

# **On the Land, Territory, and Crisis Triad: Extra-legal Appropriation, Border Materialities, and Enclosure of the Russian Land Commune**

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My research examines territorial practices of land enclosure employed to eliminate the Russian land commune in response to the crises of the late imperial and socialist periods. Since the land reforms of 1906, the Russian urban periphery became a center of territorial struggle, where complex alliances and strategies, beyond the exclusive control of the state, came together to carry out or resist land appropriation. Using original archival records, I explore how the coalitions of landed nobility, land surveyors, landless serfs, and peasant proprietors used enclosure as a conduit for extra-legal governance, accumulation of capital, or as a means of resistance. Through critical discourse analysis, I illustrate how the Russian imperial state and territories in the periphery were dialectically co-produced not only through institutional manipulations, state resettlement plans, and husbandry manuals, but also through political and public discourses.

I argue that land enclosure exploited practices of customary territorialization in the commune, instigated territorial decentralization of state functions through erosion of the peasant land law, and furthered growing agrarian and economic crises in the countryside. The urban periphery became a strategic and contested territory used for the accumulation of old landed wealth and displacement of two million peasant households, which accommodated capitalist development under both Russian Tsarist and Soviet political regimes. Through this example, my dissertation identifies blind spots in the Anglophone scholarship that treats territory as a ‘bordered power container’ of the nation-state. Instead, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of social agency in the production of territory from decolonized and decentralized perspectives.