Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

# Changing Economies and Changing Identities in Postsocialist Eastern Europe

*Edited by Ingo W. Schröder and Asta Vonderau*


LIT

# Changing Economies and Changing Identities in Postsocialist Eastern Europe

The essays in this volume deal with current economic changes and their impact on identity in the postsocialist countries of Eastern Europe. The authors presented in this volume have all done ethnographic fieldwork in the region. Their contributions refer to a wide array of social contexts in several countries – among them Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia – and to urban, rural, business, and subcultural spheres. They address various historical and cultural situations and local forms of change. The book's main foci are issues of class formation (collective identities) and notions of self and personhood (individual identities).

The papers bear witness to the importance of ethnography in analysing the impact of global economic forces on everyday lives. They show that, at the collective level, the production, reproduction, and reorganisation of identities are closely tied to the workings of global and vernacular capitalism. Such identities are also represented in ideologies propagating symbolic systems that represent a legitimate vision of the social world. The ethnographies found in this volume describe daily practices of institution building, performance, and narrative that translate shared experiences of social inequality into collectively held beliefs about social order and moral values. At the same time, market forces have created unequal possibilities for success and suffering and have engendered changes in concepts of selfhood and images of the new, 'capitalist' individual. The pervasiveness of economic structures notwithstanding, people thus experience the constellations of power in concrete social contexts and strive to either harness them to their own notions of life and identity or to circumvent them in order to make their own way in the interstices of global capital.

Tracing the relations between structure and agency and describing both collective and individual experiences of the social impact of economic change, these essays point the way for further analyses of class formation processes and provide a better understanding of the relationship between political economy, subjectivity, and social relations, thus contributing to the explanation of the production of inequality.

# Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

**General Editors:**

Chris Hann, Richard Rottenburg, Burkhard Schnepel

**Volume 20**

LIT

Ingo W. Schröder and Asta Vonderau (eds.)

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LIT

https://doi.org/10.52038/978-38258-1121-1



Cover Photo: T-shirts on a flea market in St. Petersburg
(Photo: Lilia Voronkova).

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier entsprechend
ANSI Z3948 DIN ISO 9706

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 978-3-8258-1121-1

**A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library**

® LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf Berlin 2008

Fresnostr. 2 D-48159 Münster
Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22 Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99
e-Mail: lit@lit-verlag.de http://www.lit-verlag.de

**Distribution:**
In Germany: LIT Verlag Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster
Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, e-Mail: vertrieb@lit-verlag.de

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# Preface

This book began to take shape at a workshop of the same name at the 2006 European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Meeting in Bristol. On this occasion, earlier versions of the editors' papers as well as those by Bogdanova, Cimdina, and Pilichowska were presented. This volume was born from the editors' shared concern with the connection between economic change and changes in identity in Eastern Europe transpiring since the demise of the socialist system. Yet the book's main themes also reflect our different approaches to the analysis of this relationship in terms of either processes of class formation or in terms of changes in personhood. It is our conviction that the study of phenomena such as social closure, marginalisation, and elite formation, with their concomitant legitimising discourses of nationalism and neoliberal morality, belongs in the centre of the anthropology of postsocialist Eastern Europe. We believe that such an approach may even provide novel theoretical insights valuable for anthropology more broadly. In this preface, we present a brief summary of the main ideas that have guided us in organising this volume.

Concerning collective identities, we assume that they are transformed into practice primarily in three ways: the creation of institutions, public performances, and the production of shared narratives (in particular, narratives about a meaningful past). All of these processes serve to translate individual experiences into collectively shared beliefs about social order and moral values by reifying them into structured practices, images, and metaphors. The production, reproduction, and reorganisation of collective identities in today's world are inextricably linked with the workings of global capitalism and its vernacular forms. The hegemonic persuasiveness of elite-sponsored ideologies of individual responsibility, nationalism, and ethnic and religious identification tends to deny to lesser-advantaged groups the articulation of class identities. Symbolic systems assume crucial importance as a means of domination and resistance and through representing the 'legitimate' vision of the social world.

At the macro level, we discern three processes of class formation in Eastern Europe: the development of a lower class from formerly privileged workers and farmers at the bottom of the new societal hierarchy; the emergence of a new middle class made up of a hard to define amalgam of the economically successful and better educated; and the creation of a new economic elite from members of the old *nomenklatura* and the most successful 'transformation winners'.

At the micro level, the economic transformation has engendered changes in peoples' conceptions of life and identity that entail a radical renunciation of socialist notions of personhood. The forces of market capital-

ism have created unequal possibilities for success and suffering. As the contours of 'society' blur and as 'the market' takes control, a more individuated sense of personhood emerges. The fact that postsocialist societies are 'getting closer' to Europe both politically and culturally has reinforced the dissemination of dominant ideas and images of the new, prosperous person, which reflect not only postsocialism and European-ness but also global neoliberal concepts of the flexible, personally responsible individual. The new market economy calls for a type of personality that is knowledgeable of the new economic framework, which is based on the principles of diversity, difference, and flexibility. However, such ideologies of Westernisation tend to ignore the fact that Western models are based upon material and social prerequisites that do not exist in the everyday lives of many people in the postsocialist world. Thus, feelings of insecurity and loss have arisen in response to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that define the material terms for people's aspirations to new identities.

The pervasiveness of economic structures notwithstanding, the essays in this collection show how people recognise configurations of power in concrete social contexts, how they interpret them in different ways, and how they strive to either harness power to the pursuit of their own ideas of life and identity or to circumvent power in order to make their way in the niches and interstices of the system. While global capitalism provides powerful blueprints for new kinds of narratives and practices in contemporary Eastern Europe, individual and collective identities are also built upon the mediation of such external models through existing, historically grounded cultural and social relations. This volume centres on the cultural space that people are making for themselves in the social fields of transforming societies. Without reducing economic inequality to mere differences in taste and patterns of consumption, our focus on culture helps to study how people construct their identities through the generation of histories and symbols as well as social practices, institutions, and relationships. Individual and collective identities are understood as emergent projects sustained by the practice of everyday life.

The two sides of the book's approach to identity sketched above are reflected in the organisation of its chapters. The first part focuses on the reconstitution or construction of collective identities. In the first chapter, Ingo W. Schröder sketches a general approach to the study of class in contemporary Eastern European societies. Neringa Klumbytė shows how public discourses about nostalgia serve as the basis of collective identification in Lithuania. Michał Buchowski investigates how the emergent middle class can be defined in rural Poland. Finally, Anastazija Pilichowska and Zlatina

Bogdanova present studies of processes of recent identity changes in rural villages in Poland and Bulgaria, respectively.

The second part of this volume addresses the impact of economic change on individual negotiations of the self in the new socio-cultural fabric. The first three chapters in this section examine how new identities are tied to images of success in the market economy. Asta Vonderau illustrates this issue by investigating images of success prevalent among the Lithuanian business elite. Agnese Cimdina studies the social construction of 'businessmen' in the international marketplace of Latvia. The metaphysical quality of money as a marker of 'new' Lithuanian identity in millenarian imaginings of success is the focus of Victor de Munck's contribution. The two final chapters deal with the flipside of success: Vihra Barova examines the reproduction of marginal identity under changing economic conditions among Bulgarian punks; in their chapter, Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova explore the feelings of nostalgia that characterise visions of the socialist past among visitors to flea markets in St. Petersburg and Berlin. In their concluding essays, Steven Sampson and Elizabeth C. Dunn discuss some of the wider theoretical implications of the studies presented herein.

It is our hope that this book provides fresh insights into the complex interrelation of large-scale economic upheaval and the socio-cultural microhistories of people's life worlds in contemporary Eastern Europe.

Berlin/Kaunas, Summer 2008

Asta Vonderau and Ingo W. Schröder

# PART ONE

# (RE)CONSTITUTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

# *Chapter 1*
# The Classes of '89: Anthropological Approaches to Capitalism and Class in Eastern Europe

Ingo W. Schröder

This chapter argues for the centrality of the concept of class in the analysis of processes of identity formation resulting from the introduction of a capitalist economy in Eastern European countries. Today we are living in an era in which the idea of cultural identity is favoured over that of class. References to class have also become fairly marginal in contemporary anthropology, rather paradoxically just as the impacts of neoliberal capitalism and conservative politics have led to an unprecedented increase in social inequality and class polarisation across the globe. Aside from anthropology's current fascination with fashionable post-modernist ideas of subjectivity and discourse, this neglect can be attributed to the fact that the decline of the 'traditional' Fordist working class and notions of stable class oppositions has been mistaken for the end of class itself (cf. Carbonella and Kasmir 2006). In fact, this is far from true. It is the case, however, that classes are less easy to describe nowadays, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for class identities and interests to be articulated as such. Neoliberal regimes have been highly successful in creating images of 'capitalism without class' by keeping 'classes by themselves' from articulating their identities by means of various legal, political, and economic strategies. Processes through which class is obliterated in public discourse through the use of powerful collective images of 'culture', 'nation', and 'modernity' are apparent in Eastern European societies, and investigation of such processes should comprise a part of every anthropological study of identity formation in the region.

Anthropology should challenge the simplistic assumption that class has been replaced by or subordinated to particularistic forms of cultural identity. Marxist anthropologists have argued that engagement with the very vicissitudes of collective identity formation under conditions of neoliberal capitalism belongs in the centre of contemporary anthropology's research agenda. In particular, two suggestions merit special attention: (1) Anthropology should study social phenomena from the perspective of 'social realism',

a concept that 'partly reflects the need to understand society entirely in historical terms, and partly reflects the need to emphasize the realness of history over its constructedness' (Smith 1999: 15). From the vantage point of social realism then, culture is not seen as an autonomous force in social life but as a set of ideas and practices that reflect specific historically generated economic conditions and social relations; (2) As stated by Gerald Sider (2007: 13) in his call for a reinvigorated Marxist anthropology, the discipline:

> might well situate itself not in terms of finding underlying patterns or structures or processes but in the increasing difficulty of social reproduction in localities, in regions, and in nations: the increasingly intense production of locality and the simultaneous failure of this productive process.

In other words, within the contemporary world's unstable and unpredictable conditions, people are no longer able to reproduce their own social relations with their own means. At the same time, state and capital also fail to produce pervasive hegemonic narratives of social cohesion or to harness people's vulnerability to their own political or economic ends with any permanency (Marcus and Menzies 2005, 2007; Sider 2007). Both of these approaches promise a fresh perspective on the study of processes of class identity formation in present-day Eastern Europe.

The introduction of a capitalist market economy in Eastern Europe has evidently been the most obvious and far-reaching transformation that has transpired in the countries that comprise the region since the demise of the socialist system. Concomitant with the economic upheaval, processes of class formation and class restructuring have taken place in the field of social relations. This process of class formation involves political and cultural factors as well as relations of production. Classes are by their very nature the products of struggle and therefore are not pre-given by any economic criteria, even if they are ultimately tied to some quantifiable economic condition. Of course, class was by no means completely absent in the officially 'classless' societies of socialist times, but with the introduction of capitalism, economic inequalities and social fault lines have emerged on an unprecedented scale (Fuller 2000; Heyns 2005). In fact, it could be argued that in comparison with the advanced capitalism of the West, in so-called 'postsocialist' societies, such class divisions and the ever-widening gap between economic and political elites, on the one hand, and a growing marginalised sector of the population, on the other, are even more drastic. For this reason alone, economically induced divisions within society; processes of inclusion and exclusion, marginalisation, and elite formation; and the discourses of nationalism and neoliberalism that legitimate these processes all belong in

the centre of anthropological analyses of contemporary Eastern Europe. Class matters here not only with regard to immediate concerns of material wealth but more generally as it affects people's chances of having a fulfilling life and gaining access to the things, practices, social relationships, and experiences to which they aspire. Like recent social processes in Eastern Europe more generally, class formation has taken place on a fast track, as it were, in rapidly transforming social environments, in comparison to the centuries-long historical evolution of the bourgeoisie and working class in Western Europe (Thompson 1966; Kalb 1997).

The usefulness of the concept of class as an analytical tool in studying social transformation processes in Eastern Europe has been demonstrated by several studies from the social sciences (Slomoczynski and Shabad 1997; Evans and Mills 1999; Buchowski 2001; Krzywdzinski 2005; Lane 2005; Ost 2005; Stenning 2005; Slomoczynski et al. 2007). These studies reflect a recent trend in sociology toward revitalising class analysis from both a classical Marxist and a neo-Weberian perspective (Wright et al. 1989; Wright, Cohen and Elster 1996; Hall 1997; Bottero 2004; Devine et al. 2005; Lawler 2005; Sayer 2005; Yodanis 2006). Scholars agree that, at its most basic level, class is defined by a person's position relative to the means of production and resultant shared interests among similarly positioned actors. At the same time, these studies strive for greater analytical sophistication by paying attention to cultural factors such as those produced by the structures of the capitalist organisation of markets and those produced by class actors themselves in the process of negotiating collective identities. Neo-Weberian researchers like John R. Hall have argued that such cultural interfaces make class analysis a much more complex endeavour than envisioned by orthodox Marxists, since 'a shared class situation does not translate directly into common interest, much less into collective action' (Hall 1997: 18). Even if common class interests are pursued, this may well happen through actions that are not directly oriented toward the market situation – as 'classical' class actions were supposed to be – but rather toward other social, legal, or cultural ends. Moreover, people's concerns in relation to class often go beyond questions of material benefit to issues of recognition and respect and to wider normative concerns with what is good in terms of practices, beliefs, ways of life, and character. Relations with others as part of the class experience are expressed in part through sentiments of morality and immorality. Thus, while subjective identities based on perceived class interest have declined, this does not mean that differences and inequalities are not expressed in different idioms (Sayer 2005). The notion of 'class identity' may not be part of people's everyday vocabulary, but people still are likely to recognise the concept's validity in accounting for their position in the social

field. Pierre Bourdieu's work on distinction and habitus can be cited as a prime example of this kind of understanding of class (see below). In the following, I will address three key themes in the study of class in more detail: capitalism, identity, and inequality.

## On Capitalism

In recent years, in anthropology there has been an increasing interest in the study of capitalism (Miller 1997; Applbaum 1998; Hefner 1998; Blim 2000; Yang 2000; Nugent 2002; Fisher and Downey 2006). As Michael Blim indicates in his survey, neo-Marxian studies have investigated the new mechanisms of flexible accumulation in the global economy, the decentralisation of industrial production, the recruitment of new labouring populations (mostly women and former peasants), and the construction of small-scale ventures in the periphery. They also provide a critique of the neoliberal ideology that has masked the depredations wrought by this new form of accumulation. Current debates have focused primarily on the role of consumption and whether or not it enables people to create alternative worlds from those normatively proposed by the global hegemonic centres. Examples of such studies come from Trinidad (Miller 1997), the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Heyman 1991, 1994, 2001), and the urban United States (Roseberry 1996). They illustrate the complex relationship between global capitalism, class, and local consumption. Class, in the words of Roseberry, is the key concept in understanding the intersection of the actions of global capitalist players and the local agents of a specific type of vernacular capitalism (1996: 773). This relationship of class to consumption is always dialectical, as local responses are to some extent independent of global machinations, but at the same time, class is also imagined by market strategists. From the perspective of consumption, class is actually articulated through a process of negotiation between local agency and global strategies.

There is, however, a much more drastic impact of neoliberal capitalism on people's everyday lives in the wake of economic restructuring (a euphemism for the liquidation of formerly important industries in the capitalist centres as a consequence of the new world order of flexible accumulation) that has led to widespread impoverishment in the former industrial heartlands. Anthropological studies of such processes (cf. Leach 1998, 2005; Bruno 1999; Newman 1999; Buck 2001; Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Uhlmann 2001; Dunk 2002, 2003; Adams and Gorton 2006) testify to the need to investigate not only the consumption side of capitalist society as a marker of social distinction but also the ways that production defines access to resources and economic opportunities. Being included in or excluded from participating in the production process has immediate consequences for

people's welfare and provokes specific social and cultural responses. In general, capitalism impacts people's lives in a number of ways, affecting everyday life in a manner radically different from socialism. Changes range from the more overt such as the privileging of consumption as a privileged site for the creation of self and social relations to much deeper 'ontological conditions-of-being under ... capitalism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 2). Capitalism as a social system produces its own ensemble of cultural practices and ideas that shape people's habitus and ways of experiencing the world.

## On Identity and Habitus

The construction of social identities happens through the dialectical interplay of external and internal definitions (i.e. what Marx distinguished as the 'class in itself' and the 'class for itself', and what Richard Jenkins [1996] has more recently referred to as 'category' and 'group'). Although external and internal definitions of class are clearly distinguishable as ideal types, in practice they are inextricably intertwined within specific power relations. In other words, even if internal definitions may contradict external categorisations propagated 'from above' (especially by states), they are not created at random but tend to be strategic responses to the experience of existing frameworks of power. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) suggest understanding identity as comprised of three interrelated social processes: categorical identification, self-understanding of one's own social location, and connectedness through the sharing of some common attributes and relational ties. With regard to ethnicity, the kind of identity most extensively studied by anthropologists, one research tradition identifies ethnic groups primarily as interest groups in the arena of identity politics vis-à-vis the state (Cohen 1969; Roosens 1989; Eriksen 1993; Banks 1996; Schröder 2003a, 2003b).

In his introduction to social identity research in the social sciences, Richard Jenkins (1996) points out three key ways in which identities are transformed into practice: (1) institutionalisation, i.e. the creation of established patterns of social practice which are recognised by social actors as representative of 'the way things are done' (1996: 24), that is, of organisations that integrate the individual into a collective structure; (2) performance, i.e. the 'visible embodiment of the abstraction of collective identity' (1996: 146) in a ritualised, publicly visible manner; and (3) the positing of a meaningful past as the foundation for order and predictability in the social world (1996: 28). Identities are constituted through narratives that serve to legitimise social action and characterise people for themselves in relation to others. Narratives of the past are generated by the experience of a particular

social position in the present, thus constituting a specific contemporary identity (Alonso 1988, 1995; Friedman 1992).

More generally speaking, social identities require and produce 'ideology', described by Fine and Sandstrom as

> a set of interconnected beliefs and their associated attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population, that are related to problematic aspects of social and political topics. These beliefs have an explicit evaluative and implicit behavioral component (1993: 24).

Such ideologies are made up from 'folk ideas' that are generated by collective experiences of the social world and allow individuals to make sense of their world by conveying notions of social order, moral values, and emotions. In other words, by reifying them into images and metaphors, ideologies translate individual feelings and experiences into collectively shared beliefs about social relationships. As E. Paul Durrenberger has shown for the United States, such folk models may explicitly deny the existence of class in a society. In the United States folk ideas about equality and individual achievement are so pervasive that they succeed in disguising the realities of class and practices of inequality (Durrenberger 2001; Durrenberger and Erem 2005).

The idea of class identity as constructed from social relations and individual experience has been elaborated by Bourdieu out of a critical reinterpretation of the economic view of class formation and reproduction from the orthodox Marxist perspective (cf. Bourdieu 1977, 1985, 1991). Bourdieu distinguishes between 'classes on paper' that are made up of actors having similar positions in social space, facing similar conditions, and sharing similar experiences and therefore similar dispositions and interests, and 'classes in reality', which are created from classes on paper through the symbolic and political labour that gives them identity and mobilisation. Classes find expression in status distinctions, and these differences in status go misrecognised since they are legitimised through a powerful ideology of individual equality. Two important constituent factors of class, aside from qualities such as residence, gender, age, and ethnicity, are the volume and structure of various forms of capital. In Bourdieu's conception, capital is not only economic but also can be cultural, social, and symbolic. In a historical process, class structure becomes internalised and is reproduced as class habitus. The pursuit of social reproduction by class actors who seek to maintain or improve their position in the social order leads to class struggle – that is, competition over valued forms of capital and, even more importantly, over what is to be the legitimate vision of the social world and the definition of what is legitimate capital. Identity manifests itself in a field of possible social identifications and a repertoire of self-definition and localisation in

social space. It constitutes a symbolic order, a specific pattern of classification and action that must be defined relationally and processually and produces collective strategies of social closure. Symbolic systems therefore assume crucial importance in Bourdieu's concept of class as instruments of domination. They provide integration for dominant groups, concepts of distinction and hierarchy, and legitimisation of social ranking by encouraging the dominated to accept the existing hierarchy (Bourdieu 1977: 114-115). For this reason they are at the same time both cultural and political. The exercise of power always requires some form of justification or ideology ('symbolic violence', in Bourdieu's words), which is seen by Bourdieu as 'the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms' (Swartz 1997: 89). Symbolic power must thus be understood as 'worldmaking power' (Bourdieu 1991: 164).

Bourdieu's ideas constitute a useful starting point for understanding how class matters in people's everyday lives. Class experience generates a habitus of deeply ingrained dispositions that orient individuals at a subconscious level toward the world around them. These dispositions have a structure that reflects that of the surrounding field of social relations in which they were formed. The class habitus includes moral sentiments and certain distinctions to classify other social actors and phenomena. Such conventional 'lay normativity' (Sayer 2005) reflects class identity as the objectification of correspondences between economic, social, and cultural capital (cf. LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989).

## On Inequality

Class creates uneven possibilities for success and suffering. Throughout Eastern Europe, disparities in access to economic resources and life chances have increased drastically since the demise of socialism. Inequalities with regard to gender, age, and residence (regional, urban-rural) have been exacerbated by the market transition, and various processes of social closure have established and continue to reinforce the exclusion of a large part of the population from many of the benefits of the new capitalist economy. Historical sociologist Charles Tilly (1998, 2001, 2003) has theorised the establishment of 'categorical inequality' through two basic strategies of closure: (1) 'exploitation' – the exclusion of a majority from the full benefits derived from resources commanded by a powerful elite; and (2) 'opportunity hoarding' – the monopolisation of the access to a specific, valuable resource by members of a categorically bounded network of people (1998: 10). These two mechanisms activate a third one, the reproduction of organisational models already operating elsewhere ('emulation'). Through a fourth, com-

plementary mechanism, 'adaptation' (i.e. the building of multiple routines around the categorical boundary, thus inclining social actors towards boundary maintenance and the accumulation of 'satisfying local knowledge' [Tilly 1998: 97]), the system of categorical inequality is sustained over time. In the experience of trajectories of exploitation, class identities may become 'political identities', as they can be mobilised in situations of political contention. Such politicised identities may either be identical with those that inform people's everyday lives or they may be disjoined from daily social relations and articulated only in the context of political struggle (Tilly 1998: 219).

Tilly's abstract reflections on the formation of social inequalities leave us with some important conclusions: social inequalities generate two different types of mechanisms of closure – one from above (exploitation) and another from below (opportunity hoarding) – that operate successfully only under specific conditions but that can nevertheless contribute to keeping the system in place; organisational models of structures of inequality tend to be appropriated from outside (as in the case of Eastern Europe where models are applied from the capitalist West); and categories of inequality are reproduced through the development of everyday life worlds and forms of knowledge (ideologies) that translate these categories of inequality into experiences, cultural forms, and identities.

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As noted above, class identities are articulated through the institutionalisation of patterns of practice, through ritualised public representations, and through the creation of ideologies that posit a meaningful past and that legitimise present-day conditions by conveying notions of order, social relations, and morality – in other words, through the creation of symbolic systems that present a legitimate vision of the world. Ethnographic studies of class (cf. Foley 1989; Lem 1999, 2002; Liechty 2002; Dunk 2003; Adams and Gorton 2006) have shown that class experiences produce distinct cultural forms. A prime example of this kind of research is Mark Liechty's study of middle-class formation in Nepal (Liechty 2002). He summarises his approach as follows:

> My own concern is how emerging middle classes construct themselves as cultural entities, how their cultural life essentially depoliticizes social life (or hides middle-class privilege behind screens of seemingly 'natural' cultural practice in the realms of 'status') [...] The book portrays the middle class in Nepal as a domain of internally competing cultural strategies, systems of prestige ('status'), and forms of 'capital' that are not, strictly speaking, economic. But

> [...] this internal cultural dynamic is always also part of a middle-class project to construct itself in opposition to its class others, above and below (2002: 15).

This approach points a way toward an analysis of the cultural dimensions of class. In Liechty's approach, class culture is created in two ways: through narrativity, which builds worlds of meaning through stories and overarching meta-narratives that naturalise certain privileged cultural practices; and through embodied, physical, and material practices that create specific arenas for the performance of class identity (Liechty 2002: 21-26, 255-257).

For want of ethnographic studies of class in contemporary Eastern Europe, studies of other societies undergoing economic transformation can be used to illuminate promising anthropological engagements with class as a key factor in people's everyday lives. Winnie Lem's study of small farmers in the Languedoc region of France (Lem 1999, 2002) can be cited as another example. Lem wants to make:

> a case for the continuing salience and significance of class in an era when the emergence of cultural subjectivities appears to have led to its subordination. I argue that a subjectivity based on class remains significant as it defines the fundamental tensions, antagonisms, and conflicts of interest that prevail in a social and economic system that remains based on the production of goods by one class and the appropriation of surplus by another (2002: 288-289).

Her research shows that although class remains salient in contemporary identities, it has become inseparable from other emergent forms of cultural identification. Both have become fused in such a way that class and cultural identity cannot be easily separated in everyday discourse and expressions of political interests. Such fusion of identity narratives is exemplified in the use of the term *l'exploitation*, which has emerged amongst Languedoc farmers as a keyword encapsulating the complexity of their livelihood struggles as occupants of a particular position within the economic, spatial, and cultural order of French society (Lem 2002: 295). Class persists for the farmers not only as a category of economic positioning but as a form of subjective identification alongside distinctive cultural identities, nationalism, and political identities based on ethnicity (Lem 2002: 302).

## Class Identities under Construction in Eastern Europe

Scholars agree that there never was a truly classless society in Eastern Europe under socialism. Class differences between the *nomenklatura* and intelligentsia on the one hand and workers and farmers on the other were established through the control over the utilisation of resources and labour. Class distinctions were drastically aggravated, however, after the fall of

socialist governments through a variety of social processes such as unfettered, unequal, and often opaque privatisation, industrial restructuring, rapidly rising living costs, the decline of the state and its regulatory function, increasing corruption, and differential access to information. While it may be too simplistic to divide Eastern European populations into winners and losers, it is obvious that some people have profited from the transformation while others have been disadvantaged. No drastic upheaval of pre-existing societal stratification has taken place, however, and many of the former elites have continued to prosper. Entrepreneurs and proprietors rose to prominence as new social groups after the market transition (cf. Evans and Mills 1997; Slomczynski and Shabad 1997; Fuller 2000; Krzywdzinski 2005; Lane 2005; Ost 2005; Slomczynski et al. 2007). Ongoing processes of class formation in Eastern Europe raise important issues from several perspectives: the creation of new elites in business and politics; the marginalisation of broad sectors of the population as 'transformation losers' or the new underclass, parts of which used to be privileged under the socialist system (workers and farmers); and between these two poles, the emergence of a new middle class, which was nearly nonexistent in socialist times.

As noted above, the market transition has not created class identities *ex nihilo*; the process should instead be understood in a manner reminiscent of Raymond Williams' differentiation between residual and emergent forms of culture. While some parts of a society's culture at any given time continue to be practiced on the basis of previous social formations and historic cultural models, other parts are continuously being added through new experiences and from the repertoire of externally available meanings, values, and practices, while yet others are becoming obsolete (Williams 1980: 40-41). From this perspective, class formation in Eastern Europe is not simply a case of 'Westernisation' or the automatic adoption of blueprints of social practice provided by Western capitalism but is instead a social process that joins together the local and the global and the internal and external in one project of creating new identities. Observing this process can enable us to follow E. P. Thompson's famous call for reconceptualising class not 'as a "structure", nor even as a "category", but as something which in fact happens (or can be shown to have happened) in human relationships' (Thompson 1966: 9).

Ironically, after having been publicly denied in the name of socialist ideology under the previous regimes, nowadays the existence of classes continues to be denied in the name of an American-imported, neoliberal ideology of individual achievement, aptly called a 'folk model of meritocracy' by Durrenberger (2001). The salience of such hegemonic models notwithstanding, processes of class formation have indeed occurred in Eastern Europe at three different levels. The one that has received the most

attention from social scientists is the development of a new urban and rural underclass out of the former socialist working class and the farming communities in the countryside since the decollectivisation of agriculture (on workers, cf. Clarke et al. 1993; Ashwin 1999; Crowley and Ost 2001; Emigh and Szelényi 2001; Kideckel 2002, 2004; Stenning 2005; on farmers, cf. Buchowski 2003; Hann et al. 2003; Rausing 2004). Economic restructuring, the shutdown of large state-owned enterprises (factories and farms), and the widespread indifference of neoliberal state policies to the needs of workers and farmers has led to great uncertainty, fragmentation, unemployment, and poverty and has made workers and farmers the most conspicuous case of 'transformation losers'. Neither unions nor farmers' associations have proved effective in providing a united front against the devastations of neoliberal capitalism. Thus, the majority of workers and farmers, once privileged by the socialist system, have now been abandoned by the state and left more or less to their own devices. The spiral of downward mobility has triggered an ongoing negotiation of identities and social relationships as people try to make sense of their new position at the bottom of the societal hierarchy. A variety of strategies of acquiescence and resistance to state policies has been created along with the search for ways of solving the more mundane problems of everyday survival and the (often unsuccessful) search for a meaningful place in changing societies. Previous arenas of working-class life have been replaced by the nation, the ethnic group, or the church, and representations of working-class identity have moved away from the formal realms of workplace or union to everyday-life spaces and local relationships of family and neighbourhood. Social practices and roles have changed in response to rapid downward mobility (cf. Kideckel 2004; Thelen 2006). Since workers' and farmers' problems are easily linked with the new economic conditions, many show a certain nostalgia for the socialist past.

Much less attention has been paid by social scientists to the emergence of a middle class in Eastern Europe. The middle class has always presented a special challenge to class theorists. In his above-mentioned study of middle-class life in Nepal, Liechty identifies 'the middle class's extraordinarily complex culture – with its myriad forms of competing cultural capital, its ambiguous and anxiety-inducing relationship with the capitalist market, its intricate systems of dissimulation (whereby it hides its class privilege in everyday practice)' as the key site in the production of identity in transforming societies, drawing upon the seemingly contradictory resources of 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Middle-class culture is shaped by dynamics of consumption, individualism, and a general openness to new influences from 'the West' and, at the same time, by reflexive references to existing cultural heritage. Foreign influences are not so much viewed as

cultural domination but as models for cultural practice that can be harnessed to local projects. In the course of its development, the middle class produces a unique cultural space of which a pluralist attitude is a key element.[1] In Eastern European countries, the middle class has emerged in the course of the postsocialist transition (cf. Steen 1997; Eyal et al. 2000; Matonytė 2001). Sociological studies (cf. Mokrzycki 1996; Balzer 1998; Russisches Unabhängiges Forschungsinstitut 1999) have identified the middle class as composed of representatives of all social layers of socialist societies, but mostly the former *nomenklatura* and intelligentsia, along with some new professionals and businessmen who have emerged with the market economy. The middle class is a true product of the transformation and a rather heterogeneous assemblage of mid- to upper-level government officials and managers, businessmen, professionals, academics, technicians, and some skilled labourers. The middle class is defined not only by its economic condition but also by its level of education and its predominantly urban lifestyle characterised by consumption and certain leisure activities, and by its self-image centred on the quest for social recognition. The consumption of material goods and media images plays a key role in self-identification (cf. Fehervary 2002, 2005). The middle-class self-image also includes ideas about high degrees of adaptability to the market economy, of flexibility and social mobility, a positive attitude toward the transformation process, and key values aligned with free enterprise, private property, and individualism.

There is an ongoing debate between Eastern European sociologists about the appropriateness of the use of the term 'middle class'. Doubts have been raised if it is not just another concept (like civil society) imported from the West whose explanatory power in Eastern Europe is rather limited (cf. Leonavičius 2002; Gečienė 2005). However, while some scholars question the usefulness of such 'Western' concepts, others (cf. Matulionis et al. 2005) conduct studies of social structure on the basis of a fine-grained division of highest, higher, middle, lower, and lowest classes as identified by social and economic parameters. Because of such ambiguities alone, there is a particularly strong need for ethnographic studies that focus on groups that can be included within the concept of a middle class in order to investigate such social actors creating a common identity from their shared position in the social space of Eastern European societies.

Elites are defined anthropologically as 'groups that control specific resources by means of which they acquire political power and material advan-

[1] For other studies of the middle class, see Lamont 1992; Le Wita 1994; Gewertz and Errington 1999; Owensby 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 1999; O'Dougherty 2002; Ortner 2003; and the classic historical ethnography of middle-class life by Frykman and Löfgren 1987.

tage' (Pina-Cabral 2000: 2).[2] Like the middle class, elites in postsocialist societies have so far received little attention from anthropologists (cf. Sampson 1994, 2002). While the question of to what extent the old *nomenklatura* has transformed itself into the ruling class of the new democratic states has been the subject of some studies by sociologists and political scientists (cf. Steen 1997, 2002; Higley and Lengyel 2001; Steen and Ruus 2002), the role of upper-class individuals who have attained their economic position in the course of the transition remains rather unclear. The extent to which the elite has developed a shared identity on the basis of its position in social space and how the elite's cultural narratives and social practices are being constructed have been even less researched than the middle class in these societies.

## Conclusions

While class in Eastern Europe in inextricably linked to the introduction of global capitalism, which provides blueprints for new kinds of narratives and practices, it is also a project built upon the mediation of such external models through existing, historically-grounded culture and social relations. To quote once more from Liechty's study of middle-class Nepalis:

> The challenge for anthropology is to clearly distinguish (ethnographically and theoretically) the now-global cultural process of middle-class emergence from the assumptions of worldwide cultural homogenization that have often accompanied understandings of 'globalization'. The transformative work of cultural compromise that takes place as part of these global middle-class projects is less about 'westernization' than about the making of local class culture. […] Global cultural processes are always localized in cultural practice, even if that new cultural practice exists 'somewhere in the middle', manifesting itself in forms that are neither local (in the sense of 'traditional') nor global (in the sense of 'foreign') (2002: 252-253).

There is still a substantial lack of ethnographic studies of Eastern Europe that focus on class, so any conclusions can only be very preliminary at this time. Still, I will venture to advance three general statements concerning the role of class, which refer back to the observation of Gerald Sider mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. First, true to Marx's famous quote that the tradition of all generations weighs like a nightmare upon the brains of the living, class identities are, economic upheavals notwithstanding, to a greater extent the product of historical trajectories than of recent creation. In the

[2] For comparative studies of elites in anthropology, cf. Marcus 1983; Pina-Cabral and Pedroso de Lima 2000; Shore and Nugent 2002.

same way, the ways in which the present condition is experienced and prospering or suffering are felt are strongly influenced by people's perceptions of how the present measures up to the past, real or imagined. The repertoire of practices and ideas that is used today to create a cultural space for class may be fashioned from images recently created or borrowed from 'the West', but people's social spaces themselves by and large have not shifted drastically. There are exceptions to this rule, of course, and there are obvious instances of upward mobility by enterprising individuals who have made spaces for themselves in the new economic elite or the haute bourgeoisie section of the emergent middle class; there are also cases of downward mobility among the former labouring and farming elites. For these reasons, today's class constellation needs to be historicised as the contemporary expression of a set of collective identifications in an ever-shifting field of interaction of social groups and particularistic interests with societies and states.

Second, within an historical-realist approach, class needs to be studied at local sites and as part of the everyday reality generated by living with capitalism. Class is about the hard facts produced by economic conditions and social relations. Such reality needs to be distinguished from discourses about class, those that people produce as narratives about themselves and their culture in the process of creating a shared identity, and the hegemonic discourses propagated by state and capital in order to obscure the existence of class divisions, replacing them with persuasive slogans of 'culture', 'nation', 'market economy', or 'modernity'. Such hegemonic discourses are essential for the establishment of a logic of capital in everyone's lives and are thereby central in securing the active collusion of the 'responsible citizen' in capitalist state regulation. These discourses are indeed powerful and highly pervasive throughout Eastern Europe, but they must be continuously problematised and challenged by the investigation of 'real' social conditions on the ground.

Finally, the situation in Eastern Europe strongly supports Sider's ideas, developed on the basis of his research experience in the West, concerning the failure of the production of locality. Class actors create cultural narratives and practices for themselves in order to give meaning to their everyday life experiences and aspirations, but such folk ideologies of identity are not identical to notions of shared interests and resultant claims vis-à-vis the state and the market. In other words, the creation of a common culture fails to transform 'classes in themselves' into 'classes for themselves'. This political dimension of class identity has been successfully denied by state policies and hegemonic grand narratives intended to replace class-consciousness. Yet neither do these hegemonic narratives succeed in creating a new level of community by rallying people around images of the nation

or the market. While keeping people from translating their precarious life situation into political action, hegemonic ideologies of identity fail to generate loyalty to national ideas or trust in governments, as the volatile political situation in all Eastern European countries shows. Neither are loyalty and trust generated among the middle class and elite, which, while approving of the economic transformation in general, prefer pursuing individual interests of career and consumption, paying little attention to either their class associates or the commonwealth.

It is here that the true paradox of class identity in Eastern Europe – and the true challenge for anthropological research – lies: classes evidently exist as operational, 'objective' social categories, but people ignore both the interests generated by their class identities and the state's claims to advance other models of identification in favour of rampant individualism or apathy. Class identity appears to have become emptied of its political content. The question of why class identities fail to engage state power in the political arena still remains vital to any politically engaged anthropology. An obvious solution to this dilemma of depoliticised class identity appears to be Liechty's suggestion that we shift to focus on class as a cultural practice. From this perspective, anthropology should investigate the cultural space that class is making for itself in the social space of transforming societies in Eastern Europe. Without reducing economic inequality to mere differences in taste and patterns of consumption, such a focus on culture would analyse how people construct their identities through the generation of histories, symbols, and moralities, on the one hand, and through the generation of social practices, institutions, and relationships, on the other. It is such ideologies and practices that situate people's identities in the new social space created by the transition to market capitalism.

One must be wary, however, of reducing all kinds of class experiences to forms of status and lifestyle, thus granting an autonomous power to culture that it does not possess. An exclusively cultural understanding of class would make it almost impossible to identify what is specifically 'class' about the actual countless cultural forms of narratives and practices and how one class differs from another. Anthropological studies of class must try to walk a fine line between economism and culturalism, as envisioned by Thomas Dunk in his study of working-class life in Ontario:

> I propose a theoretical perspective which avoids both economism and culturalism by maintaining an analytical distinction between the economic position of the working class and its cultural expression, and by recognizing the role of non-class discourses and practices in the formation of working-class culture. Thus, working-class culture is not viewed as a mere expression of economic interests, but rather

> as an articulation of various cultural phenomena in an oppositional struggle with the dominant culture which reflects the values and interests of the bourgeoisie (Dunk 2003: 21).

The degree of agency in creating class cultures varies drastically across societal hierarchies. While the middle class and elite have the means to invest in projects of identity-building, groups at the lower end of the social order are severely restricted in their ability to produce meaningful narratives of their existence, just as the very means of making a decent life are a matter of constant struggle for them. It is useful here to keep Bourdieu's assumption in mind that social and cultural capital are ultimately tied to the economic base. Therefore, class can never be reduced to mere cultural practice. Still, one should study such practices and narratives rather than carry out a more or less successful, exclusive search for vestiges of 'real' class struggle. Class struggle has obviously been obliterated across Eastern Europe by everyday lay-normative notions of proper behaviour, morality, and social closure. Dunk (2003) has suggested that analysis should focus on the interplay of structure and agency in seeking to explain why class identity tends to be deflected onto non-class terrain. Class identity finds its expression through the dialectic of human agency and the structures that determine or limit the possibilities of intentional action. Agency acts within and upon structures that exist independently of the will of individuals, but intentional human practice still cannot be denied. This dialectic can be explained with reference to concepts such as Levi-Strauss's notion of the *bricoleur*, who makes new meanings by rearranging pre-existing elements, or the Gramscian notion of hegemony. In Gramsci's theorisation of subaltern culture and consciousness, hegemony emerges out of a variety of actions and ideas rooted in class experience and historically accumulated understandings. Culture is thus a product of hegemonic hierarchy in a world of inequality between power elites and subalterns. Unlike the hegemonic worldview, the subaltern's own worldview is fragmentary, incoherent, and contradictory, expressed not through structured narratives but through 'folklore' and 'common sense'. While the subaltern is likely to uncritically absorb the hegemonic conception of the world, there is always the possibility that its common-sense understandings will evolve into counter-hegemonic narratives and practices (cf. Gramsci 1971; Kurtz 1996; Crehan 2002; Sider 2003; Smith 2004).

A perspective from the vantage point of such a dialectic of structure and agency promises to shed light on the complex relationship between class, consciousness, and social practice by analysing the specific ways in which various elements, both mental and material, are combined to take on a significant meaning for people.

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# *Chapter 2*
# Post-Soviet Publics and Nostalgia for Soviet Times

Neringa Klumbytė

> The twentieth century began with the futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia.
>
> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*

> How can a human being live Other-wise?
>
> Homi Bhabha, *Remembering Fanon*

A red flag on a pole flies by a dilapidated Soviet building.[1] On this building a red banner invites everyone to bring 'The Decisions of the CPSU [the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] Congress – into Life!' Guards with German shepherds emerge from behind the corner. Two of them move towards us. They instruct us to leave our cars and personal belongings, including cameras and cell phones. They let us in through a fence, and a dog barks viciously as we pass by.

I enter the old rundown building. About twenty other people, most of them in their twenties and some in their thirties, wait on the old Soviet-style chairs. We have to sign papers indicating that we do not have heart problems or other heath issues. I get into a dirty, threadbare coat that has an unpleasant smell. Others do the same. Then, we are served some tea, which is poured into old glasses from an old teapot. A Soviet army soldier offers us Soviet-style cookies.

We are ordered into a room where the colonel instructs us to obey his orders. Otherwise, we will be punished. Then, he commands us to form a line and leave the building. We march to the pole with the red flag where we number off by twos. We repeat this many times, each time louder and clearer until the colonel is satisfied with our performance. I automatically turn my head left when I first say 'second' and freeze in surprise. I used to do this

[1] I am very thankful to Cameron Hay-Rollins, Eric Minzenberg, and Jonathan Larson for their comments and suggestions, which helped me to improve this chapter significantly. I thank Bruce Grant for drawing my attention to *1984. Survival Drama in a Soviet Bunker*.

when I was in physical education classes in high school. The body remembers what it learnt almost fifteen years ago…

In the bunker to which we all descend, I encounter a strange Soviet world that I never before have experienced. I run as fast as I can through the dark corridors for about ten minutes. The guards with the dogs hide behind the corners. I march, chanting, 'one-two-three', in a dark room for fifteen or twenty minutes. I work in a semi-dark room moving scrap metal from one cement platform to another, and then again from another platform to the first one. And again from the first one back… I put on a gas mask and learn how to save myself from a nuclear attack by wrapping myself in a white blanket. In the doctors' office, the old dental drill starts running. I anxiously wait in a dental chair, but the bell rings and saves me. In another office a KGB interrogator with a cigar in his hand questions us about our work and residence. Then he decides to search everyone and finds drugs in the pocket of a foreign reporter. First, I think this is just for show, but then I change my mind as I see the confusion on the reporter's face turn to fear. This gets even worse since the reporter does not speak Russian. The reporter responds in poor English looking at the bag with the white powder, 'This is not mine. I don't use this brand…' This is the only time I almost burst into laughter although we are not allowed to. Nobody notices. We freeze as the KGB officer screams in the reporter's face, 'Where did you get drugs?' Then, he grabs a leather belt that lands on the reporter's back. My amusement evaporates. The reporter has to confess that he had committed crime against the Soviet state. The confession, written in French on a piece of paper, appears on the interrogator's table. The reporter will get a heavy sentence and end up in Siberia.

