

### **23. Encounters of the postsocialist kind: The movement of goods and identities within and beyond the former socialist world**

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The socialist markets involved the delivery of goods and the movement of people across huge distances, but they were centrally organised and had clear rules and norms which could be circumvented in equally well-defined ways. The emergence of post-socialist markets entails new forms of encounters, risk taking, knowledge and relationships. The distances may still be as vast and the journeys as cumbersome, but the paths of relationships have changed - as have the connections, the goods that are exchanged and the people. Azerbaijanis, for instance, participated in vegetable trading for a while within the Soviet Union, but now their trade has become transnational, relations international, their identities non-citizen, encounters multinational and racialised. This workshop seeks to ask the following kinds of questions: to what degree are new types of knowledge necessary in these new markets and new market relations? What sorts of values and norms are being created, reshaped or challenged through these new encounters within and beyond the post-socialist markets? How are new identities and communities created through the goods exchanged, encounters made and relations formed? With which theoretical and methodological frameworks can these new relations of exchange and identities best be understood?

"Nothing has changed, it just turned illegal": discourses of justification of illegal trade and immigration in the Moldovan Republic

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My paper addresses the movements of goods and people within the former Soviet Union from the point of view of their real and perceived legal status. In my case study of a Moldovan village situated on the border with Ukraine, I analyse villagers' discourses of justification of illegal trade and illegal immigration (including human trafficking) in the context of severe economic shortage and the lack of employment opportunities in the area. Economic rationality and the tradition of commerce between the former Soviet republics are the main reasons invoked for justifying the continued engagement in economic transactions that became illegal when the USSR collapsed. My analysis identifies the multifaceted reasons and complex argumentation used to justify legally condemnable actions. It points out that these discourses are elaborated not only for the officials or for the anthropologist, but also for the fellow villagers. The latter need to be persuaded that the standards of morality within the village are

distinct from the standards of morality outside the village and that the movement of goods and people should not fall within the jurisdiction of the former.

Maids of education, entrepreneurs of margin: Class and gender between Moldova and Turkey

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In the last decade, a transnational social and economic field has emerged as a result of new flows of labour and business between Moldova and Turkey. Two examples of these new encounters are temporary female migrant workers in Turkey and Turkish commercial enterprises in Moldova. Since the mid-1990s, women from rural Moldova have been working as domestics in middle and upper-class homes in urban Turkey. While many of these domestics are more highly educated than their Turkish employers, they find themselves learning capitalism through their work and consumption practices as domestics in Turkish households. In this same period, male entrepreneurs from urban Turkey with little formal education have established business enterprises in both the Moldovan capital and its provinces. These new transnational circuits have led to new imaginative horizons for these individuals' lives and identities, confusions and revisions of understandings of class and gender positions, and transformations of notions of labour and property. By examining the experiences of these temporary migrants in this transnational field, we illustrate how urban and rural as well as class distinctions are redrawn and how "transitional" socio-economic practices are constituting new subcultures and new moralities.

The Coca-Cola Kashkaval network: Idioms of belonging and business in the postsocialist Balkans

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This paper discusses the case of Krasioties, a Greek bourgeois population which migrated in 1926 from the Bulgarian Black Sea coast into Greek Macedonia. A minority of this population preferred to remain in Bulgaria. The post-WWII situation in the Balkans prevented regular communication between the two parts of the once united community. Things changed dramatically following the political changes of 1989. The total freedom in the movement of goods and persons between Greece and Bulgaria affected the Krasioties populations living in the two countries. Krasioties of Greece and Bulgaria established cross-national trade networks. After a decade (1990-2000) of successful business, most of the Krasioties businessmen in Bulgaria had been incorporated in the post-socialist elites. Such developments challenged kinship relationships, community symbols and identities. The analysis highlights the limitations of "deep freeze theory" approaches (G. Kennan, R. Kaplan, Z. Brzezinski) concerning the development of post-socialist societies and markets.

Branding the Nation: Corporate Governmentality and National Identity in Latvia

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Within the last decade nation-branding has been firmly placed on the policy agenda in a number of Eastern European countries. Many, including Latvia, have launched

efforts to discover and market their “essence” in order to assert a firm place in the global market economy. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s notion of governmentality, I will argue that the transition to free-market economies in Eastern Europe has meant not only embracing neo-liberal economic policies, but also reconfiguring the ethical and technical character of government. I will trace the convergence of corporate techniques and the practice of government in Eastern Europe through analysis of the recent exercise of nation-branding in Latvia.

