

***New Lithuania in Old Hands: Effects and Outcomes of Europeanization in Rural Lithuania.* By Ida Harboe Knudsen. London: Anthem Press, 2012. xi, 192 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Figures. Hard Bound.**

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Ida Harboe Knudsen's *New Lithuania in Old Hands* discusses the unintended consequences of EU intervention in Lithuanian farming during the "the process of change prior to and after the EU accession" that she defines as "EUropeanization" (4). Her study successfully challenges the official narrative of "New Lithuania" and the view of an integrated European Union in which each member state effectively mirrors every other in terms of policies and their implementation. Knudsen's fieldwork was conducted over a year and a half among mostly small-scale farmers in two villages, one in the most fertile agricultural region of the country and the other in one of Lithuania's poorest regions. Her research demonstrates a widely divergent implementation and results of EU laws and regulations, allowing her to argue that it makes greater sense to see the rise of "local EUs" rather than a single, well-integrated Europe (5). Her work further confirms the findings of scholars across Eastern and Central Europe that the socialist past remains the key to understanding present practices by the newest members of the European Union.

Knudsen's second chapter offers a brief excursion into the past, to the years of Lithuania's transition out of the USSR and the early involvement of the European Union in restructuring its economy. Drawing special attention to the process of privatization, Knudsen demonstrates that the breakup of collective farms led not a nostalgic rebuilding of pre-socialist farming, but to what one of her informants described as "land-murder." (43) The imperfect process of privatization gave farmers land in non-contiguous pieces precluding efficient cultivation. Those who already had a say in land management, such as the collective farm chairmen, were able to manipulate the process of privatization to get more of the desirable land (48). Lithuania was then faced with a large population of aging peasantry engaged in semi-subsistence agriculture and not the intended class of modern farmers (51-52).

Chapter 3 discusses Lithuanian "paradoxes of aging." As older farmers are encouraged to retire and free the land for consolidation into modern farms by younger investors, they are no longer portrayed as the symbol of traditional Lithuania, but rather as holdovers from the Soviet past. The irony of the situation is deepened in that it is the equally aged politicians, genuine holdovers from socialist Lithuania, who are trying to demonstrate that they are attempting to free Lithuania from the past by telling the farmers to retire (75). These same political operatives are using the system of giving and getting favors (*blat*) that they learned in the socialist period to retain their influence (76-80).

Knudsen returns to the unintended consequences of EU regulations in the countryside in chapter 4. Milk production quotas and price controls, as well as an Early Retirement program, seek to encourage older, small-time farmers to get out of farming and open the way to larger, more efficient industrial farms to undo the results of the earlier EU-encouraged privatization schemes. Knudsen points out that the older farmers are not comfortable with the idea of giving up reliance on the traditional economic warranty of the cow in exchange for money. Even when retired and no longer officially "farmers," many older country residents continue to engage in

agricultural work and illegally sell surpluses, pursuing the same activities and bending official regulations the way they did during the Soviet period.

In chapter 5, Knudsen discusses how the introduction of new EU regulations on milk product certification means that some producers can afford to get certification and sell within official farmers' markets, while others do not get certified, but continue to sell just outside of the entrance to the market hall. While selling the same products, adherence to regulations turns the sellers into literal "Insiders" and "Outsiders." Since both groups are able to sell their goods, Knudsen argues that the situation visibly demonstrates the malleability of EU standards in every member state.

The sixth chapter draws attention to the new and increased pressures on young males during the transition between the Soviet past and the EU future. Young men are expected to both be individualist earners, which usually means working in a city, but also to provide for aging parents in the countryside. Lithuanian mistrust for official promises of a secure retirement after multiple economic and ideological changes combined with the much lower life expectancy for Lithuanian males means that the burden of work in the countryside falls on older women and younger men.

As Knudsen reiterates her main conclusions in the final chapter, she makes a concluding argument that the processes that she observed in Lithuania should not be perceived as "the EU gone wrong," but rather as "the *actual* processes of Europeanization." (170)

The book should provide a necessary corrective to the glossy façade of "New Europe." It further demonstrates that the "ostalgie" felt within so many formerly socialist nations of Europe is not simply the past viewed through rose-colored glasses, but is often based on a very rational understanding of the changes that have occurred since 1989/1991. One criticism that I can offer of this otherwise very fine book is the occasional historical error. For instance, Knudsen claims that Gorbachev "stated that due to health problems he could no longer act as president of the Soviet Union" in 1991 (38). This was not his claim, but rather that of the bumbling coup leaders who tried to overthrow him in August 1991. Nonetheless, this should not distract from this enlightening account of the interplay of the Soviet and European Unions in the Lithuanian countryside.