At the end, we go to a shop where we can buy a bar of authentic Soviet soap, coffee, a cigarette, toilet paper, a jar of peas, a container of laundry paste, dental powder, a balm cream, and a few other things. All of them are Soviet luxuries, scarce commodities. In a shop, we are allowed to wonder and laugh at the Soviet goods. The colonel shows us around, full of irony and disgust. He picks up a piece of Soviet style women's underwear. One woman pulls it on her pants, then turns around as if she was in a fashion show. At a nearby foreign currency store, we, the Soviet citizens, can only gaze through the window: a sewing machine, a bottle of Belyi Aist cognac, a pair of jeans, some other clothing. We are allowed to 'take' a bottle of cognac, which we all later share during the 'authentic Soviet dinner'. The dinner starts in a big hall accommodating all of us. I refuse a shot and tell the colonel that I am driving. The colonel tells me to look up and read the red banner above the table: 'The Party is Our Driver!' I have to drink. I pretend I do. He goes further. I look at my dinner: a warmed up can of beef and bar-

ley, some cookies and chocolate, some jam, a packet of tea, coffee, and sugar. I really like beef and barley, although I am probably not supposed to since the dinner is also a symbol of Soviet time poverty and bad taste.

This amusement park, *1984. Survival Drama in a Soviet Bunker* (director Jonas Vaitkus, producer Rūta Vanagaitė) is part of the pan-European project *Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009.* The mission of *Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009* is to create a new European cultural experience.[2] In case of *1984. Survival Drama*, the European experience is created by inculcating a specific memory of the Soviet past and tradition. The audience learns about and actively participates in recreation of the Soviet era of 1984 by becoming Soviet citizens for two and a half hours.

*1984. Survival Drama* re-circulates the official history of Soviet times through performance of the abuse, injustice, fear, uncertainty, and absurdity that Soviet citizens experienced during Soviet times.[3] *1984. Survival Drama*, is a reference to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1992 [1949]), a dystopian satire of totalitarian regimes. The colonel, the KGB officer, the dentist, and other actors dressed in Soviet military uniforms are reminiscent of the police-state that formerly intruded in people's lives and made them suffer.

As a memory laboratory, this park must produce both a 'correct' memory of the bygone era for the younger generation while also 'correcting' the memories of those visitors now nostalgic for Soviet times (Vanagaitė 2008). And since there 'are still many people in Lithuania who are sick with Soviet nostalgia', the producers 'started this show to help them recover' (Vanagaitė 2008). The discordance between the generated 'Soviet' memories and the reality of post-Soviet life aims to illustrate 'how much Lithuania and its people have achieved in the seventeen years of independence [since 1990]'.[4]

The park is an intense communicative site. It is an example of Bakhtinian dialogism – multiple voices (nostalgic and otherwise) are not self-enclosed but rather hear each other constantly, reflect in one another, and call back and forth (Bakhtin 1984: 75). The park primarily addresses the post-Soviet public, a kind of social totality that, according to Michael Warner (2002), exists by virtue of being addressed, as much notional and text-based as empirical. Warner (2002: 88) claims that dominant publics take

[2] See the official website of *Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009*, http://www. culture-live.lt/en/events2009/events2009-live/2009live-museums-2/. Accessed on 04/01/2008.
[3] Ibid.
[4] See the introduction to *1984. Survival Drama* on the official website of *Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009* http://www.culturelive.lt/en/events2009/ events2009-live/2009live-museums-2/. Accessed on 04/01/2008.

their discursive pragmatics and lifeworlds for granted, as certainly the producers of *1984. Survival Drama* do, misrecognising the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universality or normalcy.

This chapter attends to the circulation of nostalgic discourses as well as the discourses about nostalgia. Although nostalgia is widespread and exists in multiple forms and in various registers, I focus on the sensations that give rise to nostalgia and that are reinterpreted through it. I will look at various materialities such as money, work, food, clothing, heat, and light to illustrate how the material and the sensory are intertwined in nostalgia discourse and nostalgic experience. The material objects and processes are tokens of difference since through them individuals experience post-Soviet alterity. Nostalgia-focused debates like that in *1984. Survival Drama* exemplify the normalisation of a post-Soviet nation oriented towards a future that lies in the Western and European community.[5] This normalisation rests on an objectification of the nostalgic as an other that is simultaneously both inside and outside the post-Soviet public. In Germany (Berdahl 2001; Boyer 2001), normalisation of the reunified state takes place through the identification of its distinct 'East German' publics as culturally different and through the definition of this cultural difference as a matter of consumer preference. In Lithuania, the 'Eastern' Lithuanian other is viewed as outside of culture, tradition, authenticity, nation, consumer society, and post-Soviet modernity.[6] It is seen as an anomalous and polluting part of the social and political body. Portraying nostalgia as a disease, intellectuals undermine claims about inequality, social injustice, and experiences of alterity embedded in nostalgic discourses. By creating discourses and images about nostalgic others, they reproduce the very alterity they aim to eliminate in attempting to cure the nostalgic as in *1984. Survival Drama*. In this chapter, I argue that nostalgia is a restorative discourse through which individuals express sentiments about inclusive citizenship and reclaim their dignity, respect, and recognition by transposing themselves onto an idealised chronotope of the Soviet past. Nostalgia is not simply a reaction to economic deprivation and status differences; it is a response to neoliberal modernity and post-Soviet regimes of disempowerment and difference.

This chapter is based on research I conducted in Vilnius and Kaunas as well as in three villages in central and eastern Lithuania in the early and mid-2000s. Most of the interviewees cited in this chapter lived in villages. All three villages are relatively small with 29, 115, and 705 inhabitants,

[5] For a discussion of the normalisation of the West and Europe in Lithuania, see Lankauskas 2002 and Vonderau 2007. For a discussion of Europe as a new colonial Other in the Baltics, see Kelertas 2006; on the geopolitics of Europe in Europe, see Böröcz 2006.

[6] But see Klumbytė n.d.

respectively. Of the three, the largest village is the only one that has several small industrial enterprises and large farms. Most people in the three villages subsist on small (a few hectare) plots and usually do not consider themselves to be 'farmers' (Mincytė 2006). Among the individuals I interviewed, there were twice as many women as men and four times as many unemployed or retired people as employed. There were only a few farmers with large property holdings and private business owners, who have been relatively successful in the post-Soviet period. This research relies on approximately eighty unstructured interviews, several life histories, participant observation in villages and cities, and media and archival analysis. I also include commentary by some urban dwellers that is indexical of a broader (that is, both rural and urban) geography of nostalgia.

I call villagers' relation to post-Soviet history nostalgic because many villagers long for a place and time that no longer exist; this longing embraces feelings of romance, pleasure, loss, irreversibility, and displacement as well as, in some cases, grief and stasis (cf. Davis 1979; Rosaldo 1989; Herzfeld 1997; Berdahl 1999; Boym 2001; Boyer 2006).[7] I approach nostalgia as a social practice and a cultural artefact.[8] The questions I raise in this chapter about social and political history and nostalgia are essentially about the present. By focusing on the present, the argument that nostalgia displays the past fictitiously, selectively, and partially (as it does) loses its relevance because nostalgia is an essential constitutive part of the individual's *present* self and his or her *present* projections of social history. Rather than judging nostalgia in terms of its accuracy or veracity, I show how certain pasts are granted authenticity and become integral to the articulation of post-Soviet publics and citizenship.

Nostalgia emerged in narratives about 'better [Soviet] times'. In this chapter, 'Soviet times' marks a real and symbolic time and space invoked in people's stories about their lives 'under the Russians', 'in Soviet times', 'then', and 'under the other government' ('*prie anos valdžios*'). People typically recollected late socialism. 'Post-Soviet times' refers to the 1990s and 2000s. Interviewees understood this division as fundamental and as contrastive (see also Davidson 2007).

Some villagers never referred to the past as good, while others, particularly younger individuals in their twenties and thirties, never compared the Soviet past to the present. Nostalgia was most prevalent amongst villagers who had lived most of their lives in Soviet times, that is, people in their

[7] On nostalgia in Eurasia, see also Paxson 2005; Sliavaite 2005; Knudsen 2006; Lankauskas 2006; Özyürek 2006; Pelkmans 2006; Petrović 2006; Velikonja 2006.

[8] On memory as a social practice and cultural artifact, see Connerton 1989; Bourdieu 1994; Lambek 1996; Abercrombie 1998; Järvinen 2000.

forties and especially in their fifties and sixties. For the nostalgic villagers, their experiences of the Soviet period were integral to their subjectivities. Their feelings, experiences, and thoughts are presented in the following sections.

## Tokens of Difference

Nostalgia emerged in villagers' conversations about social and economic displacement, isolation, hunger, poverty, social and personal space, and insecurity. Themes that dominated narrations about self and social history were structured in terms of the good Soviet times in contradistinction to the contemporary decline, chaos, and regression. Many villagers discussed Soviet-era cheap housing, free education and medical care, accumulation of savings, low crime rates, mobility and travel throughout the Soviet Union, cheap vacations in summer resorts, the everyday liveliness and noisiness, and general peace and order of Soviet society. Post-Soviet life was characterised by the inability to keep houses and pay bills, hardships in getting education, the high price of medicine, degraded health care, rampant alcoholism, loss of savings, money shortages, increased criminality and the absence of justice and order, dissolution of industry and agriculture, the inability to go on vacation, and the loss of any belief in the future.

Among the various topics that populated my conversations with villagers, stories about the cold invoked deprivation and discontent and triggered nostalgic reminiscences of better, Soviet times. In Soviet times, prices for utilities were low. Some pensioners in villages claimed that in the Soviet period, they were provided with firewood for heating. A former teacher in her seventies remembered, 'In Russian times, there was a law that if a teacher living in a village retired, compensation for electricity and heating had to be guaranteed to that teacher. Firewood had to be delivered until the end of the teacher's life'. Now, the end of life had to be mastered by the teacher herself.

In rural and urban areas alike, the big challenge for residents with low income had become the heating of large apartments or houses.

## *Fieldnotes, Fall 2004*

Kazys from Domeikava, a suburb of the city of Kaunas, lived in his house for forty years. He came to Domeikava as a young man and worked in the construction brigade. Soon, he got a plot of land where he built a house with the help of some relatives and friends. Kazys made good money. He was a major provider of income for his family. Post-Soviet changes reached their family in the same house. After the central heating was dismantled, Kazys

had to purchase an expensive gas furnace. Nevertheless, monthly bills consumed much of Kazys's meagre pension and became a real challenge. Like many others, Kazys' family strategised in order to minimise bills during the long cold period, which lasts about seven months in Lithuania. Not only memories but also Soviet-era fur coats, used as much inside as outside during winter, provided warmth for their bodies. Kazys' family used mainly one room, which they heated with the electric stove. They pleasantly remembered Soviet times and spoke regretfully of the possibility of selling their house, which was so much intertwined with their children, work, and hopes over forty years.

For some, not only warmth but also water and light became a luxury. In cities, some pensioners saved water by minimising dishwashing and bathing as well as by collecting rain water when possible. Some collected drops of water from dripping taps. The meter did not register water usage when the faucet was only open to a trickle. Among the most poignant strategies that I encountered was not flushing toilet regularly or flushing it with water used for washing dishes or clothes. In such cases, postsocialist poverty acquired a specific smell. Light, like cold, sparked nostalgia. Many urban residents had unpaid bills and debts, which they managed to pay little by little in order to get by. However, for some, the power had been shut off.

## *Fieldnotes, Summer 2004*

Before moving to the village, Marija lived with her husband and two small children in a town. She worked at a factory until the early 1990s when travelling to the workplace became too expensive after the factory terminated subsidies for commuting. Her husband lost his job due to staff reductions. Marija remembered how it got harder and harder to pay their bills and to survive on the temporary jobs her husband took. The electricity was turned off. They began using candles that Marija's stepfather, a sexton, made for them from used Church candles.[9] Marija remembered, 'The ceiling was black […] The curtains were smoked up. In the summer – dawn breaks early; the sun sets late. Not bad. But in winter you have to live with those candles. How can you be happy with this free Lithuania, my dear? In the dark. No TV'. Marija was happy that her family decided to come to live with her mother and her stepfather. Now she lives with five other people in a small two-room house in the village. 'The children get milk and eggs', said

[9] In Catholic churches, the sexton guards the church edifice and its treasures and as an inferior minister attends to burials, religious festivals, ringing the bell, and similar activities around the church. He is charged with the maintenance of church buildings and surroundings, including the graveyard and thus has access to used candles.

Marija. As a testimony to her words, a chicken peeked into a house and ran away. It is easier for her family. 'But in comparison to those times [Soviet times], there's nothing to say', sighed Marija.

Any commodity or experience can become a token of difference and an object of nostalgia. Clothing, like many other things, was often wrapped in nostalgic reminiscences. Many villagers bought their clothing at the so-called *skudurynai* (second-hand stores, the Lithuanian word *skudurynai* literally means a 'place for rags'). Many agreed that 'it is good that these second hand stores exist'; 'if you couldn't buy there, you would have to wander around naked […] What would you wear?' (a member of the Vitkus family, in her late sixties). However, clothing bought at second hand stores stinks, 'but you cannot buy at a store – it's so expensive' (Renata in her early forties). According to a librarian in her fifties, 'Earlier it was shortages, *blatas*, but people did not make the rounds of those second hand stores. Even the poorest did not buy there. And now intellectuals wear used underwear [laughs]. Look… really, all those rags…' For Marija like many others, her experience of post-Soviet history, as recalled through her different consumption practices, is about personal decline:

> I made good money [in Soviet times]. There were no second hand stores – well, there were these consignment stores [*komisai*]. But you didn't even look in that direction. And now? Now it's finished. Now you cannot buy a new item at a shop […]. Usually those second hand stores save us. Otherwise you would have nothing. And in earlier times, when you went to a store, from every salary you purchased things for yourself, for your children… and anything else.

Food consumption is another everyday activity through which people experience post-Soviet decline and their changing social position and status. Some feel that 'in the other times' they were better off because they could have parties, which seldom take place today. Using their connections, people were also able to purchase luxuries such as hunter sausages (*medžiotojų dešrelės*). It was a time, villagers reiterate, when 'food was cheap and we had money', whereas at present, 'there are goods, but there is no money'. Villagers' memories of fullness in the past and hunger in the present reflect their suppression of desires and minimised consumption (cf. Creed 2002).[10] Reflecting on their displacement, villagers claim that at the stores they feel like they are in a museum.

In villages, in addition to heat, light, clothing, and food, two other important social markers and tokens of difference were work and money (cf.

[10] Villagers admit that they do not suffer from hunger, however, since they cannot afford certain products and cannot exchange food as before, they *talk* about hunger. On subjective hunger, see Caldwell 2004.

Berdahl 1999; Pine 2002). As Daphne Berdahl (1999: 198-199) notes, in a society where productive labour was a key aspect of state ideology and where the workplace was a central site for social life, as it was in socialism, the high incidence of unemployment has profoundly undermined many peoples' sense of self. In postsocialism, unemployment became a central concern for the re-articulation of selfhood emerging in nostalgia discourse (see also Ashwin 1999; Dunn 2004; Kideckel 2008). Memories and concerns about jobs expressed in interviews indexed often-denigrating experiences of losing jobs, economic hardship, as well as insecurity and uncertainty about the future. Villagers pondered how they had lost their jobs, how they might find new ones, the jobs other people had, and how to travel to the workplace in the event that they got a job outside the village. Even people who did not face unemployment spoke of 'better [Soviet] times' and thought about changing work relations and uncertainty in the job market in negative terms. According to Genovaitė, a city resident in her early forties who has been continuously employed since graduating:

> The most terrible thing about this epoch is the instability, the uncertainty about tomorrow. We live hand to mouth […] You are exploited by every employer; you're like a serf. If you don't like something, you are told that there is a line [of potential workers] behind the door […] Earlier [in Soviet times], if you didn't like it, if the pay was too low, you could leave the next day. You could say whatever you wanted fearlessly, say what it was you didn't like. You could choose and not be afraid of tomorrow. I knew that my salary would be paid on a particular day. If I spent all my money, I could borrow [from a neighbour]. I knew I'd repay it the next day. It's not like that anymore. Today I might work; tomorrow I might be unemployed. And I don't know whether I will have this job. Maybe I will have no one to borrow from, nothing to eat. I have no savings; we live hand to mouth […] You try to think that everything is all right, but sometimes you start thinking, what if something happens. If we had to take medicine every day, the prices of medicine are enormous. This uncertainty is so depressing.

Money is another token of difference and an object of nostalgia. Although important in socialism, it was usually secondary to social relations (see Ashwin 1999; Berdahl 1999) since many goods in the former scarcity-economy were acquired through connections. These connections indicated an individual's social status (cf. Berdahl 1999). In postsocialism, the social meaning of money has changed. Money has become a new token of prestige, intrinsic to the formation of inequalities, social boundaries, and distinctions (cf. Berdahl 1999). In villages, some people conclude that it was good under

the Russians only because of money. The oft-repeated expression was some variation of, 'It was good under the Russians – we had money and jobs'. Aldona and Povilas remarked in a conversation:

> Aldona: It was good under the Russians. We had a ruble…
> Povilas: We had jobs. We worked.
> Aldona: I have nothing now.
> Povilas: We even made good money.

Work and money shortages variously affected social relations and everyday interactions. Many pensioners regretted that they could not help their children as they previously could (however, there were some adult children who, because they could not find a job, lived with their mothers and shared the small pensions their retired mothers received). Others mentioned that they could not travel to visit friends, pay visits to their neighbours, or go to family reunions. Some felt unneeded, forgotten, and worthless. Ramutė, a fifty-year old woman and former storage administrator at a collective farm, claimed:

> We lived well then; we had jobs. Everyone was needed somewhere. For example, I was an administrator [of a warehouse]. I worked for three years. I started to understand that work, and I was a needed person. Now you are trash, not a person. If you don't work, who considers you a person?

Like work, money earned in the past also spoke about villagers' dignity and self-worth. Many villagers also claimed that they earned more in Soviet times than they presently do. Brickyard workers earned from 200 to 300 rubles per month. A former excavator driver recalled that he used to earn around 400 rubles per month. Kazys, mentioned above, was also proud of his 380 ruble salary. A former brickyard factory worker remembered:

> My pension was 270–280 [rubles per month]. When there were rubles, you felt that you had money. Now I get 415 [litai]. But earlier, I could buy much more for those 280. Well…it is better not to think. If you have to buy medicine, you spend your monthly pension. On medicine. Medicine is very expensive. Once I went [to a pharmacy]…you need this and that and that…I paid 100 litai for medicine. And you have to pay for electricity and for water…Then you buy firewood, so you have to pay for the firewood…Then you have some left for food and that's it—no more money. Almost nothing is left. Just like that. And earlier [in Soviet times], I used to get those 280…The ruble had its *own* value.

Although wages in some factories in the city were low during Soviet times, some people were able to increase their income in other ways, using alternative work strategies. Alina, who had lived in the village for six years when I met her, recalled her work experiences:

> I went to work at a factory. It was impossible to get a job at that factory. There were only a husband, a wife, and children [who worked there]. Relatives. To get there from the street for a common person was almost unimaginable. Really. They carried out tons [they stole from the factory]… The first time, I remember, I got forty-eight rubles. That was my first salary… Then we worked. I got medals and honours [for work]. I was never late. I was never absent… I never saw what others did… Nobody ever told me, 'You take with you too much'. When a boss came to say, 'Today is going to be *облава* [*облава* is Russian for "ambush", i.e. a surprise inspection to control for stealing]. No one take anything!' So I never took anything; that was out of the question for me [*šventa*]. And women [*bobos*] liked to take risks […] It was in their blood. How could they come home and have nothing? And I did not need to. All my life [I did not take anything during *облава*]. It was enough for me.

Working at her job, Alina could travel to a resort at the Black Sea at the weekend, buy good furniture, golden rings, and chains, and eat good food. She lost her job during reconstruction of the factory, which was bought by foreign investors in 1997. Unable to subsist in the city because of her small pension, Alina moved to a village.

In all of these cases, nostalgia rests on abstraction, selectivity, and forgetfulness. It imparts charm and goodness to what at the time may have been experienced as ordinary and uneventful (Davis 1979: 38) or even threatening and unpleasant like Alina's 'ethical' stealing. Nostalgia romanticises and glorifies the past and dramatises the past in the present. Nevertheless, it is an important historical and political commentary on post-Soviet alterity and neoliberal regimes of difference. Villagers' narratives merge sensations of materialities such as cold and work with their expectations and desires of well-being and respectful citizenship. Nostalgia emerges in the space of incommensurability between the experiential and the expected. Although in nostalgic commentaries villagers objectify their social difference, nostalgia is also a way to reclaim the ideal, moral self as well as one's personal status and dignity. Positive memories of Soviet times not only reintegrate the Soviet tradition into the present and provide a continuity of identity; they also re-invoke an entire semiotic space in which an individual is an honourable person and where his or her life has significance (cf. Ferguson 1999).

## Nostalgia and Class

In his classic study on nostalgia, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (1979), Fred Davis claims that one cannot be nostalgic for yester-

day. Nostalgia requires the passage of longer spans of time in order to allow for a contrast between the past and the present self to become perceptible. In Davis' words, there must be the subjective contrast of succeeding 'identity gestalts' that facilitates the resort to nostalgic activity (1979: 11). In the former socialist states of Eastern Europe and the former USSR, a subjective contrast emerged because of an abrupt historical change – the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In post-Soviet Lithuania, nostalgia for the 'good old' Soviet or socialist times is most visible among the currently marginalised, including the unemployed and underemployed, the poor, elderly people living on small pensions, and disadvantaged families with many children.[11] However, nostalgia is not simply a possession of the dispossessed (Humphrey 2002). Over the course of my research, I met intellectuals, Soviet-era professionals, and former members of the Communist Party, who were all contemporarily 'successful' but nevertheless nostalgic for Soviet times. The nostalgia of these individuals indexed different experiences and social positions and voiced other grievances than those of marginalised rural and urban residents.

Significantly, since nostalgia 'always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties, even though they may not be in the forefront of awareness' (Davis 1979: 34), those who have relatively little to fear or be discontented about are typically not nostalgic for the Soviet past. Furthermore, nostalgia for the 'good old Soviet times' is not common among individuals who were stigmatised during the socialist period, including dissidents and devout believers, even when they are now poor and disadvantaged. If nostalgia is a yearning for a continuity of self (Davis 1979), it is indeed this continuity that some try to escape.

Because nostalgia is very common among marginalised rural and urban residents, it is possible to relate it to class identity and thus to claim that nostalgia expresses emerging class differences central to the concerns of this volume (Schröder, this volume). In my research sites, villagers themselves reflected upon alleged class differences by claiming that there is, on the one hand, a political elite or the 'lords/masters' (*ponai*) and, on the other, the 'people'. A pensioner formerly employed on a collective farm lamented:

> I think there is a Lithuania and a small Lithuania. Lithuania is where the masters of Vilnius live [the political elites]; small Lithuania is where all the rest live. Two Lithuanias. There are Lithuanians in both places, but our Lithuanians are poor people.

[11] On the new class of disadvantaged individuals in rural and urban areas in postsocialist Eurasia, see Ashwin 1999; Hann 2002; Kideckel 2002, 2008; Nazpary 2002; Buchowski 2003; Rausing 2004; Pelkmans 2006; Phillips 2008.

The image of 'two Lithuanias', which is widely re-circulated in the public sphere, produces class distinctions already 'catalogued' by the government of Soviet Lithuania. For example, Justas Paleckis, the then-acting president of Soviet Lithuania, claimed on July 21, 1940:

> I would like to dwell on the situation which we have lived through so that we could better appraise the present situation and the prospects before us. Looking back into the past, to the period of our national renaissance, we see a clear-cut and constant struggle between the *two Lithuanias*—between the Lithuania of the landmasters and the Lithuania of peasant serfs, between the Lithuania of reactionary clericals and the Lithuania of progressive free thinkers, between the bourgeois and the proletarian Lithuania. All the stages of the nation's history are marked by the struggle between these *two Lithuanias* (Kancevičius 1976: 189–190, emphasis added).

The Soviet discourse emphasised the exploitation of the toiling masses and ideological differences. Post-Soviet categorisations, like the villagers' claims about two Lithuanias, index economic backwardness. Intellectuals, journalists, and politicians depict the members of the second Lithuania as voters for populists, the losers of the transition, poor, rural, as the Lithuania of losers, and as disenchanted (see also Klumbytė 2006).[12] While the Soviet regime privileged peasants and workers and cherished their ideological loyalty, post-Soviet conceptualisations speak of a successful and prosperous neoliberal subject engaged in self-enterprise as the ideal of post-Soviet citizenship.[13] Ideological loyalty is also important: the post-Soviet citizen must respect democracy and the rule of law and have a negative memory of Soviet times like in *1984. Survival Drama.*

In this chapter, I identified the nostalgic as a community of common discourse rather than a class. As I have already mentioned, the poor and disadvantaged tend *not* to be nostalgic for Soviet times if they experienced social alterity during the Soviet era. In one of the villages, I saw two elderly women of similar socioeconomic statuses sitting on a bench and talking about various hardships. One of the two, Elena, who was tortured in a Soviet prison for her collaboration with the Lithuanian guerrillas in the 1940s and who was later deported to Siberia where she spent ten years, was not *nostalgic* even if she *recollected* some positive aspects of her life in the Soviet

[12] For example, the impeachment of then-President Rolandas Paksas in 2004 reinforced the idea that 'Lithuania' is split into supporters of President Paksas and his opponents. The supporters were presented as poor, rural, and the most vulnerable part of the population, the 'second Lithuania' (see Šindeikis 2004: 12).

[13] For a discussion of neoliberal personhood in post-Soviet space, see Yurchak 2003; Dunn 2004; Cohen 2008; Ozoliņa 2008.

period. For Elena, post-Soviet era official discourses about Soviet oppression provide a narrative of continuity with a self that was subject to elimination in Soviet prisons and deportation camps. Elena feels that independence restored justice, and she identifies with the post-Soviet publics articulated in official spaces through discourse, policy, and performances like *1984. Survival Drama*. Thus in Lithuania, nostalgia is not simply a response to economic deprivation and status differences, it is also a response to neoliberal modernity and post-Soviet regimes of citizenship as well as the disempowerment and difference that they entail. Nostalgia is experienced by those like Elena's neighbour who are not only economically disadvantaged but also subjected to post-Soviet social alterity. These experiences of post-Soviet alterity, in this chapter emerging through encounters with the material objects and processes such as money, work, food, clothing, heat, and light, engender nostalgia for Soviet times.

## Conclusion

Nostalgia for Soviet times is at odds with much of the scholarship on socialism which defines the Soviet or socialist regimes as 'totalitarian', 'immoral', 'imposed', and 'oppressive'. Furthermore, it stands in sharp contrast to national and international views of the Soviet regime as being responsible for enormous human suffering comparable to that inflicted by Nazi Germany (see Todorova 2006).[14] Maria Todorova concludes that in such circumstances, nostalgia can be subsumed only (and appropriately) under the Marxist notion of false consciousness (Todorova 2006). Furthermore, this false consciousness is linked to false morality. As Deanna Davidson notes in the case of Germany, the Western economic victory over socialism is capitalist democracy's moral victory. The 'here and now' of national politics, official history, and mainstream news is a time of wealth and freedom, a point of progress beyond fascism and dictatorship (Davidson 2007: 215) and beyond totalitarianism and the economic stagnation of the former Soviet states. The moral ranking of states, in which West is superior to East, is fundamental cultural knowledge that underlies mainstream discursive norms (Davidson 2007: 215). The West's superiority over the East is also a fundamental legitimising narrative of postsocialist and post-Soviet regimes. Therefore, struggles against nostalgia are intrinsic to the Eastern European normalisation of postsocialist statehood and citizenship.

[14] For example, Roger Cohen (2005: 2) regrets that 'years of debate have not resolved how the terrible twins of the 20th century, communism and fascism, should be viewed on a scale of evil'.

However, artists, journalists, and politicians who contribute to such normalisation often dismiss the idea that nostalgia is a modern process concurrent with post-Soviet modernisation and embedded in global processes of neoliberal transformation. By associating nostalgia with backwardness, stagnation, and the past, they gloss over the fact that nostalgia is immanent to post-Soviet modernity as well as to articulations of post-Soviet publics and citizenship. Furthermore, because of various national and transnational circulations nostalgia is amplified since the oppositions in which differences between higher-order collectives, like geopolitical and moral orders of East and West, are laid onto lower-order discords, like local disagreements about the meaning and value of the past, thus adding the force and meaning of the greater antipathy to ongoing local differences (see Sahlins 2005 on symbolic amplification). The antagonisms of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras are added to the arguments between individuals or groups, in this way inflating nostalgia disputes all out of proportion to the original reasons of those who long for Soviet times. Villagers whom I interviewed did not deny the atrocities of Soviet times. They did not long for the oppressive state or make arguments about the Soviet Union political regime. Moreover, when asked directly, most of them claimed that they wouldn't want the USSR to return. Their nostalgia thus embraces *their post-Soviet* suffering and longing for a different *post-Soviet* society and the state.

In this chapter I have argued that in nostalgic reminiscences of Soviet times, villagers reclaim visibility, voice their concerns, and appeal for respect, recognition, and inclusive citizenship. By accusing the nostalgic of having false consciousness and remaking them into social others, mainstream publics repeatedly deny the rights of the nostalgic to respectful citizenship and exclude them from the project of post-Soviet modernity. Thus like Ferguson's Zambian Copperbelt miners, Lithuanian villagers experience contemporary history as a kind of abjection – they are cast down and cast out, feeling both excluded and expelled from the promise of (European) modernity (Ferguson 1999).

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# *Chapter 3*
# The Enigma of the Middle Class: A Case Study of Entrepreneurs in Poland

Michał Buchowski

## Introductory Remarks: Ten Years after

I conducted empirical research on the subject matter that comprises this chapter in the mid-1990s and originally worked on this article between 1997 and 1998.[1] In order to properly understand the arguments herein, one must keep in mind the specificity of this former time period for Poland, the region, and the world as well as the climate of accompanying intellectual debates. In this milieu, various commentators talked about 'spontaneous transformation', which was linked with widespread enthusiasm about building a new capitalist society. These processes gave rise to heated discussions about the necessity to construct a middle class. One Polish weekly aimed at businessmen even accepted applications for 'middle class membership'! Researchers – first and foremost sociologists, political scientists, and social philosophers – also joined this public debate. Many of these common sense and 'enlightened' opinions had a very speculative character.

There is a demand for a critical account of both actual processes taking place on the ground and of the narratives about them. Can we make an attempt to produce such an analytical description? Socio-cultural anthropology is a discipline that feeds on the everyday practices of ordinary people and the images and theories people have about the surrounding reality they co-produce. The art of anthropological narrative can be understood as the capacity to intertwine ethnographic details with theories about social reality held both by 'ordinary people' and 'extraordinary' social scientists. In effect,

[1] This is a revised version of an article first published under the title 'Encountering Capitalism at a Grass-Root Level: A Case Study of Entrepreneurs in Western Poland' and published in the book *Poland Beyond Communism: 'Transition' in Critical Perspective*, ed. by M. Buchowski, E. Conte and C. Nagengast, Fribourg: Fribourg University Press 2001. I thank the publisher, especially the series Studia Ethnographica Fribugensia, for permission to publish this new version. Special thanks to the co-editors of that volume for their efforts to make this text readable in English.

anthropology should help us to gain a critical view of non-reflexively, accepted patent images. The case study presented herein is an attempt to make lofty discussions about the new middle class more empirical and therefore realistic. I hope that despite the passage of time since its original publication it still carries some value as a contribution to the study of a society undergoing relatively rapid and vehement change. At the same time, I hope that it shows in particular how culture and society are tightly entwined. Their analytical separation leads to a certain 'cultural idealism' that disassociates culture from its social base and that, in turn, can lead us astray to the idea of 'cultural determinism', which mistakenly views culture as the decisive factor for social life and history.

Of course, if I were writing this text today, I would have to take into account developments that have transpired in the last ten years. Several structural constraints have changed, further re-composition of social structure has taken place, and the climate for debates about the middle class has also altered. Also, new articles and books have been published, especially in the domain of anthropology, and they should be taken into account. Deeper analysis should devote more attention to the relation between history and the present and should reconsider such phenomena as economic globalisation, migratory trans-nationalism, and the new international division of labour – all of which cross nation-state borders. This would imply a deconstruction of localised images of the relatively closed social and cultural systems in their particular polities. In other words, it would be necessary to not look at nation-states or localities in isolation but instead as points in a broader constellation of culture and society.

## Goals and Means

In this paper, I illustrate social processes, practices, and views, especially centred on the purported emergence of a so-called 'new middle class' among entrepreneurs in Swarzędz, a small town near Poznań.[2] This case study of people's attitudes and deeds can be treated as a window through which the more general phenomena taking place in Poland in the 1990s can be interpreted. The formation of a 'new middle class', a category widely and wildly used by Polish scholars, should be verified at a grass-roots level and, I argue,

[2] Ethnographic materials were collected from Autumn 1995 to Spring 1996 thanks to the support of the Wenner-Gren Foundation. The project, entitled 'Learning Capitalism: Practices and Discourses in Poland', was carried out by Carole Nagengast and myself, with the participation of Jacek Schmidt, Monika Baer, and Magdalena Szramkowska. I wrote this paper as a visiting scholar at the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at Humboldt University in Berlin and at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. I would like to thank all of the above mentioned people and institutions for their help and co-operation.

questioned because individuals arbitrarily categorised as members of this entity have divergent social genealogies, education, cultural models, and patterns of behaviour. Socio-cultural reality is much more complex than the models invented by scientists and politicians to account for it. The 'new middle class' is a concept influenced by teleological ideas of 'transformation', and it plays an ideological role in the building of the new liberal political and economic order.

In my analysis, I employ Bourdieu's (1990: 112-134) theory of economic, social, and cultural capital. The degree to which individuals possess each type of capital as well as their competence in using these forms of capital and making rational choices based on their knowledge allows them to undertake actions meant to protect or increase social and economic status. This formula can be extended to groups such as families and indeed larger units defined according to chosen criteria. This social affiliation is relationally constituted since social classes 'define themselves always in implicit reference to the other(s)' (Ortner 1991: 172). Social stratification to some degree puts people in privileged or underprivileged positions vis-à-vis other actors. For example, somebody coming from an educated (cultural capital), rich (economic capital) family and occupying a high position in the social hierarchy (social capital) has many more possibilities for effective operation within a community than somebody coming from an uneducated, poor, and lower-class family. Thus, inherited capital comprises an important factor in life careers. This does not mean, however, that personal characteristics, aspirations, and coincidence do not play any role in the acquisition of social status. If this were so, social structure would be petrified. Movements up and down the social ladder are particularly visible in periods of rapid change or in mobile societies where equal opportunities tend to prevail.

## A New Middle Class?

Edmund Mokrzycki (1996: 193-194) distinguishes three social groups in Poland, which, he says, form a 'middle class' *in statu nascendi*. These are formed by (1) private entrepreneurs who already owned small enterprises under communism; (2) members of the *nomenklatura*, i.e. former communist managers and party activists who skilfully managed the 'privatisation' of state companies and became their new owners, functioning in the newly expanded private sector as 'parachutists'; and, (3) 'declassed intelligentsia', grouping skilled former employees of state institutions and enterprises, who have been 'pushed out' into the private sector. This third group constitutes an already qualified 'knowledge class', portrayed as carrying the seeds of the modern 'new middle class' that will help build a modern, western-type society. While I sympathise with the overall tenor of Mokrzycki's paper in

that the concept of a middle class is a fabrication of neoliberal ideologists who overemphasise the importance of private owners as 'an embryo of the future "capitalist society"' (ibid. 188), I disagree with three specific points he makes. Firstly, why should someone who abandons his or her position as, for example, a state-employed lecturer to become a tax adviser be considered *déclassé*? Even individuals who switched from traditional intelligentsia professions such as clerks, teachers, and engineers in order to start small businesses feel satisfied and think that they made a wise decision. Although people's feelings about their profession or class status do not affect their location in the social structure itself, I see no reason to describe such conscious movement, subjectively perceived as advancement, as a decline in social status. Secondly, Mokrzycki writes that 'private initiative' was falsely seen as a 'Trojan horse' of socialism. Meanwhile, '[t]he first weeks of reform demonstrated the complete dependence of this sector on the central distribution of goods, especially through its symbiotic relationship with state industry and trade. Market instruments [...] turned out to be destructive rather than healing for this sector' (ibid. 193). This is definitely not the case, at least in Swarzędz, particularly when one looks at the problem in terms of the actors' adaptation to market mechanisms. Why not treat the shutdown or, as Mokrzycki (1995: 64) calls it, the 'cataclysm' of, let us say, a number of greenhouses, as a result of changing market demands and commercial possibilities, as occurs everywhere, rather than in ideological terms, attributing it to the inability of 'postsocialist' small entrepreneurs to face 'real' capitalism? Thirdly, I do not believe that only members of the former intelligentsia, now called the 'knowledge class', are able to build a modern, liberal society based on the solid foundation of a middle class.

Steven Sampson provides a more specific classification of Eastern European social groups, which he labels the 'new rich', that have engaged in entrepreneurship over the last decade. Only with respect to the *nomenklatura* do Sampson's and Mokrzycki's classifications coincide. Sampson further mentions 'former players in the second economy', 'former state employees, many with higher technical or professional training and "culture", who leave state employment to start their own small firms', 'former wage workers who lose their jobs and are forced to open small shops', and members of '"traditional" liberal professions or craftsmen who in various East European countries [...] were allowed to practice their trades' (1996: 100-101).

Mokrzycki's 'private entrepreneurs' partially correspond to both Sampson's 'former players in the second economy' and 'craftsmen'. The 'declassed intelligentsia' partially coincide with both 'liberal professionals' and 'former state employees'. Mokrzycki's background as a sociologist writing about Poland, on the one hand, Sampson's background as an anthro-

pologist writing about Romania, on the other, may cause the former to recognise the significance of socialist private entrepreneurs in the formation of the new economic and social order while the latter emphasises the contribution of 'second economy players' (i.e. participants in the black market) in this process. This difference may also flow from the fact that outsiders (Sampson is an American living in Copenhagen), in contrast to insiders (Mokrzycki is a Pole living in Warsaw), tend to exoticise perceived social reality. No doubt, smugglers are more fanciful 'heroes of transition' than 'dull' bakers, plastic toy producers, boutique owners, and furniture makers. 'Former wage workers' are not present in Mokrzycki's classification at all perhaps because he focuses on the formation of a 'new middle class'; as I mentioned above, he straightforwardly states that the former intelligentsia, thanks to its ethos, was already destined to become the emerging group's nucleus. It is hard for Mokrzycki to imagine that former workers, commonly considered to be the social core of the obsolete communist system and carriers of 'post-communist mentality', can bolster the vanguard of neoliberal society. Meanwhile, Sampson writes about *nouveaux riches* attempting to convert their money into culture and transforming themselves into more 'refined' people. We can imagine that currently, within the same 'middle class', however vague its contours, an exchange takes place through which, for example, the 'declassed intelligentsia' sells its 'refined manners' for money to the emerging 'former players in the second economy' or to former workers and their children.

My detailed reference to these two views on just who might belong to the 'new middle class' is meant to show just how equivocal the issue is. The confusion stems from the abstract character of the entire construction called the 'middle class'. According to classical Marxist understanding, the middle class is composed of people who own some means of production. However, modern social analysts point out that in post-industrial capitalism the middle class consists, first and foremost, of 'knowledge people'. Postsocialist countries, according to Mokrzycki (1995: 67), have to bypass the old capitalist route to (post-)modernity. The creation of a petite bourgeoisie is less important for the formation of a middle class than the reformation of the former intelligentsia into a knowledge class. The policy of states bent on transforming their economies and societies from strictly regulated to liberal ones should encourage such a mutation. A group of people interested in a 'new deal' and sharing pro-market and liberal views will give momentum to reforms. Evidently, a discrepancy arises between traditional Marxist and 'post-industrial' views of social relations: the concept of class based on ownership of the means of production runs afoul of the concept based on an imagined ethos and the acceptance of a laissez-faire worldview.

It is impossible to verify these speculations. However, it is possible to test whether the formation of specific, conscious, and culturally distinctive social groups is taking place. In what follows, I will consider both ownership relations as well as social and cultural capital. Most people referred to below are entrepreneurs. In Swarzędz, they meet at least some basic criteria set by Mokrzycki, Sampson and other commentators (Kozyr-Kowalski 1995; Wesołowski 1995) for 'middle class' membership. In the Polish context, an entrepreneur is simply 'a person that owns or co-owns a company and carries out an economic activity in the non-agricultural private sector' (Jasiecki 1996: 116). The concept of the entrepreneur is thus definitely less debatable than that of the 'middle class'. Nevertheless, in order to make my account more representative, I will also consider a man from a former wage-worker family who now owns the shareholding company he works in, and a knowledge man *sensu stricte*, i.e. a person who provides qualified services and does not own any means of production or even shares in the company. The question is whether, and if so, in what sense, all these people, particularly entrepreneurs, constitute a social category we can refer to as a class.

## The Place and the Actors

Swarzędz is a town of 27,000 inhabitants located on the eastern outskirts of Poznań, the capital of Wielkopolska, a city of 600,000 people and one of the biggest in Poland. In fact, Swarzędz belongs to the broader Poznań agglomeration of almost 900,000 people. The border between the two cities is hardly visible. Swarzędz is known throughout Poland for its carpentry, furniture-making, and upholstery tradition reaching back to the seventeenth century,[3] a tradition that has thrived intensely since the early twentieth century.[4] This tradition was recognised by the communist authorities who, on the one hand, expanded a furniture factory in the city[5] and who, on the other, never totally thwarted private furniture entrepreneurship in the community.[6] Data from Swarzędz proves that although people working in the

[3] The Swarzędz carpenters' guild was founded in 1653 (Białek 1988: 17).

[4] In 1914, among more than 3,000 inhabitants, 229 were carpenters working in 59 shops (Białek 1988: 35). In 1937, when the city had 5,770 inhabitants, 1,200 people worked in enterprises manufacturing furniture (ibid.: 74). By the end of the Second Polish Republic (1939), 80% of families made their living from work in the wood and carpentry industry (ibid.: 86).

[5] The factory was created from several private enterprises, which were nationalised. It got its name, *Swarzędzkie Fabryki Mebli* (Swarzędz Furniture Factories), in 1952 (Białek 1988: 149).

[6] In communist Poland, the number of private entrepreneurs fluctuated according to market demand and official policy towards this kind of activity. However, the private sector grew overall. For example, in Swarzędz, in 1945, there were 29 private carpenter enterprises

private sector under communism made up only a fraction of the workforce,[7] they played a considerable role in the community, and the craft tradition never died out. By 1989, 1,418 private enterprises were registered in Swarzędz, among them 194 upholsters, 460 cabinetmakers, and 16 other furniture manufacture related shops producing springs and artificial foam. These 670 enterprises accounted for almost half of the private economic activity in the community.[8] Together with a large state furniture factory, this made Swarzędz the capital of this branch of industry in Poland. Today the city guide still proudly announces that 'Swarzędz relies on business' ('*Swarzędz biznesem stoi*') and that it is 'the biggest centre of furniture production in Poland' (Swarzędz 1995).

At the beginning of the 1990s,[9] the factory was privatised and its shares were traded on the Warsaw stock exchange. Mainly due to the crisis in the industry and extremely tight international competition, the company took on debt and underwent restructuring in order to navigate through the stormy times. Nevertheless, in 1996, it still employed 2,320 people. In addition, a large Swiss furniture company (VOX) employing 760 people was opened in the vicinity of Swarzędz. Market oscillations are also reflected in statistics concerning private entrepreneurs. Once bureaucratic shackles were removed, Swarzędzians eagerly ventured to work on their own. In 1989, the number of private companies rose to 1,971, among them 427 upholsters, 515 cabinetmakers, and 30 others associated with furniture production (altogether, 972). The furniture industry grew constantly and reached its peak in 1994 when 1,371 enterprises of this kind were officially in operation. Signs of crisis in this sector were visible at the time of our fieldwork when, for the

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(among 139 private shops altogether); in 1946, there were 119 carpenter enterprises; in 1963, 246; in 1972, 199; in 1980, 274, which together employed 601 persons; and, in 1987, 478 (Białek 1988: 146-162). The population of Swarzędz grew from 6,000 in 1945 to more than 17,000 in 1985 (ibid.: 173, 180). No doubt, in the communist period, the fate of artisans depended directly not only on market demand but also administrative decisions. For example, a decline in the number of carpenters at the end of 1960s was caused by increasing competition from state factories as well as restrictions placed in 1969 on capital transfers from the state to private sector and a 1970 government regulation forbidding state institutions from purchasing furniture from private entrepreneurs (ibid.: 159-160).