I will also consider how this emerging government rationality might be related to particular understandings of the self. The fact that the English language term “branding” becomes “image building” (*t\_la veido\_ana*) in Latvian is indicative of multiple and contested interpretations of both the new corporate government rationality and the nature of collective and individual selves. Thus, in addition to outlining the emerging techniques of government, I will also consider what the “essence” of Latvia as a place “discovered” during the nation-branding exercise reveals about Latvia’s positioning (both imagined and real) within re-invented geopolitical hierarchies.

#### Commodification and Changing Outdoor Culture in the Czech Republic

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This paper will concentrate on the evolution of the *ideologies, images* and *practices* of outdoor pursuits in the former Czechoslovakia (present Czech Republic) from the 1980s to the present. It argues that during the late period of state socialism a specific mode of the culture of outdoor pursuits developed. This resulted in quasi-resistant, rather egalitarian and collective qualities, on the one hand and practices of closed membership, on the other. These qualities will be explained as stemming from a specific economic mode of providing equipment through semi-legal, small-batch *bricolage*-like production distributed on a semi-barter basis mostly among acquaintances. After the revolution of 1989, those members of the culture of outdoor pursuits who had gained a comparatively high level of know-how in the production and distribution of equipment and services started their own small businesses. These networks of acquaintances, which lie close to the core of the culture of outdoor pursuits, have created the basis of current outdoor trade. Hence, a rather paradoxical situation appears inasmuch as those actors who are most deeply socialised into the older egalitarian collective form of culture are at the same time prime actors in shifting its patterns towards commodified and semi-privatised, yet open leisure forms.

#### Creating the *Homo Europeanus* through Consumption

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In socialist Hungary, even as the state was saying, “go ahead and consume”, the official discourse always emphasized consumption with a certain moral obligation and responsibility. The collapse of state socialism not only removed all formal barriers to the consumption of Western goods, it also cleansed consumption of morality. This did not, however, deter people from attaching their own moral meanings to consumption - meanings that varied along class lines. Initially, for example, a common source of discomfort was fancy and excessive packaging and other concerns about wasteful consumption - understandable given the pervasive material thriftiness and spontaneous reusing and recycling activities under state socialism. With the country's entry into the European Union, once again a new official moral discourse is developing about the

“right” ways of consuming. These are distinctly Western or postmaterialist. The EU’s prescriptions for feeding and slaughtering animals, for example, explicitly forbid traditional Hungarian practices, and, given the prominent place of meat in the Hungarian diet, they have the effect of discrediting Hungarians by implying complicity in animal torture. The paper will examine the reception of this new moral discourse and will analyse what it reveals about larger questions of the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union and about the production of a “European” subjectivity in postsocialism.

From brands to nations: Consuming goods in late-socialist Vietnam

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In this paper, I consider an unusual response to market reform: the tendency of shoppers in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam to frame consumer goods in increasingly nationalized, rather than branded terms. A defining characteristic of Vietnam’s economic reform has been the growth of joint-venture operations and direct foreign investment efforts. Vietnamese workers now manufacture famous foreign brand name goods domestically, some of which are destined for the local consumer market. However, the local proliferation of famous foreign brand name products has not led shoppers to think “globally.” Instead, they distinguish between goods marked with seemingly homogenizing brand names and logos as “local” or “source,” and “domestic” or “foreign.” This situation runs counter to a now common assumption about the transition from socialist to market economies: namely, that as foreign goods and global brands replace state manufacture and national products, local consumers will come to think about products in less nationalized and more branded terms. In Vietnam, market reform has had the opposite effect. Shoppers see themselves participating not in a “global” economy of a “borderless world,” but in an increasingly localized hierarchy of nations, in which both manufacturing techniques and consumer goods reflect and reproduce social and economic inequalities.

I sell, therefore I am: Commodity-person interfaces on the Ulaanbaatar market scene

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Much has been written about the new forms of identity constituted through practices of consumption in the post-socialist world. This paper aims to turn these discussions on their head by focusing instead on the interface between commodities and the persons *selling* these goods. It addresses a specific kind of vendors operating in Mongolia’s urban markets, the so-called *chenjüüd*, (“the exchangers”). *Chenjüüd* are rural migrants, who make a living by selling more established vendors’ wares at a higher rate than at the market stalls. This is accomplished through their superior salesmanship - one just cannot escape the persuasive powers of the *chenjüüd*. Clearly, these skills constitute a novel form of knowledge in post-socialist Mongolia; indeed the personhood of the *chenjüüd* provides new insights into the manner in which peoples’ identities become infused with the material substances of goods. The *chenjüüd* figure thus seems to represent an inverted *flaneur*, for instead of one’s identity being mirrored in the goods one buys, the *chenjüüd*’s personhood is seen to be a product of the different goods he sells. This observation invites comparisons with Mongolia’s rural shamans, whose occult abilities are perceived as arising from a similarly fluid constitution of the person.



