact of intergenerational transfers of property, money and care on the aged's well-being in Sri Lanka.

Beyond the emotional and instrumental functions of networks, what is at stake here is the cultural capital bestowed on those who participate in intergenerational transfers. Successful aging processes vary cross-culturally: old age connotes dependence in the United States and freedom in India, as Lamb eloquently portrays. Paid work is construed as social usefulness in Lynch's analysis of elderly's work in New England who resist expected inactivity during retirement. Feeling equal participants within their own networks and the larger society through the financial inputs and outputs of work is not only attributable to the United States. Guyer and Salami show how the need for a money supply throughout the life course institutionalizes reciprocity in Nigeria.

In her afterword, Cole draws on the impact of increased longevity on the redrawing of generational contracts, ranging from economic transfers to changing meanings of productivity, as a major contribution of the book in understanding the years between late adulthood and old age. Yet the cases show how age is experienced differently depending on proportional demographics, politics, and policies of the state, as well as situational factors such as ethnicity, social class, and gender. With such a wealth of material presented in this volume, it was a bit disconcerting to find that the comparative method, a hallmark of anthropology to produce ethnological theories on the basis of ethnographic cases, was not a natural wrap-up of the book. A comparative analysis of the contextualized and historicized experiences of the aged depicted in the ethnographic cases would help to further understand the global consequences of longevity. While politics and policies influence the situationality of the aging process – in fact, the entire life course – as experienced in specific nation-states, comparison and contrast of case studies could determine the best practices in policy making toward the aged, the central preoccupation of national and international institutions dealing with the aged, in addition to contributing to the life course scholarship on the interplay of structure and agency.

Perhaps the next iteration of this work would be to use analytical categories to develop an ethnology of the life course based on the interplay of biography and society in a historical and political economy context. For instance, it is different for an Iraqui to experience aging as a refugee in the United States than in Iraq. Although there are frequent citations to book authors to illustrate this and other topics, no comparative framework is suggested to analytically link the topics together. Possible continuation of the interesting cross-cultural research presented in the volume might be the exploration of the extent to which Western notions of personhood in old age, including the medicalizing of old age and the institutionalization of the elderly, have diffused globally, and to analyze the concomitant changes in the interplay of biography and society. Such comparative framework would allow us to tease out the universal from the specific scenarios that defy generalization. Another direction to be explored further is the extent to which agency about social usefulness (mattering, in Lynch's formulation) underscores identity during transition points, even at the cost of dissonance between personal biography and societal ideologies about aging and the life course. Judith Freidenberg

**McNicholl, Geoffrey, John Bongaarts,** and **Ethel P. Churchill** (eds.): Population and Public Policy. Essays in Honor of Paul Demeny. New York: Population Council, 2012. 360 pp. ISBN 978-0-87834-128-3. (Population and Development Review, Supplement, 38). Price: $ 24.95

Paul Demeny is, without doubt, one of the titans of modern demographic research. Since his first published article in 1963, Paul has been at the very forefront of shaping the relationship between population studies and public policy. More than almost any other scholar, he demonstrates an overriding determination to make population issues *matter* to policy makers. The contribution made