[7] Nationwide, until the mid 1970s, the proportion of entrepreneurs among the economically active population was kept lower than 2% (e.g. 1.9 % in 1965 and 1.6% in 1975). Relaxation of state policy towards entrepreneurs resulted in the percentage of entrepreneurs growing to 4.7% by 1986. At that time, more than half a million employees and self-employed individuals worked in the private sector of the Polish economy. By 1993, this number had reached almost 1.9 million and 18% of the workforce (cf. Osborn and Słomczyński 1997: 254).

[8] This and the following data I obtained from the City and Commune Office in Swarzędz.

[9] The year 1989 saw a breakthrough in macroeconomic terms in that prices were deregulated, restrictions on labor removed, and property rights institutionalised. It is clear, however, that private entrepreneurship had already gained momentum in the 1980s.

first time since 1989, more furniture enterprises shut down (143) than opened (121). The number of furniture enterprises fell to 1,256 in 1997, 1,205 in 1998, and 1,118 in 1999. Meanwhile, the extent of furniture industry in relation to other steadily expanding fields of economic activity diminished, and by 1996, for example, out of 3,985 registered shops, only 1,330 were dealing in furniture; in 1999, they numbered 1,118 out of a total of 4,462. In any event, private economic activity is remarkable. The city is flooded with advertising and information boards of various sizes. I once counted the number of enterprises located on a randomly chosen street (Żytnia street): 20 out of 24 households were engaged in some form of productive activity. The cottage industry, in some cases relegated to the 'grey zone', is unbelievably widespread in Swarzędz.

Furniture producers have their own professional organisations. However, in 1997, less than half of the 537 registered joiners belonged to a guild (250 according to the official city guide and 200 according to the head of the guild). Of these members, only 100 still produced wooden furniture, while the others had been forced to collaborate with upholsterers and were producing 'small pieces', as they are described. The guild continues to be a powerful organisation and employs sixteen people with many others working voluntarily. It also fulfils marketing and social functions and tries to influence local politics. In addition, a separate upholsterers' guild was established in 1994. The number of upholstery shops, which are cheaper to start and run, floats around 600, and half of the owners of these shops belonged to the guild in 1995 (Swarzędz 1995: 20).

All of the entrepreneurs involved have been led to elaborate new practices. In Swarzędz, as in many other places in the world, it has become apparent that 'ideas and behavior patterns [...] are correct in relation to a specific institutional set-up. They [...] become not only untenable but also destructive if the latter changes and they are not abandoned in time' (Redlich 1971: 42). Swarzędz always has been famous for its 'heavy' designs, which contrast with the 'light' designs of IKEA. As joiners admit, they address a certain group of consumers who prefer solid, long-lasting, and impressive furniture. Their products should look like the 'Mercedes' of household furnishings. This particular style continues thanks to buyers who prefer it and who can afford this kind of furniture. For many, heavy furniture is a mark of social status. Members of the 'cultured intelligentsia' who despise this style have always associated it, both under communism and today, with the *nouveau riche*. Therefore, it is a conscious decision on the part of furniture makers to cater to the tastes of a select group of consumers and to participate in a specialisation that perpetuates a tradition of furniture making in which they feel strong enough to compete. In the context of a new institu-

tional set-up and changing consumer desires, producers diversify production, specialise in manufacturing certain kinds of products, and look for new markets and niches. This elasticity enables producers to find purchasers for 'Swarzędzian style' furniture not only in Poland but also in the East (the former Soviet Union) and in the West (particularly Germany).

In their struggle for survival, entrepreneurs have evolved various strategies, and this has been accompanied by significant changes in social relations and the emergence of new cultural phenomena. I would like to offer some insight into this complex process and to identify some of its important features by paying special attention to issues of adaptation to the new institutional structure and conditions, shifting logic of production and marketing, and some of the continuities and changes in the habits, ethos, and identity of entrepreneurs. From the interviews I conducted, I have selected cases by referring to such criteria as a 'genealogy of entrepreneurship', the education level of the people involved, the production capacity of the enterprise, and the social position of the given interviewee. The examples offered are typical of whole sets of cases. Their ethnographic authenticity gives us an aura and flavour of entrepreneurialism in Swarzędz.[10]

## *Entrepreneurs in Swarzędz*

Case 1: *Traditional and steady*

Pan N. is in his early fifties.[11] Both he and his wife come from families of cabinetmakers. His father established the enterprise in 1929 and continued to work in it for fifty years until he retired in 1979. Pan N. did his apprentice-

[10] All data provided herein refer to the period of fieldwork unless otherwise indicated.

[11] I define as 'traditional' those entrepreneurs who inherited shops from their predecessors. As Osborn and Słomczyński (1997) show in their nationwide analysis of Poland, until the end of 1970s, more than half of all entrepreneurs originated from urban property owners and farming families (255). After 1989, only one fifth of new entrepreneurs were recruited from these types of families (ibid.).

*Pan* (female form *Pani*, for Mr. and for Mrs., *Państwo*) is, in Polish, the traditional, polite form people of address. It is most commonly followed by either the Christian or family name. As it happens, men are commonly the heads of families and run and officially own family enterprises. Even when a woman is registered as an owner, her husband or father usually manages the undertaking. My male-oriented narrative merely reflects the cultural context in Swarzędz (and perhaps in Poland in general), at least when we are concerned with issues of ownership and entrepreneurship. Even in situations where a wife was present during the interview, it was usually the man who answered the questions related to doing business. Women whom we asked about business referred us to their husbands. There were some exceptions, of course, in which women were more directly involved in their family business affairs (see, for example, cases 5 and 6 below). Women usually have more to say about lifestyle and family life. This traditional division of the female domain of the household and male domain of the shop still prevails in Swarzędz.

ship in his father's shop, which he eventually inherited. Pan N. finished secondary school; his two children completed university level education. His son works with him at the shop, and after an unsuccessful attempt at being a wholesale clothes seller, his daughter now teaches in an elementary school. He has three sisters whose husbands also own, work in, and run furniture enterprises. One of his nephews is already a joiner, the other an upholsterer, and one of his nieces married a joiner. The inheritance practice and advance of some capital to the members of the younger generation to enable them to establish their venture took place here. This extensive furniture-making tradition and network does not result in close collaboration, but it does occur occasionally. 'When there is an "issue" and money to make, why should I let them leak out? I go to the family'. Pan N. has three employees and three apprentices.

As he confessed, taxes obstruct investments and 'fiscal levies enter everywhere'. He tries to keep his business in operation, and the guild exhibitions facilitate sales. In the recent past, he relied mostly on customers from 'Russia', in other words from the former Soviet republics, particularly Belarus and Ukraine.[12] The other venue is a shop opened in 1989 and run by his wife. Initially, they sold furniture made in his enterprise, then interior equipment, and now clothing. Difficulties notwithstanding, he has been able to keep his enterprises afloat.

Case 2: *Traditional and expansive*

Pan K. is in his late fifties and comes from a family of craftsmen. His wife is a skilled tailor. He apprenticed in his father's cabinet making shop, which was established in 1935. Pan K. took over the shop in 1976 and now works with his younger son. His older son completed agricultural training but now owns a petrol station. While furnishing the Poznań Voivodship building, Pan K. learned about a lot suitable for establishing a petrol station and, thanks to a connection, bought it for his son. Pan K.'s brother also has his own enterprise, and his sister runs another petrol station. Every member of the family owns a good car and a house. He employs fifteen people and has no reason to complain about his and his extended family's material situation.

[12] This eastern market shrank radically when, in 1998, in accordance with European Union instructions, border regimes for former Soviet Union citizens were tightened shortly after an economic crisis in Russia. This at least partly accounts for the closure of many furniture manufactures in recent years.

Case 3: *A former member of the nomenklatura*
Pan L. comes from a working class family and is a technician in his late fifties.[13] He now owns a wooden fixtures enterprise and a furniture shop. He employs eight people permanently plus ten on a temporary basis. His wife is a housekeeper, while his son, who will one day inherit the enterprise, attends administrative and trade school. For several years, Pan L. worked in the Swarzędz Furniture Factories, where he was promoted from a rank-and-file position to manager of the factory's branch in the neighbouring town of Kostrzyn. No doubt, his Party membership facilitated his career. In 1985, he decided to work on his own. He invested his savings and managed to trade furniture on long-term instalments. His capital also comprises *znajomości* ('connections') in the industry and knowledge about the intricacies of production and the market situation. This is why he was selling his products in 'areas under-invested with furniture' (notice the Newspeak). Pan L. and the members of his family feel satisfied with their achievements in the new reality.

Case 4: *Self-made and expansive*
Pan B. is in his late twenties. His father was a cabinetmaker but did not own a business. His wife is a trained tailor and her parents had a tailoring enterprise. Pan B. started as a wageworker in a private venture. Even then, he made additional income by manufacturing electric guitars. In 1988, he started his own business in a rented barn. Immediately after the couple married, they built a well-equipped house. They also own a good car. He employs five people but also gives his relatives the opportunity to earn 'tax-free' money. He is fully aware of the advantages and disadvantages of doing business today and competes on the market with large factories. He is convinced that he can manage capitalism more ingeniously than his older competitors. Under communism, it was enough to have some skills in order to make easy profits. 'Socialism for craftsmen in Swarzędz was like capitalism, but a thousand times multiplied [...] There was a group of people a thousand times more affluent than those in the West'. Yet, these times are over, and it is no wonder that the older generation complains and has partly been pushed out of the business. By producing furniture on customer requests, by minimising manufacturing costs, and by clever calculation, he is able to expand his business. In the free market, he feels like a fish in water.

[13] The role of former *nomenklatura* members among today's entrepreneurs should not be exaggerated. The Swarzędz experience confirms Osborn and Słomczyński's rejection of 'the hypothesis about the importance of the *nomenklatura* system for the present period, at least with regard to small business' (Osborn and Słomczyński 1997: 258).

Case 5: *Self-made struggling*
Pan and Pani J. both come from families of teachers. They completed social science studies at Poznań and used to work in education at the elementary school level. In the late 1980s, they earned some additional income by travelling and working abroad and engaging in some small-scale cross-border trade. At the beginning of the 1990s, they quit their jobs and started a small shop and fast food service. Lacking savings, they took a loan from a local bank, which was granted because the bank manger fortuitously remembered Pan J. because of some past situation. Now, they own three fast food shops and provide catering services at the university guesthouse in Poznań. No doubt, family connections helped them to establish themselves. Pan J.'s sister lives in Berlin (visits paid to her enabled him to start his entrepreneurial career as a small cross-border trader in the 1980s), and his sister-in-law administers the university guesthouse in question. Nevertheless, the family has difficulties making ends meet. They both work for many hours a day, including weekends. They live in an apartment 'transmitted' from Pan J.'s sister.[14] They invest a lot of money in the education of their two daughters, one of whom studies cello and requires expensive instruments.

Case 6: *Self-made and deteriorating*
Pan and Pani S. are in their early fifties. Pan S. has a higher polytechnic education. His father was the manager of the area's state farm, and his wife comes from a working-class family. Their two sons attend university, one of them abroad. Pan S. used to have a white-collar job in the Poznań Public Transportation Company. Pani S. worked at Swarzędz Furniture Factories. Eventually, she decided to stay at home, while Pan S. – as harassed by police for being a strike leader in the company at which he worked – gave up his job for 'political' reasons. With the help of his father, he established the upholstery shop in which he now works. He employs three workers and two apprentices. Pani S. distributes cosmetics. Pan S. recently closed down his shop and the couple now runs a wholesale shop. They do what they must to get by and do not want their children to inherit their enterprise. They own a flat in a block and have an old van. Although they are not nostalgic about communism, they complain a lot about the current system. Before 1989, they maintain, craftsmen were much better off and had no problems selling their products. Pani S. bluntly stated, 'Now I can afford nothing. Before, even when we worked in state enterprises [...] for sure we were better off. Today money has no value'.

[14] I write 'transmitted' and not 'inherited' since it was administratively tricky to pass on rights to a co-operative flat, even to close family members. In the meantime, however, they managed to buy the flat in question. Since then, they have built their own house.

Case 7: *Self-made and steady man*
Pan M. comes from a small, poor farming family. He and his three siblings completed university, while his wife finished high school. In 1985, he resigned from a research institute and started an upholstery business. Since then, the couple has owned several different cars and has moved from a flat in an apartment block into a newly built, modern home in Swarzędz. In 1998, Pan M. decided to close down his enterprise and now works as an engineer at a local private firm. Initially a white-collar worker, his trajectory led him to become an entrepreneur and, finally, a hired professional. In the process, his family's standard of living has increased. Both sons attend university, with one poised to pursue a scientific career in the US. Pan M. encouraged his brothers to leave their jobs in the state sector and to jointly establish a furniture spring enterprise. They did so, are very satisfied with this move, and still run their own firm. The entire extended family, strongly anti-communist and pro-liberal in its worldview, has welcomed the political and economic changes since 1989.

Case 8: *A 'knowledge man'*
Pan P. is in his fifties and has a university education. He used to work in a huge state chemical company in Bydgoszcz. At the beginning of the 1980s, he was employed restoring historic buildings in Germany, and later, after he quit his job at the factory, he was hired by a German-Polish joint venture chemical company in Swarzędz, where he now works as a deputy-manager. Since divorcing and remarrying, he has purchased an expensive apartment in Poznań, owns a good car, and finances his children's higher education. He has always been an outsider in Swarzędz and has never really become acquainted with the local entrepreneurs. His companions are other 'knowledge people' employed by the same company. He supports economic integration with the West and is fully satisfied with his social and economic position.

Case 9: *A former worker become enterprise shareholder*
Pan A. and his wife are in their early forties. Both come from working class families. She works as a clerk for the City Council, and he is in charge of transportation at the employees' shareholder enterprise that broke away from the Swarzędz Furniture Factories in 1991 after its privatisation. Their son attends vocational high school. Their incomes are relatively low, and they own a flat in an apartment building and own an old French car. They manage to make ends meet but cannot fulfil their dream of building their own house.

## Class *in statu nascendi?*

These accounts of the life-styles of various entrepreneurs and 'knowledge people' in Swarzędz were not meant to split hairs but instead to illustrate how diverse social roots, entrepreneurial genealogies, and current socioeconomic conditions contribute to the transformation the 'middle class'. Let us now examine from an anthropological standpoint some characteristic features of our respondent's social, economic, and cultural lives.

## Economics

Processes of individual adaptation to structural, economic, and political conditions have, of course, always taken place in Swarzędz. Under communism, the number and size of shops was reduced. Many owners were forced to close their businesses and to take employment in the state sector. However, some families managed to overcome the ideologically motivated restrictions imposed by the state. In the 1970s, relaxation of these constraints allowed for the resurrection of small-scale private business, and this was followed by an expansion of small business activity in the 1980s. Hundreds took the risk of working on their own, some of them leaving behind safe and relatively prestigious employment in state companies (cf. cases 5-8). Such individuals quickly took advantage of the market niches created by 'real socialism' as it approached its nadir. Permanent shortages caused by the inefficiency of state enterprises and weak competition enabled entrepreneurs to make easy profits by manufacturing much needed furniture. Virtually all joiners today depict the 1980s as the 'golden age' of entrepreneurship. Customers bought anything and waited months for desired goods, paying for products in advance and thus enabling investment. In addition, relatively attractive loans were available because of which many workshops and houses were built. Economic activity obeyed clear rules and profits were high in relation to wages; they often exceeded production costs several times over. The prospect of realising quick earnings overshadowed the bad name craftsmanship had been given by socialist propaganda. Pejorative terms such as *rzemiocha* (from Polish *rzemieślnik*, i.e. artisan), *prywaciarz* (from *prywatny*, i.e. private), *badylarz* (from *badyl*, i.e. stalk or, metaphorically, weed) could not discourage people from joining the 'disregarded' fold of entrepreneurs.

As data from the period reveal, obtaining a production license depended on the whim of local bureaucrats. Bribes to officials and employees of the state-owned companies and agencies responsible for the distribution of raw materials thus became commonplace. Total dependency on the state sector and administration created a specific kind of peripheral, indeed para-

sitic, economic practice. Nevertheless, those few who were able and courageous enough to try their luck could expect high returns. And yet, to some extent, contemporary recollections of the easy life and incredibly high profits of entrepreneurship during the late communist period reflect an 'erroneous', idealised perception of the past.

As we have seen, there have been many paths leading to private entrepreneurship: inheriting a shop; acquiring capital through working abroad and investing earnings at home; family savings and bank loans; and, most often, a combination of these factors. People adjusted to the changing situation. For example, one of our interlocutors decided not to waste time studying but to earn money instead. Following an accidental meeting with a Polish Jew during an excursion to France in the early 1970s, he started to trade *ortalion* coats, which are made from a thin, rainproof, artificial material. He then built and sold a couple of houses, ran a greenhouse, produced furniture foam, and today, with forty employees, makes and trades furniture, a large portion of which is exported to the 'East'. The winding road of his career reflects how a skilful entrepreneur adjusts to the market situation. No doubt, an entrepreneurial aptitude is necessary in any context. The same rule applies today, even more acutely, as people redirect production according to free-market principles. This is why, pushed out by big international companies, many have abandoned woodworking and have switched to the less prestigious but safer aspect of furniture production, upholstering. Others have changed their entrepreneurial profile (case 6) or started (again) to work as qualified professionals in other fields (case 7). The possession of skills needed to effectively compete and an acceptance of the necessity of marketing and advertisement are key characteristics differentiating contemporary Swarzędz entrepreneurs. Some entrepreneurs are successful and are expanding their operations; some manage the situation well, while others experience difficulties competing in the new environment, thus becoming 'transition losers' who complain about the changes. There is no reason, however, to label this adaptation to the change from 'socialistic' to 'capitalistic' rules of the game as a 'cataclysm', as Mokrzycki does. Similarly, the fact that production profiles have changed according to market principles invalidates the suggestion that entrepreneurs have been unable to adjust and acquire a 'post-communist mentality'.

## Social Differences

The material presented shows that the social composition of the entrepreneurial class in Swarzędz is extremely diversified. Today, most people continue to simply reproduce their inherited status, though others, coming from various walks of life, have become entrepreneurs only recently. Osborn and

Słomczyński's (1997: 255) data indicates that 80% of the newcomers in the private sector since 1989 have had their social roots in groups other than the entrepreneurial class. This factor affects the social and cultural features of this class. Genealogy, however, is just one among many signs of change.

A division into 'prosperous' and 'struggling' sectors is no less important. The successful do not complain. They admit that it was simpler to run an enterprise *za komuny*[15] (under communism), but there were few competitors and many economic and political restrictions preventing 'real entrepreneurship' for those eager to pursue such a path. A series of complex actions must be undertaken in order for an entrepreneur to succeed and turn a profit: tax reduction and even tax avoidance (as one interlocutor informed us, 'sometimes this is not a question of cheating, but a choice: either you cheat the state budget or go bankrupt at once'); marketing; efficient organisation of the production process; accumulation of capital by any means, often at the expense of working conditions on the shop-floor. One also has to make furniture of good quality and often on request (see case 4). Flourishing producers distinguish themselves from those not clever enough to face new challenges and accuse them of subscribing to, at least partially, the 'socialist mentality'. According to one expanding entrepreneur, 'They [i.e. unsuccessful entrepreneurs] cannot understand certain points of reference'. In the past, 'they' thought that producing one set of furniture would allow one to buy a Mercedes:

> They produced three benches a month and today they have to produce thirty such benches and several armchairs, chairs, and tables and cannot manage the situation. So they start to complain that the government is bad, interest rates are too high, and so on. However, it turns out that with the same credit and government, in the same Poland, several people have started to think a bit differently, have started to specialise, have started real production (Pan B.).

Distancing – i.e. making inclusions and exclusions, among entrepreneurs – is clearly visible. Using a 'snow-ball' method of making contacts, we learned that persons possessing similar economic and symbolic capital recommended one another to us. Moreover, people are conscious of existing social and economic differences. After learning who we had previously interviewed, one informant remarked that 'these all are from the top shelves, and you should also go to those who are not that prosperous'. The fact of being engaged in the same type of production is not decisive in establishing social ties. The latter appear to be conditioned mainly by three factors: age, education, and economic capital. In times of systemic change, the young, the

[15] *Komuna* is a popular term with pejorative overtones used to describe communism *(komunizm)* as a system.

middle-aged, the well-educated, and the already well-off tend to fare better and are typically more optimistic. Such individuals have tended to stick together in Swarzędz and constitute, irrespective of specialisation, the core of the future-oriented entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs recognise their specific position in the social hierarchy and distance themselves from other groups. This can take on very acute forms. Commenting on the presidential elections of 1995, won by Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a post-communist leader, one of the successful entrepreneurs said:

> In the Polish nation, *homo sovieticus* is deeply rooted [...] Look at the last election results that are an effect of this. There is still a disco-polo Poland [a contemporary popular music style regarded as plebeian and typical of rural taste]. There is still a Poland of people lost, closed in on state farms, in small-town state enterprises, of people who don't see any future and who rapidly lost their means of subsistence. They feel forlorn and don't have a 'gene' for creating, for looking for something different, for seeking a new road (Pan G.).

Interestingly enough, these arguments have been constantly repeated in media sources that advocate liberalism and in scientific discourses that appeal for the quick construction of a new middle class.[16] Rural residents are treated as a residue of the postsocialist mentality and backwardness. Self-appreciation and legitimisation of individual success is at times even rooted in beliefs about natural predestination and even divine election.

Many distance themselves on purpose. Choosing a place to settle is no longer a random matter. Reacting to a remark that he lives in the workers' quarter of Poznań, a 'knowledge man' (case 8) quickly retorted that this is not the case in his part of the quarter, particularly the building in which he purchased a new apartment, since only rich people can afford to live there. He openly thought about his selection of a place of residence in terms of 'class'. His social life also reveals that 'knowledge men' do not easily merge with entrepreneurs of lower status and education than their own.

Entrepreneurs are also becoming conscious of their professional interests. They commonly criticise legislation they view as unfavourable, as well as 'excessive' protection of workers' rights and state fiscal policy. They also think that there is no political force that really represents their interests in Parliament. Political tensions are also visible at the local level. The city is divided into blocks of flats in which many newcomers and state employees live and into the quarters in which entrepreneurs who own houses and shops have settled. The City Council determines the level of local property taxes

[16] I discuss this in more detail in Buchowski 2006.

and infrastructure investment. Hence, craftsmen want to elect as many of their peers as possible to the City Council, but at the time of our research, only three were members of the body. In 1996, there was a conflict within the Council and an attempt to overthrow it. Of twelve members, eight were teachers.[17] As the head of the joiners' guild said:

> They [teachers] are a pain in the neck (*zakała*) of contemporary society. There are too many teachers everywhere, also in Parliament. There's a joke that says that the [communist] Party was blown up from the inside because there were too many teachers in charge. They want to teach everybody.

Apparently, some white collar workers are not very popular among entrepreneurs.

One of the most criticised groups among self-made or traditional entrepreneurs is the former *nomenklatura*. Nationwide, 'too many people at important places continue with their duties' (Pan B.). Changes are obstructed by such old-fashioned politicians. 'The misfortune of our revolution was that heads did not roll. What kind of revolution is it without cut-off heads?' (Pan N.). Pan N.'s lamentation about the lack of 'rolling heads' expresses the feelings of most people interviewed. Such criticism also translates into perceptions of local level relations. Former Party activists constitute a network of old cronies and connections, privileging one another. Pan M. told me that the former local first secretaries of the Communist Party are doing well. One owns a shop; the other is a director of the City Cooperative. Also, the Swarzędz Furniture Factories' chief of the board is a friend of president Kwaśniewski. Pan B. claims that 'the *komuna* has come back behind the mask of the law, and one hand washes the other'. Ironically, he adds, 'All these small chiefs have become big businessmen'. According to Pan B., the post-communists represent an outmoded way of thinking in which 'a certain stereotype prevails: if one has something, it should be taken away from him'. Capitalism equals an affluent society and 'what kind of capitalism is it when everything is done to make a society poorer?'

Workers, it is said, were treated too softly in the past. Under communism, one could not fire bad workers, even those who drank. 'I worked as a intermediate-level manager and the worker was always right and could even stuff my shoes' (Pan A.). Any attempt to differentiate income according to performance was defeated by the statement, 'Everybody wants to eat!' (Pan S.). This attitude prevented any competition and negatively impacted the work ethic. 'Under communism, a boss was a slave who […] begged a worker to do something. Although he earned better money, he treated the

[17] Teachers are attracted by the per diem the City Council assigns its members. This can significantly augment their relatively low incomes.

worker as if he were a god'. Luckily, today it is the other way round, and 'the bosses made themselves gods while employees wander around and ask for a job' (Pan B.).

According to most entrepreneurs in Swarzędz, the state should take care of old and retired people. But everyone expressed that unemployment benefits should be revoked, at least in regions as prosperous as Poznań. For Pan T., formerly a worker-peasant and now the owner of a large building materials production venture, 'unemployment is an administrative absurdity'. The practice of getting fictitious testimony of employment from private entrepreneurs in order to get social welfare was widespread. But, later, entrepreneurs became hesitant to issue fake papers. In entrepreneurs' view, several people do not want to work simply because it is not worth working with a social security system that favours 'lazy people'. In regions suffering from chronic unemployment – as Pan T. suggests – public works should be organised. For active entrepreneurs, work is considered an individual duty, if not a mission. Pan L., a former member of the *nomenklatura*, thinks that 'when there is unemployment, work should be given, a street or two to cleaned'.

## The Politics

Several entrepreneurs in Swarzędz are conservative in their views. Statements like 'I am a liberal at heart' (Pan M.), 'I consider myself to be a man of the right' (Pan G.), or 'I am anticommunist' (Pan M.'s brother) are not uncommon. In Swarzędz, a club of the so-called *Ruch Stu* (the Movement of the Hundred), which identifies with and advocates liberal and conservative views, was very quickly established. It is noteworthy that all of its members were well educated. Entrepreneurs welcome a free market that facilitates entrepreneurial activity and the possibility of running shops employing more than two workers, a restriction for a long time imposed by communist authorities in the past. They have power over their employees and select them according to their own criteria. For example, some hire only young people 'who are not spoiled by socialist habits and can learn new things' (Pan B.). State monopolies should be privatised and their power broken – '"They" [the authorities] should blow up everything [i.e. all of the monopolies]' (Pan T.).

Socio-economic liberalism goes together with a critique of the 'real existing socialism'. Post-communist politicians are perceived as dishonest liars who even today are only interested in building up their *Rzeczpospolita kolesiów* (Republic of buddies). Nonetheless, according to the entrepreneurs we interviewed, credit was formerly more readily available and profit-making easier, but the system curtailed free will and economic expansion. Shortages of raw materials and goods were severe yet manageable for many

thanks to their 'special connections' throughout the country. In this respect, the free market is a blessing. Political shackles oppressed people and made them dependent on bureaucrats. Freedom of speech, travel, and religion as well as free enterprise constitute unquestionable advantages of democracy that entrepreneurs eagerly enjoy. These aspects of the new political deal are particularly emphasised by the better educated and more prosperous. In the case of the less successful, views of the past and the present do not present such a black and white contrast. A mixture of 'nostalgia for socialism' with respect to social security and minimal competition is combined with the appreciation of the personal freedoms enjoyed today.

Therefore, it is impossible to say that the entrepreneurs of Swarzędz have unanimously embraced liberal ideology. Liberalism functions as a 'new religion' for only a few. The pursuit of profit need not exclude the conviction that creating jobs and strengthening the national economy constitute an important social mission. Those who believe in the 'businessman's vocation' and who see themselves as naturally endowed with special capabilities tend to perceive their activities as a calling to build up a modern capitalist society. In the eyes of these 'young wolves', as they are occasionally called, this stance legitimises aggressive expansion and success. Well-educated entrepreneurs, many of whom stem from the former intelligentsia, find in liberalism a progressive vision of a functioning society capable of bringing affluence to all but particularly to those who most actively and ardently work. For representatives of the former *nomenklatura*, the competitive spirit that gives priority to the 'most apt' sanctions their success and current social position. They avoid talking about the system they worked for in the past but never condemn it. Liberal views on work and criticisms of the 'overly generous' unemployment benefits are instead justified in terms of respect for work, a traditional tenet in this community. Entrepreneurs who inherited their wealth perceive the changes in more pragmatic terms. Freedom of enterprise opens possibilities for full-scale entrepreneurship, profit, and becoming 'real' businesspeople, not merely artisans. For those who have experienced difficulties, being on their own or as mere shareholders, capitalism is a demanding and, at times, overly demanding system that, in addition, is badly implemented by 'them', the vaguely identified authorities. For such individuals, the move to private employment was often brought on by the arrival of new circumstances under which they were barely able to effectively compete and survive. For such transition 'losers', the past appears as a lost, virtually ideal paradise.

## Ethos

As indicated above, some entrepreneurs believe that one must have the right 'genes' for creativity and must take risks in order to become an entrepreneur. 'We craftsmen have always been capitalists' (Pan B.). Apart from this 'genetic endowment', what does it mean to be an entrepreneur or capitalist in Swarzędz?

No doubt, there is a certain work ethic. A solid entrepreneur does not simply make quick money and then disappear; instead, he or she must work steadily for his or her 'good marks' and reputation. One has to struggle for customers since 'today the art is to sell'. In order to be considered an honest person, one has to be a reliable partner. 'As a trader, I always paid on time [...] In this small town environment, one has to be reliable if one wants to function' (Pan G.).

An entrepreneur has to be able to take risks. 'At some point, I had to bet on one horse' (Pan G.). The older generation took the risk of running its small shops, nagged by an omnipresent administration and stigmatised with the then-disgraceful label of *petite bourgeois*. Their heirs bore this burden until the mid-seventies. In the 1980s, many opted to quit their state positions and started independent businesses from scratch. At several points in their careers, entrepreneurs made risky decisions that made lasting impacts on their lives. Those who were successful never regretted these decisions. 'Now I can afford more than if I had worked for a state salary. In the past, when we travelled abroad, we stared at each mark or dollar from all angles before spending it. Now, it's different' (Pan M.'s brother). They hope their children will take over their businesses and, thanks to new possibilities and skills, go even further.

However, inborn skills, reliability, and decisiveness are not enough. One also has to work hard, and, as the wife of one entrepreneur said, 'Whatever we have achieved, we gained thanks to hard work twenty-four hours a day' (Pani S.). According to the entrepreneurs, if workers envy people who have their own businesses and who have improved their material status, they should see how much effort one has to put in. 'If such a man were to come to me and see how much I work, he would say, "He is sick, abnormal, leave me alone"' (Pan B.). Hard work is one of the conditions that enable profit making, but the fruits of entrepreneurship cannot be consumed completely. One has to invest. Decisive, sometimes risky, but ultimately unavoidable investments comprise a premise of survival and success. The competition is hard and only the strongest can survive. Permanent stress has resulted in the suicide of some formerly successful entrepreneurs.

What is the local image of an ideal employer? He or she should treat his workers fairly. Many employers desire to have good relations and a

familiar atmosphere in their enterprises, yet the conditions of employment are straightforward: one gets a decent salary and is treated well provided that he fulfils his duties. The owner should remember, however, that people have families and be hesitant to lay off employees just because there is a temporary lack of orders. This is a basic principle for running a good, reputable business. A human attitude combined with frankness in social relations is the mark of a good entrepreneur. Provided all these requirements are met, one can fulfil the ultimate goal of a real businessman: 'that money should be multiplied' (Pan B.).

## Lifestyle

There are many signs of changing lifestyles amongst entrepreneurs. Most importantly, several entrepreneurs have transformed themselves from self-employed workers to managers. 'My duty now is to organise work for people, to control production, and do accounting' (Pan M.). Small businessmen and -women perform several jobs at once. They have to take care of marketing, making contacts, and securing raw materials and parts. They are at once managers, salesmen, advertisers, public relations specialists, and employers but no longer manual workers. They are, first and foremost, entrepreneurs or small businessmen.

Entrepreneurs invest in their children's education. The broader tendency whereby the better educated care more about schooling than the less educated is also valid in Swarzędz. But even those with only an elementary school education, former workers, and peasants arrange, for example, additional private lessons for their children or buy equipment necessary for their development (cases 5-7). Both those consciously oriented towards educating their children and the less well off are determined to sacrifice a large portion of their incomes for their children (case 5). Many entrepreneurs' children attend additional English classes and attend private high schools and universities.

Inter-generational differences are notable. Those in their fifties and sixties typically prefer to spend their holidays, if they are lucky enough to have them at all, in Poland or in neighbouring countries. Most from this generation smoke. They spend their free time with family or friends. The social circles of these individuals are determined primarily by kinship relations, social position, and education. Sometimes entrepreneurs, especially the more traditional amongst them, attend entertainment events organised by the guild or attend guild meetings after which, as one member said, 'I like to gulp a schnapps [...] We "do in" a bottle for two, have fun, laugh, and go home'. The lifestyle of the middle-aged generation is changing rapidly. Many have given up smoking. There are houses in which smoking is forbid-

den, a demand unthinkable in the past. Healthy food habits are becoming widespread. 'We avoid fat food and eat green salads instead of hot dogs or hamburgers' (Pani M.). Holidays abroad in Greece, Turkey, Spain, Italy, France, Malta, and Tunisia have become fashionable, particularly among families from the middle and younger generations. In contrast to the richest businessmen, entrepreneurs do not yet visit such exotic and more expensive places like the Far East, Mexico, or Florida.

Consumption patterns also have changed. It is apparent that people can afford better cars, and they build houses with fully modern equipment. Microwaves, computers, and dishwashers are common. Expensive cars of all different makes parade the streets and are parked in the courtyards. Already in the early 1990s, mobile phones became a common device considered necessary for effective work. A satellite dish or cable television is nowadays a must, demanded by children and public opinion. 'I installed my dish because I was ashamed in front of my neighbours', a chief of the carpenter's guild in Swarzędz frankly confessed. Western-made electronic equipment, televisions, stereo systems, video players, and DVD players as well as video cameras are found in almost every household. Expensive cosmetics, washing powders, and cleaning materials were spotted in every bathroom.

All these phenomena have emerged and have become common over the last ten years. Such lifestyle changes have been rapid and are striking. Consumer aspirations are limited only by financial possibilities. The latter factor differentiates entrepreneurs from one another while also to some degree differentiating entrepreneurs as such from most workers, clerks, and the impoverished members of the intelligentsia. The lifestyles of entrepreneurs also differ from those prominent amongst the richest of the *nouveau riche* in the big cities. For example, busy entrepreneurs and their wives have not adopted active forms of leisure such as jogging or going to the sauna or gym. Such distractions are not suitable for people who should invest all or their time and energy in work, either at home or at the enterprise. There is no doubt, however, that entrepreneurs' families would love to acquire still more luxurious cars and houses or to travel to exotic countries.

## *Fission and fusion in Swarzędz*

Let us now come back to the problems raised at the beginning of this chapter: What kind of community do entrepreneurs in Swarzędz form? Do they form a coherent group? Do they or do they not meet the sociological criteria of a class and of a middle class in particular? What kind of cultural features do they share? And, what differentiates these people? These questions, addressing both cultural and societal aspects of community life, are intertwined since, in social life, culture represents an important variable shaping

social relations (cf. Sider 1986; Buchowski 1997). I hold that factors both differentiating and uniting entrepreneurs are currently at work in Swarzędz. In effect, we are witnessing a simultaneous process of social fission and fusion.

According to the Marxist criteria of property relations, entrepreneurs constitute a class since they own means of production. They form an economically independent segment of the community and of Polish society. Many also employ a labour force, which makes them producers of capital. However, as initially mentioned, other forms of economic capital as well as social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986; Nagengast 1991; Wesołowski 1995) should equally be taken into account when social relations are considered. From this perspective, entrepreneurs comprise a diversified community, divided according to designated crosscutting criteria. Entrepreneurs come from various social backgrounds, ranging from the working class and peasantry to the intelligentsia and, last but not least, craftsmen's families. Therefore, the range of social groups comprising the 'new middle class' provided by Mokrzycki and Sampson is fully covered. Entrepreneurs' education level likewise ranges from completion of elementary schooling to university. Some have inherited their enterprises, while others started businesses more recently, often from scratch. Currently, they manage their respective situations differently. Several entrepreneurs are established and prosperous, others barely manage to survive, and quite a few were forced to move to another branch of production or to abandon their businesses, working instead as hired professionals by private companies. Thus, the social composition of the group designated as 'entrepreneurs' is not only diverse but also in constant flux, even though its core – i.e. those coming from well-established furniture makers' families – remains largely the same.

The distinction between those producers who, like in the past, now work as small-scale artisans, some merely self-employed, and those who have evolved into full-scale businessmen, should be made clear. The former are directly involved in the production process, although they also perform managerial work. The latter act solely as owners and managers and do not engage in physical toil. Both sociologically and subjectively, this is a significant difference. Business people are not only economically but also internally diversified. They own enterprises of various sizes, offering jobs to a relatively small number of employees, including managerial and administrative staff. Businessmen come from traditionally wealthy families as well as from the former *nomenklatura*, and they have managed to enfranchise themselves. Skilful and self-made 'young wolves' have also joined this group. The social capital of expanding businessmen has also been dissimilar. Those who inherited their parents' businesses through an 'intergenerational trans-

mission of capital' (Osborn and Słomczyński 1997: 255) took advantage of this position. Those having special privileges under communism used their connections. Newcomers, to some extent underprivileged, have had to generate social and economic capital using only their educational capital, personal talents, and free market intuition. Relations between all these factions are intricate and full of subtle tensions. Former *nomenklatura* members are scorned for ideological reasons, although this does not seem to affect direct business dealings with them. Long-established cabinetmaker families tend to stick together, but their younger members shun doing business and establishing social ties with 'newcomers'.

It is not easy to measure the volume and significance of various types of capital in entrepreneurial success. Family tradition and affluence play a role in this respect and have led to the foundation of entrepreneurial 'dynasties' in Swarzędz. Rich parents help their children materially and morally by handing down enterprises and by establishing new ventures. However, several self-made men have also done well. They have quickly adapted to the logic of the free market and have adopted a producer ethos, accepting the new system of liberal values as both their own and as 'natural'. Surprisingly enough, there is no fixed correlation between education and prosperity. Entrepreneurs coming from highly educated intelligentsia families have not been significantly more successful in doing business than other newcomers. Many work as artisans; some have returned to their original activities and work as hired labourers. However, there were many more white-collar than blue-collar workers who attempted to become entrepreneurs. Blue-collar workers comprise the smallest contingent among today's producers. Very few manage to establish themselves as businessmen.

The division between the entrepreneurial and other sectors of the population of Swarzędz is manifest. Entrepreneurs are united by their involvement in private economic activity and daily professional ties. They recognise their specific economic interests and are aware that political representation at both national and local levels would be desirable. Craft guilds only further this purpose to a limited extent and are perceived by many as outmoded. In spite of its shared aims, the group cannot be considered uniform in economic and political terms. Liberal views with respect to social stratification and social security do not imply voting exclusively for a given political party either at the local or national level. The group is becoming increasingly segmented, and individual entrepreneurs perceive differences in status. In this respect, affluence plays the most important role, but position in the hierarchy is also influenced by education levels and pre-existing social relations.

In classical anthropology, culture was perceived as a factor uniting human groups. History, language, and patterns of behaviour were seen as comprising a force that knitted a given community together while distancing it from others. Such views show that 'the tendency toward essentialism […] tends to freeze differences […] to overemphasize coherence [and to] contribute to the perception of communities as bounded and discrete' (Abu Lughod 1991: 146). Of late, 'culture is more frequently conceptualized as a "field of discourse" [...] as an arena in which values, norms and patterns of meanings of cultural actors are permanently negotiated' (Schiffauer 1997: 148). Negotiations of meanings are conducted not only through language and conversation but also in daily acts. Lifestyle, ethos, worldview, and even taste all belong to the domain of meanings.

This view of culture is useful for understanding entrepreneurs in Poland. In Swarzędz, we are witnessing a renegotiation of cultural meanings as new patterns of social relations and culture are being developed. The community displays a long tradition of private enterprise with its entrepreneurial culture and ethos. Yet, this tradition is modified in everyday practice in accordance with the constraints imposed by the Polish rendition of the free market. The shape of capitalist culture in Swarzędz is formed at the intersection of this structural framework and the actions of people who seek to redefine it according to their own interests and images. Among the factors that condition modes of living are strategies for achieving economic success and the adoption of certain material lifestyles. All parties involved in entrepreneurial activity, be they traditional small shop owners or newcomers from the intelligentsia, working class or *nomenklatura*, contribute to the ongoing construction of 'entrepreneurial culture'. The heirs of traditional small businesses, more numerous in Swarzędz than in other entrepreneurial cities in Poland, here make an important contribution. They ensure a degree of continuity as entrepreneurial culture changes. Rising income levels, growing professionalisation, and the increasing proportion of educated people among entrepreneurs lead us, contrary to Mokrzycki, to count this group as a vital part of the Polish *Mittelstand* in spite of its internal divisions. Internal economic and social distinctions combine with cultural differences. This is why I am reluctant to talk about a 'new middle class' in the anthropological sense of the word. Contrary to what Mokrzycki suggests, the emergence of a new social formation that would potentially conform to the complex criteria defining a 'middle class' cannot be attributed to 'knowledge people' alone. It is not only the former intelligentsia that supports transformation toward a democratic, free market system. People who were white-collar workers under communism also became entrepreneurs, and all appreciate the principal changes initiated since 1989.

Such traditional values as industriousness, risk-taking, freedom of enterprise, and the conviction that everybody is responsible for his or her own fate fit in well with neoliberal ideology. That is why entrepreneurs in Swarzędz have accepted neoliberalism with little resistance and are in favour of a free and liberal society in which, for example, the unemployed must take care of themselves. No doubt, several elements of their new identity have been renegotiated. Entrepreneurs have to some degree internalised their new identity, internal divisions notwithstanding. It seems that heritage and culture are still important differentiating factors. However, entrepreneurs partake in a social space and discourses that allow us to talk about a specific social group in a specific place. I am not sure, however, if entrepreneurs share 'the sociological features of a class' (Mokrzycki 1995: 51). They simultaneously both participate in and produce a field of common habits, beliefs, and values. These fields are constantly being recomposed.

Will entrepreneurs come to form a middle class in and of itself in the post-Marxist sense of the term? I doubt if it is possible for such a class to form at all in contemporary society. Going beyond property relations brings us into a domain of meanings negotiated by people from various social strata. The dynamism of social processes obstructs the stabilisation of such meanings. This is especially true in 'transitional societies'. Consumption, designated by Sampson (1996) as a major factor unifying social groups, cannot alone forge a new middle class because, however pervasive it may be in a given group, this practice cuts across society. Entrepreneurs, for example, can share consumption patterns with 'knowledge people', white-collar workers, or affluent workers. Thus, consumption cannot serve as a distinctive feature in the constitution of a class. Entrepreneurs, although unified in many ways, are too diversified to be baptised as a middle class too. For the time being, talk about a middle class in postsocialist societies sounds metaphysical because this would-be entity is a creation grounded neither in the subjectivity of those who might identify with it nor in the 'objective conditions' of social life – economic, social, and cultural – implied by the notion of class.

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# *Chapter 4*
# Changing Identities in the Polish Countryside? A Case Study from Lublin

Anastazija Pilichowska

This chapter compares Polish farmers' perceptions of their position as rural producers in three different periods: during the socialist era; in the period of systemic transformation;[1] and since Polish accession to the European Union. I explore how the different epochs, so close in terms of historical and chronological time but so different in terms of social time and affect, have influenced villagers' lives. My research focuses on the role of kinship networks in processes of inclusion and exclusion, i.e. in determining whether people are able to integrate successfully into or are marginalised from the core social, economic, political, and cultural institutions of their village.[2] Beginning in September of 2004, I conducted a year of fieldwork. The village and its surroundings had already experienced 'systemic transformation', but further changes were taking place due to EU accession (May 2004).

I chose my field site on the basis of several criteria. The east of Poland was at the time of my research one of the poorest areas in the country and of the EU overall.[3] Popularly called '*Poland B*', the regions on the Eastern side of the Vistula River are very rural and have little significant industry. Small farms dominate. Fifteen years after the systemic transformation I thought it would be instructive to investigate the consequences of Polish membership in the European Union in this peripheral location. I gathered most of my data from participant observation and semi-structured interviews with members

[1] This is a direct translation of the Polish '*transformacja systemowa*', the standard term for the restructuring of the Polish economy after 1989.

