



# **The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania (Culture and Society after Socialism)**

*Katherine Verdery*

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In most countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the fall of communism opened up the possibility for individuals to acquire land. Based on Katherine Verdery's extensive fieldwork between 1990 and 2001, *The Vanishing Hectare* explores the importance of land and land ownership to the people of one Transylvanian community, Aurel Vlaicu. Verdery traces how collectivized land was transformed into private property, how land was valued, what the new owners were able to do with it, and what it signified to each of the different groups vying for land rights.

Verdery tells this story about transforming socialist property forms in a global context, showing the fruitfulness of conceptualizing property as a political symbol, as a complex of social relations among people and things, and as a process of assigning value. This book is a window on rural life after socialism but it also provides a framework for assessing the neo-liberal economic policies that have prevailed elsewhere, such as in Latin America. Verdery shows how the trajectory of property after socialism was deeply conditioned by the forms property took in socialism itself; this is in contrast to the image of a "tabula rasa" that governed much thinking about post-socialist property reform.

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