[2] The project was part of a comparative research program funded by the VW Foundation at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany: "Political, Economic and Social Inclusion and Exclusion in Poland and Bulgaria: An Anthropological Study". Although I have retained the actual name of the commune in which I conducted my research, the names of individuals have been changed.

[3] Since the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, however, this is no longer the case.

of local households, local authorities, and local leaders (i.e. people belonging to the commune's public sphere).

The systemic transformations associated with accession have brought dilemmas about identity as well as new possibilities for Polish farmers. The transformation has changed the place of many family farms in the rural landscape. Whereas previously the great majority of farming families would have said that they were primarily involved in agricultural production, this is no longer true. Increasingly, individuals and entire households have found themselves between categories – they are neither farmers (*rolnicy*) nor peasants (*chłopi*). They live in the countryside, but they are not solely or even primarily agricultural. On the other hand, a group of highly specialised *rolnicy* for whom farming is a profession has finally emerged. In what follows I examine the increasing differences between these two categories of rural dwellers.

For many years, land, work, religion and family were recognised as 'the universe' of the value system and identity of the Polish peasant. Since the systemic transformations of 1989, senses of identity tied to notions of land and work (especially collective work in the local community) have changed. In this chapter, I focus initially on how individuals reflected on the meaning and importance of land. Was land understood as the 'land of fathers', passed down from one generation to another, something that must stay in the family? Or was it treated more like a 'workshop'? How important was inheritance in discussions of land?

This chapter is organised as follows: First, I present some representative cases from the village in which I conducted research in order to explore how land ownership, landlessness, or possession of very small landholdings have in recent years shaped family identity and the ways in which people have reconstructed their lives. Secondly, I focus on another well-studied aspect of rural identity, namely work. I consider work not as a value in itself but as a means through which the inhabitants of a village may identify as a cohesive community.

Plate 1. An elderly villager with his horse.

First I shall briefly introduce the commune (*gmina*) in which I conducted my research.[4] Mełgiew, located close to Lublin, is typical of many communes in Poland and especially those situated in the vicinity of voivodeship capital cities. Mełgiew is first mentioned in historical documents in 1325. In 2004 its twenty villages comprised almost 8,000 inhabitants. Locals earn their incomes through a combination of rural activities – ranging from highly capitalized farming to smaller-scale, primarily subsistence oriented gardening – and wage labour and informal work in the neighbouring town of Świdnik and in Lublin itself (although such opportunities were more numerous under socialism). The soil in the area is of good quality, and the main crops are wheat, sugar beets, potatoes, and hops. The average farm size is three and a half hectares; more than 70% of farms are less than five hectares.

[4] The *gmina* is a territorial division. In the 1990s, Poland's system of administrative divisions was reformed in two stages. In 1990, the *gmina*, the primary urban and rural unit, which had been abolished in 1975, was re-introduced. In 1998 the number of voivodeships (*województwa*), the major territorial division, was reduced from forty-nine to sixteen, the *powiat* was instated as an intermediate unit between the *gmina* and the voivodeship, and some of the administrative duties and tasks devolved from the central government to territorial and/or local authorities.

Plate 2. Mełgiew commune.

The commune economy has a primarily rural character. Any trace of an industrial sector is for the most part absent from the landscape; there are only three villages in which heavy industry exists. A foreign-owned tractor factory is located in one, while one of the other factories employs a significant number of local inhabitants on its production line. The area is characterised by good infrastructure and good living conditions, and this is very much emphasised by its inhabitants. For most people today, life conditions are neither very different from nor any worse than those found in the city; in fact, many feel that they are better off on the commune. Infrastructural assets such as electricity, gas, running water, and, quite often, central heating in houses, as well as an ever increasing number of asphalt roads, make Mełgiew inhabitants feel that living in the commune is a distinct advantage. For many, this sense of advantage combines with a strong sense of belonging to create a feeling of being 'at home' on the commune.

Recently, the social landscape has changed significantly, as villages in the *gmina* are increasingly penetrated by 'newcomers' – that is, city people who buy plots of land in the villages closest to the city, so that they are able to live in the countryside and commute to work in the city. This is an increasingly common phenomenon in contemporary Poland, as new houses

and even villas (typically not in accordance with local architectural styles) are erected, replete with colourful roofs constructed from high quality steel, and elaborate, impenetrable fences to 'secure' and separate each house from those of the neighbours.

Commerce, services, and industry in the commune are primarily privately owned, as is almost 90% of the land. The Commune Council owns 65.5 hectares of land, while the commune's inhabitants hold an additional 12.9 hectares in common ownership. The main problems listed by local development planners are: a weak job market; a large number of people identified as occupationally passive; a low percentage of people with higher education; weak extension of the services sector; an insufficient number of small enterprises; too many people working in agriculture; and too many small farms.[5]

In other words, the region shows many of the attributes of 'backwardness' identified in the early 1990s by the IMF as problematic for the Polish countryside. The question raised by such a description, however, is to what extent development of rural areas can be separated from social processes and reciprocal relationships that in themselves counteract rather than perpetuate poverty, exclusion, and changes in identity.

## Situations of Transformation

At the time of my fieldwork, fifteen years had passed since the watershed year of 1989. Two thousand four was also the first year of Polish membership in the EU. Before the systemic transformation, Poland, like other countries of Eastern Europe, was part of the Soviet system. What distinguished Poland, however, was the fact that it was less collectivised than other communist countries. Before 1989, 25% of Poland's land was state owned, with the remaining 75% privately owned by rural producers. Even so, this has not necessarily made the transition easier or less painful for Polish people. In her discussion of the rural areas of central (the Łódź region) and southern (the Tatra Mountains) Poland, Frances Pine contends:

> After the fall of socialism in 1989, local factories were closed down, state sector employment was drastically cut back […] Many villagers lost their jobs while others still in work faced long periods without pay, as did all farmers who were contracted to sell milk and other produce through the cooperative. This was an uncertain and frightening time […] many were suffering, unable to meet the most basic costs of living. During this period it became painfully clear

[5] Analysis based on the *Local Development Plan of Mełgiew Commune* (Plan Rozwoju Lokalnego Gminy Mełgiew), 2004, Włodawa.

> that, although villagers had tended to represent themselves as autonomous farmers and dismiss their wages as significant, in fact many houses had been highly dependent on these state earnings and needed them to subsidize their small income from agriculture (Pine 2007: 192).

In the 1980s, the economic crisis had a definite influence on the importance of agriculture, as the agricultural sector accounted for a relatively large portion of the Polish GDP (12% in 1988). Shortages of produce meant that the entirety of agricultural production was absorbed by the market. Between 1989 and 1998, the incomes of agriculture producers increased by 30% and were 16% higher than those of non-agricultural families, and some specific years during that period were particularly lucrative for the rural sector. For instance, the last government in *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa* (PRL) deregulated food prices, thus allowing producers to profit substantially.

## The Region during Socialism

For many of the villagers, the socialist era, the 1980s, and the time just after 1989 invoke memories of comparatively higher levels of stability and even 'prosperity'. The WSK helicopter factory provided a source of income for almost everyone: first for those employed directly by the factory who came from various parts of the region, and second, for agricultural producers who sold products to people from the city. There was no single household that would not have had connections with WSK Świdnik factory in some way. The presence of heavy industry in the neighbouring city gave people a feeling of security and stability. The prospect of employment with WSK changed the lives of many families. Although, for many, agriculture did not provide a primary source of income, people emphasised that even if one owned only a few hectares of land, it was possible to live off it, unlike today.

During conversations with my informants, the subject of socialism and their position as farmers producing within a socialist political economy came up repeatedly. Comparing then and now, people felt a great nostalgia for the days in which they could focus on their own production and lives. Even though many felt that the system was 'sick' and 'democracy is better', under socialism they knew that what they produced would sell. They spoke a great deal about possibilities for the future – the conditions under which they might be able to enlarge their pig stock or do something else to improve the farm.

During my research I frequently spoke with Janina and Stanisław. Their situation was not easy, as both Janina and Stanisław were retired with a small pension, and their children still needed help, sometimes financial. When they spoke about changes in their lives associated with the transforma-

tion, what emerged most frequently was their desire to 'live in dignity'. As far as I could understand, for them the idea of dignified living was connected with financial independence and with requiring no help from family or social institutions. The couple was not economically successful at the time of the transformation and this period was felt by the family as one of insecurity, as Janina explained:

> Who did not experience it? We were putting away money for our children, to secure them a good start in their adult lives, on as you say '*książeczkach oszczędnościowych*' –saving books – they already had twenty-five million zloty, and for that time, this was quite a lot of money. Afterwards it was enough to buy shampoo. It was a real shock. We were saving and saving for our children, with the hopes that they would have something in the future, and that was a real devastation for us. Balcerowicz came and took it away from us.

With the 1990 agricultural reforms, farming and the countryside were substantially changed, with ceilings imposed on subsidies for agricultural production, and rural products, as well as on stable prices. Further, preferential loans, which had been a major source of support for rural producers, suddenly, and with little warning, had to be paid off. .

Many of the people with whom I spoke were strongly attached to communism and spoke positively about the socialist period. This seemed to stem primarily from the fact that it provided them with a sense of stability, particularly with regards to profitable agricultural production.

Today, soft fruits like blackcurrants and vegetables can generate profits. My host family still owns a small farm, though agriculture is not their main source of income, and they produce enough food only for their immediate and extended family. In the past, earnings from agriculture were an important part of the family's income and household budget. For three years they supplied Lublin Frozen Foods Company with beans, and one year the profit from their harvest was equivalent to half the cost of a new car. For most rural producers, agricultural production was strictly connected with the state, as the state was the main guarantor of economic stability. Pine explains:

> During the 1990s nearly all village houses continued to farm, although for various reasons – rising feed and fertilizer costs, decreasing subsidies, cheap imports from the West, liquidation of cooperatives and collapse of regional markets among others – many stopped producing for the market […] and they work alone in their fields. They don't exchange labour (Pine 2007: 193).

In speaking about the times before and after 1989 with my interviewees, I encountered similar opinions in most conversations; in comparison to pre-

transition times. Villagers emphasised the lack of both stability and profitability of the present period.

Economic changes left their mark on the Polish countryside. The introduction of the market economy made small-scale farming unprofitable, which consequently either forced the passage from peasant farming to farming understood as a business or forced small-scale, subsistence farmers to look for alternative source of income. With the transition, farming and work on the land began to be recognised first of all as a profession and only secondly as a family tradition.

With the run up and eventual accession to the European Union and the various requirements thereby entailed, fewer and fewer people describe themselves as 'farmers' involved in 'advanced' agricultural production. The number of farmers able to adjust to European standards and to take advantage of European financial support is small. Although official data on the matter at the time of my stay were quite limited, from the information that I was able to gain access to it became clear that very few farmers in Mełgiew have been able to take advantage of support offered by the EU.

The time immediately before and immediately after EU accession was a period of intensive activity aimed at preparing rural areas for absorption of EU funds and development of programmes intended to narrow the gap between rural Poland and the EU-15. The introduction of these initiatives was accompanied by a stormy political debate and strong emotions. Some people were afraid of the EU, while others pinned all of their hopes for a better future on accession. The experience of the first programmes suggested that the distribution of economic assistance for farmers would be carried out in line with strict bureaucratic rules, so that in keeping with guiding neoliberal principles, the best and the strongest would benefit, as it was only they who would be able successfully to apply for and effectively utilise funds. Investment in Poland's rural areas was undertaken due to the belief that rural areas were underdeveloped (Szafraniec 2006).

## The Village and Commune Immediately after EU Accession

People in the village and commune where I worked can be distinguished according to their degrees of involvement in agriculture. Twenty or thirty years ago, the area had importance not only as a residential area but also as a site of agricultural production. Today, the picture is much more complex and diversified, although the commune is still described as rural. However, statistical data reveal that in the commune one third of those cultivating their land for agricultural production work on parcels of less than one hectare.

Overall, most farms are between two and five hectares.[6] This means that most rural residents farm for household subsistence or for 'garden' sales and exchange rather than as part of a market-oriented enterprise.

Looking at the structure of the village, three main categories of households may be distinguished: (1) Households in which agricultural production is aimed only at meeting family needs; income comes from other activities; (2) Households that undertake minimal agricultural production for the market, mainly raising pigs or growing small plots of vegetables. The EU classifies such holdings as 'low market farms' and in these households income is supplemented by non-agricultural activities; (3) Farmers (*rolnicy*) with highly specialised and intensive production profiles. In the following section, I will try to show how people in these different types of households perceive and give meaning to land.

## Land – Heritage and Workshop

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the Polish peasantry has been the subject of a substantial sociological literature. According to Kocik and Vnenchak,

> the traditional Polish peasant family was seen as a working team and productive unit. This means that all the productive function of the family had a determining effect on every function as procreation, economic, security in life. Each family member had a defined place within the family structure. The father occupied the superior position and children were trained to take over appropriate roles, such as that of peasant farmers and members of the local community (Kocik and Vnenchak 1986: 87).

Moreover, traditionally the entire process of socialisation and education took place within the family (Gałęski 1975). In short the peasant family has generally been depicted as a highly 'traditional' form, mainly because of its perceived functions. In his seminal study of Polish rural social organisation, Gałęski identifies the following primary functions of the peasant family:

> Insurance (providing material and other kinds of support for individual family members in times of failure or crisis); the transmission of inheritance (both material and cultural); and the provision of facilities for the individual's start in life and the preliminary determination of his position in the hierarchy of stratification, based on income, prestige, and authority (Gałęski 1975: 56-57).

[6] The average farm size in Poland is estimated at 8.9 hectares, and in Lubelskie it is 4.7.

Plate 3. Family work during potato planting.

For rural households, land was the basis of family existence. The cultivation of land could assure, if not family prosperity, then at least survival, and there was thus a symbolic notion of land as a '*mother bread winner*'. Referring to the southwestern mountains, Pine writes that

> in the 1970s and '80s, people spoke about land, and the relationships and labour arranged around it, as the focus of village life. Land occupied a huge space in village talk – who owned which fields, who was going to inherit or take over which, what fields or woods or pastures would comprise marriage settlements, where the next new house was to be situated, and so on. Conflicts within families usually came down to land, although they were often represented in different terms (Pine 2003: 286).

Conversely, in the village where I did my research, at the time of my study land was not really a broadly discussed topic. Those owning small plots spoke about their attachment to the land from a symbolic perspective, as a

heritage passed from generation to generation, a heritage that must be kept in the family even if working the land did not bring significant economic returns. Others who owned more land (both traditional family land and land bought from others) treated the land in two rather different ways: on the one hand, symbolically, but on the other hand, and more significantly, as an important (and very often the only) workshop.

As I have already mentioned, land was recognised in rural societies as *the* main source of value, but at the same time land seems always to have had two meanings. On the one hand, there was the specific market value of arable land; on the other, land was imagined as guaranteeing independence and self-sufficiency and hence as maintaining a significant value in itself through inheritance. Land was understood to be a gift from God, an inheritance from the ancestors, and especially as a '*land of fathers*' and '*mother bread winner*'. For a long time, both during and after the socialist era, emotional attachment to the land provided for many a reason for cultivating it.

How has attachment to the land changed more recently? Has it changed at all? These are not easy questions and finding answers is complicated.

## Case Histories – Living on the Land through Different Regimes

In my conversations, I frequently asked people about the meaning which the land held for them, both for those with many hectares of land and for those with just a few. Opinions among my interviewees initially appeared to me to vary, but upon further reflection I realised that, in a way, they all contained similar assumptions. Mr. S, a sixty-five year old man I interviewed, explained:

> What meaning does land hold? When you get a profit out of it, you work and live; when not, it is difficult. In such cases, people do not sell the land because of its great symbolic meaning. The land of your fathers, not the popular attitude, not market-oriented, but the truth. Even if you worked in the city as a *chłopo-robotnik* [peasant-worker], you kept the land, just to work on it a bit and because it was from your parents.

Mr. and Mrs. S. lived in the village, and during socialism they used to divide their work between the land and the helicopter factory in Świdnik. Both came from rural families, and they initially cultivated a small, 0.5 hectare plot of land more suitable for gardening than substantial agricultural production. Later, they purchased an additional 3.5 hectares. They never owned a significant number of hectares, but they gradually enlarged their farm and cultivated the land. The land never generated their primary source of income. Mr S. was a chłopo-robotnik, and Ms. S. looked after the house and worked

the land. At the time of my research they lived off their pensions and owned almost no land - only a garden in which they grew some vegetables for themselves and their adult children who lived next door. Mr. S. said that he could only work in the factory, and that that had been enough to support and provide a good life for the entire family of five. They tilled the land and kept a cow, and their agricultural activities provided a minimal source of additional income, as Ms. S. sold dairy products and vegetables at the market. When I asked them if they had ever thought about selling their land and moving to the city, they said that they had never seriously considered such a proposition. They felt that they belonged to and had always belonged to this place, and they would not have felt at home anywhere else. Although the land did not have significant economic importance, there is no doubt that the family was emotionally attached to it. They thought of the land as their heritage, passed down from generation to generation over the years. They knew that at least one of their four children would one day cultivate the land for his or her own subsistence, just as they themselves had before.

Another of my respondents, Anna, came from a different group of landholders in the village. Anna and her husband owned a little more than 4 hectares of land and were thus medium agricultural producers. They moved to Anna's parents' farm and lived with her mother for ten years. From the very beginning of their marriage, both worked the land, and agriculture provided their only source of income. Anna, a forty-forty-year old woman, recalled:

> It was necessary that we both work the land; before there was my mother and me – my father died a long time ago – and additional hands were needed. We cultivated the land and sold our products at the market in Świdnik. At that time, ten to fifteen or even twenty years ago, you went to the market and in two to three hours sold everything that you had. My husband also knew how to make flour from the grain that we grew. But afterward, what we sold at the market was not enough, and for some time my husband has been working outside the house and I am responsible for the farm.

Anna was very active and wanted to apply for EU funds. She participated in all of the commune meetings about EU support and attended most of the preparation training offered and organised in the commune. At the time we met, she was hoping to apply for financial support for '*low-commodity*' farms. Anna referred to the land both in terms of attachment and as an occupation that brought her satisfaction:

> I like it very much, even if perhaps I would prefer to be a teacher at school, but I like it very much when I can see that my works brings some results, and I guess that it is kind of attachment, especially

> when I think that my grandfather and my father did similar things, cultivated the land, and I do the same...

For Anna, the family farm was a heritage and tradition, but it also contributed to her family budget. Farming continued to be a part of family life even though she knew that the small farm 'doesn't really have a future. It has to be a big, mechanised farm, otherwise it is very difficult and won't always bring the results you would expect'.

Plate 4. Milk production according to the EU standards.

One might think that with the modernisation, mechanisation, and specialisation of agriculture, the importance of land would have changed, with land increasingly being understood as a sort of workshop, detached from family ties. However, in the case of professional farmers land does not always have such a meaning. Family K. has been involved in hops production for two generations, and they also grow soft fruits like blackberries. Their only income comes from agriculture, in which both Mr. and Mrs. K. are involved. Mr. K., age forty-two, explained:

> Land. Yes, land for me is most of all tradition; it is what I got from my father and from my grandfather. It has a great meaning for me; it is a kind of attachment.

Mr. K inherited the farm from his parents, and he and his family worked the eleven hectares of land. Both he and his wife had attended university, specialising in agricultural production. For them, 'being on the land' was not just about keeping a tradition alive but was also about production. For Mr. K., the land is significant not only because it was passed down from his grandfather to his father and then onto him, but also because it is his source of income:

> [W]e live only from agricultural production. It is my workshop; without the land I would not be able to work and support my family.

For Mr. and Mrs. K., the land was their place of work, a place where they had invested, expanded and modernised, as well as where they secured their only profits. Mr. K. explained:

> As a means of production. You invest in land all the time; it is like being an entrepreneur. You have to invest in machines, tractors – the means of production – everything that makes your work easier and more efficient. When you work on and live off the land, you invest in land, buy more land, buy machines – the household is invested in only second. First, land needs attention as the main workshop and support of the family.

The land was a special kind of workshop. In the past, the identity of the family and what family life meant were strictly dependent on and connected to the land, but now, in today's economy, the tradition of land having been held for generations in the family cannot trump economic calculation.

## *Land Inheritance*

It is apparent that when people talk about the possibility of passing on their farms to their children, there is no longer the same degree of certainty as there once was that the next generation will take over the farm. Many people I talked to imagined a situation in which the next generation would not take over agricultural production. Parents wanted their children to have lives with a better future than they themselves had been offered. Much attention was placed on the education of children, as it was believed that this would allow for greater opportunities. In the area in which I conducted my research, a growing number of young people were studying agriculture. Amongst both small-scale subsistence farmers and agricultural producers whose entire income came from their investments in agriculture, people could only imagine their children eventually becoming farmers if conditions were to become more stable and a prosperous future in agriculture more imaginable.

For example, the son from Family K. was attending the agricultural faculty at the university. His parents said that they had discussed the possibility that their son would eventually run the farm, although they stressed

that this was far from certain, as it would all depend on whether or not working the farm was potentially profitable. They were aware that contemporary conditions were very different from when they started farming and that the present did not hold the same prospects for farmers as the past once had.

Family R., like family K., owned one of the bigger farms in the area. They cultivated nearly twenty hectares of land, mainly growing corn and apples. Mr R. received 10 hectares from his parents, and the rest he and his wife bought together. Family K.'s ideas about the land were not very different from those of others, nor were their feelings about the possibility of their children staying on the land. Mr. K. explained, 'It is very common to call land a *mother bread winner*, but it is the truth for my family; we live from farming; this is our work.

Mr. and Mrs. R. had two children: a daughter in secondary school and a son attending university. Neither child was certain that he or she would want to remain on and farm the family land; the son was considering going into agro-tourism but was not planning on going into agricultural production. Mr. R. supported his son's ambitions, and he admitted that although he would eventually like to pass the farm on to him, he wanted to do this only if it would be profitable:

> Like every father, I would like to pass the land on to my children and for them to stay. But the times are such that nobody should force kids to stay on land and work in agriculture. Personally, I would like my children to have a better and easier life than we have and to work outside agriculture, at least for now when the situation is so difficult and unstable.

The uncertain continuity of land inheritance in contemporary Poland is thus in contrast to earlier periods in which, even though there were intra-family conflicts over inheritance, the basic fact that *someone* from the next generation would take over the land was taken for granted in peasant families.

Anna, a woman in her forties, lived with her husband and two sons in one of the commune villages. They made their living from farming their land, her husband's waged work, and her work for the commune. Most of the time she was responsible for the farm and its development. Anna had two sons. The elder one was attending university in Lublin, and the younger one was attending the commune's gymnasium. Anna was an only child, and her two sons were the only potential heirs of the family's land. Even so, she did not want to pressure either son into staying on the land:

> No, I do not want them to take over. I do not know what will happen then, but it is not easy work. My younger son cannot work due to his health problems, and the older one – I guess it's better for him to

> study and do whatever gives him satisfaction and not that unstable life. I guess it will be better for them to have a good education and to live here in the house, but not necessarily to work the land.

Attitudes towards land were very complicated. On the one hand, land appeared as a family tradition, a support for the family, and a source of independence, but on the other hand, people I talked to knew that farming could be accompanied by intense frustration and a very difficult life. It cannot be said that today rural people view the land from either an exclusively emotional or exclusively professional/economic point of view. Between feelings of obligation and other sentiments come calculation and anxiety about the future, the family, and especially the next generation. I would argue that there is a bit of both emotion and interest, especially for families that rely on the land for both income and subsistence.

## Entering the Labyrinth: EU Accession, Work, and Local Identity

The recent heterogenisation of work within the village (i.e. not everyone is a farmer) has changed local identities. Rural work constitutes a central part of local identity (Pine 1996); the shared nature of village labour is also a central dimension of rural relationships (Kaneff 1998). At the time of my research, in the village there were approximately ten farms run by specialised farmers. Other farming families farmed their land for subsistence and/or worked on other farms as seasonal labourers. Still other villagers worked in private businesses, family-owned or otherwise. After the collapse of state industry and significant reductions in the number of local residents employed in the Świdnik factory, people from local villages had to look for new job opportunities.

With the mechanisation of agriculture and the specialisation of production, farms have become increasingly independent. As thirty-eight-year-old Paweł explained,

> [W]e have a carrot combine, and our son has the one for French beans, so we exchange. He will work at our place and we in his field. We share the equipment, which is more economical, and it would be impossible to buy everything.

Most families in the village had basic agricultural equipment. Thirty-seven-year-old Marta commented, ‘Farms here are not that big in size; people try to buy the basic equipment for themselves, the stuff that makes work easier’. Those who were involved in market production invested in their own essential equipment. The case of Marta and Paweł, a young farming couple that raised pigs and cultivated thirteen hectares, is relevant here. Marta and Paweł had inherited some land from their parents and were expanding their farm. To make the farm profitable, they had to invest in it. In farming families,

family members still usually help each other with farm work, and such reciprocity requires equipment. Paweł explained:

> We have quite a lot of land, and we decided to buy the equipment to make work easier. Probably I'm the only one in the village who has such equipment, but when you live on agriculture, you have to have your own machinery – maybe not all, but quite a bit – and count on your own work. Sometimes I'll help my cousin, and I help my in-laws, and they do some work for us as well. However, it is important to help one other, at least in the family, because it is impossible even for a farmer with a good number of hectares to buy everything that he needs on his own. Today everyone counts on him or herself. Farming is business – you have to be on time with your products.

Farming now requires less work and can be done more quickly; utilising machines, two individuals can do the amount of work for which the labour power of an entire village was once required.

Interviewees explained that in the past neighbours used to help each other with work, and such aid was reciprocated. Today, help in agricultural work is treated as a service, not as an exchange or mutual help. While most agricultural work is now mechanised, farmers who owned larger farms had invested in professional equipment. Those who had less land and for whom owning equipment was thus unfeasible would rent equipment. Fifty-seven-year-old Zofia explained:

> It used to be that when it was harvest time, neighbours would work together, one day at your field, one day at mine, and so on. Today, there is no such need; one can order services; a combine will come and do the work. […] In my opinion, real neighbourly help no longer exists. I remember how neighbours used to help my mother: ten or more women came and worked on the field together – with no equipment, just with their own hands.

However, this service was not only exchanged for 'real cash'; poor farmers in particular would reciprocate such services to one another or provide such labour as a form of lease 'payment'. As Grażyna, a thirty-nine-year-old woman, put it:

> We do not have any advanced equipment, so when there is work in the fields that needs to be done, I ask someone from the village who has equipment and does such service as an additional occupation. I pay for this service.

Collective work (outside the family farm) in the countryside is less and less visible. Households and farms are increasingly independent of one other. This decrease in collective work has also resulted from the increased specialisation of some villagers, on the one hand, and the withdrawal of others

from the agricultural sector altogether, on the other. Sixty-two-year-old Halina explained:

> I remember when it was the potato harvest; neighbours were working together; that was the collective work of the local community. When there was no machinery, people worked together. Today, those who own land try to organise farms to have such equipment and to be independent from others.

Farming today is not an obligation for the entire family, on neither market-oriented nor subsistence farms. The exigencies of the market and production standards require that farmers use special equipment, and the scale of production has rendered non-mechanised agricultural production unviable. Small farms also rely on modern equipment, except in cases in which farming operations are so limited that only a very small number of individuals are required to provide sufficient labour. On the one hand, work in the countryside is 'easier', but on the other, the 'human element' and the collaborative spirit of agricultural work are missing.

Mechanisation of agriculture has also had an impact on relations between rural inhabitants. Previously, collective work forged essential bonds in the village community, but today farms are increasingly self-sufficient, and villagers have less contact with one another. However, this has come about not only as a result of mechanisation but also due to increasingly specialised farms. Jan came from a long line of farmers, and he raised and bred pigs. In his village, he was the only person who had specialised in pigs; his neighbours planted vegetables. Jan emphasised that his market orientation was very different from that of his neighbours, whereas in the past, nearly everyone cultivated their land in the same way, differing only in terms of farm size and yields. Today, with production specialisation, next-door neighbours often have very different production profiles and thus less opportunity for reciprocal cooperation.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how aspects of what has been seen as traditional and stable in a rural community, particularly the land and collective work, have changed in response to external politico-economic circumstances. I have also considered what seems to endure or is seen as enduring in the face of such changes.

As the brief case studies I have presented in this chapter reveal, land continues to be highly valued by most people in Mełgiew commune. Symbolic attachments and notions of family heritage keep people connected to the land, even when farming it is unprofitable and only provides for family subsistence. For many families, the idea of selling the family farm is unbear-

able. As one villager put it, 'You can sell your land once and get good money, but what then? The money will be spent, and you will be without anything'.

Work in the countryside is becoming increasingly individualistic as farming families become more self-sufficient. Mechanisation, progress, and, in many cases, specialisation of production have eliminated much of the need for collective work. The village has become more individualistic, and villagers deal with their everyday problems and obligations independently, enlisting only close family members when assistance is required. With the possibilities of individualised, specialised agricultural production, some farmers have come to be identified as entrepreneurs, while others see themselves and are identified by others more as small-scale cultivators or gardeners.

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# *Chapter 5*
# Class and Identity Construction: The Case of Rural Bulgarian Businesses

Zlatina Bogdanova

## Introduction

This chapter is about class and identity construction amongst a group of village entrepreneurs participating in the new tourist industry that is developing in rural Bulgaria. I will focus on entrepreneurs in Cherven, a village in southern Bulgaria in which I carried out fieldwork from 2004 to 2005.[1] This village, like most Bulgarian villages, has always had a mixed economy, but over the last decade some families have branched out, starting small businesses that cater to the growing tourist industry of the region. In order to explore the rise of a new 'class' in this village, I describe three families from the area that have started businesses in the service industry (i.e. hotels, restaurants, cafés, and/or shops). In order to explore issues of class and identity in the context of Cherven, I first need to make some brief comments about how I understand 'class'.

In this chapter I will I rely on the three-component theory developed by Max Weber (1964), known as stratification theory or three-class system. The Weberian approach to class is based on the presumption of unequal access to material resources based on power relations. Those possessing wealth (economic assets) enjoy more prestige (status) and power over people with less access to resources. In the context of my case study, this definition of class becomes relevant since I look at one distinctive group within the village community - local entrepreneurs. As owners and employers, entrepreneurs control access to a desired social resource and place themselves in a dominant position vis-à-vis common villagers. Therefore, I argue that these new, self-established entrepreneurs constitute a distinctive social class in the Weberian sense, exemplifying the interplay among wealth, prestige, and power.

[1] My doctoral research was part of the same comparative program (funded by the Volkswagen Foundation) described by Pilichowska in the previous chapter.

I explore attitudes towards identity and status as markers of a distinctive social group – the emerging entrepreneurial class in a rural context. In common usage a class is understood to be composed of people sharing a social or economic status. Therefore, I also focus on how local understandings of class and class distinctions are reflected in notions about status and privilege held by my informants.

I address the question of identity from the perspective of gender and family relations. I demonstrate how economic change shapes gender roles and identities in the context of work performed within family businesses related to village tourism. A notion of work (or occupation) as a sort of public performance remains central in constructing class and identity among rural entrepreneurs. For this reason, I illustrate the relationship between work and gender identity by interpreting statements by three wives from enterprising families. In addition, I include comparative examples to show how labour performed within the household constructs identities based on gender roles within the family.

## Background and Context

Before I proceed to my analysis, I must first briefly clarify the general context of the tourist industry in Bulgaria. In recent years, the country has become a popular tourist destination, ranking among the first in Europe. Naturally, the Black Sea coastline has attracted the attention of most investors. The rapid construction and expansion of tourist facilities like hotels, restaurants, and amusement parks along the coast have even brought concerns about environmental safety. Kirsten Ghodsee (2005) writes about tourism and gender on the Black Sea coast, exploring the relative success of women employed in this sector since the fall of communism. She reveals how new market demands impact the social and economic accommodation of professional women working in Black Sea resorts. With postsocialist changes, she argues, the importance of social and political capital was significantly reduced, as forms of cultural capital (skills, education, and previous experience) gained crucial significance in the developing market economy. Kirsten employs Bourdieu's (1984) notion of capital to connect her findings to the case of Central Europe described by Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley (1998) not referenced properly here or in the back where it is written differently. Both studies conclude that possession of cultural capital has been the necessary prerequisite for success in the postsocialist economy. In the cases I discuss herein, I examine the significance of certain forms of cultural capital in relation to rural tourism in Bulgaria.

Not only the coastal area, but also small villages in the Bulgarian countryside have witnessed similar developments. Owing to state support for

tourism in rural areas, many attractive sites have been renovated. The Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works has carried out several projects related to the Rodopi Mountains (PHARE program, 2003). One of the projects is entitled 'The Rodopi Holy Mountain', and its main focus is to facilitate access to churches and monasteries in the area. It envisions the creation of cultural tourist routes through the Rodopi, integrating many villages south of Assenovgrad. In this way, EU projects have fostered and re-established local identities based on cultural heritage, emphasising religious tourism in this particular case. Unfortunately Cherven, although located close to Assenovgrad, was not part of this network.

Considering such tendencies, family- and kinship-based economic enterprises have now been established which attract foreign visitors and are developing a range of tourist services. By 2004/5, Cherven had become a significant site for capital investment. At this time, the village had around 800 permanent residents according to official data, but due to the increased number of villa owners, the population swelled to around 1000 in the summer. Acquiring property in Cherven has become rather expensive in recent years – a garden plot with a house ranges from 20,000 to 30,000 BGL. Even so, the contingent of villa owners in the area has been continually rising due to the fact that Cherven is conveniently located twenty-nine kilometres away from the district capital of Plovdiv and ten kilometres from the municipal town of Assenovgrad. The main highway connecting Plovdiv to southeastern Bulgaria divides the village in half. The village centre is located along this highway and thus is continually exposed to the heavy traffic of cars and buses. As a result, transitory visitors, villa owners, and tourists regularly pass through the village. Apart from attracting people from Plovdiv and other settlements, groups of international tourists often stop in the village on their way to the Rodopi.

The good location of the village and economic investments aimed at stimulating development of regional tourism help explain business expansion in the village. One pattern of business development in particular stood out, clearly reflecting the modern tendencies of the whole region – that is, the proliferation of tourist facilities and, more specifically, the increasing number of family run hotels. At present, Cherven has two family hotels, and a third one is currently under construction.

This type of business development presents an alternative to the ongoing devaluation of small-scale farming, which, being costly and labour-intensive, can no longer generate considerable profits. As a result, traditional rural lifestyles based on farming and employment in the state sector have been considerably challenged over the last fifteen years. Bulgaria's agricultural sector shrank with the collapse of the socialist economic support system

and the subsequent loss of Soviet markets. Today, low profitability and limited investment impact on labour productivity in the agricultural sector, which constituted merely 7.7% of Bulgaria's GNP in 2005. The importation of cheap food products has precluded local farmers from effectively competing in local markets. The marginalisation of small-scale farming has persisted in Cherven. In response, locals have sought new, positive identifications that would allow them to pursue a strategy of social accommodation by reconciling their rural lifestyles with the new state ideology and reform policies in the context of the EU market economy.

During my fieldwork, I observed several cases of successful entrepreneurial activity, mostly based on family and kinship relations. Focusing on three such cases, I extrapolate how the most successful group of village inhabitants has managed to adapt to the changing context of social and market relations. As a result, such families have become the primary agents of change, as their hotels and restaurants transform public space in line with the new demands of tourism: comfort, luxury, and good client service. One further effect of these economic activities is the ongoing conversion of Cherven into a local leisure centre.

In order to examine this frame of class construction and identity reinvention, I will focus on three family couples of village entrepreneurs. Specifically I will refer to interviews with the three wives in which we discussed issues related to forms of self-identification. I try to show how entrepreneurialism has created a new class and new identities by reshaping lifestyles and family relations.

## Family-run Businesses in Cherven

### *Mitko and Diana*

The process of local business development was already underway prior to Bulgarian EU membership. Cherven's first family-run hotel/ restaurant/ grocery store opened its doors in 2004. Mitko – a successful businessman from Assenovgrad decided to transfer his capital from his urban business in order to start a new rural venture. The hotel complex 'Diana', named after his wife, is extensively advertised on the Internet, along with many other hotels and vacation houses in the region. Descriptions of the facilities are available in three languages – Bulgarian, English, and German. According to the advertisement, the hotel can host up to twenty people in six double rooms and two apartments. There is a terraced swimming pool surrounded by tables (at which food and drinks can be ordered), and there is a small tavern inside. In front of the complex, there is a grocery store that sells basic

foodstuffs, cosmetics, and other personal items to tourists and local residents.

The hotel complex quickly became a setting for various celebrations, weddings, and birthdays, as many outsiders from Assenovgrad and Plovdiv booked the facilities. During the summer, families with small children from Assenovgrad and Plovdiv come to the hotel for a weekend to take advantage of the swimming pool. The complex has gained a reputation as an accessible recreation opportunity for families, couples, and groups of friends.

Mitko and Diana manage the hotel and employ thirteen low-skilled workers. They do not farm the land, nor do they operate any other major enterprises. Diana is responsible for the day-to-day management of the hotel, including hiring staff. She was enrolled in a legal education program at the time of my research in the village. Mitko is in charge of organising supplies. This division of labour is predicated on a mutual agreement through which both participate equally in decision-making related to the business. Because the business proved to be profitable, Diana and her husband decided to expand it. In 2007 they bought a plot of land opposite the complex where they plan to build additional accommodation for tourists.

Diana and her husband have never applied for EU subsidies. She explained that Cherven was not part of the tourist networks going through the Rodopi. Therefore, they could not rely on European aid for developing their business. Even so, they have attracted numerous tourists from all over Europe. Most of these tourists learned about the complex through internet advertisements or by word of mouth. Previous business experience has helped the couple create a successful family enterprise without enlisting the help of any consultants. As Diana said, they respond to clients' needs and use them as basic guidelines for further service improvements.

When I interviewed Diana about her role in the family business I asked her how she identified herself. She indicated that she thought of herself as a 'hotel-owner/manager'. When I asked her how her family's economic and social status compared with that of other villagers, she asserted that her own family was better off. However, she emphasised that she and her family worked hard and made personal sacrifices in order to provide clients with superior service, as if attempting to justify her privileged position. By seeking justifications, Diana implicitly revealed her awareness of emerging class distinctions in the village. Diana's reference to 'hard work' was an attempt to carefully obscure the details of her upward social mobility. Kirsten Ghodsee (2005: 169) similarly addresses the problem of justifying emerging class differentiation in a system of 'functioning meritocracy'. Upward social mobility is regarded as a natural result of hard work, skills, and expertise (cultural capital). Ghodsee (2005: 169-171) contends that the

underlying issue is how limited access to cultural capital (education and training) has solidified class positions and determined prospects for social mobility under neoliberalism. Under neoliberalism, education has become a commodity, and only people who can afford it can gain legitimacy as elites. It would thus seem that limited access to education would determine the process of class construction in postsocialist Bulgaria. In Cherven I could observe how the majority of young adults with little education or specialised training were employed in low-skilled jobs, which greatly reduced their options for upward social mobility.

In addition to running a successful tourist enterprise, both Diana and Mitko aspired to partake in local politics. They ran in local elections on two occasions, with Mitko running for mayor of Cherven and Diana running for mayor of Assenovgrad. Although thus far unsuccessful, their attempts indicate a desire to accumulate more status and power for the family. Theoretically, the three components of the Weberian theory of stratification - class (economic condition), status (social position), and power (party) - can be applied to the case of Mitko and Diana. After achieving a distinctive class position through the accumulation of wealth and situating themselves as owners and employers, they felt privileged and desired access to political representation – in other words, power. As a result, the family strove to expand its economic, social, and political power and capital.

## *Peter and Katya*

The hotel/restaurant combination proved so successful that this pattern of business development and this marketing strategy were quickly adopted by two other village entrepreneurs. The first to follow Mitko's example was Peter. During my fieldwork I established regular contact with Peter, his wife Katya, and their two sons, Martin and Hristo. Their small family restaurant was situated in the central square of the village, just next to the main road that separates the village into two halves. The restaurant was officially opened in December 2004 and started operating at full capacity in January 2005. During my stay in the village the family added a small hotel to the restaurant, expanding the business to accommodate up to ten guests. Peter's ambitious strategy for developing the hotel included establishing regular contact with international clients and hosting groups of foreign tourists. In such a way he strove to expand his social contacts and to accumulate social capital in order to make his business lucrative.

After 1989, Peter made two unsuccessful attempts to launch a private business, both times in cooperation with business partners. On his third attempt in 1994, he went into business independently, starting a dairy farm in Cherven. This venture succeeded, and Peter has now been involved in

milk production for around fourteen years. He owns one of the biggest private farms in the village. He and his family look after thirty cows. Peter sells his milk to one of the biggest milk-producing companies in Bulgaria, *Fibella*. After a failed attempt to obtain EU funding for his expanding business, Peter used his monthly income from his dairy farm – around 4000 BGL in 2005 – to open his restaurant.[2] He secured a loan from a bank to pay for constructing and furnishing the hotel, thus requiring him to mortgage his father's house.

Despite the high risks, Peter managed to create this combination between private farming and hotel-restaurant management. In fact, animal husbandry provided Peter with capital to expand his catering business. His wife Katya and their younger son Hristo are constantly occupied with the day-to-day management of the hotel and restaurant. In this sense, it is worth acknowledging how family duties were redistributed among family members and how internalised gender roles were replicated in the context of familial business engagement. Katya regularly attended to clients, aided by her husband and Hristo. She benefited from her previous experience in catering - she was the manager of a school canteen in Assenovgrad during socialism. Peter negotiated with construction workers and supplied materials for repairs. He was also responsible for public relations, networking with potential clients and tourist agents. Hristo was responsible for provisioning the restaurant. This clear division of labour suggests the reproduction of gender identity though economic activities: men dealt with the external world while women dealt with the domestic space.

I asked Katya the same questions about self-identification and social status. She denied belonging to a distinctive class that differentiated her family from others in the village. To the contrary, she did not feel privileged to own and manage a hotel. Like Diana, she emphasised how much she worked and her lack of personal time. 'Even unemployed people live better than us', she said, implying that work in this business was demanding in the face of growing competition. Katya's self-identification was contained in the simple phrase, 'We own such a business', and she deliberately avoided referring to herself and her husband as 'entrepreneurs'.

Katya neither differentiated her family from those of common villagers nor did she admit to having any special privilege or status. Her attitude contrasted with Diana's explanation. One of the reasons, I think, was the level of involvement of the two women and the nature of work performed within the family. Katya did manual work, serving the guests, cleaning, and cooking. She did not employ any full time staff to help her. Diana, on the

[2] At this time, the average monthly wage in Bulgaria was between 300 and 600 BGL.

other hand, was a manager and employed others to do manual jobs around the hotel complex. There were other marked differences between Diana and Katya: Diana had recently finished a law degree, whereas Katya wasn't a university graduate. In contrast to Katya, Diana was eager to take part in local politics. Their conflicting attitudes towards social distinctions implicitly reflected these aspects of their individuality.

One can speculate that Katya viewed her class position differently from Diana because she (Katya) was still struggling to establish her family business in the tourist market. Weber explains that class is related to market positioning, and it is thus understandable that Katya was less willing to distinguish her family from others in the village. In addition, she and her husband were not major employers and did not strive to accumulate political influence. One can easily assume that their particular views on class relations were also informed by the different state ideologies to which they had been exposed: Katya had spent most of her adult life under socialism, and so her understanding of class was influenced by the socialist ideology of egalitarianism. Diana, in contrast, had less experience under socialism and was more explicit about social differences, even though she sought legitimate justifications.

It may be important to acknowledge that Diana and Mitko were newcomers to the village and did not have relatives or other important social networks there. Peter's family had lived in Cherven for many generations, and he still had a big network of relatives and friends in the village. Moreover, Peter was related to the mayor, and the mayor was among his most loyal clients. As a result, Peter had direct access to local political power, although he himself was not politically active. In contrast, Diana and Mitko were desperately striving to gain political legitimacy and public recognition among the villagers, albeit at that time, only unsuccessfully. I can only speculate whether political stakes were part of the business competition between the two couples.

Such factors presumably contributed to Katya's perception of her equal status: she did not want to declare herself 'above' relatives and close friends. Peter and Katya's family connections were thus fundamental to their business and to their understanding of their class position in the village, while this was not the case for the other couple.

## *Ivan and Nedka*

The third couple I wish to discuss is Ivan and Nedka. Ivan was following a strategy similar to that of Mitko and Peter. He also began with a single grocery shop in the centre of the village, just across the street from Peter's restaurant. At the time of my research, Ivan had recently completed con-

struction of a coffee bar and restaurant next to the grocery store where his daughter worked. Because Ivan had decided to open his own coffee bar, his wife Nedka was available to attend to the new place. Both spouses had professional catering qualifications and relevant experience under socialism. Today, Nedka's training (cultural capital) helps her in her present occupation as manager of the restaurant. Ivan recently began construction of a new hotel on the top of the grocery shop.

Ivan's father was a well-known entrepreneur in the village. Even under socialism he managed a small enterprise and traded his products around the country. Starting with a small grocery shop, Ivan was soon driven to prove himself as a successful owner and manager of a hotel complex. His ambitious spirit was in part a response to the successful example set by the two other families.

When I went in to interview Ivan's wife, Nedka, she was still busy with organising work in the restaurant. Her involvement with Ivan's family placed a big burden on her shoulders. Nedka was expected to take part in the family business development both under and after socialism. She was also responsible for managing household affairs. Luckily, she was able to rely on the other two women in the family – her twenty-four-year-old daughter and her mother-in-law.

In our conversation, Nedka complained about how villagers were envious of her family's success: these people did not give her any credit for her long work days (fifteen hours). Nedka made it clear that she worked very hard for her money, much harder than any member of the staff she hired. 'If I am not around, the job won't be done', she explained. It was true that Nedka regularly served drinks in the coffee bar and attended to guests at the restaurant.

Although Nedka was not very explicit about her status or class, her comment about 'envy' among common villagers indicated a process of social polarisation. I also noted hostility towards the new entrepreneurial class in village gossip. Growing resentment towards new business families was indicative of tensions arising between the 'new' class and others.

Aware of this separation, Nedka legitimated her position in a manner similar to Diana. Indeed, Nedka's family's long-standing commitment to private enterprise could partially explain this similarity. After all, Nedka regarded herself as more experienced and skilled in dealing with market affairs than the other two families, let alone when compared to ordinary villagers.

I was impressed by the fact that none of the women explicitly identified themselves as entrepreneurs or businesswomen. I did not hear any clear or explicit statement referring to class position. However, the women's

statements about ‘working hard’ and ‘personal sacrifice’ led me to conclude that just beneath the surface was a process of social differentiation that ought to be explained and justified.

## The Gender Dimension of Family Business

Each of the three women openly expressed resentment towards the family businesses of the others. It became obvious that competition between these enterprising families was severe. In this complex situation, women’s labour was valued as a resource accessible within the family.

In this section, I emphasise the gender dimension of private family enterprises. In the cases described above, men typically played the active role of planning and executing the business while women aided in the implementation of the men’s decisions to improve and expand their business ventures. Similar ideas about gendered identities in family enterprises have been noted by Jane Cowan in her work about a town in central Macedonia. Cowan argues that women’s involvement in family enterprises is supplementary to their domestic responsibilities and subordinate to their husbands’ economic initiatives (Cowan 1990: 53-54). My interviews and observations indicated a gendered distribution of responsibilities in business (e.g. women attending to guests, cleaning, and cooking, while men organised supplies and construction work). In contrast to Cowan’s observation, I contend that none of the women considered their involvement in business as secondary or supplementary to their domestic work. I felt that the reflections these women expressed on hotel management were not superficial but rather resulted from their conscious and deep commitment to the family enterprise. The family hotel complex was an arena for self-realisation. Katya and Nedka both had catering experience, which now proved useful in the restaurants they supervised. Diana had a law degree and a distinguished portfolio of cultural capital that she applied to further her ambitious plans for business and local politics. The issue of domestic work, though not completely neglected, was somewhat understated in our conversations. This tendency *de facto* illustrated the primary concern shared by the three women: their work in the family business.

It is also important to consider gender in relation to the sexual division of labour. Using the division of labour as an analytic framework can provide insight into how gender roles reflect the familial balance of power. In this sense, the relevant question is how labour performed in the family affects the position of women therein. Do they feel subordinated by their husbands? Or are they capable of maintaining their own boundaries/private spaces and standing up for themselves? Exploring the gender perspective in the family, I found that Diana felt equal to her husband in regards to the business. They

shared responsibilities and obviously had complementary political ambitions, having both run for office. I discovered that Katya did not feel subordinated to her husband. Like Diana, she and her husband mutually agreed upon common responsibilities and duties. Katya, however, was more explicit about her husband's leading role in the establishment of the business: 'He has deeper insight', she confessed.

It is possible that the reproduction of gender identity though economic activities (men dealing with the external world, women engaging in domestic life) can lead to greater participation by women in business activities, since such activities do not require any special skills. The experiences gained by these women in their own households – cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children – may enable them to feel more comfortable and useful in the business. Women's involvement in business thus may not directly contradict but instead complement or reinforce their habitual, customary role as caretakers and providers of practical help in the household.

Kirsten Ghodsee (2005: 108-114) discusses how gender roles are perceived in relation to domestic work and work in the tourism sector. Her informants provided common justifications for why women were more suited for tourism-related work than men. They believed that women are more aware of other people's needs. Moreover, managing a household (cleaning and cooking) is not so different from working at a restaurant or attending to hotel reception enquiries. Considering the wives' heavy involvement with the day-to-day operations of the hotel complexes, such explanations appear to have a degree of validity.

White (2000) writes about how Turkish women regard their economic involvement:

> [S]he is encouraged to see the labour as part of her role as woman, as family member and as neighbour. She is encouraged to do so both by the attitudes of the other women and by her employers, all of whom entwine the woman's labour with the other social activities that bind them forever (p. 140).

This applies in the same way to the women I interviewed, who identified themselves both as wives and mothers in their family's businesses. The interviews I cited demonstrate how women in the tourist industry in Cherven reflected on their condition and how they described themselves. The role they played in their families' businesses primarily involved shaping family relations to achieve common benefits and security. In my research, all of my informants asserted their equal share of rights and responsibilities in their families' businesses. Diana, Katya, and Nedka worked side by side with their husbands and children. For each, the family business was considered important for the economic wellbeing of the family. Katya explicitly linked

her various entrepreneurial activities to the economic security of the family: complementing farming and hotel management was intended as a risk reducing and security maximising family practice. In such a framework, children were active participants in the business and generally the most prominent beneficiaries.

The intersection between kinship-based business and gender is discussed by Pine (2002), who argues that after socialism, especially in rural areas, Polish women felt excluded from the public domain. They had lost their jobs in the state sector and were deprived of social networks and relations built around the workplace. As a result, their socially constructed identity and sense of self suffered irreparable loss. As my cases demonstrate, women can be reintegrated back into the public domain though participation in kinship-based economic activities concerned with private farming or with catering and the hospitality industry; this can be understood as utilization of a form of cultural capital gained during socialism.

Ghosdsee (2005) argues that in Bulgaria the tourism industry was and continues to be dominated by women. She reveals how under socialism women employed in the tourism sector accumulated important cultural capital (language skills and knowledge of Western cultures) that was revalued after the changes. The specific gender politics of the socialist regime induced women's specialisation in tourism, thus ultimately resulting in skills and experience relevant to the functioning of the market economy. As other sectors of the Bulgarian economy faced economic downturn, tourism remained vital and generated new jobs. This sector had a solid legacy of both advantages and disadvantages from the past. New private, family-based enterprises challenged the established, centralised tourist industry. Nevertheless, the crucial role of women in tourism was reinforced by new market demands. By making use of their skills, drive, and motivation to succeed, the women I studied were well equipped to adapt to the demands of the market economy.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how class and identity construction take place in the context of a rural community. In order to approach this problem, I identified and briefly described the key agents of economic change and social transformation in a village – local entrepreneurs. The establishment of new market institutions, together with opportunities for private initiative have resulted in new roles, discourses, and practices. The rehabilitation of economic capital and new forms of capital accumulation have made possible the emergence of distinctive social groups within Bulgarian society. I thus contend that rural entrepreneurs constitute a distinctive

social group, distinguished by their social practices and legitimising discourses. Through my ethnographic examples, I have tried to illustrate the economic and social conditions surrounding the creation of new class identities. There are important similarities and differences between the three families I discussed. All three families were engaged in family businesses, thus implying shared responsibilities among family members and mutual agreement on how the business should be developed. All three families possessed forms of cultural capital re-valued from socialist times. But there were also important differences between the families: each of the families benefited from differential access to social and political networks within and outside the village. They also differed in how they legitimised their distinctive status in the village.

Applying the Weberian model of class stratification, I have shown the various aspects – economic, social, and political – of current class formations. All of these aspects were represented in the cases of the three families I studied. In general, the economic aspect was represented by the family enterprise, and the social aspect reflected relationships between the families and their surroundings in terms of status and privilege. The political aspect was present in access to political power and legitimisation in and outside of the village.

My findings confirm the presence of an incoherent process of class formation through which social actors hold conflicting ideas about social distinctions. Various factors, including Bulgaria's socialist legacy, influence local understandings of social distinctions. Differing attitudes also mirror individual life trajectories and strategies of adjustment. I deliberately avoided discussion of what the new class of village entrepreneurs should be called (i.e. 'middle-class' or 'elite'). I would not want to group all three families under one category and thus acknowledge the problems accompanying the processes of class formation in Bulgaria.

Another dimension of identity I explored was familial gender roles in relation to work in the family enterprise. I related how gender distinctions influence common practices and discourses in relation to work in tourism in general and work in the family enterprise in particular. Two of the women emphasised hard work and personal sacrifice in order to highlight and legitimise their privileged position. The third woman tried to downplay social distinctions and to present a more socially acceptable image of her family. Such differences in self-representation point to an uneven transition from a socialist understanding of class and identity to roles and self-representations brought about by the introduction of a neoliberal model of society.

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# PART TWO

# (RE)NEGOTIATION OF SELVES

# *Chapter 6*
# Models of Success in the Free Market: Transformations of the Individual Self-Representation of the Lithuanian Economic Elite

Asta Vonderau

## In Search of Success

Why are some people in Lithuania successful and others not? This was the question with which I was repeatedly confronted during my field research in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius in 2005 and 2006. My goal was to explore how cultural categories of the 'good life' and 'success' and social roles, especially the role of *elites*, had been (re)defined in Lithuania in the wake of the postsocialist transformation and European accession.

Discussions about the 'good life' and 'successful individuals' proved to be more prominent in contemporary Lithuanian public discourse than I had first suspected. Newspapers and other public discussion forums addressed this issue in terms of various forms of growth, the progressive democratisation of society, the growing economy, and Lithuania's increasing integration into the European Union. These developments were seen as signs of national progress on the way to an improved society and citizen, however the details of such improvement might be viewed. Moreover, in many media reports and public debates, the active pursuit of a better life and the will to prosperity were even interpreted as national traits, as 'natural' elements of Lithuanian identity that differentiated Lithuanians from their eastern neighbours and determined their relationship to Western Europe.

The vision of a 'good life' was not so much an abstract goal or distant horizon in Lithuanian society; rather, efforts were made to personify this vision and to materialise it, to give it a human face and body, and to tie it to actual life stories of specific individuals. The new lifestyle magazines, for example, contained countless portraits of successful and happy people, describing their meteoric career development and fulfilling private lives.

My question about just *who* was in a position to provide such models of success quickly led me to a very distinct group of people. Among them

were mainly businesspeople, owners and CEOs of local companies, top managers and employees of international companies and their family members, well-known representatives of the entertainment industry, architects, designers, and doctors. Although the careers and lifeways of these people varied greatly, they nevertheless shared an above average level of material prosperity, and they were clearly objects of public interest as they embodied the very image of success. I observed the daily practices and symbolic self-representation strategies of these actors in the performance of their social elite status, and I conducted biographical interviews in which we discussed their personal and professional backgrounds and in which they were given the opportunity to tell their success stories. These biographical self-portraits serve as a basis for the following discussion of the transformation of the self in Lithuania and the redefinition of social elite status.

When I speak in the following pages about transformations of the self, I understand the 'self' as Katherine Verdery does, namely, as 'an ideological construct whereby individuals are situationally linked to their social environments through normative statements setting them off as individuals from the world around them' (Verdery 1996: 53). The term 'economic elite' is thus meant less to indicate a social group defined by objective criteria than to reference the self- and hetero-perception of a group of social actors as 'winners' in their current social situation and as the very embodiment of the desirable lifestyle.[1] The question of *what* the economic elite is is thus prefaced by the question of *how* this elite manages to reproduce its authority and its social status in times of rapid social change in a specific cultural context (Shore 2002: 2). Since this is a question both of self- and hetero-perception, analysis of the discursive framework within which this elite role is conceptualised and constituted acquires a particular importance (Shore 2002: 3). Although the biographies of the 'winners' no doubt differ from the lifeways of most people in Lithuania, I assume that they reveal dominant and collective ideas about 'prosperity', 'the good life', and 'success' as well as how these categories are negotiated in society between different social groups and actors. The information content of such self-representations goes beyond the portrayal of the social situation of a specific social group in that these representations are principally communicative, make reference to social developments and related discourses, make use of a language accessible to other

[1] C. Wright Mills' definition is sufficient for the purposes of this article: 'The elite are simply those who have the most of what there is to have, which is generally held to include money, power and prestige – as well as all the ways of life to which these lead. But the elite are not simply those who have the most, for they could not "have the most" were it not for their positions in the great institutions' (Mills 1956: 9).

members of Lithuanian society, and are expressed in the social practice of the narrative.

In the first part of this essay, I describe transformations of the self in Lithuania. I show how the understanding of the individual and his or her role in society have changed in the postsocialist period and describe some of the new principles of social differentiation. In the second part, I address the question of how the economic elite positions itself within this discourse. What forms of self-representation are applied to attain and maintain winner status? My interest lies primarily in describing the reformulation of the individual pasts of economic elite members. I assume that these reinterpretations of individual pasts also give information about the collective reinterpretation of the past and new modes of subjectification in postsocialist Lithuanian society.

## The 'New Man' in and after Socialism

Following Elizabeth Dunn (2004) I see the economic transformation of Eastern Europe not only as a transition to a free market and private property but also as marked by new modes of subjectification, i.e. new concepts about what it means to be an individual and about the place of the individual in society.

The ideological project of the 'new socialist man' understood the individual primarily as part of a collective of the 'people-as-one' (Verdery 1996: 93). Gender, ethnic, and social differences within socialist society were considered to have been overcome under the egalitarian socialist regime. The socialist state attempted to organise and outwardly level the lives of members of the collective by means of centrally controlled and standardised production and consumption processes. As Katherine Verdery argues, socialist temporality was marked above all by the fact that the state controlled the time of its citizens, attempting to slow them down and make them rigid, thus preventing them from participating in nonconformist activities. One prominent example is the ubiquitous phenomenon of queuing, which literally immobilised the human body (Verdery 1996). This form of control and regulation clearly did not always function smoothly, and resulting collectivisation processes did not always turn out as intended; both individuals and collectives invented various adaptation and individualisation strategies that allowed them to participate in both state and shadow economic structures and, in this way, to compensate for the material deficits of the former. For example, informal networks (*blat*) provided access to sought-after material goods and services. As my interview partners (some of whom belonged to the political and economic elites of the socialist period as well) stressed, the socialist ideal of a 'good life' and 'success' was tied inextricably to the

ability to manipulate such networks and to combine official/formal and unofficial/informal activities effectively. People developed a special form of flexibility as a result of their efforts to do so, namely, a flexibility to reveal or hide aspects of their selves and to switch behavioural codes depending on the context and situation (Yurchak 2003). This form of *situational* action and thought dominated towards the end of the socialist period in particular.

The image of the socialist man disappeared from the public after the fall of socialism, and situational action, like other socialist behavioural codes, skills and identities, was denounced as old-fashioned, hypocritical, and even schizophrenic (Dunn 2004: 70). The structures of the free market economy called for flexible, mobile, self-controlled, linear, and consistent individuals, both in terms of actions and thoughts. The capitalist self is not only structured differently in terms of temporality but is deprived of its social environment – privatised and individualised. The individual person is perceived as a collection of characteristics that are constantly being developed, optimised, and enhanced in order to be sold ever more dearly. The responsibility for this form of self-improvement lies not with the state or the collective but with the individual (Dunn 2004: 125-128).

With the denigration of socialist models of identity and subjectivity, an idea prevalent throughout the postsocialist world spread in Lithuania: the introduction of the free market and private property were to lead 'naturally' to a shift (Westernisation) in all spheres of social life and the creation of a 'new individual', an individual able to adjust and function successfully in the new political and economic structures. This naturalisation of the transformation of an entire society and its members was and continues to be propagated by proponents of the political ideologies of neoliberal democracy and modern marketing strategies that instrumentalise media images of the new, modern man (as a successful European).[2] This ideology is carried in Lithuania by, among other things, a national discourse that perceives the socialist past as that of the Russian occupier and views postsocialist transformation and European integration as a return to the 'natural' state of Lithuanian society (Rausing 2002). Success-orientation, flexibility, self-responsibility, and other 'new' individual characteristics are thus often cited as 'true' Lithuanian character traits. Individuals subscribing to contrary normative models of subjective identity are, by contrast, perceived and represented in the media as 'not normal' and are associated with a 'Soviet mentality' and the stereotypical image of a *Homo sovieticus* – the person trapped in the socialist past (Vonderau 2006).

[2] This form of naturalisation of the postsocialist transformation has been critiqued repeatedly by scholars such as Katherine Verdery (1996: 208) and Zygmunt Bauman (1993: 208).

## Socialist Time and Capitalist Pace

Interviews I conducted with Lithuanian businessmen about how the shift from a centralised to a free market affected their business activities confirm the arguments made above about the transformation of the individual. Differences between the 'old' individual (functioning in rhythm with the socialist world) and the 'new' individual (adjusting to the pace of capitalism) as these emerged in the transition period were spoken about in detail.

The owner of the first modern restaurant in Vilnius explained, for example, how, in the early 1990s, she became aware of the 'shocking differences' between her older employees, who were socialised in the socialist labour system, and her younger, westward-oriented employees. The decisive moment in this process was a visit by a group of foreign cooks who had come to train her staff. The Western chefs were appalled at the pace at which her kitchen staff (mostly older women) went about their work and that they spent so much time discussing personal problems, which the chefs considered a sign of a bad work ethic. The realisation that her older employees were working based on the temporality of the socialist labour market, which was incompatible with the pace of the new capitalist world, moved the restaurant owner to finally hire new, younger, westward-oriented and socialised staff-members who had a completely different work ethic.

Why did these differences between the 'old' (i.e. socialist) and the 'new' individual appear to be so crucial and so central that they made the integration of the former into the 'new' labour world impossible? This question can only be answered if the hidden 'economy of power' behind this seemingly natural transformation of economy and individual is examined more closely. By 'economy of power' I mean the shift in values of governance taking place in the context of economic-political transformation in which categories of individualised time and space are reinterpreted in specific patterns and tied to labour-based production processes (Lehmke, Krasman and Bröckling 2000: 26).

Two temporal orders collided in the course of the transition from a centralised to a free market economy in Lithuania, as did two different concepts of the individual and its role in production and consumption. The transformation of the individual into a flexible, mobile 'enterprising self' was and continues to be perceived in the Lithuanian public sphere not only as a step westward (towards a democratic, capitalist state) but also as a condition of the success of the free market. During the postsocialist period in general (and increasingly since EU accession), Lithuanian democratisation, adaptation, and mobilisation activities were imposed by international institutions such as the EU and World Bank and implemented in the form of training, consulting, testing, and selection procedures as well as in the form of

media reports and advertising. These activities suggested that people should adjust their personalities to the neoliberal ideal and arrange their lifestyle, work ethic, bodies, and physical environment accordingly. In the meantime, it seems that a consensus has emerged in Lithuania that only those who realise this personal transformation are in a position to succeed in the free market and lead a good (and above all prosperous) life.

Even though representatives of the economic elite function as the architects of economic transformation and as employers, they themselves must also undergo this personal transformation process. Jonas, the long-time director of an electrical parts factory, said that he was firmly convinced that knowledge acquired in the socialist university and in the socialist labour market could be adapted to the new economic system and used to restructure his old factory, which in the early 1990s was at risk of closing due to rampant inflation. But the World Bank and the EU insisted on a barrage of training courses before granting financial support. Despite the fact that Jonas had a coherent business plan for the company, the western institutions regarded it as necessary to teach new principles of labour organisation and to change the workers' behaviour patterns and work attitudes first.

Jonas explained how his employees' 'unreliable behaviour'[3], inculcated in the years of socialist socialisation, and the enactment of their 'situational selves', were viewed negatively by the Western experts because such behaviour was perceived to undermine requirements of self-discipline and self-management. The PHARE[4] consultant claimed that the production output of the factory workers was not good enough because they were not able to provide a clear answer to his question about the problems they faced in their labour process. Jonas found himself mediating between the situational action of his factory workers, which was still widespread in the early 1990s, and the demands of Western experts to school self-disciplined indi-

[3] 'Unreliable behaviour' here means that postsocialist workers were often not following the 'new' organisational principles and rules of communication in their labour process, set by the company leadership and Western experts. They also were not able and willing to talk openly about problems they faced at work like Western 'self-controlling' workers were trained to do. While it was common within the working environment of the socialist deficit economy to hide some of one's own activities at work and to disobey at least to some of the official rules, this kind of behaviour was perceived as unreliable and insubordinate within the free market because it made it difficult to intensify and control the production process.

[4] The PHARE programme is one of the three pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union. Originally created in 1989 as the Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies (PHARE) programme, PHARE has expanded to currently cover ten countries. It assists eight of the ten 2004 accession member states as well as those countries that acceded in 2007.

viduals. He tried to explain the attitudes of his workers to the Western experts by describing socialist codes of behaviour:

> I told him that he shouldn't come to any hasty conclusions. You have to consider that you have people in front of you who have fifty years of experience in how they should lie in this kind of situation. When the Ministry representatives from Moscow who distributed the money to us and our workers asked what was not working, they knew that they should tell the truth about the bad material, outdated equipment, and the like because they knew that the ministry would provide money to solve the problem. And when the party secretary came and asked the same question, then everyone would say, 'Everything is good', because he could not help anyway; he could only dismiss the director from his post. Everyone knew these rules. For a couple of years now we have said that the workers should not lie because it leads to losses, but the people have no experience with it. They know that they should not lie, but they do not know what they should say either.

As this example shows, workers acting according to old behavioural codes were considered to be problematic and were pushed to change their selves, not because they were unable to adapt to new production processes but because they appeared uncontrollable since modern control and audit mechanisms require a linearly thinking and acting, self-disciplined individual (Dunn 2004: 127).

The assumed 'problem' in Lithuania of an individual who does not meet the standards of neoliberal subjectivity is not relevant only in the working world; it is also relevant in various public contexts. For example, in public media discussions, material and spiritual poverty, social passivity, and the political populism of some population groups are bemoaned and interpreted as symptoms of the failed integration of these actors into political-economic structures. The reasons for this lack of integration are not typically sought in the dynamics inherent to these structures but in the inherited mentality of the *Homo sovieticus*. My interviews with businesspeople show, however, that these people, who may appear to be incapable of integration into the modern labour market, are in fact targeted for participation in economic processes, even if they remain invisible to the market itself and in the popular image of the 'new' Lithuanian society. They find a role, for example, providing cheap labour.

Petras, a senior manager in the Lithuanian branch of Schneider Electronic, the world's largest producer of electrical and automation technology, explained that unskilled labour in Lithuania was so cheap that it played practically no role in cost calculations. This fact was a competitive advan-

tage over Western competitors, who were constantly on the lookout for ways to reduce labour costs because their workers earned wages up to ten times higher for the same work. This allowed Petras, for example, to buy cheaper electrical appliances because he did not need to consider installation costs.

'Some guy sits there with his quilted jacket and a screwdriver in his hand and gets 100 Euros a month', said Petras, describing Lithuania's labour market. His comment includes in it references to the different temporal worlds of 'postsocialist' and 'capitalist' individuals who are more or less established in the free market and to the different value their work has in the modern world. An 'integration' of individuals 'outside' of modern society (which could also be described as exploitation) as set out in Petras' story is observed not only in the labour market but also in the market for consumer goods and in other spheres of society. Social inclusion and exclusion mechanisms based on ideologically coloured and temporally marked oppositions between people trapped in the 'old', stagnating socialist past and the 'new', flexible and modern capitalist present emerge parallel to a transformation in the modes of subjectification. The image of the *Homo sovieticus* is becoming increasingly focused on older, socially weak, less educated members of society.

## Recipes for Success

Representatives of the economic elite, who see themselves as the winners of the above-described process of social differentiation, have, in contrast to the losers, transcended the assumed gap between past and present, integrating themselves into the new economic and temporal structures. This self-perception corresponds with their public image as the embodiers of the collective ideal of success and the good life. Most of my conversation partners were well-known public figures, known not only for having successful careers and as specialists in their respective fields but also as trendsetters and experts in matters of lifestyle and success. Their life stories, their property, their hobbies and leisure activities, and even the contents of their wardrobes are described repeatedly in the media and are presented as recipes for success for other members of society.

In their efforts to meet the standards of a modern, flexible, self-disciplined individual and to gain elite status, my informants not only reinterpret their own pasts to fit given identity and career models; they also change their lifestyles and their physical environment and redesign their own bodies. What they have in common despite quite heterogeneous life and career paths lies in their rapid movement between different business activi-

ties within a relatively short time. This phenomenon can be illustrated in the biographies of two businessmen of different generations.[5]

Forty-year-old Antanas began his entrepreneurial career before the collapse of the Soviet Union, in his second year of university when the Gorbachev government permitted the establishment of private small businesses – so-called co-operatives – in the late 1980s. Together with his friends, Antanas opened a cafe in a nightclub in his hometown of Kaunas.

> I rented rooms, an eight square metre kitchen, seven square metre bar, and five small tables. Then I took out a loan of 1,000 roubles from the bank and borrowed 3,000 roubles from my mother. We had to bring our stuff to the cafe by taxi every time because we had no car. It wasn't even possible to buy juice in a normal store back then; we had to negotiate with the director. We built the coffee machine ourselves...

Even if this situation seems primitive from today's point of view, Antanas' first business was quite lucrative, with a 1,000 % profit, which at the time was not uncommon.

After the nightclub was forced to close by criminal gangs, Antanas felt forced to explore other opportunities. Soon he had the largest restaurant in the city; later he imported household goods and clothes from China and Russia and invested in the fish market. Not only did his revenue grow exponentially in only a few years, the geographical scope of his business grew as well. He bought fish in England, Canada, and Norway to sell in Lithuania, Russia, and Estonia, topping eight million dollars in sales per month. Later, Antanas built a bank in Kaliningrad before he finally came to his present business activities. Today he owns a chocolate factory and a chain of stores in Vilnius. He wants to become the largest chocolate producer in Lithuania and expand into the European market.

Thirty-four-year-old Andrius followed a different trajectory. His career in the 'new' society began immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Soon after starting his studies at the technical university in Vilnius he had the opportunity to go to the United States, where he studied marketing management for four years. Andrius stressed that he received this opportunity thanks to the influence of his father, a former top party bureaucrat and current entrepreneur, who arranged for his American visa. Upon his return from the United States, Andrius began as an independent entrepreneur, first as an importer of Martini. Later, he opened some of the city's leading restaurants. He organised fashion shows and founded his own advertising agency,

[5] It is not coincidence that I introduce here two male representatives of the economic elite. This elite is clearly male-dominated, a fact that is reflected in my empirical material. A detailed analysis of this gender discrepancy is not possible herein.

which ultimately collapsed during the Russian economic crisis.[6] Andrius then worked as assistant to the director of Lithuanian Insurance and then two years in a Scandinavian investment fund; at the same time he invested in the production of milk products and ice cream. Later, he moved to a digital printing company and dabbled in marketing and business consulting. Andrius today owns a legal and management consultancy. A few years ago he also started to invest in land, old buildings, and the like.

Despite generational and gender differences, for my informants constant shifts in profession appear key to remaining successful in the free market and maintaining social status in the face of socio-economic breaks and transitions. The variety and dynamism of career choices do not stand in the way of the construction of successful biographies. On the contrary, such career changes appear to be a necessary characteristic of modernity, one that my informants use to distinguish themselves from other social actors. As one of the richest men in Lithuania, the president of a large company, said in an interview:

> Any change is painful if you are not able to re-orient yourself. But I would not call this a crisis of the whole of society. For me, any change is good; it releases an explosive energy, which opens up many possibilities. We live in dynamic times and I am glad for it; I feel like a fish in water.

But flexibility and dynamism are not enough for a winner-biography. Continuity in an individual's personal and professional career must also be established in a manner that conforms to the ideal of the individual acting consistently and must prove the conformity of the respective individual to modern society. In creating such self-continuity, winners must incorporate the contrasts of 'East' and 'West' and of 'socialist past' and 'European present' in their self-representations, dualities that mark the Lithuanian social ideal in public discourse: The East is associated with the image of Russia, as an aggressive, undemocratic occupier state, and with the socialist past. The West, in most cases, has positive connotations of the future, democracy, Europe, and the like. Irmina Matonytė, a Lithuanian scholar and specialist on elite groups, describes the incommensurability of the East and the West in Lithuanian business and political spheres (Matonytė 2000: 214). The official goal for the Lithuanian economy is the adoption of Western market standards, but it is obvious that, in spite of such notions, economic relations with Russia and other eastern neighbours remain essential for the Lithuanian economy. There is a discrepancy between the dominant and politically proclaimed westward orientation and the trans-national economic and social

[6] The Russian economic crisis of 1997-1998 led to serious difficulties in Lithuania. Many young enterprises went bankrupt as a result.

processes that stretch beyond the ideologically obstructed eastern borders of the Lithuanian state.

This discrepancy is particularly painful for businesspeople. They are publicly recognised as successful Lithuanians and Europeans, but in their everyday work, many must be open to both the eastern and western markets if they really want to succeed and remain competitive. Such contradictions may not be a problem in everyday practice; they have learned over the course of their careers to negotiate between state institutions and the free market, between formal and informal networks, legality and illegality, and between the visible and invisible spheres of social life. Some were active in the socialist shadow economy at the same time they held high positions in state-owned enterprises and were in the Communist Party or the Komsomol. Those who were too young to do so openly told me about the advantages they had and the skills they learned from their parents or grandparents, who were party members and directors of state institutions or important hubs in informal networks (such as physicians).

Experiences, skills, and relationships acquired in the socialist period clearly provide valuable social and cultural capital on the road to success in the free market. But when it comes to public self-presentation, a precise selection and reorganisation of the socially visible and invisible aspects of an individual's biography become necessary – on the one hand, because the socialist past is a controversial issue, and on the other, because of an uncertainty in the population about what a 'real' European identity, untainted by a (post-)Soviet mentality, should look like.

Representatives of the Lithuanian economic elite do not try to disguise these problematic issues in their autobiographical narratives. On the contrary, they represent these tensions as reasons for their success. They naturalise their business acumen by presenting it as an inborn, inherited characteristic. For example, in my conversation with Marina and Andrius, a successful entrepreneurial couple, I was able to observe how they constructed continuities between their own business success and the activities of their parents and grandparents, making success a family tradition across generations and across political systems. Marina told me that her grandmother, who lived and worked in a kolkhoz, was 'a business woman in the style of that time'. She had a special ability to build relationships of trust with the directors of the kolkhoz and other important people by means of bribes and other informal methods typical for the time so that they 'always had more milk and flour than the others'. Marina explained how her father had inherited his particular business sense. As evidence thereof, she enumerated a whole range of economic activities that her father, as a man socialised in the centralised Soviet economy, had been involved in after 1989, from organising private loans

before the banking system was stabilised to buying and selling real estate. 'He did all that as an autodidact, without any training and without having seen it done abroad', she said, stressing the 'naturalness' of this seemingly genetically determined entrepreneurial skill.

Nor did Marina's husband Andrius see any gaps in the entrepreneurial tradition of his family. He stressed that his father, a now well-known entrepreneur and former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, had always been successful and prosperous. What had changed, Andrius explained, were merely the conditions under which business was done: 'Nothing has changed in my life, at least as far as business is concerned. Of course, things were done one way back then and are done another way now because the system and the relationships work differently'.

Like Andrius, in their depictions of their success in the free market many other winners evoke the myth of the 'heroic businessman', with his profit-oriented behaviour, who undermined the stagnating socialist system. In this way, they interpret complicated episodes in their biographies such as participation in party structures, speculation, and money laundering as 'natural' expressions of their business acumen. Other conversation partners evoked what in the Lithuanian context is a very emotional image of 'clandestine resistance' in order to legitimise their biographies. They stressed how there had existed within their families a strong sense for the injustice and hypocrisy of socialism. The collapse of the socialist system was for these individuals not a crisis but rather a return to normalcy. In this context of resistance, the activities of the winners in the new political and economic system are interpreted as a logical consequence; questionable biographical episodes are explained as necessary camouflage for their revolutionary entrepreneurial spirit. Both self-representation strategies present the narrator as a person true to a personality structure that has been consistent for generations and across political systems and with which he or she is able to integrate him or herself successfully into contemporary political and economic structures. The past is instrumentalised in constructions and representations of a linearly thinking individual consistent in his or her actions – a veritable paragon western neoliberalism.

## The 'New Europeans': Between Hunger and Taste

While a form of biographical continuity is established in the winners' discursive representations, the visible side of their lives – their material environment, their lifestyle, and their bodies – has been radically transformed. I visited many of my interview partners in their brand new, virtually sterile houses or in their newly furnished offices. I was permitted to admire their modern cars and their clothes and accompanied them to the most fashionable

fitness clubs and restaurants, where they ate healthy food and moulded their bodies in conformance with the latest trends. Even the old odds and ends in their homes such as a collection of old pipes, antique furniture, and paintings had only been purchased recently and under the guidance of interior designers and other lifestyle experts. These non-modern objects were arranged in the most modern of contexts. My question about whether or not interviewees still owned or wanted to keep any items from 'before' (i.e. from early postsocialist or even socialist times) was often met with incomprehension. Old things appeared to be as inappropriate and irrelevant in today's world as the old codes of behaviour. This break with their material and physical past, an act that paralleled their construction of biographical continuities, has its roots in specific developments that emerged in the early 1990s and in the dominant neoliberal model of the individual.

As has become apparent in self-representations of the economic elite, the initial years of the postsocialist period were particularly important as a time in which individuals distanced themselves from a situational personal model perceived as hypocritical and schizophrenic (*Homo sovieticus*) in order to transition to a modern westward-oriented form of individuality. To do so, it was often enough to simply be active in the free market and to achieve and demonstrate a degree of prosperity beyond the means of the majority of people in this young postsocialist society. In this context, material goods (especially Western consumer goods) functioned as direct 'extensions' of the human body (as Jonathan Friedman has formulated it), symbolising not simply social position but literally constituting it (Friedman 2002: 242).

With the increasing integration of Lithuania into Western political and economic structures and progressive social differentiation in Lithuanian society, it became increasingly important for the winners to situate themselves in the new social order. EU accession in particular established a new context for the vision of what constitutes a successful individual. Given the previously mentioned public discussions on the European-ness of Lithuanian society and its individual members, the 'winners' faced the task of legitimising their success not only in the national but also in the European context, at least as far as their public image was concerned. That meant confronting their often-inconsistent public image. They were awarded the status of Lithuanian and European elite and recognised as 'new', modern individuals, 'winners of the transformation', and the foundation on which the future nation would be built. But their activities just as easily could have been branded as illegal, mafia-like, and non-western and they themselves awarded a negative image as uncultured, money-hungry, 'new Lithuanians', defined

by their conspicuous consumption, clothing, and lifestyle and a clearly non-western form of behaviour.[7]

I was able to observe how members of the Lithuanian economic elite often made decisions in their everyday lives with the clear intention of distancing themselves from the so-called 'new Lithuanians' or 'bandits'. They stressed, for example, that they did not want to be seen with expensive cars, ostentatious brand-name clothing, or other 'typically postsocialist' status symbols because these were characteristic of criminals, and they were careful not to be seen in the company of such people. In maintaining their winner status both in Lithuania and in the European context, they found it necessary to distance themselves from images of the 'new Lithuanian', an image of 'money without culture' (Sampson 1994), by positioning themselves in the western tradition of 'old', 'cultured' prosperity. Such positioning was expressed primarily in terms of demonstration of good taste.

A well-known and often consulted designer and stylist described contemporary taste and social differentiation processes as being characterised by a shift from a direct relationship between people and their material goods (as an extension of the human body) to a more symbolically charged, differentiated relationship, in which things became status symbols and investments in a social class:

> About ten years ago having blinds in the windows, a new BMW, a mobile phone, and a tracksuit from Nike or Adidas was seen as being prestigious in Lithuania. It did not matter that old chairs from grandmother's dacha were hidden behind the blinds or that the car was leased and the phone stolen [...] Today, a car is still an object of prestige, but it doesn't matter if it is from 1991 or 2005. Clothing can be combined differently, depending on one's taste. But if you have money, then you don't go to a simple jewellery store to buy jewellery. Things have become investments.

It is not enough to buy the 'right' things today to situate oneself in the 'old money' tradition; these objects must be tied into the respective system of symbolic practices and an appropriate lifestyle. In doing so, members of the economic elite draw on traditional western status symbols, career strategies, and recreational activities. Membership in the Rotary and Lion's Clubs was popular at the time I was in the field, as was participation in charity events,

[7] The contradictory public perception of elites appears less illogical if one considers the autopoetic role these actors assume as builders of capitalism in the postsocialist context: 'They are destroyers as well as builders. They take pieces of the past and they find them and recombine them into new structures, amazing capital and building new institutions. In the process they are themselves changed and they change the people around them' (Gustafson 1999: 119).

art auctions, refined dance events, and wine-tastings. Common leisure activities included horseback riding, playing golf and squash, diving, travel and visiting health clubs. While most of these activities are relatively new in the Lithuanian context (the first golf course in Lithuania opened in 2002), they are symbolic markers of membership in the sphere of the 'old' and 'real' Lithuanian-European elite.

Taste is becoming increasingly important as a '*differentiating principle*' for the representation of social elite status (Bourdieu 1991: 307). But while tasteful western prosperity marks outward representation, the socialist experience of material poverty and physical restrictions have not been forgotten. In the discursive self-representations of 'winners', these experiences are reinterpreted as the root of the narrator's success. My interviewees maintained that they learned to be exceptionally flexible and to practice a particular form of self-enterprise as a result of their postsocialist experiences, and for this reason they even felt superior to Western Europeans. Their ability to adapt and stress particular aspects of their *selves* strategically – both skills attributed to the socialist individual – were described as particularly valuable in this repositioning of the economic elite. Equally important was their ability to negotiate both Western and Eastern social contexts and economic structures.

'Winners' cite a particular 'hunger' as being among their self-proclaimed 'qualities'. This hunger is manifested in an unusual and aggressive determination and will to prosperity that emerged in the context of the socialist economy of scarcity and the postsocialist transformation. While this hunger (which leads to excessive, indiscriminate consumption and the conspicuous demonstration of wealth) is considered to be a typical feature of the *nouveau riche*, it is, on the other hand, reinterpreted as a motor of the winner's success. As one of my interviewees put it:

> The new generation of managers and businesspeople has a positive aggressiveness. They are hungry in a positive way. They are intelligent and well educated; they want to come, fight, and win. Their desire to make money motivates them. I think that the Eastern Europeans will quickly rise to top positions in the European Union and this will be an injection for the old Europe.

Based on this description, individuals who have experience with the situational self are freer because they are not bound to a given truth. Instead, such individuals question the apparent truths of social life and are able to look behind the facade of society's power structures. The ability to act situationally is reinterpreted in the process of autobiographical self-representation in a new European context in conformity with neoliberal models of subjectivity and collective ideals of what it means to be a 'suc-

cessful European'. The economic elite thus positions itself not only within local social space as new, modern individuals but also in the European context – as winners.

## Hybrid Forms of Subjectivity and the Past in the Present

The answer to the question I asked initially – why are some people in Lithuania successful and others not – must be sought in the relationship between the social order and individual lifeways and in the relationship between the past and the present as it is developed and negotiated in individual and collective consciousness. In view of the Lithuanian context, it appears to me that the emergence of a neoliberal, self-enterprising individual as embodied in the stereotypical image of the 'new', modern man (*Homo europaeus*) is an important consequence of the postsocialist transformation. The same is true for the emergence of new principles of social differentiation based on the contrasts between the 'old' and 'new' individual and between the past and the present. It is important to stress that the transformation of the self is not a straightforward process, despite the popularity of the Western neoliberal model; rather, it is one actively negotiated and developed in society.

When considering economic elites, it can be argued that they are presently experiencing a transformation and formalisation of their social role in the process of EU enlargement, which in turn affects their self-interpretation and self-representation. Their public image, life, and identity models must be negotiated between dominant, westward-oriented political ideologies, European images, trans-national markets, and flows of capital. But Europeanisation is only one of many transformations that the 'winners' have experienced and survived in the last few decades. And like before, the 'winners' look for new forms of self-definition and self-representation that permit transnational economic activities and at the same time underline their public role as modern and successful Europeans. Their identity and life models mark their own transformation into neoliberal individuals, successful in the free market. And yet, this new individual also has the traits of the situational, socialist self, a fact that 'winners' interpret as a *competitive advantage*. Thus, I doubt that the differentiation process will lead to the emergence of a 'real' elite class with a collective identity and a politically articulated common interest. In view of the individuality and self-responsibility-based models of identity propagated by the winners, it seems to me more likely that they will remain a 'class on paper' (Bourdieu 1985: 742; see also Schröder in this volume) marked by a similar social position and similar experiences. What is significant, however, is that hybrid subjective forms

emerge in this process that combine past and present experiences, thereby integrating the past into the present.

(Translated by Andreas Hemming)

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*Chapter 7*

# The Otherness of Eastern Europe? The Socially Constructed Marketplace as an International Business Arena

Agnese Cimdina

## Identity as a Dynamic Feature of Social Life

The relations between the individual and his or her community underpin human life in any society (Eriksen 2000). Who we are, what we are like, how we come to identify ourselves with a certain community, how we distinguish ourselves from other people and groups, and the political and cultural consequences that result from group identification are amongst the most important issues in social anthropology.

Identity can be understood as a series of representations that are created within an individual's personality and that are tied to the biological substratum of the individual, the roles he or she performs, the presence or absence of this individual in particular social contexts (e.g. a nation or ethnic group), and also in terms of the extent to which others interpret individual behaviour as evidence for the existence of an individual identity (Seweryn and Smagacz 2006). The role of others in relation to the individual reveals how identity is a relational concept, a process resulting from individual exchanges in the course of social interactions. An identity contains a set of relations, self-representations, and self-images that an individual or group has about itself and that others attribute to that individual or group. Approaching identity as an instance of self-definition by social actors hides a multitude of controversies and interpretations surrounding the exact relations between individuals and social groups to which they belong and with which they interact.

Identity divides and unites us. It delineates us from others, and at the same time it allows us to share feelings with others (Eriksen 2000). Who we are and what our identity is are questions the answers to which depend on our location at a particular moment and with whom we cooperate. By examining identity, we examine relations between at least two categories of

people who define themselves in contradistinction to one other. It is difference or the absence of difference that creates identity. Being equivalent to or different from others, we come to acquire a certain identity.

In order to understand the processual, situational, and contextual character of identification, i.e. who one identifies with, why one identifies therewith, and in what types of situations such processes take place, we must specify from which perspective the individual is being identified – by him/herself or by an other (Voros 2006). Like Seweryn and Smagacz (2006), Voros points to an essential distinction between the self-identification (i.e. self-representation) and external identification of one and the same person. The distinction here is between internal and external instances of identification, which inevitably are dialectically related. One key type of external identification as shown by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Voros (2006) is the formalised, codified, and objectified systems of categorisation developed by powerful, authoritative institutions such as the modern state.

While ideas like 'self-understanding' and 'social location' help us to understand how individuals perceive themselves and their social world, ideas like 'commonality', 'connectedness', and 'groupness' could be usefully employed in the analysis of collective identity – that is, the emotionally tinged sense of belonging to a distinctive, self-contained group, involving both a sense of solidarity or identity with fellow group-members and a feeling of difference from or even antipathy towards specified outsiders (Voros 2006). Together with 'identification', 'representations', 'categorisations', and 'perceptions', these terms effectively reflect the identities of individuals, groups, communities, or even states.

The chapter mainly attempts to show how the identity of Baltic economies is constructed and to illustrate the repercussions of these processes on regional business activities. The chapter reflects how representations, self-perception, groupness, and connectedness of social actors contribute to the construction of the marketplace images of which the identity of the Baltic economy is built. This chapter will demonstrate that people and abstract notions of economy are interconnected and that local perceptions of the Baltic economy differ from perceptions of the Scandinavian public, which belong to a broader Western discourse on 'Otherness'.

Based on fieldwork I conducted in 2002, 2005, and 2006 in Latvia, the chapter describes, analyses, and compares the manner in which the identities of Baltic economies and entrepreneurs are constructed in Scandinavian and Latvian public culture among Scandinavian and Latvian business people. Entrepreneurs find international business operations challenging mainly because of symbolic and imagined borders rather than territorial divides. The empirical part of this chapter examines the role of these frontiers in the

build-up of different collective identities. I also discuss how interactions between various frontiers and divides influence the content of said identities. I will view the discrepancies that emerge between the self-images of local actors, on the one hand, and, on the other, images of the Latvian economy and Latvian businessmen perceived by others, in this case, Scandinavians. I have chosen not to analyse these images merely as discourses, and I examine the concrete social and economic practices giving rise to the production of these images.

In the body of pertinent literature, thus far emphasis has been placed on public culture and the role of discourse in creating a Baltic identity and the ways that the public and media construct and reconstruct the image (Plakans 2002; Ekecrantz 2004; Riegert 2004). Moreover, it appears that primary attention has been given to types of identity, leaving the interaction of actors in the identity-building processes in the shadows.

As the cases below will show, identity is something changeable and mouldable, and it is built through interactions. The identity of an entrepreneur or company develops when specific tasks in relation to specific actors are fulfilled (Johanson 2001). If interacting entrepreneurs have different nationalities, it is plausible that their nations will be identified with the results achieved. Anthropologists have pointed out for some time that identities are never better perceived than in encounters with others and in real and metaphorical frontiers (Bellier and Wilson 2000: 9) and that ethnicity or national 'membership' occur when cultural differences are made relevant through interaction (Barth 1969).

Scandinavian entrepreneurs and Latvians do not share a common stance towards the Latvian economy. The identity of the Latvian economy is shaped by external opinions and, locally, where various perspectives intersect, resulting in broad, even contradictory properties, which are attributed to the Latvian economy. This chapter views the Latvian economy as a socially constructed marketplace both at the macro- and micro-levels.

## Captured Identities

In the imagination and everyday practices of ordinary people, the state and market are constructed in a variety of ways. There are numerous *situated knowledges* (Gupta 1995: 392) through which the state and market are perceived: statistics, interaction with the state bureaucracy, pronouncements

of politicians, business with entrepreneurs and government agencies, public culture, and policies.[1]

The 'Baltic tiger', 'wild West in the East', 'Baltic Bonanza', '*den nye Østen*' ('the new East'), '*den ville Østen*' ('the wild East'), '*den nye Europa*' ('the new Europe') '*den nye Bangalore*' ('the new Bangalore'), or the European Union? These are just some 'tags' that have been associated with the Baltic States in Scandinavian public culture and by Scandinavian entrepreneurs over the last few years. The image of *Baltikum*[2] as developing from backwardness to progressiveness is central in practices and policies regarding the Baltic Sea region. Metaphors and categories attributed to the Baltic states show how policies, public culture, and interaction have constructed new kinds of Baltic identity and how these identities have been drawn into discourses about 'democratisation', 'capitalisation', the 'establishment a of free market', and 'joining Europe'. Such categorisation is powerful, as it partly overrides other means of identification. It has also attracted Western investors, who deliberately try to maintain an image of Baltic 'otherness'. A similar symbolic build-up of inter-regional borders takes place whenever collective identities are strengthened. This has been thoroughly discussed in various academic writings on 'otherness', for instance, in Said's classic, *Orientalism,* and in *Inventing Eastern Europe* by Larry Wolf, who analyses intellectual discourses about 'backwardness' and 'the Other' in modernising Europe.

In recent years, the Baltic countries have made efforts to politically and economically 'catch up' with the EU. Since their accession to the EU in 2004, the Baltic countries have been involved in a process of so-called Europeanisation (that is, the integration of disparate European communities, economies, and societies), which has brought many Western businessmen and experts to the Baltic region. Although distinctive national identities flourish throughout EU member states, special attempts have been made to clarify and promote the notion of a common European identity and market (Bellier and Wilson 2000; Cimdiņa 2006). Cimdiņa (2006) asks whether or not a true unification of European markets is achievable. Bellier and Wilson (2000) ask how and where the majority of the EU population will see their joint community of Europe and if disparate forms of European identity will ever be identified with EU institutions, policies, and ideals.

Postsocialist countries share at least one identity feature, namely, they are situated in a pre-defined framework. One aspect of this framework is the

[1] By public culture, I understand a zone of cultural debate conducted through mass media and other mechanical modes of reproduction, and the visible practices of institutions such as the state (Gupta 1995).

[2] The Baltic countries are often referred to as '*Baltikum*' in Scandinavia.

epithet 'emerging' – emerging democracy, emerging market, emerging economy, emerging capitalism. Thus, to the Latvian economy are attributed several imaginary features that are part and parcel of the Western-defined phenomenon of the 'emerging market'. Such construction contains a clear operation of power in the specification of one identity that is perceived to be mature and developed and another that is perceived as emerging or developing. The rise of the emerging market as a concept itself is a consequence of new ways of looking at processes in developing countries (Montoya 2002). One can characterise emerging markets as those in which processes of modernisation, industrialisation, and consumption move rapidly; consequently, investors enjoy higher rates of return on their investments in these markets than in North America or Western Europe, where growth supposedly moves at a steadier pace (Montoya 2002).

Successfully growing rather than emerging: this is how Latvian officials like to refer to the Latvian economy. They see Latvia as the most rapidly growing economy in the European Union. They are convinced that Latvia's accession to the European Union and to NATO in 2004 have notably improved the already favourable investment climate in the Baltic and have helped the region attain the highest economic growth rate in the European Union. Latvia's membership in these two organisations is believed to have created promising new business opportunities for those wishing to gainfully explore both the Eastern and Western markets.

What are the views of individual entrepreneurs in relation to such a market? Do they reflect the images of Latvian economy on the macro-level? On the basis of fifty in-depth interviews with Scandinavian and Latvian entrepreneurs in Latvia, observations of Scandinavian industrial parks in Latvia, and my own participation in business activities in Latvia, certain trends can be observed.

## From Dale to Baltikum

From 1967 to 1999, Dale, a 5000-strong village in Norway, was the place chosen by Tore Hauge for metal production.[3] At one point, a decision was reached to transfer production to Latvia, an unheard of place at the time. Tore admits his then-ignorance candidly – all he had heard about Latvia were rumours that the mafia was active there. When we first met in 2002 at one of his production units in Latvia, Tore agreed that there is no mafia in sight:

> Norwegians commonly believe that Latvia equals Russia. But when they come here, their impressions are preponderantly positive [...]

[3] All names of people, firms and cities have been made anonymous herein.

> You name it; there are lots of Lithuanian gangs in Norway and Europe, those raging thieves. Many Norwegians are unable to differentiate between Latvia and Lithuania; that's why talk about the Latvian mafia is so frequent. They just think that the place here is teeming with crooks.

Tore relocated his production facilities to Līvpils in Latvia because he was unable to compete in the European market. For a period of several years his enterprise in Dale had been attempting to compete with two other European producers who had transferred their production facilities to Poland in the early 1990s. Metal and labour cost half as much as they did in Norway, so as the time went by the higher expenses of Tore's facilities made it increasingly difficult to compete. His thirty-two-year investment (in terms of experience and machinery) was in great jeopardy. To prevent a closure, Tore chose to move production to Latvia and his business recovered in just three years.

Why exactly was Tore's business saved by Latvia? The Norwegian government's action plan for cooperation with EU candidate countries, implemented in 2001, gave priority to the Baltic States. Although not a EU member itself, Norway was willing to assist the Baltic in the accession process. Many entrepreneurs from Scandinavia saw the Baltic region as an extended Nordic market and wanted to be present there.

Public culture finds its expression in various headlines such as '*Norske bedrifter finner ikke kvalifisert arbeidskraft*' ('Norwegian enterprises fall short of qualified labour'), '*En av fem paa vei ut av Norge*' ('One in five leaves Norway'), '*Det nye Latvia*' ('The New Latvia'), and '*Norske industrier Etablerer seg i lavkostland*' ('Norwegian production units are being established in a low-cost country'). Policies and conversations with Norwegian entrepreneurs proved that Norwegians saw the Baltic region as dynamic and growing, and with high production costs at home the Baltikum was seen as the best option for investments and transfers of production facilities. Nordic Business Development Cooperation (NBDC), managed by Harald Heggstad, encouraged entrepreneurs to invest in Eastern European countries. NBDC's objective was to facilitate the internationalisation of Norwegian companies, aiming to make it easier to establish small- and medium-sized enterprises in Eastern Europe. Achieving this required NBDC to make things more predictable, reduce risk, and reinforce long-term investment perspectives by establishing their own industrial parks like the one in Līvpils in Latvia.

One of the first industries to move to NBDC's industrial park was N-Welding Ltd. The choice of Līvpils was dictated by NBDC marketing activities and the fact that other companies were increasingly transferring production units to countries with low production costs. Knut Kløver, the director

of N-Welding Ltd., confirmed his initial but ultimately unfounded scepticism about the Baltic region:

> The safest way to penetrate the market was the NBDC park in Līvpils. We wanted to make sure we would not fall prey to fraudsters. We had heard there was mafia, one had to bribe…. In fact, insofar as we are concerned, we haven't had any such disappointments. The low salaries explain why production in Līvpils is so lucrative. In Norway, an hour of welding plus insurance costs us 270 NOK, but here the same hour with insurance and social tax only costs 30 NOK. Latvia offers countless possibilities; it no longer has to be perceived as a risky and shady place. The economy functions rather well, and Russia, with its humongous market, is just next-door. So there is no doubt that moving to Līvpils was the right decision.

## The Town of Līvpils: An Industrial Paradise?

Līvpils' leafy streets were well maintained and lined with trendy shops and bright cafes when I saw it again in 2005. Compared with the economic gloom in provincial Latvia just a few years ago, it seemed that prosperity had arrived. Private businesses were well established. New private housing was growing rapidly. Although the transition had created a sharp divide between the haves and the have-nots, people believed their town functioned fairly well.

Despite its proximity to a few larger cities, Līvpils has an unrushed, provincial feel about it. According to a local government official, eight years ago, public municipal finances were in shambles. But now, the town has paid off its debts to gas suppliers and has invested in new boiler plants to ensure that residents receive heat and hot water at all times. The official claimed that in doing this, his municipality had shrugged off the old Soviet-style dependency on subsidies and had ensured that it would have a viable financial foundation.

The Latvian owner of a bakery in Līvpils told me that his life had definitely improved in recent years, but he listed numerous problems faced by many trying to run businesses. He claimed that the tax system supported large national monopolies, unfairly burdening small- and medium-sized companies. High interest rates and tough conditions for bank loans did not make life easy either. A year ago, the bakery needed new machinery. Such purchases are eligible for tax relief, a form of support the Latvian state provides producers. The baker explained how he was unable to obtain bank credit necessary for buying the machinery and bought second-hand equipment, hoping that it would function well. However, had he bought it new, it

would have lasted longer and would not have been more costly, given the tax benefits.

An entrepreneur from Līvpils who was active in the field of electrical engineering and had experience at both small and large companies explained that the differences between the two were enormous. He said that small businesses were forced into cheating to survive because the state had not created conditions in which they could work and prosper, especially when they provided social benefits to their staff and pay all of their taxes. Alternatively, large companies had no choice but to pay social benefits and taxes in their entirety.

Attracting investors was one of the priorities of the Līvpils municipality. Recently, Līvpils was advertised in Norway as a convenient location for production facilities. According to a local businessman, the opportunities and tax system in Līvpils were the same for large enterprises, investors, and small manufacturers alike. But several manufacturers from Līvpils felt quite bitter about unfair initial start-up conditions that prevented them from achieving sufficient production levels and thus from making enough money to compete with foreign investors in Latvia. One local businessman explained:

> Foreigners arrive in Latvia with ready-made solutions in order to manufacture goods because they want to bring down production costs. They found their niche and their sales outlets in the world a long time ago. They are not eager to sell in Latvia because the market is quite small and purchasing power is not too bright either. The small Latvian entrepreneur, however, has to start his business, and he has yet to find outlets for his goods. We hardly manage to find our niche here in the Latvian market, let alone the European one […] This year we had to discontinue three projects because we failed to get credit from the bank. The SMEs [small- and medium-sized enterprises] struggle to get funding. I think that foreign companies have access to credit abroad, which they invest in Latvia. But who will give me credit in the Swiss or Stockholm banking establishment? Despite our being part of the EU this is simply not an option. I must confess that I resort to tax avoidance to keep my business going.

Though the initial starting point for locals was not as good as that of foreign investors, small businesses were gradually developing in Līvpils. But a Soviet-era enterprise still maintained a major role in the town's economy. The public company Līvpils AS, a huge textile plant on the outskirts of town, employed over 1,500 people. It also paid many of them just over fifty

lats per month.[4] The financial problems the company experienced meant untimely payment of wages. A municipality official said that he did not really know what the current situation at the plant was, but he said that he believed it was being restructured into several smaller enterprises, which might soften the blow its potential collapse would deal to the city.

According to a staff member at Līvpils AS, most workers do not even know that overtime, holiday-work, standing in for other workers, and taking up additional duties all, in principle, should mean extra payment. Neither do the majority of workers realise that they have legitimate claims for paid leave and safe, normal working conditions. A social worker in Līvpils told me that the growing alcoholism problem in the town was directly attributable to the economic problems at Līvpils AS and to other unscrupulous employers that operate without contracts, safety regulations, or social benefits. She said that middle-aged people in particular found it difficult to adjust when they lost factory jobs they had held for the entirety of their adult lives. Nevertheless, according to the official, improvements were being made in the way the city dealt with social problems.

Once I had returned from Līvpils, I went to a media library in Riga to find out how the economic situation in Latvia was evaluated in public culture. I came across a study of the competitiveness of European countries done by the University of Sheffield and George Washington University. The study placed Latvia at the bottom of the list. However, Latvian experts were cautious about and sceptical of this study. They believed that indices of competitiveness based on population income and GDP were likely to be imprecise in that they disregarded the role of the grey economy.

A Latvian economist stated that the study underrated the Baltic countries and that it was impossible to accept that, in terms of competitiveness, Latvia was the weakest link in Europe. He pointed out that the World Bank placed Latvia amongst the countries that were putting in place the most dynamic reforms with regard to the entrepreneurial environment. Furthermore, he noted that, according to the World Bank's *Doing Business 2005* report, Latvia ranked among the world's top countries in terms of business start-up time and that Latvia's financial sector was among the most stable in Central and Eastern Europe.

Later, visiting the Latvian Business Agency, I could not but notice various business guides full of quotes by Latvian officials stating that Latvia possessed the unique advantage of being a strategic point of entry into the Russian, CIS, and EU markets. They emphasised that, owing to its advantageous geographic location with three ice-free ports, an extensive road system

[4] Latvias national currecy; one Lats is equivalent to about 0.69 EUR.

linking Europe and the CIS, and its high-capacity railway corridor linking Latvia's ports with Russia and the Far East, Latvia could serve as an important link between East and West as well as North and South. In their view, Riga, the largest city in the Baltic States, had all the potential of becoming a significant commercial, financial, and transportation centre in Northern Europe.

The advantageous economic and geographic location of Latvia was likewise acknowledged by the Knut, Harald, and Tore, the entrepreneurs introduced earlier in this chapter. But while Latvian officials extolled the merits of rapid economic growth and stressed Latvia's solid investment opportunities in order to attract investors, local SMEs feel neglected. However, Latvia's investor-friendly entrepreneurial environment, anticipated on a macro-economic level by Latvian officials, should not be taken for granted. Everyday business encounters are a different facet of Latvian economy: although they remain outside the macro-economic image, they create a subjective image of the economy perceived by individual investors.

## An Ordinary Trade?

When doing business, an entrepreneur must initiate and coordinate a number of interpersonal relationships to effectuate his or her enterprise (Barth 1967). In an international setting, a variety of business strategies may come in handy, as each entrepreneur or company has its own unique interpretation of the industry and environment within which they operate. Likewise, each player has a unique interpretation of how to do business (Cimdiņa 2006). Over time, when companies operating in the same environment and industry come to acquire understanding and experience, a common understanding of how to conduct business may emerge (Sorensen 2002). Where many persons act in a similar manner, one may expect that they agree on certain relevant evaluations and regard their own behaviour under prevailing circumstances to be optimal in terms of these evaluations (Barth 1967). It is difficult to predict, though, whether common views and understanding will emerge and how these qualities are likely to develop once they have emerged because social constructions are not planned but emerge as a result of daily activities. The way industry or business develops depends on the perceptions of business actors involved and how they react to the actions of others (Cimdiņa 2006).

In the spring of 2005, the Krister Hjellum's company came to the Baltic market. To start up, Krister needed a reliable person with good knowledge of the Baltic and Norwegian entrepreneurial environment and languages. I needed to grasp the intentions of a Norwegian company, its fields of activity, and the challenges faced in the Baltic market, so for research

purposes I decided to accept Krister's offer to assist him in establishing his enterprise in the Baltic market. As a Latvian with ten years of work experience in Norway, I was the right person for Krister's company. To manage things from Baltikum seemed an excellent idea to him because labour costs were cheaper there, workers more skilled and ambitious, and it was easier to avoid issues arising from the pointless laws that had to be respected in Norway.

Krister showed interest in an *Object*[5] being sold by Grīva Enterprise, a Latvian local government company. Krister asked me to get in touch with Grīva and to tell them that a Scandinavian company, represented by him, would take the *Object* unseen, pay one million USD more than the eventual other buyers, cash out immediately, and cover extra costs for problem solving incurred by the people involved, in addition to providing a good bonus for the owner of the *Object*.

The structure of Grīva turned out to be complicated and its management unreachable. I had to ask for help from a friend to find out the contact information of the person in charge of the sale. Once our offer had been forwarded to the person in charge, Krister expected that, stunned by the generosity of it, the person in charge would sell the *Object* immediately. But there was no response to Krister's offer.

By inquiring among some acquaintances, I was able to locate a man who knew the person in charge of the sale. I was introduced to him as the representative of a serious buyer, and a meeting with Grīva's board of directors was arranged. It turned out that in addition to the person directly in charge of the sale, the assent of the entire board of directors and the director-general was necessary for the purchase to take place. But just prior to the meeting, I was told that it had been cancelled, as Krister had failed to provide information concerning the buyer of the *Object*, i.e. the Scandinavian company.

'This is not a fairytale but the world of business, with certain rules about how you conduct it', the representative from Grīva enterprise said. A clear precondition for the meeting to take place was that documents proving the solvency of the Scandinavian company were to be brought along. Subsequently, I got in touch with Krister and reminded him to bring the required documents. Krister was irritated:

> Who does he think he is? [...] Is this a kind of joke? Is this a limited company or a show with gangsters, trying to compete with each other? I refuse to obey such old commies. It's plain extortion. They think they can treat us this way. *Objects* of that kind are bought and

[5] In order to make the deal anonymous I cannot reveal what exactly this object for sale was.

> sold over the phone. Perhaps it's the only one of that kind in Latvia; they haven't sold any so far [laughing]. He attempts to pull out of the deal and believes that we're fools; such a primitive mind…It looks as if they are attempting to introduce a new global sales practice.

Krister carried on his vehement, ironic tirade:

> He said I was a bad manager? Oh, let him talk to me; I have worked in international business management all my life. He's useless; we have to approach the director of Grīva directly. Do you think it is feasible?

To organise the meeting I had to seek out assistance from some acquaintances again. I managed to get in touch with Sandra Uzule, the mother of a very good friend of mine. Sandra was a powerful state official who was unlikely to see her invitations to meetings turned down. In order to help us with negotiations, she called the director of Grīva enterprise and invited him to a tea party in her villa on the outskirts of the city.

The table was laid for five. When we arrived, Sandra invited me to take the seat to her right and showed Krister a seat next to me. To her left sat her husband and the director of Grīva, Viktors Skuja. The smell of tea and freshly baked cinnamon cookies, Sandra's feminine hospitality, and the cognac offered by her husband all contributed to a pleasant, relaxed vibe. Krister and I were introduced as 'family friends' and 'representatives of a promising Scandinavian company'. Over the course of the evening, our company's interest in obtaining the *Object* was announced, and a long discussion ensued about how to possibly reach a deal. Viktors had the profoundest respect for Sandra as a politician, and Sandra reciprocated, showing reverence to Viktors as an influential businessman. Obviously, they thought of each other in terms of a friendship of mutual importance. It was a very pleasant evening, full of jokes, compliments, and small talk about politics, business, property management, and other trivialities. It did not resemble in the slightest a typical business meeting aimed at reaching a multimillion-dollar deal. But it was exactly in such a relaxed environment that an agreement was reached: Grīva would try to insure that the Scandinavian company could acquire the *Object* within a couple of weeks. When bidding his farewell, Viktors invited us for a yacht trip to take place the following day, Krister was delighted and believed that it meant that the deal was sealed.

Two days after the yacht trip and a hospitable reception at Viktors' spacious apartment, Krister's offer regarding the *Object* was accepted, and the contract-signing meeting was set. However, a week later I learned that Grīva enterprise had decided to terminate negotiations with Krister. Their decision was based on the fact that the Scandinavian company Krister repre-

sented was unable to prove its serious intentions or to provide guaranties for the purchase. Krister opposed the decision, stating that serious businessmen should keep to their agreements, be they verbal or written, but Grīva provided no further answers.

Following numerous phone calls from Krister's Scandinavian partner, who insisted that the *Object* deal was worthwhile, Krister felt duty-bound to cast light on the unfortunate contract signing meeting:

> The greedy members of the board of Grīva called me a cheat and a representative of a letter-box company [i.e. a company that exists in name only, as a tax haven]. It was plain to see that they expected a bribe. We had calculated an impressive amount indeed for that purpose. I sent an email to Grīva's lawyer. I guess her name was Ilga Cine; I offered her cash. No answer, incredible and utterly unprofessional! Obviously, they have no clue how business is done in the civilised Western world.

Coincidentally, it turned out that Ilga Cine was an acquaintance of mine. This fact cheered up Krister, and he asked me to give her a call and to tell her that he would make sure that she benefited if she helped him out. From what Ilga said, I understood that the Scandinavians had in fact made a bad impression. Krister expected that my acquaintanceship with Ilga would secure the deal. But Ilga was furious and told me that there would be an official auction of the *Object* and a written contract in order to rule out anyone getting it on the exclusive basis of a personal, verbal agreement. But convinced of the merits of his own professionalism, Krister still did not want to give up:

> Tell her that as your friend I can assist her with the selling procedure. I see that people in Latvia are neither able to communicate nor do they know how to sell. A Norwegian can buy such an *Object* in Japan over the phone because there are international regulations in place that provide for such an option. Latvians are incompetent abusers of power...But we can very well get tough with them – the *Object* can be seized.

Over the next few days rumours began to spread that the Scandinavian company that wanted to acquire the *Object* had turned out to be undependable. This made Krister indignant, and he stated that Latvians had no manners and no understanding of what Western rules of business conduct were like: 'Call Cine and Viktors Skuja and tell them that we revoke our offer. Ours was a gift to Grīva, but they evidently don't know how to manage things', he said.

## A Gift Turned Down or the Social Logic of Exchange

Ilga Cine and I met a couple of months later. The *Object* had already been auctioned off to a Mediterranean company for 1.2 million USD less than the Scandinavian company had offered. I brought her a bottle of wine and apologised for the trouble I had caused her by asking her to help my Scandinavian colleagues out. She recounted to me why the Scandinavians had not gotten the sale:

> Krister believed that good contacts are enough to get everything done...He wanted to get some 'easy dough'. Fair enough. As a business-minded person, I can understand this, but he treats us like Africans. His attitude sucks. He thinks that everybody is only too happy to please him and that we're all totally ignorant. For your sake, I made an effort to check out if something could be done… but then he alleged to the entire Grīva board that I had given him guarantees…He was asked to provide information on the purchaser and it appeared that the purchaser was a complete non-entity. He was unable to produce a single document proving the solvency and existence of the Scandinavian company. Grīva Enterprise is owned by the local government and has to account to the state for what it does; we can't get involved in business deals with a mysterious person who claims to have several million bucks up his sleeve. He believed that all the board could be bribed and vouched that he would pay us nearly half a million USD. And then he walks around saying that somebody has explicitly demanded that he pay this amount. The Mediterranean company sent a normal application for the tender with all the germane documents, and the *Object* was eventually sold, albeit for a lower price.

How can one explain this Scandinavian misstep in cooperating with Latvian businessmen? Why didn't the Grīva enterprise simply go for a quick profit? Isn't the basic objective of any market exchange or business transaction to yield the greatest profit possible? Are Latvian entrepreneurs as unprofessional and unreasonable as Krister believed them to be? The deal with the Mediterranean company was not very lucrative for Grīva, but neither was *kula* trade 'profitable' for Trobrianders. How can we account for such seemingly irrational behaviour? Are there considerations having to do with social logics of exchange or the articulations of 'alien' reality?

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Business* (2003), any trading of goods, stocks, shares, commodities, etc. may simply be termed 'exchange' when one value is exchanged for another, just like in the sale of the *Object*. All exchanges are based on reciprocity. For economists, reciprocity refers to two-directional exchanges, monetised or not. For anthropologists, reciprocity

falls in the scope of communal transactions and is never about objects alone but about relationships that are made through them (Gudeman 2001). If someone invites you to his or her place for dinner, this invitation implies a reciprocal obligation. Sandra and Viktors' relationship would have fallen into ruin if Viktors had not reciprocated Sandra's invitation by inviting her on a yacht trip. In doing so, he discharged his duties towards Sandra for a given period of time. As for Krister, he believed that Sandra's invitation to tea needed to be reciprocated with the *Object* deal. Whereas Viktors reciprocated Sandra's invitation because their relationship was important to him, he could not be bothered with Krister because he felt no need to establish a relationship with him.

In principle, the capitalist economy recognises only one form of commodity exchange, namely, market exchange based on the laws of supply and demand (Eriksen 2001). But markets never exist outside cultural and social contexts, and trade is not detached from social bonds even in capitalist societies. Buyers and sellers are constrained by obligations requiring them to purchase certain things at certain times in certain markets and by obligations to reciprocate and maintain relations and networks. In most places there are rules, written or unwritten, that stipulate what can and what cannot be sold and purchased for money. Even in modern capitalist societies, there is a general agreement that there are values that cannot be bought for money – friendship, trust, loyalty, and reputation, to cite but a few. But the *Object* did not belong to these values.

The transaction did not solely involve the *Object*. As evidenced by the chronology of the deal, from the onset there were important social bonds and obligations. Krister did not want to reveal the identity of the Scandinavian company and attempted to corrupt the loyalty of Grīva's legal representative, thereby breaking 'the rules of the game' and consequently tarnishing his image in the eyes of Grīva's board in addition to wasting his investments in social ties that were aimed at promoting his success. Precisely because gifts have an integrative function and are concurrently capable of establishing mutual relations between individuals, the Scandinavians were ready to part with an impressive amount of money as a bonus in order to secure the deal. The gift imposes an identity on both giver and recipient, revealing 'the idea' that the recipient evokes in the imagination of the giver (Parry and Bloch 1989). The Scandinavians perceived Grīva Enterprise as a body that welcomed gifts so that a positive outcome could be reached. But this perception was wrong; there was no obligation to give.

It is argued that money allows us to measure everything by the same yardstick and that it reduces qualitative differences to purely quantitative ones. Money denies the unique and is easily regarded as a means to all ends.

The possession of money thereby confers upon the possessor an almost God-like power (Parry and Bloch 1989: 6). In light of this argument, it is tempting to state that money can be used to dissolve 'cherished cultural discriminations' (ibid.), to 'eat away' at qualitative differences, and to depersonalise inter-personal relations. The Scandinavians believed that money provided a means of reducing 'qualitative differences' – they believed that money could be used to pave over the fact that they were ready to take up power positions to which they as foreigners would otherwise not be entitled.

Just like in the potlatches held by the Kwakiutl Indians of North America (Mauss 1995), the Scandinavians tried to surpass their competitors and to place themselves at the top of the hierarchy in relation to Grīva. The significance of such a hierarchy could be viewed in terms of the correlative forms of capital emphasised by Bourdieu (1986). In Scandinavia, as the ethnic majority, Scandinavians enjoy economic, political, symbolic, and cultural power. Used to this position in their own land, they cannot accept a different status elsewhere (e.g. in Latvia). This can also be seen in the way in which Scandinavians always try to have the last word on a given subject, like when Krister revoked an offer that had already been rejected by Grīva. Violations of the obligation of reciprocity (to give, to accept, and to give again), regardless of the place of violation, be it Polynesia or Latvia, incur consequences. After Krister's gift was repeatedly rejected, he threatened war, seizure of the *Object*, and other nefarious repercussions both to the board members and Grīva's legal counsel. Grīva's refusal to accept Krister's 'gift' can be construed as an unwillingness to enter into an alliance and morally committed relationship with Krister and his partners.

In the case of the *Object*, the Scandinavians wanted a quick and anonymous exchange, without revealing their identity. But the Scandinavians' money was not perceived as something anonymous. Instead, the Latvians identified it with an objectionable source. Ilga Cine understood that Krister was out for 'easy dough', but for her money was not only about profit but remained closely linked to its source and the giver's attitude and intentions. Neither she nor Grīva's board could accept the Scandinavian way of construing money along the lines of 'We = the West = money = power'.

One wonders if the 'odour' of the money's source was the factor that ultimately made the deal between Latvians and Scandinavians impossible. If the economy of Latvia were based on the principles of the gift economy, this would be a plausible way of explaining this occurrence. But for the time being, Latvia has a market economy that functions as well as any other in Europe. There is a trend in social anthropology to postulate a fundamental division between monetary and non-monetary economies, this division being intrinsically linked to other dichotomies such as traditional vs. modern, pre-

capitalist vs. capitalist, and gift economy vs. commodity economy. The introduction of money is viewed as the major catalyst of the transformation from the latter of each pair to the former (Bloch and Parry 1989). This postulate has prevented a number of writers from seeing the importance of money in many traditional or pre-capitalist economies (Fuller 1989) and, I would like to add, the importance of non-monetary economic interactions, or more precisely, social bonds and affiliation, in capitalist economies.

Market exchanges, whatever we may think of them, are not uniform, and the market in different societies certainly functions in different ways. Although the main purpose of commercial exchange is monetary profit, this does not mean that the affiliation of partners and the value of sustaining social relationships are irrelevant. The importance of personal relations[6] in socialist and postsocialist economies has been observed by many. Many researchers, from Berliner (1952) as one of the forerunners to Humphrey (2000), Johanson (2001), Ledeneva (2001), Lampland (2002), Sedlenieks (2003), Barstad (2004), L'Orange (2004), Cimdiņa (2006), and others, have studied the role of personal relations in both legal and illegal business activities in postsocialist economies. The importance of personal relations in these economies can at least partly be explained as a legacy of the state-planned economy and as a result of the uncertainty and volatility caused by reforms. Networks were necessary to deal with widespread shortages (Barstad 2004), while the best way to enforce agreements was to do business with those whom one could trust (Johanson 2001). This tendency is observed not only on the personal level; Ledeneva (1989), Hendley (1997), Johanson (2001), Sedlenieks (2003), and Barstad (2004) all concur that firms also tend to rely on personal relations rather than on legal systems as a means of settling disputes and conflicts.

Finding the right people with connections in Baltikum used to determine the degree of future success for the majority of the people I interviewed. NBDC's strategy reduced the necessity for such local networks, offering a ready-made production environment in the Baltic. But it is probably the case that the presence of instrumental relations in the contemporary economy is inherent to market relations as such rather than a unique feature of the postsocialist setting. The extent to which economic life is embedded in structures of social relations – be it in a socialist or a democratic society – is one of the classic questions of social theory (Granovetter 1985). Networks and connections are used in many countries for various purposes, and in terms of economy, they are often necessary for raising capital, forging stable cooperative links, and finding solutions to business problems. Networking is

[6] 'Social ties between people … relationships between friends, leisure associations, professional contacts' (Ledeneva 2001: 62).

considered to be a vital part of any functioning economy. Snehota (1993) defines the workings of the market as a process of networking, that is, establishing, strengthening, weakening, and dissolving exchange relationships between market participants.

## Frontiers and Otherness

One can gain insight into identity-related mechanisms by observing the personal experiences of individuals thrust into other-than-home environments, working with others. As regards the Grīva case, these identity-related mechanisms shaped interactions between the parties more than their desire to make profits. In their attempts to come to an agreement, the Scandinavians and representatives of Grīva tried to cross boundaries of many types – territorial, political, social, psychological, and cultural – but ultimately without success. What borders are left to cross, one might wonder. After all, ever since the collapse of the USSR and enlargement of the EU, there have been radical changes related to the Baltic borders and their isolation from the rest of Europe. One could claim that EU enlargement has brought about a world without borders that is likely to fundamentally transform and bring nearer economic, political, and cultural realities. But do Latvians actually think of themselves as being one with the rest of Europe? Although we have witnessed the dwindling importance of the former, well-defined borders, new ones have been put in place both territorially and symbolically. These new borders are not only physical but also psychological.

Klusakova (Klusakova et al. 2006) contends that frontiers and identities cannot be treated separately. Dividing lines, frontiers, and boundaries are present everywhere, both separating and connecting objects, territories, individuals, and groups. They construct and confirm identifications. In many situations, like in the Grīva case, an individual thinks of himself or herself as one of 'us', as part of a category that is distinct from its surroundings, which are themselves then defined as 'other'. By definition, identities create borders between communities and collective entities that define themselves as 'us' in contrast to 'them' or 'the others'. Thus, borders and identities belong together. Self-identification is facilitated and supported by the construction of images and stereotypes of others. Others are different, and as a general rule, negative traits are attributed to them, and this is why it is so difficult for any of 'us' to accept differences or otherness (Klusakova et al. 2006).

The local entrepreneurs of Līvpils perceived themselves as a whole. While an essential element of their sense of connectedness stemmed from the shared difficulties they faced doing business, the case of Grīva was different. At the onset of negotiations about the *Object*, the starting point for the Scandinavians and the representatives of Grīva was similar: in the given

circumstances both the Scandinavians and the representatives of Grīva perceived themselves as entrepreneurs. But why was this common identity weaker than other collective ties like, for instance, ethnic or national ones? Over the course of the negotiations, another collective identity came to the surface. Its ties of connectedness turned out to be strong enough to put the two parties in opposition. Instead of crossing the perceived boundaries, the Scandinavians and the representatives of Grīva deliberately sustained the dimension of otherness, an occurrence that ultimately became the main obstacle preventing the two parties from reaching a mutually lucrative deal. To get over this 'imaginary' wall, money and presents were used. However, ultimately it turned out then an exchange of gifts, including money, involving 'the others' who were different from 'us', was not desirable.

It should be added that 'us' never has a clear value. The feeling of groupness has nothing to do with the real distribution of the so-called common opinion. The combination of shared common attributes (e.g. language and habits) and the existence of certain social ties generate groupness – a feeling of belonging together. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Voros (2006) point out that strongly bounded senses of groupness may rest more on categorical commonalities and an associated feeling of belonging together than on relational connectedness. This is typically the case for large-scale communities like nations: when a diffuse self-understanding as a member of a particular nation crystallises into a strongly bounded sense of groupness, it is likely to depend on strongly felt and perceived commonality rather than relational connectedness.

If we accept social reality as a social construct, i.e. as something that has been created by social actions, 'frontiers' come to depend on individual and group definitions, which in turn are based on the subjective experiences of individuals. Frontiers can be invisible; stress is on the symbolic, cultural, and internal perception of the line between things that are understood as 'mine', 'ours' (i.e. known), or 'his', 'hers', or 'theirs' (i.e. unknown, different) (Seweryn and Smagacz 2006).

While in the case of Grīva, the Latvian and the Scandinavian entrepreneurs perceived themselves as fundamentally different from one another, in other contexts the proximity of Latvia to the rest of Europe is emphasised. Latvian officials and politicians consider Latvia to be a European country in its own right and on an equal footing with other European countries. Both at the micro- and macro-level, distinctions between external and internal identifications and their dialectical relation are obvious.

One key type of external identification lies in public culture and the policies made by powerful state authorities, even if citizens often do not explicitly recognise the forms of identification involved in policy-making.

Consequently, the activities and experiences of individuals reflect how these internal and external identifications emerged. Following his failure to reach a deal with Grīva, Krister viewed Latvia as diametrically opposed to the 'civilised western world with no understanding of what the western rules of business conduct are like'.

Bearing in mind the duality of cultural structures here, one is able to see that, on the one hand, culture provides a pool of resources to be drawn on in everyday social activity. On the other hand, social activity creatively shapes and reshapes culture and, thus, also practices in the marketplace. According to this perspective, individuals and groups constantly create, shape, and reshape 'frontiers' and 'borders' within existing cultural, political, and economical frameworks. There is a dialectical relationship between structural conditions and new social needs, aspirations, and aims (Seweryn and Smagacz 2006).

## The Magnet of Latvia

My starting point was to approach the business reality of Latvian and Scandinavian entrepreneurs in Latvia as a mix of unique and commonly agreed upon ways of acting within this milieu. Viewing business reality as an outcome of the interplay between the constructions, self-understanding, and connectedness of individuals, I naturally began to focus on the interplay between individuals. The best way to understand this interplay was to take part in it.

As we have seen, the Norwegian companies in question were attracted to Latvia because of its strategically advantageous location, relatively low operating costs, and its extensive labour force. What story would Tore, Harald, Knut, and Krister tell about Latvia? Tore and Knut viewed Latvia as a country with cheap labour and raw materials and logistics, a sort of refuge from the threats of bankruptcy in Norway. For Harald, Latvia was a cheap but promising country, a sort of base from which his Norwegian policies could be carried out with a view of supporting his own businessmen in Eastern Europe. Krister viewed it as a place that would enable him to show off his Western know-how and entrepreneurial skills, to secure quick profits, to employ ambitious, skilled but cheap labour, to avoid stringent Norwegian laws and regulations, to find loopholes in local laws, and to carry out transactions the legality of which even locals would find suspect.

It would be wrong to claim that the *Object* deal failed because money was chosen as a means of reaching the goal. The issue is more complex than this. Krister's strategy of using anonymous money and bribing Grīva was based on a Scandinavian perception of the Baltic States as a region in which such behaviour was acceptable. The perceptions of Krister, Tore, Knut, and

Harald did not necessarily refer to real divisions but were constructed in everyday social interactions. The social construction of business reality takes place through the interactions of individuals who base their actions on experience, perception, reflection, and various myths (Cimdiņa 2006). This echoes the assumption of the social constructionists, who claim that social phenomena are constantly created and reinvented in fluid processes and that our knowledge of such phenomena is nothing but a stream of reconstructed interpretations, looking at the world from one limited perspective or another (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Friedman 1994; Burr 2003).

In the cases I have outlined, experience and reputation are vital components of the identity construction we see occurring. Experience is gained from interacting, joint problem solving (or the failure thereof), trade, and business operations. Interaction is vital to gaining experience. Knowledge about the reputation of other actors is gained from conversations and public culture and is then transformed into opinions, ideas, and information about specific actors, organisations, and the state and then further exchanged between entrepreneurs and companies. Knowledge of individual reputations helps entrepreneurs learn about other business actors beyond their own limited exchanges and interactions. In the case of Tore Hauge and Knut Kløver, we saw how their preconceived opinions about Latvia, which were produced by Scandinavian public culture and policies, turned out to be wrong.

Representations of the Baltic States and market are constituted, contested, and transformed both in daily interactions and in public culture. The construction of the image of the Baltic market is based not only on first-hand experience but also on various myths about the *wild East* and the *Baltic tiger*. As observed elsewhere (Cimdiņa 2006), understanding the perceptions business actors have of Eastern European markets makes it easier to understand their willingness to operate in these markets. It also helps to explain their behaviour, which, more often than not, is a performative consequence of their perceptions.

Since 2000, the trend of relocating production units to the Baltic states has shaped the public culture of Norwegian entrepreneurs and producers quite noticeably. Relocations to Latvia have received extensive mass media coverage and have been discussed at great length by entrepreneurs. A closer look at public culture reveals that transition (from socialism to capitalism, from planned economy to free market, from postsocialist to Western standards) remains an essential concept in dealings with Baltic countries. It is obvious that Scandinavian entrepreneurs often resist viewing the Baltic States as equals.

The identity of the Latvian economy turns out to be quite complex. Externally, the Baltic Sea region is perceived as a mixture of both backwardness and great expectations. It has inherited features from its Soviet past but faces a potential future of development within the EU. Internally, at the macro-level it is shaped both by images in Latvian public culture, which to a great extent aim at attracting investors, and by the public debates of local experts on Latvia's rapid economic growth. These debates have disregarded and continue to disregard negative statistical data from foreign sources and turn a blind eye to the difficulties encountered by small businessmen.

At the micro-level, interactions between individuals involved in day-to-day business operations lead to a different picture. Although foreign entrepreneurs are generally welcome in Latvia, this is not always so in business deals, as the Grīva case shows. Bright as it might be, the foreigners' business record does not always insure business success in Latvia. Having suffered a setback, the investors make defamatory statements about the Latvian economy. Even though local officials deny the existence of the cronyism in the Latvian entrepreneurial environment alleged by foreign experts, the Grīva deal clearly proves it. Though foreign manufacturers find Latvia advantageous and have moved their production facilities to industrial parks like the one in Līvpils, local small- and medium-sized manufacturers face continuous problems.

Purely theoretically speaking, one could say that the transition period in the Baltic States is over. EU accession proved that the Baltic countries have successfully integrated themselves into the European Economic Area. Still, denominations like 'new member state', 'post-communist', 'Eastern', 'emerging European', and 'Baltic tiger' adorn those segments of Scandinavian public culture pertaining to the Baltic countries. Unlike Latvians, who tend to emphasise the rapid growth of their economy and who posit that it is equivalent to and included in the common European market, Scandinavians continue to perceive Latvia through a discourse of Otherness. In their view, *Baltikum* is either the primary recipient of Western assistance and is thus bound to recognise the West as a yardstick for measurement of its progress, or it represents an ocean of opportunities that remain to be exploited.

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# *Chapter 8*
# Postsocialist Punk Identity: From Dissidents to Workers

Vihra Barova

## Introduction

This chapter argues that economic change in Bulgaria can be traced through its relationship to changing processes of identification in youth subcultures.[1] In particular, I will address how and why, since the mid-1990s, the unified 'anti-systemic' ideology, 'anticommunism', has transformed into a variety of subversive ideologies turned against the 'liberalism' and 'democracy' of the postsocialist state. The anticommunist ideology found its expression in manifestations of indifference to policy and in antisocial behaviour that united various subcultural groups during and immediately after the collapse of the socialist state. Since the mid-nineties, antidemocratic ideologies such as 'anarchism' and 'nationalism' have been proclaimed as platforms supporting working-class interests. These youth ideologies are not aligned with 'formal' ideologies prevalent among the adult population. They represent symbolic markers of different options in the realm of subcultural identity.

According to the few Bulgarian sociologists who have studied the matter, subcultures first appeared in the country in the 1980s (Nikolova and Mitev 2003). A variety of subcultural lifestyles, which were the products of long and well-differentiated historical processes in the West, were imported into Bulgaria all at once in a very short span of time. Transplanted into Bulgaria, these subcultural identities took on rather different meanings for Bulgarian youth. With regard to the transition, two periods of subcultural identity construction can be distinguished, representing two generations of youth. Members of the first group were socialised under late socialism in the 1980s; members of the second group have no memory of socialism at all. The first period (which lasted into the mid-nineties) was characterised by vague images of the 'decaying West',[2] emulation of western models, and a

[1] I draw most of my evidence from fieldwork carried out in Sofia 2004 and 2007, and I include some examples from other sociological research on youth identity.

[2] A derogatory definition used by the communist ideologists.

general attitude of protest against the disintegrating socialist system. In the second period (from the mid-1990s onward), young people have faced the real effects of the market economy and have become increasingly acquainted with the actual western world (in particular through labour migration). This has given rise to new 'class' patterns of subcultural identity.

The clearest example of this identity shift can be found amongst punks. When speaking of 'punk', it should be kept in mind that this subculture is an amalgamation of many different groups that, while not easily differentiated by outsiders, nevertheless reflect different aspects of social change during the postsocialist period. For example, there is a clear distinction between left-wing and right-wing groups. The 'Cold Wave' group of the first period was extremely subversive and critical of the socialist system, while the skinheads of the second period are the most powerful anti-democratic group of the subcultural spectrum.

## Dissident Youth Subculture in the 1980s and Early 1990s

It was Bulgarian intellectuals and not semi-urbanised workers who played a decisive role in the emergence of subcultures in the 1980s. The young people who comprised these groups were predominantly the children of well-educated persons possessing high degrees of cultural and social capital providing them with access (albeit limited) to western (sub)culture. They emerged from the circles of the elite language and art schools of Sofia and Bulgaria's other large cities. These youth were privileged, being the first to enjoy some degree of freedom of expression (Dziegiel 1998). Consequently, we may speak here of a westernised subculture that emerged from the middle class, though over the course of the transition this situation has changed.

During the 1980s and the early 1990s, both jeans and music (the most emblematic attributes of the subculture) were sold on the black market.[3] Commodities imported from the West were scarce. The socialist shortage economy (Kornai 1980) was accompanied by a shortage of information as well. The image of the West that was prominent in Bulgarian subculture was somehow fragmented. Members of the subculture trying to emulate the West engaged in semi-illegal activities like listening to BBC radio broadcasts and importing and trading western goods (including magazines, LPs, tapes, and jeans). They also constructed western looking commodities from materials that were at hand. The emulation of the West was done through social networks and comprised a part of the second economy that was disrupting the system. Consequently, the consumption of western goods was considered to be politically incorrect. Along with their questionable family backgrounds,

[3] Jeans and boots were two of the main markers of subcultural style during the first period.

their involvement with western goods provided reasons for these youths to be regarded as dissidents. But in actual fact, their protest was more a manifestation of their desire to take on certain aspects of the western lifestyle than a political protest, accusations by the authorities notwithstanding.

In the beginning they were always together. They visited and stayed at the same places and dressed and behaved similarly, but most importantly, they were all friends and shared both a desire for greater freedom and a feeling of superiority in relation to other young people. In a 1991 interview with a first generation Bulgarian punk (born around 1970) in the now defunct youth newspaper, *Club 15*, the following question was posed to the young man: 'What do you want to see changed in society'? He replied:

> Everyone should feel free. I want to be a part of society. It has not thrown me out; it's me that has thrown myself out of it. I do not want to look grey, to melt into the crowd, to be put in a mould and wear the label: made in somewhere (Skortcheva 1991: 3).

In the early 1990s, 'old school' punks became favourites of the media, and such kinds of publications were common. Punks were treated like dissidents more in tune with an unknown western lifestyle.

## *1. Outward Appearance*

The outward appearance of punks provided their main avenue of opposition to the imposed official culture. They wore safety pins on their clothes, in their ears, and even under their skin. Bushy hair was dyed the most unnatural of colours. The preferred hairstyle was the 'comb' (i.e. the 'Mohawk' in English, see Plate 1). Chains hung over their torn, hand-made clothes. Jeans were cut under the knee. They wore black leather jackets and raincoats, the surfaces of which were decorated with buttons of their favourite bands. Male or female, their outward appearance was more or less the same. Female punks cut their hair short and wore the same kind of army boots as the males.

## *2. Use of Space*

An understanding of the places in which a particular subculture 'lives' is crucial in undertaking an explanation of its actions and disposition in society. It matters whether members of the subculture gravitate toward the city centre, a particular quarter, or some other more marginal space. An account of the visibility of some and disappearance of other sub-groups from certain areas can illustrate changes in youth attitudes specifically and social changes more generally.

Plate 1. The Mohawk hairstyle (picture by author).

I contend that transmission of subcultures is more heavily tied to particular locations than to fashion. The specific neighbourhoods in which young people lived pushed them toward one subculture or another, while also conferring a form of social status and a place in the social hierarchy. It would seem that the appearance of subcultural provocation in the city centre was an attempt to challenge such hierarchies, while at the same time, those interested in the subculture typically came from families with higher social status. The Bulgarian punk community had a common meeting place at the café bar Kravai near the National Palace of Culture (NDK). This is where Bulgaria's punk bands were born and where street gangs began to form. The punks began to use the numerous small yards around Graf Ignatiev Street, one of the main shopping streets in Sofia, for shelter.

## *3. Practices*

Punks rejected all norms and their behaviours were aimed at forcefully and immediately provoking public opinion. Punks were viewed as gaudy, fear inspiring, and provocative, even though they were not typically aggressive towards others. During this period, new punks panhandled – referred to as 'dusting off' ('*rasene*') in Bulgarian slang – as a way of gaining acceptance from the group.[4]

The consumption of various toxic substances also was a common practice and was referred to as 'shaking' ('*drusane*'). 'Shakers' sniffed glue, took various types of psychotropic drugs, and used heroin. Valery, an eighteen-year-old punk who hung out at 'Kravai' explained why some people in the punk community had turned to drugs:

> Some of the crew does it in order to look interesting; others – because they are in despair because of everything. Not only from the simple life we're living everyday. You go out in the evening and spend two hours with friends in some public house that is so familiar that you get sick and tired of it.

Dread of the 'simple life', dullness, and boredom was another element uniting young people at this time. They would gather in abandoned houses and basements where they could do anything they wanted without being disturbed. Amongst other places, they congregated at the old city library, (which is now part of the Grand Hotel Sofia) and in a system of underground conduits they called the BRONX, the entrances to which are now blocked. Such activities comprised an early form of the illegal occupation of property that would later come to be known as 'squatting' after this idea and practice was imported from the West. These practices were important because they were totally forbidden during the socialist era, and individuals caught squatting were victimised by the militia. There were no beggars, hobos, homeless, or drug-addicts on the streets of socialist Sofia. Individuals falling into any of these categories were regarded as engaging in a form of political protest. In the early 1980s, there was only one tramp visible in the city centre, and he was officially recognised as a dissident.

## *4. Ideology – 'The Revolution Continues'*

Punks demanded full freedom and anarchy. 'Do the things you want to do, but do not obstruct others' – this was their basic principle, clearly inherited from an anarchist ideology. By the end of the eighties, Bulgarian punks had

[4] With the exception of impoverished drug addicts, who should not be confused with punks more generally even though both groups engage in various sorts of risky behaviour, such begging is no longer the norm. I discuss the reasons for this later.

split into two factions – punk and 'cold wave'. 'Coldwavers' had become more deeply aware of the need for anti-systemic revolt than the genuine punks. This led this group to greater social engagement, and, as time passed, their political engagements took on a more elaborate shape. They were called 'gravediggers' because they wore black and regarded themselves as the gravediggers of the old system.

Generally speaking, the gravediggers aimed at producing art and 'higher culture'. They created cultural phenomena of their own capable of expressing their problems in the here and now. The cult band New Generation was born, comprised of regulars from Kravai. The lead singer, Dimitar Voev, penned the following allegoric lyrics: 'We are a new generation forever/ with eyes bleeding from pain and torment/ We know that there is no compensation/ and we vomit over hope for better days'. New Generation's lyrics were in Bulgarian and focused on the burning problems of the day. Albums from the band and from related side-projects (such as Kale,[5] Entrance B, Votsek, and Chugra, Review, Absolute Beginners, and Hopelessness) were almost illegal and were passed from hand to hand. In this way, the punk subculture created an identity for itself under the motto 'The revolution continues'. This identity was anti-conformist and critical toward the perceived hypocrisy and philistinism of the times. The falseness and dullness inherited from the idle times of socialism were the basic targets of the punk subculture's critique, as the problems associated with contemporary neoliberalism had not yet arrived.

## 'Classed' Youth Subculture in the Postsocialist Present

I now want to focus not on the pioneers of punk in Bulgaria but on their successors whose lives have proven undoubtedly harder. The basic characteristics that determined subcultural identity in the previous period all changed along with the changing political and economic context in Bulgaria. The resultant transformations of contemporary subcultural group identity can be understood as a protective response to these new conditions. The old class structure built of dissidents, the socialist elite, and workers no longer fits. The new economic conditions have led to a class structure among the younger generation as well: on the one hand, there are mobile students, on the other, workers and the unemployed. These groups are differentiated according to their respective access to the West, a factor that is central in shaping their identities.

The impoverishment of vast strata of Bulgarian society has had an impact on this class composition as well. The new class structure is marked by

[5] 'Kale' is a kind of glue used for sniffing.

a decreased standard of living for the former middle class, which is comprised primarily of members of the scientific-research intelligentsia. Disappointment that the desired *swift* replacement of the socialist system is not still complete has brought about some negative results. Thus, confidence in European, westernised identity failed at the end of nineties (Mitev and Riordan 1996: 16-18). Official ideology about Europeanisation, a central theme in the mass media, contrasts with the real situation of the country. Mass impoverishment, corruption, ostentatious killings, and many other social diseases have led to a resistance to European identity. Nationalism has become a new form of local fashion for the punks (nazi punks and nazi skinheads), though this is not unique to Bulgaria, as similar patterns can be found in the West in times of crisis. The nationalistic style has become the subcultural face of the underclass, while the pro-western, 'middle-class' punk style (paradoxically inherited from the short period of subcultural history during socialism) has remained underdeveloped in the second period.

As time has passed, members of the punk group have been replaced by members of a new sort. The punk group has become decreasingly comprised of mobile, educated individuals with direct access to the West. Unemployed and unqualified workers without permanent jobs now prevail in the crew. They have less access to resources than to information about the subculture, as most people have internet access in their homes. This is why they have knowledge about the ideas of the movement they have chosen, though they remain financially anchored to a certain place in society. Their resistance, once expressed by social and political indifference, has required a change of symbols corresponding to the new social and economic conditions. The large group of punks and gravediggers has split into various factions. Some are indifferent to social reality; others are socially critical, and there is fighting between these groups. Thus, the punk/new wave culture has given birth to new groups of punks – skins (red and nazi) and goths. It is important to note that in this period, punk (politically on the left) and skinhead movements have turned out to be strongly politicised (in contrast to prior period), while goth, which was born out of the 'new/cold wave' subculture, has lost its social engagement (intrinsic to the cold wave and the 'New Generation' circle) and has grown apart from punk subculture. We could say that the goths have managed to preserve their previously discussed 'higher culture' attitude as well as their involvement in arts such as fashion, performances, exhibitions, and parties, while punk and skinhead movements have accepted political identifications commonly linked to anarchism and nationalism, respectively.

## *1. Outward Appearances – The Shrinking of Identity*

In the new social conditions, wearing jeans and army boots is no longer regarded as political protest. Such forms of dress are increasingly read as a sign of economic weakness. Contemporarily, the main division among youths in schools is that between 'rich' and 'poor' (Nikolova and Mitev 2003: 141). The only way for subcultural youths to challenge this hierarchy is through physical intimidation. There has been an explosion of violent right-wing factions inside the punk subculture, but these factions have turned against the followers of the genuine punk style and led to endemic conflict between 'FA' (fascists) and 'AFA' (antifascists and anarchists). The constant threat that the 'AFA punk' might be beaten if he or she is recognised as such has inhibited the expression of style. For example, one of my informants, Valyo (a thirty-three-year-old male from Sofia), depicted his outward appearance in two ways – 'full dress' and 'undress'. The latter is designed to hide his real identity when he wants to avoid policemen or nazis (i.e. the right wing punk group). The 'undress' code is even more relevant for female punks. 'There were cases when six or seven people were hitting a girl because her "comb" was red and she wore a leather jacket', said 'The Chicken' (a seventeen-year old female from Sofia). I witnessed how T-shirts with punk bands or buttons with anarchist signs were hidden under other clothes, to be revealed only when the punk girl was among her friends and felt safe. The typical punk hairstyle is no longer visible; the 'comb' is not raised but remains hidden under a baseball cap or a hood. The opposing left- and right-wing groups still look much alike, as both 'combs' and shaved heads remain hidden. Thus, outsiders derogatorily refer to members of both groups as 'the hooded' (see Plate 2).

## *2. The Use of Space – A Period of Segregation*

The transition has meant a steady loss of status for some social groups. One typical feature of the Bulgarian transition underlined by sociologists has to do with survival strategies (Tilkidjiev 1997: 136) and the struggle to maintain social status (Rajtchev 2000: 71-72). Procuring foodstuffs produced by relatives in villages (Smollett 1989) and working extra hours to generate additional income are the primary strategies for those living in cities. An additional potential strategy is the sale of property. My ethnographic data show that many elderly inhabitants (whose children comprised the Bulgarian subculture in the eighties and early nineties) who lived in the city centre have sold their apartments and have been pushed out into the periphery. This process has no connection to the restitution of urban property after denationalisation. Consequently, punk groups have gradually moved out of the cen-

tre, becoming less visible. New members of the subculture have thus been labelled 'punks from the quarters', and the mass media and society more broadly have quickly forgotten about them.

Plate 2. Punks with hoods –May 1, 2007 (from FAB site - http://a-bg.net/).

The subcultural groups of the second period been gradually pushed towards the periphery and the cultural centre of the past has slowly become the market centre of today, with its own new rules. The backyards of houses near or in the centre that were favourite places for subcultural gatherings can no longer be used because their new owners have put up fences and locked doors. Therefore, the sub-groups have begun searching for new places to gather in public parks and peripheral industrial zones. Their basic goal is to escape (and to seek some relative protection from) an unwanted reality. This goal can be reached if they find unappropriated new spaces or spaces that are no longer used. The subculture has thus come to dwell in the ruins of socialism, in places like the former Chinese embassy or, until 1999 when it was destroyed, the former mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov and the garden around

the monument of the Soviet Army, referred to as 'Baba Yaga'[6] by the subculture. Thus public parks, with their socialist monuments, and abandoned factories ('*zavodi*' in Bulgarian) have increasingly been turned into subcultural spaces. The neglected monuments of socialism are now at the subculture's disposal. This does not imply that subcultural identity is determined by the socialist past itself, but, consciously or unconsciously, the symbols and history of the subculture link it to this past. Political awareness increasingly penetrates into the narratives of the sub-group. Five-pointed stars (pentagrams), swastikas, and, of course, anarchy signs have become the new symbols of the subculture, and the gardens around the former socialist monuments have become battlegrounds.

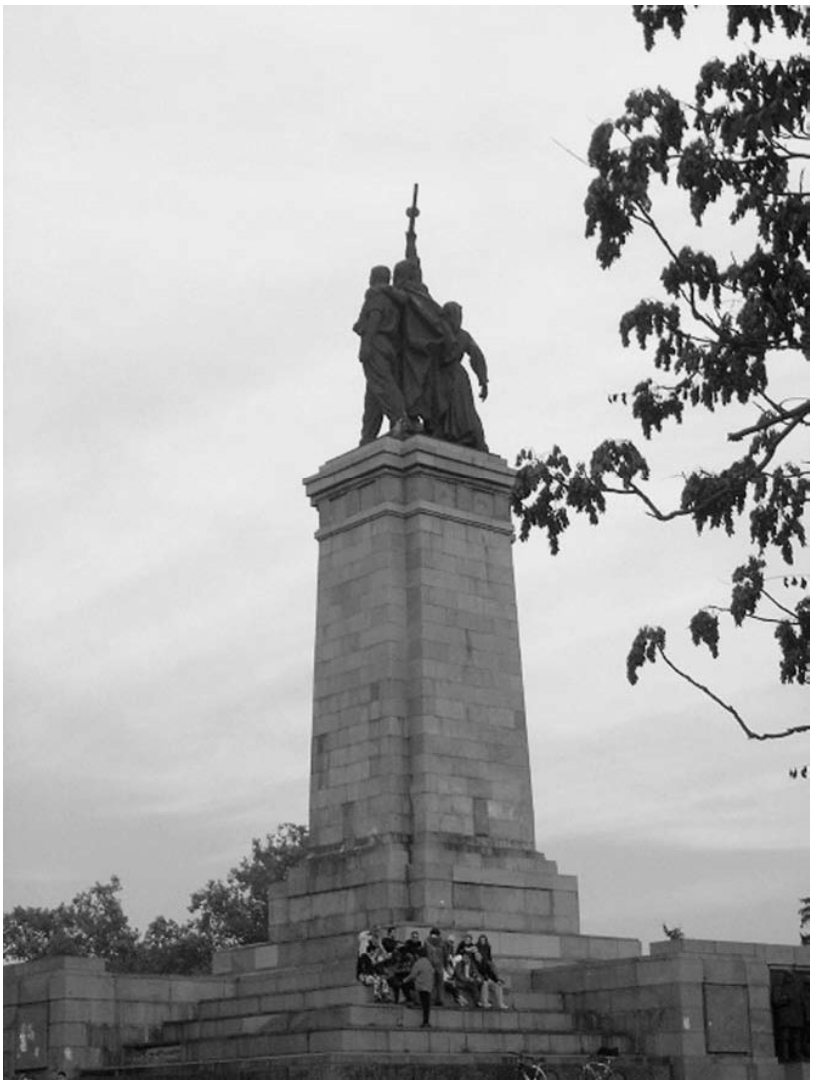

Plate 3. Soviet Army garden or Baba Yaga garden? (picture by author).

[6] This is the name of a witch in Russian folklore. The garden got this name because of a wooden hut that is located in it. It is curious that the new name is still Russian.

### *3. Practices – Marginalisation*

The new punk sub-groups neither inhabit the same territories as their predecessors, nor do they engage in the same kinds of actions. For example, punks no longer linger in the central streets, begging for money and provoking passers-by. This may be because they no longer live in this area. But I would argue a deeper reason lies in the fact that acting 'poor' is no longer provocative in an already pauperised society in which there is almost no middle class and the rich do not set foot in the streets. Up to the mid-nineties, begging was not uncommon in the central streets of Sofia, as members of the subculture found it to be stylish; now, begging is no longer a subcultural activity. In fact, begging has become a sign of extreme marginalisation, a 'trademark' of the gypsies and of some drug addicts.

The number of shakers has also decreased. Drugs have passed from the backyards where the subculture used to congregate to clubs and discos, where they have become a part of the lifestyle of relatively rich young people. The time of low-priced hard drugs has passed irrevocably. Drug dealers have already found their victims and have raised their prices. As a result, the subcultural group can hardly afford drugs. On the other hand, the state pursues a strange policy towards drug use - users suffer heavy sanctions, while dealers remain in the shadows. Recently, a piece of legislation was passed that instates mandatory prison sentences for possession of as little as one marijuana cigarette. Hence, state policy and the activities of dealers have restricted access to drugs for punks, who are too poor to afford high prices, fines, and/or bail.

Squatting (i.e. illegally occupying property) has been gradually constrained as well. Until recently, the last subcultural fortress was the abandoned former Chinese Embassy, which is near the Bulgarian Parliament. Police closed down the squat after a reporter made a movie about it. Entrances to the so-called BRONX in the city centre were sealed off long ago. The old city library is now an expensive hotel. Squatting has also become a 'trademark' of the Roma population in the city. The marginalisation of these practices as signs of extreme poverty has restrained punks from performing them. On the other hand, the resemblance of the activities of the punks and those of the Roma has fuelled the conflict between the left- and right-wing movements inside the subculture.

### *4. Ideology – 'Left-' and 'Right-wing' 'Working Class' Movements*

The right-wing skinhead movement (which I do not separate from Bulgarian punk subculture more generally) has gathered its strength and social significance (mainly referred to as a social danger in the Bulgarian media) only in

the second period. Their basic activities involve attending football matches and participating in street brawls. They believe that their nationalist ideology makes them superior. The right-wing faction is proud of its nationality, rejecting any identity aside from the national. The faction's attachment to national symbols is 'deeply rooted in history and less deeply rooted in the present' (Kovatcheva 1999: 51). Participation in this nationalist subculture appears to be a way of rejecting processes of Europeanisation in Bulgaria. In recent years, the number of nationalistic youth has increased, a trend that may be related to the emergence of Attack, an ultra-nationalist coalition that opposes Bulgarian membership in the EU.[7] The Bulgarian National Alliance (BNS) has a strong influence on the right-wing as well. Its logo and web address can be seen graffitied and stencilled throughout Sofia's centre. The Alliance's slogan is 'When law becomes lawlessness, resistance is a must'! A banner on their webpage reads 'New order against chaos'! Here, ethnic intolerance is not so important. These nationalists confront 'lawlessness' and 'chaos', and this automatically puts left-wing punks, who are inclined towards anarchism, among their enemies. Alternatively, the nationalistic, ethnocentric values of the rightists are challenged by the leftists, as they (the leftists) oppose ethnic distinctions. For example gypsies (i.e. Roma) are sometimes, though rarely, admitted into leftist groups. It is important to note that the same attitude of ethnic tolerance and attachment to anarchism was not a hindrance to unity between the first generation of punks and skins, and even later, some skins remained close with punks. Nowadays, however, such unity is taken as a sign that these skinheads have turned politically to the left (i.e. have become redskins, sharps, etc.).

To divide into 'left' and 'right' in this way would have been Bulgarian punk subculture in its earlier stage of development. A few years ago one of my major informants (who is also a good friend) said to me, 'After the reunification of West and East Germany, my East German friends who were punks like me became members of the Communist Party. I tried to convince them that they could not be punks if they were party members. I would never do such a thing myself'. Political indifference has been inherent to Bulgarian punk, but current reality is changing this. Anarchism and other left-wing positions are responses to the new social reality.

[7] Attack won a surprising 8.93% of the vote in the most recent Parliamentary elections and entered the Parliament as a fourth political force, just after the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the National Movement 'Simeon the Second' (NDSV), and the Movement for Rights and Liberties (DPS).


Plate 4. FAB protest at 'Baba Yaga' garden – 'Anti-fascist action' (picture by author).

Both the left and the right aim for the same goal – the social protection of the working class. Both identify with the working class, although this identification is more forcefully expressed by the skins.[8] Some punks have even gone so far as to step across the boundaries of anarchism, becoming members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.[9] The Federation of Anarchists in Bulgaria (FAB) has undertaken several provocative actions. In the summer of 2006, FAB organised a protest against the high prices of mass transit in Sofia. Ten thousand stickers with the slogan 'FREE TRANSPORT' were printed and flooded Sofia. The transport company claimed the action was 'criminal'. FAB responded by printing tickets that said 'ticket for one use only' and

[8] According to the website 'Blood & Honor Bulgaria', 'the skins have begun to protect workers and people damaged by ethnic conflicts' (http://bhbulgaria.com/index2.htm).

[9] At present, the BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party) leads the ruling coalition, also comprised of the NDSV (National Movement of Simeon the Second) and DPS (Movement for rights and liberties – for the Bulgarian Turks)

'free ticket for urban transport'. On May Day of 2007, FAB made the following statement:

> This day must be a day for workers' struggles and solidarity all around the world. We have to build a real, efficient, and functional alternative. We have to raise a new world over the skeleton of the old one. Let's solve our own problems by being together on the streets. Let's work, united in solidarity (http://a-bg.net/).

Finally, I should note that not a single one of the contemporary political movements in Bulgaria, regardless of whether or not they have a youth component, can identify itself with the subculture. Punks are simply punks, and skinheads are simply skinheads. One should not speak of goths, who left the political scene once and for all. However, there is no doubt about the fact that the 'political' and 'class' have entered the consciousness, narratives, and practices of the punk subculture.

## Conclusions

For the last fifteen years or so, a sizeable portion of the Bulgarian population has struggled just to get by, gradually becoming marginalised. Another, much smaller portion has managed to reach or remain in the ranks of the new middle class, with an even smaller portion reaching the ranks of the 'nouveau riche'. All of this has led to emergent youth subcultural attitudes rejecting neoliberal and democratic ideas coming from the West. The opposition between subculture and mainstream has been gradually transposed into an opposition of 'rich' and 'poor', replacing the earlier opposition between dissidents, on one hand, and the masses and elites, on the other. Mimesis of the Western forms of subculture has been replaced by a process of marginalisation. The constant loss of personal status influences group identity. Today, the outward appearance and behaviour of punks are less fashionable and less provocative. Their practices now form a protective response, following left- or right-wing ideologies that contest the postsocialist versions of both *democracy* and *liberalism* - ideologies that in actual reality have made many people feel excluded.

I have argued that one can observe a general shift from a 'classless' subcultural identity (manifest in social and political indifference and a sense of superiority over others) to a 'classed' one through which the so-called class war is fought. I call the former subculture 'classless' in the sense that, at the time, its participants claimed they were not stuck in a fixed position in society (Thornton 1997: 204-205).

In short, there has been a transition from a superior (though imagined) identity in the former socialist society to a newer one that is comparatively inferior and contains the idea of an oppressed position. This is the identity

shift from 'classless dissidents' to 'working class rebels' who in both cases identify themselves as 'punks'. Economic changes and the process of Europeanisation have influenced postsocialist punk identity in a way that I would I dare to call regressive. In the beginning (i.e. in the eighties) punks comprised a strong, non-factional group of young people, educated and from relatively privileged backgrounds, who believed that they were *above* the social structure. More recently, the new generation of punks has become increasingly class-conscious and has split into a left- and a right-wing faction, both of which identify with 'workers', using different methods (even violent ones) to protect this group. The new punk generation believes it is *at the bottom* of the social hierarchy and accepts the idea of class war. The class-consciousness of both the left- and right-wing factions is the consequence of the marginalised position of these youth in contemporary Bulgarian society. Young people have lost opportunities for a good education and employment, and some have even lost their apartments in the city centre. They have thus begun to look for a shift in their position through emulation of working class ideologies coming from the West. However, with the culmination of economic restrictions, open borders, westernisation, and globalisation, it is not so strange that the groups have easily adopted western ideas about class. No matter whether it is anarchism, nationalism, or some other faction, the groups still oppose the ex-communist regime and take their platforms from western subcultural ideologies and lifestyles. For example, a Bulgarian leftist punk would never become a member of a Bulgarian communist party, while at the same time he or she would be ready to follow the example of his or her 'comrades' in Germany or in Spain. I think this is another example (though quite a marginal one) of the postsocialist paradox in which old ideals are lost while the new reality is also denied.

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# *Chapter 9*
# Millenarian Dreams: The Objects and Subjects of Money in the New Lithuania[1]

Victor C. de Munck

In the late 1800s, Millenarian movements (also referred to as cargo cults or chiliastic movements) sprang up in Melanesia as a result of colonial conquest and increasing control over the lives of Melanesian tribal groups by 'whites'. Peter Worsley (1957) shows that millenarian movements typically emerge among stateless (that is, tribal) societies under colonial conditions. Such relatively isolated and stateless groups respond to their impotence against colonial agents and regimes through a wholesale rejection of their own culture and a radical embrace of the cultural symbols and practices of the colonists, with 'the expectation of and preparation for […] a period of supernatural bliss' (1957: 12). For Worsley, the enduring, unintended function of Melanesian millenarian movements was that they led to the development of pan-tribal political systems that provided indigenous people a political base from which to develop a sense of nationalism and ultimately resist colonialism.

Of course there are obvious and sharp differences between the events that occurred in Melanesia in the 1900s (particularly between 1940 and 1960, the period during which most of the anthropological research on cargo cults was conducted) and those that have occurred since the 1990s in Lithuania (and much of Eastern Europe). Nevertheless, there is an intriguing correspondence that I want to explore in this paper. In both Lithuania (and other postsocialist nations) and Melanesia, there was a sudden revolutionary turn to the West and a rejection of the immediate past. In both situations, there was an expectation that this turn to the West would lead to wealth and the creation of a new utopian world in the immediate future.

Major differences between the situation in Lithuania and Melanesia can easily be pointed out: Lithuania was not a stateless society at the time of

[1] I thank the editors, my wife Janina de Munck, and various anonymous and known reviewers of this work for their input; they have led me to improve this paper at each stage of the review process. The faults of this paper are mine alone.

its second independence; Lithuania was not a colony of any Western nation; it was already a Christian nation; it had already developed industrial infrastructure; and it is now considered an integral part of Western Europe. Further, millenarian movements are, as the name implies, religious movements, and as movements, they are typically organised by a charismatic leader who promises a 'new heaven on earth' (Burridge 1969). The term 'movement' often implies an organised, mass mobilisation, usually of the poor. None of these defining criteria apply in the case of Lithuania. There are no obvious chiliastic-style charismatic leaders in Lithuania; there are no mass religious movements; and there was no irrational rejection but rather a re-valorisation of the Lithuanian past. Recognising these differences, I contend that the concept of the millenarian movement can be fruitfully employed to gain insight into contemporary psycho-cultural processes in Lithuania.

This paper relies on the case-study method to make a case (no pun intended) for the occurrence of a secular millenarian movement in Lithuania. The case-study method is limited and biased because each case may be read as a metonym for all members of the group represented by the limited number of individuals presented in the case-study. The case-studies that I have selected for this paper are not intended to represent all or even most Lithuanians with a socio-economic profile similar to that of its protagonists. Nevertheless, I do claim that each case-study represents one particular psycho-cultural response to what I have referred to as a millenarian movement. I also claim that most Lithuanians would recognise each of the case-studies as a culturally feasible event (though they might disagree with my analysis thereof).

The defining feature of this Lithuanian movement involves the conscious, intentional project of transforming oneself into a Western European by means of: (1) the acquisition of wealth; (2) the consumption of western style goods, leisure, and lifestyle; and (3) developing a seamless hybrid western-Lithuanian psyche (to be elaborated below). I posit that most Lithuanians (particularly those under forty or so) have such millenarian dreams but that only some can realise these dreams. I use the case-study method to describe and compare social, cultural, and psychological features of participants and non-participants in this millenarian movement.[2]

The paper is organised as follows: the first section argues that the concept of a secular millenarian movement can be fruitfully deployed in the

[2] I should say that all Lithuanians (except perhaps unskilled pensioners and the infirm) have the possibility of working in Western Europe, but, for the most part, those who do so are youths possessing one or more of the following assets: skills, education, and/or language competency in a Western European language.

analysis of cultural schisms, particularly between the older and younger generations, in contemporary Lithuania; the second section presents case-study and interview materials in support of the argument presented in the first section; finally, section three consists of my analysis of this data. As a cognitive/psychological anthropologist, my bias is toward a psychological, mentalistic analysis of the data; hence, this section is leavened by this bias.

## 1. New Heaven, New Lithuania: A Post-Independence Millennial Dialectic

In *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1957), Worsley notes how New Guineans would not only mimic Western mannerisms but would perform mimetic religious rituals to induce Jesus or their own ancestors to send them Western forms of wealth. But why, he asks, do New Guineans employ a religious rather than a secular mode of self and social transformation? He argued that this was due to 'the low level of political organization […] lack of technological and scientific knowledge [and] the use of magic to try to solve practical problems' (Worsley 1957: 239). In other words, New Guineans were so different from Westerners that the desired transformation could only occur by way of a religious miracle. This is, of course, not the situation in Lithuania, and hence the religious mode is not necessary for fomenting millenarian aspirations.

One may ask why talk of a millenarian movement and not neoliberalism, a term that describes a similar sort of valorisation of consumerism and individualism? Neoliberalism is an ideology derived from a combination of 'transnational capital' and 'neoconservative values' (Phillips 1998: xvii). Neoliberalism depicts the individual as a consumer of goods and lifestyles that are products of trans-national capitalism (Overbeek and van der Pijl 1993). Neoliberalism refers to a modern, globalised version of Veblen's theory of the leisure class in which all members of society, including the poor, are motivated to conspicuously consume goods and live a leisure lifestyle. These two analytical lenses – the neoliberal and millenarian – complement one another; the former offers insight into political-economic processes, the latter into cultural-psychological process. My analysis focuses on the latter, on how the implementation of a neoliberal agenda has, in part, spawned millenarian dreams among Lithuanians.

A millenarian dream is one in which the dreamer believes that through some form of intentional action (traditionally conversion) he or she can be transformed into an idealised version of him or herself. The millenarian dream is a wish for personal transformation that thereby entails a transformation of society. In Melanesia, the millenarian dream was socially experi-

enced and organised, but in Lithuania it is predominantly personal. Lithuanian millenarian aspirations do not coalesce into a social movement, as they are not collectively organised, but remain individualised; however, in aggregate they can have effects similar to a movement.

First, to describe some core features of the Lithuanian millenarian movement I present four exemplary case-studies; second, I note that not everyone participates in the Lithuanian millenarian movement and describe those who do and those who do not; this section concludes with a comparative discussion of Lithuanian and Melanesian millenarian movements. In order to forestall criticism about dichotomising Lithuanians into participants and non-participants, let me add that such a division is not a law but a general pattern that can be observed, just as in the United States (or any other country), there are those who have greater opportunities to enjoy the various rewards a society (or region of the world) has to offer. I do not think it is too surprising that for Lithuanians such access and opportunity are skewed to the young, the educated, and the skilled.

## *1.1 Core Elements of the Lithuanian Millenarian Movement*

*Case-Study 1: A Prototype of Millenarian Ideology*

The new Lithuanian millenarian ideology is, at its genesis, captured well by a twenty-one year-old female university student who I will call Justė. Below is an excerpt from two extended interviews:[3]

> Victor: Do students in general...are you generally optimistic about your future?
> Justė: *Jo*…Yeah, I am.
> Victor: How come?
> Justė: Because I think we have lots of possibilities.
> Victor: Who? You have lots of possibilities?
> Justė: We can do what we want actually.... We are free to express ourselves...or so something like that… [She giggles, but not nervously].
> Victor: Are you free to get the kind of job you want?
> Justė: Yeah, I think I will.
> Victor: What kind of job do you want?
> Justė: I want a kind of job where I could express…that is, where I could use the knowledge that I get here in the university…that I could use these skills that I get and uhm. I'm not very sure about my future actually. I am not even sure what I will do next year [laughs]

[3] During the interview, Justė spoke in English, with the exception of the passage indicated in Lithuanian.

> because I am thinking of going to Germany and making a break of my studies, soooo... But I think this is great here living in Vilnius and studying in university; you can meet people; you can know about what you can do. There is not to structuralise your life…uhh. You live without structure [*Gyveni be struktūros*].

Whereas Justė is a Lithuanian college student in the initial stages of the Lithuanian millenarian movement, the following case-study is of a family that has realised the Millenarian dream and that, I think, represents the prototype for the Millenarian movement in Lithuania.

*Case-Study 2: Work, Money and the Adoption of a Western European Life-style*

In 2003, I met a Lithuanian doctor who I will call Gediminas. He, his wife Giedrė, and their two young children lived in a small two-room apartment when I first met him. In 2007, he had just come back from a two-week vacation to Italy and was planning a trip to America in autumn. He had purchased a flat in a new apartment complex located in a bustling new suburb just outside the centre of Vilnius and was driving a new Volvo. Both he and his wife were on a diet and had lost weight since I first met them. His wife was now wearing jewellery – a large turquoise bracelet and a diamond ring. She was 'tastefully appointed' (though a bit too showy). When I first met Gediminas, he worked only one job; now, he was working three. He had his general practice, but he did not earn very much from that (somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 litas, approximately 1,000 USD), so he had begun to work for an insurance agency and a pharmaceutical company, both of which paid him more than he earned as a doctor.

*Case-Study 3: The Uses of the Past*

For Lithuanians, the past serves as a psychological mechanism that makes millenarian dreams possible, for while Europe is thought of as the land of abundance and Europeans as sophisticated and fashionable, they are also considered to be psychologically weak. Darius, a member of the transitional generation who was twenty-seven when I interviewed him in 2002, explained how history has made the Lithuanian psyche tough and the Western European one soft. I asked Darius if Lithuanians were tough, and he responded (in English) as follows:

> I think so. This is my ideology too. They are tougher. But it's not a positive thing, you know, because too much criminal and stuff like that ... Still, I know from my experience. In my childhood, I didn't have lots of food, you know? I never throw out food…I can live without many things… People from the West, they are more spoiled.

> They just get, cry very fast, you know... If you step on a Westerner's toes in the trolleybus, he is upset; the food in a restaurant comes late, he whines. But we don't get upset over little things like that; we have known really hard times.

The Lithuanian with access to the abundance of the West can realise his or her dreams, particularly through emigration to the West, because he or she is tougher than his or her Western counterparts as a result of the recent past. The knowledge that, prior to five hundred years of successive colonisation by Russia, Poland, Germany, and the Soviet Union, Lithuania was the largest empire in Eastern Europe, stretching from the Black to the Baltic Sea, also gives credence to the possibility of personal conquest and success for the Lithuanian emigrant.

### 1.1.4 Summary of Above Case-Studies

Justė and Gediminas (among many others) represent what I call 'new Lithuanians': such Lithuanians believe that that they are now part of the EU and that they can live a life that they themselves craft: a life without economic hardships or shortages of goods, as successful actors on a global stage. Justė perceives her life to be full of possibilities; she, like Gediminas, is transforming herself into a cosmopolitan, moving easily between Lithuania and other European countries. She articulates a key concept that I think is relevant to an understanding of the Lithuanian millenarian movement (and probably to all the newly independent eastern European countries) – '*be struktūros*'. She means by this that there are no serious external constraints to her ambitions and desires other than herself. Europe is a place of cultural and material abundance and places relatively few obstacles between desire and its realisation.

Most Lithuanians see Europe (and the West in general) as a place of super-abundance and beautiful, fashionable people, but access to the fruits of the West is primarily reserved for the educated, the skilled, and/or English speakers. For others, such access is largely unavailable unless one is adventurous and willing to work long, hard hours at low-wage jobs (which are increasingly difficult to find abroad, as there is increased competition for them).

## *1.2 Lithuanian Non-Participants in the Millenarian Movement*

Not all young adult Lithuanians can easily join the millenarian movement. Those who do not, usually lack job skills, education, or competency in a Western European language; these non-participants or marginal participants tend to end up angry and exhibit excessive macho-aggressive tendencies. This is in contrast with the situation of the elderly, whose exclusion, as I will

show, is more severe and is reflected in their invisibility and anomic, disengaged stance toward the new Lithuania.

In part, the contrast between these two excluded groups – uneducated, unskilled youth and the elderly – was present in the apartment complex where I lived for a year in 2004. My apartment complex was in Antakalnis, a *priemiestis* (suburb) of Vilnius and was mostly populated by *pensininkai* (pensioners or retired people). They seldom left their apartments, hiding from the young thugs who also lived in the building and who typically sat outside drinking, doing drugs, and often either shouting or playing 'eurotrash' music loudly. Hypodermic needles littered the concrete rooftops of the apartment's stairwell, which extended out from each of the nine floors. The stairwell was shoddy; many of the lights were broken and the tiny elevator frequently smelled of urine. The boys that I saw were loud and unruly, with short hair, hard faces, and tight shirts that prominently displayed their muscles; they smoked and drank beer daily (so it seemed). Not all of the boys and men were like this, of course, but these were the ones I most noticed and sought to avoid. The exterior of the complex could be somewhat intimidating, with these little gangs of aimless youth and their 'I am dangerous, therefore I am' twist on Descartes.

One day in March, I looked out the kitchen window and saw an old woman walking exceedingly slowly over a patch of snow that had become ice. She toppled over, her face in the snow, and struggled slightly but didn't have the strength to get up. I was about to go down and help her, but I saw a man and his son, playing in the snow. They had noticed the woman and helped her up, walking her to the edge of the small field.

In the summer of 2007, a newspaper reported that foreigners (probably primarily those of colour) were being beaten up by gangs of skinheads. The American embassy in Vilnius sent out an e-mail message warning us to be careful. A young woman from Šiauliai, the fourth largest city in Lithuania, told me about the 'Šiauliai Boys'. She described them as youths with beer, cigarettes, and, sometimes, cars. They were always in groups and always loud, posturing like outlaws in an old western movie, harassing women, angry at the world.

Neither these youths nor the pensioners are part of the millenarian movement; they comprise different aspects of its antithesis. They do not qualify because they are too uneducated and speak neither English nor German, only Russian. No one wants to go to Russia. It is predominantly educated youths and young adults who both have millenarian dreams and believe that they are positioned to realise these dreams now that Lithuania is a part of the EU (and, importantly, not a part of the former Soviet Union, in which case these dreams would remain just that – dreams).

There are also those who inhabit a murky zone between participation and non-participation. I conclude this section with a case-study that conveys the anger of youth on the margins of the millenarian movement (though they too have millenarian dreams). In January 2003, I was with a 'new young Lithuanian' in Klaipėda, Lithuania's port city. We had taken the ferry to the spit that stretches south of Klaipėda and that is a favourite beach resort for Lithuanians and many Germans as well. On the ferry back to Klaipėda, my friend pointed to a car that had a playing card of a bare-breasted girl hanging from the rear-view mirror. My friend laughed as he pointed out the picture, drawing the attention of the driver, a boy of about eighteen years. The driver and the four passengers got out of their car, and, without a word, the driver pushed me and slugged my friend on the side of the face. We were surrounded by the driver and his companions, while the hundred or so Lithuanians aboard the ferry positioned themselves to watch the show. The driver threatened to get a gun and shoot a hole in my friend's head and then to feed him to the ducks in the Baltic Sea. I looked out at the sea, where there were only gulls. The ferry landed, the driver got back in his car, and we disappeared into the mass of passengers pushing to get off. Had this incident occurred in America, would the other passengers and ship's crew have been so passive? I don't know. The point is that, I think, one reason the driver got mad at us was because my friend and I symbolised the new, European Lithuania, and we were laughing at the crude picture dangling from the mirror. In my mind, the car (I don't remember the model) symbolised (to the driver and the world as he saw it) that he was a new Lithuanian, but our laughter and the little picture dangling from the rear-view mirror showed that he was viewed by more prototypical or 'real' new Lithuanians as an old-style Lithuanian. Of course, his anger may simply have resulted from our laughter and nothing more, but my friend probably would not have pointed to the picture and laughed during Soviet times. He pointed it out and laughed, I presume, because such pictures are part of another, cruder cultural world than the one with which he identified himself.

### *1.3 Comparing the Melanesian and Lithuanian Millenarian Movements*

Elie Kedouri (1993) was one of the first to identify new nationalist movements with secular millenarian ones in which the aim is the transformation of the self rather than society. He argues that the new secular millenarianism rose out of the idea that human beings are autonomous creatures, unencumbered by structural constraints and webs of meaning; everything had indeed

become possible, and only the image of abundance had to be placed, like a carrot, before the individual's eyes.

In contrast to the cargo cult medium of Melanesian millenarian movements (Worsley 1957; Burridge 1969; Valentine 1970; Schwartz 1976), the Lithuanian must work to realise her or his dreams, as millenarian wealth is not distributed indiscriminately to all but selectively to those who have the personal qualifications and capacities to access the wealth of the West. The Lithuanian millenarian movement is ego- rather than socio-centric.

Melanesians were unable to view the scenes of production behind the goods brought in on cargo ships; they could not conceive of whites working in factories, tilling the soil, and sweeping streets. Thus, achievement of what the white man had achieved was not imagined in human terms but through an act of faith. The Lithuanian relies on his own labour and not God to realise her or his millenarian dreams; consequently, the Lithuanian millenarian movement is radically secular and seemingly rational.

The new Lithuanian uses the past to buttress his or her psyche. The breakdown of an old, foreign (i.e. Soviet) system of thought and social structure has led to a valorisation of a precious, 'heroic', and nationally autonomous past. This remembered past serves as a cultural resource through which the individual can imagine him or herself as a contemporary manifestation of this heroic past (Lankauskas 2006). The re-composed past symbolises a heroic, conquering past, a natural life lived in or near the forest: the Lithuanian is strong, close to nature, uncorrupted, and is psychologically and physically hard. Once again, Lithuanians conquer, not as a nation, but as individuals.

The Lithuanian millenarian movement lacks the religious exuberance, spectacular behaviours, and dramatic events of prototypical Melanesian millenarian movements. For the Melanesian, the transformation had to occur through the medium of religion for the two reasons implied above: first, religion was the main belief system that the Europeans brought with them; and second, there was simply too much of a technological-power gap between Melanesians and Europeans for the Melanesians to become the equals of the latter without a leap of faith.

Lithuania was already a Catholic country and part of Europe; it was industrialised and not so radically different from the rest of Europe. Further, to believe in a leap of faith would disqualify the Eastern European, aware of the secular-sacred division of the West, from the possibility of becoming a Western European. Hence, the Lithuanian millenarian movement has had to be both secular and muted in its public expression. Nevertheless, the core features of the prototypical Melanesian millenarian movement are found in Lithuania: a subordinate relationship to a dominant alter; economic and

power imbalances catalysing the movement; the desire for self-transformation and to become European; and the construction of syncretic symbols and myths of a heroic past.[4]

For the new Lithuanian, the difference between him or herself and Western Europeans is not religious but secular. Western Europeans have a noble cultural, artistic, scientific, and military history; they were the first to industrialise; Western Europeans are wealthy and live modern, sophisticated lives; Western Europeans are gourmands, exercise, have lots of sex, and have beautiful bodies (in short, Western Europeans are connoisseurs of the senses); Western Europeans are not, like Lithuanians, peasants parading as nobles; they are nobility. Thus, Lithuanians seek specific secular transformations that, while not only about money, can only be accomplished through money. In the following section, I discuss how these transformations are expressed in the lives of these new Lithuanians.

## 2. The Medium of Money and the Transformation of Self–Case-Studies and Interviews

This section is divided into three parts: the first examines the cultural meaning of money; the second consists of interviews and case-studies of senior Lithuanians who are excluded from the millenarian movement; finally, the third part presents case-studies of several new Lithuanians – the full participants in the millenarian movement.

### *2.1 The Medium of Money*

Simmel writes that 'money liberates' (1950: 127). This depends, however, on what one means by 'liberate'. Indeed, money liberates its possessor from want, which is good, but it also liberates the possessor from the intimacies of other people, which is not necessarily good. Anthropologists (and many others) have shown how money differentiates people so that friendship and kinship are perceived as a burden. For the middle and upper classes, acquaintance ties become more functional (and hence, desirable) than the ties of kin and friends; thus, the poor have many friends and the rich few to none (Granovetter 1973).

Hochschild (2004) argues that money narrows the possibilities of and disenchants relationships. She provides an example of the disenchanting quality of money when she writes about a young girl who felt disappointed when she found out that her mother had hired someone to plan her birthday

[4] Many Melanesian movements involved a myth about how the ancestors would return to slay and drive out the white men.

party. The penetration of capitalism into our personal life is one way to manage the demands of time, but it is also a way of stripping intimacy and commitment from our private lives (Hochschild 1997, 2004).

Ilouz (1997) makes a somewhat similar point in her book *Consuming the Romantic Utopia* in which she describes how romantic love relationships are subjects of and shaped by the capitalist 'imagination' (e.g. romantic walks along idyllic beaches with palm trees and white sands; a rowboat in a park; a private booth in an expensive restaurant). Illouz's point is similar to Hochschild's because she shows how the capitalist imagination serves to create the illusion that romance can be enhanced through consumption. The problem is that the capitalist imagination ultimately disenchants because if enchantment can be bought, then it is easy enough to realise that the person with whom one shares this enchantment can also be replaced or can replace you. The individual who uses money to manage a relationship correspondingly depersonalises that relationship (Smelser 1963).

When money comes to be the common denominator of all values, then the acquisition of European values and preferences (i.e. the 'inner person') and lifestyle (the 'outer person') reflect one another, as both are constructed through the medium of money. Thus, individualism and social Darwinism are values associated with the rich in the West. Lithuanians are under no illusion that money is like manna from the heavens; they know that they will have to work hard to acquire it. However, for those who are not in a position to acquire wealth – in this section I refer primarily to those over fifty years of age who are not well-to-do – there is a general sense of social anomie, as they view themselves in contrast to the visible expressions of the millenarian activities that are most manifest in Vilnius (and also manifest in rural areas of Lithuania). The importance of money as the fuel making the millenarian movement possible is the theme presented by the case-studies in the following sub-sections. The first sub-section looks at the plight of the elderly in Lithuania and presents case-studies of those excluded from the millenarian movement by virtue of having no access to the money that makes it possible to actualise millenarian dreams.

## *2.2 Interviews and Case-Studies with Elder Lithuanians: The Excluded*

*Case-Study 1: An Old Homeless Man*

It was Thursday, January 30, 2003; Danguolė (my female Lithuanian assistant, who was a student and part of the new Lithuania) and I went out to search for informants at ten in the morning. We saw an older, hunched over, red-faced, thick-nosed, fleshy older man wearing a thick coat as he rum-

maged through the trash bin behind my flat. I nodded to Danguolė, and she went up to him and asked if we could interview him. He declined. Danguolė was persistent because she wanted to do a good job, and she asked again, just a bit more insistently. He looked at both of us and said something like, 'I used to have a job, and then I was a man, then I could talk with you, but now I have nothing. I am ashamed and cannot talk to you'. I nudged Danguolė and said we could give him money, and she told him that we were willing to pay him. He looked even more baleful and said, 'No I am no longer a man. How can I be interviewed'? I nudged Danguolė again; she resented my prodding and altered the question, asking the man if he would like to join us for a cup of tea or coffee. He said, 'No. How can I go into a coffee house? I am not dressed; I am ashamed. When I had a job, then I could go and talk with you and even take your money. But now, leave me alone. I am too ashamed even to talk with you'. Danguolė persisted a bit more, and then we left. Danguolė was nearly in tears. It was a very emotional moment. Our informant had spoken without emotion, acrimony, or bitterness. He desired to be invisible, and his present poverty in contrast to his perception of his past made him so embarrassed about the state of his present public self that he turned himself into an untouchable, refusing not only contact but also money and food.

*Case-Study 2: A Street Merchant (About Fifty-Years-Old)*

The man stood behind a wooden table and sold small goods (wallets, gloves, and such) to tourists and locals. It was January, cold and late in the day, and he had been drinking but was not drunk. He consented to an interview. When asked what his days were like, he said, 'I load and unload goods' ('*iškraunu ir sukraunu prekes*'). He indicated that his life was circular, with each day the same, nothing exciting, but nothing horribly bad happening. He put goods on the table in the morning and unloaded them in the evening. In a flat tone, he emphasised the drudgery of his days. I asked him if anything good ever happened in his life, and he immediately answered, 'When you get money'. He has a wife and a son. His son had been a basketball player, and there were hopes he might make it as a professional, but he started to experiment with drugs and alcohol and was now in rehabilitation. The father expressed his hope that the boy would steer clear of his old '*narkotika*' friends. My assistant asked him to whom he was closest. He answered, 'Closest? If I kiss you, you will also be close to me'. He leaned into kiss her and just then wiped his nose with his hand. 'Oh just mucus coming from my nose'. He kissed my assistant on the cheek. When we asked him what difficulties he had in his life, he answered, 'Oh many various difficulties. I can't even number them'. We then asked him what the cause of his difficulties

was, and he replied, 'Money, money, money. And I have health problems. My mother died recently'.

*Case-Study 3: An Antique Dealer in his Sixties*

He had originally been a dancer and choreographer. After independence, he rented a dance studio in Panevėžys for eight years with his wife but could no longer afford to keep it in 2002. Shortly after he lost his job, his wife died, and he moved to Vilnius with his youngest two children (in 2005, ages twenty and sixteen). He began his present occupation as an antique dealer by obtaining Lithuanian antiques and selling them on commission at a store near the centre of Vilnius. He was more philosophical and less sarcastic than the previous merchant, but still, he felt alienated and described his life as being the same, day in and day out. He said, 'If I really love my native country, I am also a little bit ashamed of it. Begging people, trashy people, jails'.

We asked him what parts of his life were unpleasant, and he responded, 'The bureaucracy. There is too much paper work. When I sell one antique, I have to fill out about twenty-five papers. It is nonsense. Piles of paper, mountains of paper, which are useless. You have to fill them out...Then there is the mafia, the economic polices, and the payment inspectors, who are all checking me and who all want something'.

I asked him about what parts of his job he found pleasant, and he responded, '*Alus* [beer]. And another good thing is the way to hell is shorter for me because I am old...There is such good company in hell'. He laughed. 'But it is just pleasant to be here [*malonu pabūti čia*]'. He paused, said something unintelligible, and then continued, 'I also have two dreams: one of my dreams is to go around the world – just to travel around the earth – and the other dream is to read my library – to read all of it. Both dreams are utopian'.

*Case-Study 4: A Fifty-Year-Old Widow*

She was a devout catholic. She had had many jobs, and now, for the first time, she was working at an outdoor kiosk, selling flowers in the summer. During the winter, she was employed at a welding factory when work was available. She had been married twice; 'The first for love, the second out of calculation [*iš išskaičiavimo*]', she explained. She was thirty-two when she married the second time and had two sons by her second husband, both of whom now lived with her. The elder one was a seasonal worker in Scandinavia, where he was employed as a construction worker from spring to autumn; the younger one was planning to follow in his brother's footsteps.

Her eldest son would send her money. In the winter she had difficulties, but in the summer she had enough money to get by.

I asked her about the difficulties of her life, and she replied, 'The only difficulty is financial. If there was money, then there would no problem at all, or if I had a normal job'. When I asked her about what was good in her life, she replied, '*Dabar nieko* [now nothing]', and laughed. We discussed how Vilnius had changed, and she said that it had changed for the better. 'It is beautiful now, and you don't have to stand in line because in Soviet times you had to stand in line, and at the end of the day, after a difficult job, you stood in line and could only come home after two hours. So there is everything in Vilnius [for me and my two sons] except a job and money'.

*Case-Study 5: A Male Pensioner*

I was just finishing up an interview with a sixty-five-year-old man who said that he was retired and had been living as a pensioner (*pensininkas*) for the last ten years. I asked him how he had had enough money to get by during this time. The question seemed innocent enough to me, but he responded as though I had insulted him and said, with evident irritation, 'How come you say that I was all the time without a job? How can I not work?! All those years I worked'. My assistant tried to placate him, saying, 'Nowadays' ['*šiais laikais*'], many people don't have [jobs]'. He quickly replied, mocking her words, 'You see, nowadays. I'm not from nowadays; I am from olden times [*šiais laikais. As ne iš šių laikų. As iš senų laikų*]'.

The responses of the above informants appear to me to comprise a representative sample of the class of older people who grew up in Soviet times. This era was marked by eight-hour workdays and relative equity in earnings between neighbours. One older man articulated the difference between capitalism and Soviet socialism quite poignantly. He was a driver during Soviet times. After independence, he was in his forties and healthy, and he looked for work as a driver. He realised that he could make a good salary as a truck driver, but he would have to drive long distances and spend sleepless nights on the road. He did not want to work this hard to make extra money so that he could vacation abroad, but his children were willing to do this. Indeed, the educated and young have greater access to the wealth of the West and are prepared to realise their dreams of personal transformation through intense work abroad or at home. Older, less-educated Lithuanians not only lack easy access to Western wealth but also lack the dream of personally transforming into a Westerner. They are non-participants in the millenarian movement and express their disengagement with contemporary life through black humour. They emphasise the sameness of daily life and the centrality of money as the means of resolving their problems.

## *2.3 Interviews and Case-Studies with Younger Lithuanians: The Included*

*Case-Study 1: A Thirty-Year-Old Attorney*

Remi, his wife, and his three-year-old daughter had just returned from a trip to Greece. They had spent two weeks on the beach and had rented a car to travel around the mainland. They showed me pictures of their trip. There were about forty slides, which I saw on Remi's laptop; only two pictures did not contain one of the family members. He showed me pictures of other trips: the same thing – every picture was of a family member posing in front of a beach, castle, or some other vacation object.

I asked Remi why he and so many other Lithuanians who went on vacation always prominently featured themselves as the centrepieces of their photographs.[5] He thought a moment and replied that it was because 'during Soviet times, a vacation out of the country was nearly impossible, and now we are showing that we are not living in Soviet times'. I asked him what times he was living in now. He smiled and replied, 'In European times'. After Remi had shown me his photos, we discussed the apartment he had purchased. He told me that he had taken out a forty-year mortgage from a bank and that his monthly payment was around 1,500 litas. The 75-square-meter apartment, located in a suburb of Vilnius, came with two smallish bedrooms and cost 500,000 litas. However, it came without a proper floor or insulated walls. He has had to take out an additional loan of 100,000 litas to pay for these improvements. He and his wife also had to hire a nanny to baby-sit their daughter, as both worked. The nanny cost 1,000 litas a month. The average Lithuanian salary is reported to be around 800 litas, though I have seen wildly differing figures. It may be as high as 1,000 litas in Vilnius. Still, a full-time associate professor makes less than 2,000 litas a month, and a friend of mine who worked as a public school teacher earned only 800 litas per month. I asked Remi what the average salary in Vilnius was. He quickly answered, 'It is about 1,500 per month officially, but unofficially it is around three to four thousand'. I was astounded. I thought that he must be wrong; where did all this money come from? Why the discrepancy between his estimates (Remi had a high position at a bank in Vilnius) and my own? He explained that the discrepancy was due to the fact that the mafia ruled the local economy, and carpenters and other skilled workers were in demand and were paid high wages off the books in order to keep them in Lithuania. All businesses, it seems, somehow or another relied on paying off-the-books

[5] I also asked three other Lithuanians this same question. Their answers varied, but they were all surprised to hear that one might take a picture of a place he or she had visited without including him or herself, a friend, or a family member.

wages. I asked him again where all the money came from. He explained, 'It comes from the EU. The EU gives billions of Euros to help us reach a European level of living... More goods are in demand, and they cost European prices, so money in Lithuania is rising to the same height as in the EU. It is a circle'. I replied, 'So it is like contagious magic – by being in the EU, Lithuania also obtains the same level of wealth'? He nodded. 'Yes. Incomes rise because demand rises, and there is supply. By not paying taxes or insurance for workers and paying under the table, businesses avoid extra expenses, so they can pay higher wages'. Even now, I do not understand how the system operates, but it seems that there is a never-ending supply of Eurodollars being pumped into the Lithuanian economy.

Remi spoke about the rhythm of life and how it was accelerating. He was tired everyday, and he was nervous about his expenses. He didn't have any close friends; he had his work, his wife and child, his new apartment, new car, and vacations. He said that he was happy but tired. He seldom drank. When I talked to him, I could see in his face that he was slightly irritated by my prodding, but he was a friend and I was a foreigner. He should have been willing to answer. I did not understand him; he seemed restless, and I wondered what was meaningful in his life. I asked him what in life gave him satisfaction? His shoulders sloped, and he hunched over, looking more tired than irritated. He had emphasised to me in words and body language how it was 'the rhythm of life' that had changed over time and that it was quick, too quick for comfort. He answered my question about what would satisfy him, 'To finish the house and pay my loans and that my family is healthy'. These hardly seemed like millenarian dreams. Perhaps the old saying was right: Be careful what you wish for.

*Case-Study 2: A Twenty-Six-Year-Old, Single Woman from a Rural Town*

Rimantė works as a clerk in a large store in the town of Telšiai. When she was in high school, she was fat and had a beehive hairstyle. In 2003, as she and I looked through her high school yearbook, she was embarrassed by the picture. The pictures all looked as if they were from another culture, another time. Rimantė talked about how she wanted to leave Lithuania, as all of her classmates were abroad. There were no good jobs in Telšiai, and she was eager to make money and see the world. I met her again in 2007. She still had never left Telšiai, and she was one of the few from her class who was still there. She looked and acted very differently than when I had seen her in 2003. She worked as a clerk in her family-owned (and successful) appliance and general store. Whereas before she was hefty and had a large head of permed hair, she was now thin, her hair long, and she had a 'natural' look. She was much more relaxed with me than before. She spoke decent English

and preferred to speak with me in English. She was on a diet and told me that she exercised daily. She was proud of her body, and on the day we met, she wore a low-cut, tight blouse and tight white pants. She had long legs and wore high-heeled shoes. My wife and I ran into her by chance on the street just outside her shop.[6] We sat down together and talked. She was excited to see us and told my wife, Janina, that she was getting married that coming summer. Her fiancé had been working in Norway for a year and had saved 100,000 litas. They were going to have a large wedding and were planning on building a house on the lake. Property values had increased dramatically in Telšiai even though almost all of the young people had left or planned on leaving to work abroad or else had moved to Vilnius. There were few jobs in Telšiai, the population was shrinking, and yet there was a housing boom. New houses, many of them the size of mansions, were being built along the Telšiai lake. With a 100,000 litas in hand, Kristina and her fiancé could afford to put a down payment on one of these new houses. After they were married, she planned to go with her husband to Norway, where they would work and save an even larger sum. Kristina continued to speak with confidence about her future; nothing, it seemed, was impossible. 'Now that we are part of the EU, everything is possible. Before, nothing was possible'. I thought of Juste's apt words: *be struktūros*. Without structure everything was possible, and it was money and individual personal qualities that were the mediums through which the individual could realise his or her dreams.

*Case-Study 3: A Twenty-Six Year Old Woman, Working in England as a Waitress*

When I first met Rasa in 2002, she was a student at Vilnius University. She lived with her mother and her boyfriend in a flat in a suburb of the city. She was (and is) ambitious and energetic. A top student in her faculty when she graduated in 2003, she had found odd but interesting jobs working on films in Vilnius. Through this work she had realised she wanted to become a director. She had been somewhat dissatisfied with her boyfriend, with whom she had lived since her first year as a student. He wanted to get married and have children. She said that she also wanted to marry him, but he had been her only boyfriend, and she thought it was not good to marry the only male with whom she would ever have sex. She wanted wealth, travel, fame, and adventure. Her boyfriend, a carpenter, was quiet and hard working, earned decent money, and had an old but functional car. In 2005, Rasa decided to go to England. She worked first as a housemaid for a rich Russian student who lived in a mansion and threw wild parties. Later, she became his mistress.

[6] Kristina was one of my wife's best friends in high school, and whenever we come to Telsiai, my wife and Kristina get together.

After their relationship ended, she began to work in a restaurant where she had an affair with a Pakistani. They also broke up, and Rasa began seeing a new Pakistani who, unfortunately, was a newlywed with a pregnant wife. It was, as she wrote to me at the time, 'passion' that kept them together. She was confused and was suffering from an excess of opposing desires and self-conceptions. Now in 2007, she was back in Lithuania visiting her boyfriend and mother for two weeks. She told me how her mother wanted her to stay in Lithuania and marry her boyfriend. Her mother cried every time she left the house. Rasa's mother was sick, and she made an appointment for her to see a psychologist. Rasa could not stay still, as her millenarian dreams were so close to realisation. She glowed when she spoke about her Pakistani boyfriend and their passion for one another. Yet she was or appeared to be rational; she was visiting with directors and seeking job opportunities, ensuring (as she saw it) that the trajectory of her future would continue on the upswing. Her life confused her, and she spoke to me about love, knowing that it was a subject I had been studying for five years. I told her to follow her heart, even though it would probably lead to suffering, because she might grow wiser in so doing instead of remaining in Lithuania, regretting what her life might have been like. Her Lithuanian boyfriend had little overt sense of the millenarian dream. She explained, '[He is] too Lithuanian, too old-fashioned, too quiet. I can't really say anything to [him]; he just wants to marry me and have kids and sit in front of the TV. Sex with him is always a dirty affair, something done in the dark, in secret, but with Suraj it is playful passionate, exciting'.

The millenarian dream entails a refashioning of the self into some idealised version of the Western European. There are different versions of the Western European ideal, but they all entail a personal transformation and a rejection of Lithuanian qualities, with the exception of being 'tough'. The medium of this dream – that which makes it possible – is money, and money is acquired through skills, work, and determination.

## 3. Summary of Findings

In my previous research, I focused on semantic features of Lithuanian identity. In one study I sought to answer how it is that people know a Lithuanian when they see one. To answer this question, I used a cognitively distributed approach in which I presumed there were core, scalar semantic features that were necessary constituents of evaluating 'Lithuanianess'.[7] In this paper, I have focused more on what I have previously termed 'secondary constituents

[7] The term 'Lithuanianess' has been used in this context by Vytis Čiubrinskas in discussions with myself and others.

of Lithuanian identity' and have focused on the pragmatic aspects of two different kinds of Lithuanian identities – those who participate in the millenarian movement and can be referred to as 'new Lithuanians' versus those who are marginalised (unskilled and uneducated youths) or excluded ('old Lithuanians'). I have tried to describe the core features of the millenarian movement, its participants and non-participants, and the behavioural and value concomitants of the participants.

The main findings of this paper are: (1) The millenarian dreams of the 'New Lithuanian' are secular and capitalist in ideology and mode; (2) Work is a necessary condition of realising millenarian dreams; (3) The valorisation of a precious 'heroic' and nationally autonomous past serves as a psycho-cultural foundation that Lithuanians can draw on in order to gain confidence in their ability to realise their millenarian dreams; (4) After independence there was and there continues to be, albeit in a diminished form, a feeling of release from an oppressive structure, and this gives 'new Lithuanians' a sense of freedom and possibility; (5) The Lithuanian millenarian movement is egocentric and is an inchoate mass movement (an observation that requires further examination); (6) Money replaces religion as the coin or medium for realising millenarian dreams; (7) A Western European lifestyle (i.e. travel, middle class income, house and car, periods of leisure, acquisition of luxuries) becomes the object of value that the new Lithuanian dreams (and seeks) to accrue. I have argued that the above features are, in part, a result of a secular millenarian movement that is probably in its final stages. The millenarian concept provides insight into psycho-cultural processes of change among Lithuanians. It is perhaps the case that as more and more Lithuanians succeed in realising their millenarian dreams, these dreams will cease and will be inscribed as intrinsic entitlements of the self; one senses that, as of 2007, the millenarian movement has already begun to wane. I wonder then if successful Lithuanians will turn toward the many invisible and marginalised Lithuanians and provide them with opportunities or entitlements to improve their lives as well. Or will they remain prisoners to their millenarian dreams and perceive themselves, as many Westerners do, as agents of the self, whose primary life project is to work on improving the self as constructed and conceived through the medium of money?

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# *Chapter 10*
# New Old Identities and Nostalgias for Socialism at St. Petersburg and Berlin Flea Markets

Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova

IN COMMEMORATION OF *LUBA*

> …Selling off an empire, they sell it by the pound / The Russians in the market square. / … Give him 15 Deutschmarks for an old red hat. / He will sell you the coat off of his back… / … He'll tell you stories about his past. / He'll tell you stories if you ask. / And he's looking handsome and he's looking sad, / The Russians in the market square.
>
> The song 'Russians' by Tiger Lilies[1]

> The global entertainment industry of nostalgia is characterized by an excess and complete availability of desirable souvenirs that often surprised Eastern European visitors. Whereas the objects of past regimes were carefully purged from sight in Eastern Europe as well as in China and Southeast Asia… in the West objects of the past are everywhere for sale.
>
> Svetlana Boym[2]

## Introduction

On a sunny and frosty Sunday in the winter of 2003, we went to the biggest and last flea market in St. Petersburg, located near Udelnaya metro station in the north – the one that survived the 300 year anniversary 'cleaning' of the city. As usual, we observed objects and people, and enjoyed the weather and communication. Suddenly I (Oleg) noticed a Pinocchio doll – '*Buratino*' in Russian. I stopped, transfixed. For all my childhood I had dreamt about this doll but had never owned one. There was one in my kindergarten – an object

[1] From the album 'The Brothel To The Cemetery'.
[2] Boym 2001: 38.

of my envy – but I never had my own. I felt that this was my chance to get it. 'Better late, than never', Lilia said sarcastically. She continued, 'Oh, man, you're getting nostalgic, aren't you'!? What could I say? Yes, I was.

Plate 1. Dolls for sale at a St. Petersburg flea market.

## *Why Nostalgia?*

The concept of 'nostalgia' provides an interesting angle for approaching and understanding societies that have experienced transformation and a significant break with the past and, as a result, cultural and generational gaps, changes in identities and other consequences of a social and cultural character. This concept allows one to blend the macro- and micro-levels, the structural and the personal dimension, and to place individual memory and feelings in a broader social context. We are also partial to the nostalgia approach because it provides an opportunity to transcend social and economic limits and to dwell on the cultural issues of analysis.

'Obviously, any nostalgia has an utopian element', writes Svetlana Boym (Boym 2001: 38). In this sense it is clear why the socialist past is so strongly linked to nostalgia: socialist societies were utopian projects, and in this sense they are the 'natural' objects of nostalgia. Interestingly, people are nostalgic about socialist societies in the same way that they are nostalgic about utopias: real evidence of negative experiences and traumatic memories is often ignored (as in the case of West Germans who did not experience socialism but are nostalgic for it) or forgotten (as in the case of Russians or sometimes East Germans). In spite of their trauma, people prefer to cherish their dream of the 'better world' and to find an object for their nostalgia in the utopian socialist past.

More broadly, why does the nostalgia angle fit a book on new economies and identities? Nostalgia is a feeling of missing another world in which life and people were different; it is often marked by regret. As we will show, nostalgia can also refer to a past that never was personally experienced, but nevertheless, such a form of nostalgia is employed for identity production and reproduction. In all postsocialist countries, the economy seems to play one of the most significant roles in processes of change in general and in changes of identities in particular. The economy, first, in a liberal, free market form, invaded the social order of former socialist societies: 'economic reforms of the early 1990s too quickly reduced a broad democratic and social agenda to the economy, putting blind faith into the salvatory mission of the free market' (Boym 2001: 64). The economy, with its logic, values, and rules of the game, became an integral part of the new order of things. Relying on Habermas' terminology, one can say that the economy changed the alignment of forces in the struggle between the 'life-worlds' and 'the system' (Habermas 1984) in postsocialist societies. As a result, it was difficult for formerly socialist people to resist the 'colonisation' of their life-worlds by the new system with which they were unfamiliar, and therefore they were unable to efficiently withstand it.[3] Thus, to a great extent it was an 'achievement' of the economy that the 'good old times' in the USSR and the DDR became for many people a nostalgia-worthy past. In this context, nostalgia 'became a defense mechanism against the accelerated rhythm of change and the economic shock therapy' (Boym 2001: 64).

[3] For more about the application of Habermas' approach to postsocialist societies with regards to new economic relations, the economy of survival, and 'everyday economy', see Pachenkov and Berman 2007.

## *Why Flea Markets?*

The flea market is a very special phenomenon. We need not prove why the flea market provides an investigatory site for the 'new economies'; at first glance, the flea market looks like an ordinary market place, although somewhat 'strange'. However, the flea market should be recognised not only as an economic, but also as a *social and cultural institution* (Maisel 1974; Sherry 1990a, 1990b; Damsar 1997; Bromley 2000). Therefore, an investigation of flea markets can help us to learn more about society – its history and current life.

At a flea market, one can find fascinating examples of identity building when people identify themselves and others in relation to their own and others' pasts as well as in relation to old objects and new brands. The phenomenon of building an identity through goods and consumption practices, so typical for 'consumer culture' (Slater 1997), is represented in the flea market in unusual ways and with strange contradictory forms that are worth investigating.

Last but not least, as we will try to show, it is difficult to think of a better place for learning about nostalgia than at a flea market. This text is based on the results of investigations undertaken at two flea markets: the biggest flea market in St.-Petersburg (Russia), located near the Udelnaya metro and railway station (it does not have an official name but we will call it 'Udelniy'); and one of the biggest flea markets in Berlin – *Flohmarkt am Mauerpark*.[4] However, other cases (especially in Germany) were also taken into consideration and formed a 'context' for our chosen cases, so we will also refer to them.

The two flea markets selected for investigation and comparison are interesting because they provide evidence of both similarity and difference and because they both represent the meeting, mixture, and conflict of two different worlds. On the one hand, both flea markets are located in *capitalist societies* dominated by the logic of the market economy, the influence of which should not be underestimated. On the other hand, the socialist past is represented in the space of flea markets in objects (inherited from socialist times), people (who grew up in the USSR or the Eastern Bloc) and in the very atmosphere of the market (which usually has a very strong 'taste' of nostalgia). Although both societies share a socialist past, our observations of

[4] This text is based on the results of three research projects, one of which was completed in 2003 (about St. Petersburg flea market, supported by the Independent Institute for Social Policy, Russia), the second of which was completed in 2006-2007 (in Berlin, supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation), and the third of which is ongoing (INTAS Project #05-1000006-8393, focused on the transformation of urban space in both St. Petersburg and Berlin).

the Berlin and St. Petersburg flea markets convinced us that there are different types of nostalgia for socialism – nostalgia can arise from personal experience, refer to someone's else experience, or be rooted in discourse and fashion trends. Furthermore, there are also various ways to express nostalgia; one can celebrate or deplore it.

## 'Nostalgic Recollection': Nostalgia for the Broken Everyday Life

By 'nostalgic recollection' we mean a type of nostalgia based on personal memories and lived experienced. As we will show, nostalgia in the flea market differs from ideology- and consumption-based variants.

### *Udelniy Flea Market*[5]

The Udelniy flea market in St.Petersburg is located in the northern part of the city, in a park near the local train and metro station 'Udelnaya'. Bounded by the park at one end and a highway crossing at the other, the market stretches narrowly along close to a mile of railway spanning only 80-100 feet. On weekends and holidays, the market operates from eight in the morning until the late afternoon, except in the summer, when the market, like the northern sun, extends its hours. On a typical market day, the vendors number between 500 and 1,000, with two to three times as many shoppers. The vendors arrange themselves in about eight rows, resembling small paths winding through the park. Signs that once marked the rows have long since disappeared, but people continue to reproduce the original structure with only slight variations. One by one, they stand in their places to sell their wares. There are not a tremendous number of stalls (the presence of which is a recent innovation at this market – about 150 stalls appeared in late 2006), so the majority of goods lie right on the ground in front of the vendors. Shoppers at Udelnaya are similar to those observed at other flea markets; they come to bargain-hunt, search for something special, or just to spend the day 'loafing around' (Sherry 1990a, 1990b; Damsar 1998).[6]

Udelnaya's history helps to explain the particular dynamics at work for the administration, vendors, and consumers. According to informants

[5] We found signs of this type of nostalgia mostly in the Russian flea market, although as we thereafter realised that it is represented in Berlin flea markets as well. However, we decided to illustrate this nostalgia with examples from St. Petersburg because we are more familiar with Soviet and post-Soviet everyday life in Russia than in the DDR and postsocialist Germany.

[6] The Russian word '*tolkat's'a*' has two meanings: 'to loaf around' and 'to push (each other)'. Open-air market places called '*tolkuchka*' combine both activities; time is spent loafing around as well as pushing each other because of the narrow space and the crowds of people. The flea market, however, is usually called '*barakholka*', which means a place where one can get '*barakhlo*', meaning 'junk' or 'trash'.

living in this district since the 1950s, the market operating today took shape around 1995. Before then, a small group of ten or twenty people gathered here to earn extra money by selling hand-made crafts and odds and ends brought from home. The pensioners sold fruits, vegetables, and flowers they cultivated in their dachas, while alcoholics sold old trash they found near their homes, and homeless people sold junk gathered from dumpsters. Because it was convenient for those arriving on the train with food to sell from their dachas, the market originally appeared by the railway station, where there were always crowds of people travelling to and from their dachas in the summertime.

By the mid-1990s, as a result of the social and economic collapse of the early 1990s, people increasingly were relying on the market to supplement their incomes. Hundreds of people started to sell their wares at this location, despite it being illegal. People would have repeated confrontations with the police, who took items and money from people, arresting and fining them, and sometimes destroying the objects that people were trying to sell. Troubled by the situation, seventy-two vendors organised to defend the marketplace. With a middle-aged woman named Luba as their informal leader, this group started visiting local authorities, politicians, and deputies of the city parliament to 'push the deal'. After a lengthy process of meetings and negotiations, they established a nearly legal status for the market, solving the majority of legal and practical problems between the police, local authorities, and the market director. However, this agreement legally established the market as a club for pensioners (named 'Luba' for the director), giving them the right to gather and socialise in the area. The agreement did not grant the area the status of a market; thus, trade remains illegal. Because the vendors do not issue financial documents, pay taxes, or have permission to engage in entrepreneurial activity, any participation in trading violates several laws. This semi-legal position is maintained through corruption: the administration collects money from vendors to pay bribes to the local police. Vendors are pleased that the arrangement reduces their dealings with the police - any problems with police are delegated to the administration.[7]

[7] Although the market has yet to obtain fully legal status, in 2007 its future was recently fixed. The way in which this happened is illustrative of the 'growing together' tendencies of Soviet-type bureaucracy and postsocialist wild capitalism, as well as of the fate of civic initiatives and civil society in contemporary Russia. Luba told us in private that the land had to be sold in 2007. The land officially belongs to the Russian Railways, but there was a court case and 'interested persons' (according to rumours, a close relative of the current governor of the city) were trying to win it and get this land in order to build another hypermarket or parking structure. These 'interested persons' relied on the 'strong support' (i.e. pressure) of the powerful governor, very well known in St. Petersburg since Soviet times, when she was a Komsomol leader of the city. This meant that the flea market had to be closed. But Luba

## *People at Udelniy Flea Market: 'Russians in the Market Square'*

A more thorough analysis of Udelnyi is now in order. Who are the people selling there? They are men and women (the latter more numerous) in their fifties, sixties, and seventies. In other words, they are elderly people who were socialised, grew up, and used to live in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1980s, they were about forty to fifty years old and worked as engineers, teachers, workers, scientists in academic institutions, army officers, and low-level bureaucrats in the administrative system. They envisioned their futures in a certain way, and the future was rather predictable – an average one suited to one's background and career in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1980s, suddenly everything changed. Initially, change was slow and gradual, but by the 1990s, change was rapid and drastic. Russia experienced a generalised breakdown of economic, political, and social structures (Shanin 1999: 11-13), which coincided with the process of 'large-scale marketization' (Bodnar 1998: 512). Numerous studies document factory closures and widespread unemployment, salary arrears, sharp declines in industrial and manufacturing productivity, and withdrawal of state-provided social services (Shanin 1999; Burawoy 2001).

As a result of such economic dislocation, people sought alternative employment and sources of income. The legalisation of private cooperatives and individual entrepreneurship in the early 1990s facilitated the growth of small-scale trading, which soon expanded to become a primary employment activity in the country. Traders soon filled the streets of major cities like St. Petersburg. Everyone was selling something; along the streets people sold food and goods. One could easily find a member of the Academy of Sciences selling vegetables at a bazaar, a philologist selling bed linens at an improvised market stall, or a female engineer selling hand-made wool socks in the street. Time passed. The government empowered and formalised new institutions, and street trading was replaced first by kiosks, then by shops and malls. But in spite of all the changes and institutionalisation processes, the flea markets remained. Why?

Soviet times are gone, but people – fossil '*homo sovieticus*' – remain. How have people's lives changed? What did all these changes mean for them? Everything and nothing. The country, life, institutions, and 'rules of the game' have greatly changed, but people's mentalities need much more

found a way – through her personal contacts – to reach the 'President Putin circles'. As a result, she said 'there was a call to the governor, who was "recommended" to leave us [the flea market people] alone'. Thus, the Russian Railways won the court case and - thankfully - leased the land on a long-term basis to the flea market administration (club 'Luba'), which is now able to sub-lease it. This solution allows the business to be profitable, while the poor may continue to conduct their sales, as well.

time to change. Many people remain 'Soviet' in spite of societal macro-transformations, and they will not give up their attitudes and habits. For them, this is hardly a conscious choice: a majority simply has no choice, no resources, and, at times, no wish to attempt to change themselves and their lives. Their feeling of nostalgia has a strong shade of sorrow because today many of them are 'losers', cast away from the mainstream of postsocialist (i.e. 'untamed' capitalist and unlimited free market) life. This category of people appeared during the transformation of the 1990s and is called 'the new poor'. These are people who enjoyed a high social status in Soviet society (many of them used to be representatives of the intelligentsia) and lost it due to social transformations and stratification at the macro-level.[8]

Plate 2. A 'new poor' shopper at a St. Petersburg flea market.

The majority of vendors at Udelnaya are comprised of the 'new poor'. Flea market vendors tend to be from the middle or working class, including pensioners and poor but well-kept people with small salaries, and they sell second-hand, old-fashioned, very cheap clothes and household goods. Ac-

[8] According to Vadim Radaev (2000), at the beginning of 2000s, the 'new poor' constituted about 60% of the Russian population. According to Shkaratan and Tikhonova (2001), this population relies primarily on state-subsidized social benefits, social networks, and an informal bartering system characteristic of the sector of the postsocialist Russian economy they call the 'economy of survival'.

cording to one vendor, a forty-year-old mother of two, the market was comprised of:

> absolutely normal people. There are such people; their sales add to their pension... The situation is friendly enough [here]... they are always encouraging each other. We shopkeepers have a good, healthy cooperation in selling.... In general, the situation is very sane. Even if they are alcoholics or drug addicts, they stick around there. They're dirty, but what's there to do? They have their own group. People are all very different.

For most vendors, employment in the flea market is a critical component of a wider strategy of combining small-scale economic activities in an 'economy of survival' (Shkaratan and Tikhonova 2001). They take advantage of every available opportunity to sell products, including several flea markets in St. Petersburg, free classified ads, pawnshops, and commission shops. In the summer, they grow fruits and vegetables at their dachas for themselves, relatives, and to sell. They are often employed at several low paying jobs, the women working as cleaners and the men as night guards. Many of the women work for twenty-four hours straight, followed by two or three days off during which they stay at home to take care of their children and grandchildren. Working at the flea market is a part of this life and economic strategy. This practice also allowed them to support their families during early perestroika times when money and food were scarce. One fifty-year-old female vendor explained:

> Well, how did we live? You know, we had some things stored away on our shelves... We did not used to live like this. Look, just so that we would have everything we needed for today, we bought to put away. There was a shortage, you know? Then we got used to it, that we always had to stock up on things. […] We were standing here like this, holding this stuff in our hands, selling after work, on the weekends. And gradually we made up our mind that even though it wasn't much income, at least you received cash... Right. So we received it in cash and didn't wait for the vouchers the enterprise would give us…

Pensions and social welfare benefits further supplement the income earned from these activities, and the 'new poor' population continues to rely on dense social networks for the exchange of goods and services. As a result of their constant struggle to make ends meet, the flea market is both a place of

leisure and enjoyment as well as a setting in which those dissatisfied with their lives can gather.[9]

Plate 3. Pensioners shopping at a St. Petersburg flea market.

Cultural and emotional issues should not be underestimated here either. Particularly for elderly pensioners, the flea market is an important venue that, in addition to providing entertainment and relaxation, provides a setting for establishing and maintaining a network of social relationships vital to their emotional, personal, and economic security. This is a place where one mainly finds elderly people trying to reproduce old familiar patterns because they cannot adopt the new ones, or rather, cannot adopt themselves to the new life patterns. The flea market is the place they come to meet one another – former and eternal 'Soviet' people, who used to share certain everyday life patterns, values, and morality and who still share views and scepticism towards the 'new life'. They come here to create collective nostalgia for the 'good old Soviet times' when they felt socially secure, had a higher social status, and enjoyed self-respect.[10]

[9] There is a tradition in social sciences that treats the flea market as a place of leisure, a social institution with certain functions, and a place where people come for social interaction and to have fun. See, for example, Sherry 1990a, 1990b; Damsar 1998; Bromley 2000.

[10] Of course, the diversity of people selling at the Udelnyi flea market is not exhausted by the type of people we discuss herein in relation to the issue of nostalgia. There are also other types of traders; for instance, 'professional traders' buying and reselling antique objects; 'shuttle traders', who are small-scale, self-employed entrepreneurs bringing goods for sale

## *Odd Objects? Things are Telling Stories about the Past*

Let us look at the assortment now. What do these people sell? The unusual assortment of goods sold at Russian flea markets appears strange and even absurd: lids of porcelain teapots, stool legs, electrical flexes, empty jam jars, and so on. However, this judgment of absurdity is rooted in the wrong interpretation: things only look strange if you put them in the context of contemporary post-Soviet life in St. Petersburg. Try to imagine them at barakholka in 1970s Leningrad; there and then, they would not have warranted a second glance. But what are they doing in 2007 in St. Petersburg? Why do people bring these objects to sell the market now? They may be attempting to prolong the life of old objects, while feeling safe when surrounded by their familiarity. All of these details and pieces allow people at flea markets to reproduce familiar patterns of handling the goods, to reconstruct a well-known and comprehensible world by filling it with familiar objects, and by these means to reproduce their identities.

A gap between production and consumption defined the USSR economy. It resulted in a significant difference between what was needed and what was available – both in terms of quantity and quality of goods. The resulting deficit of basic goods meant Russians did not buy them – they 'got' them. Products were 'gained' through struggle – sometimes literally – against fellow citizens or by exploitation of wide networks. This resulted in a particular attitude toward objects: the more time, effort, and networking capital were invested in procuring something, the more valuable the object. At the same time, many newly produced goods in the Soviet state were of such bad quality that people could not use them properly or only after redesigning or repairing them. So even after obtaining an object, people invested a lot of energy and emotions in the object in order to make it look good and work properly. Extensive books were published explaining how to remake various objects such as furniture and clothes. As a result, many mass-produced objects had their own unique 'face' because they were redesigned for individual tastes and needs. Consequently, personal relations developed between goods and their owners. People approached goods as friends, culti-

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from Finland (Olimpieva et al. 2007); and sellers of new items, selling low-quality, cheap Chinese and Turkish products. However, they comprise neither the majority of sellers, nor the atmosphere of the Udelniy flea market. The distinction between these types of sellers and the 'nostalgiacs' as well as the alienation of the former from the flea market is illustrated by the following example: in recent times, as the structure of the Udelniy flea market and the surrounding area (consisting of several other market places such as a second hand market and a cheap food market) have changed, these types of sellers have left the flea market and moved to other cheap market places in the area.

vating emotional attachments to them and even talking to them or giving them names (Degot' 2000; Degot' and Peperschtein 2000).

Soviet people also rarely threw used things away, mainly due to the lack of available goods, but also because even if an object could no longer fulfil its original function, so much effort, time, energy, and emotion had already been invested in it that a person could not just discard the object. Instead, people repaired things themselves. Interestingly, tools remain one of the most popular items at Russian flea markets (Brednikova and Kutafieva 2004). This habit – to repair things instead of throwing them away and buying new ones – seems to be useful to the 'new poor' since the former deficit of goods has been replaced in their post-Soviet lives by the deficit of money. A forty-five-year-old female shopper at the flea market explained:

> I remember that when our pipes broke, we bought some kind of connecter right there because there weren't any in the stores… Firstly, I know that's how father bought all the plumbing; it's true. Secondly, one fellow who's still at the market had this kind of wire, that is, to clean waste pipes; it's pushed in there and turned it through [to snake the drain]. That is, there were none in the stores. And there we, for five rubles, if that, bought it. Aren't we clever!

Russians also found new functions for the objects that became an inevitable part of interior and visible everyday life, so 'a hopelessly damaged teapot became a vase, and worn through pantyhose – a capacity for the storage of onion or garlic' (Gerassimova and Chuikina 2004: 76). Many vendors at Udelniy flea market say the reason they sell their belongings is they are not willing to throw them away, especially when they 'could be used again'. Throwing such things away is just against the morality and logic of Soviet people. The 'life expectancy' of an object in Soviet society was very long (Gurova 2004) because 'the extension of the life of an object includes not only pure technical characteristics or economic implications, but also a moral appraise' (Gerassimova and Chuikina 2004: 77). Today, nearly two decades after the collapse of the Soviet system, one can still hear vendors at flea markets describe the many uses of a broken device to the puzzled customer.[11]

[11] Since the visitors at Udelnyi flea market are often the same type of people, sometimes just the opposite interaction takes place and the consumer asks the vendor if this or that device can be used for another function. For example, when selling at the Udelnyi flea market, we were once asked by an elderly couple if the hair-dryer we were selling could be used as a bubble-making device for the Jacuzzi that the man was going to make of his normal bath. 'You know, my neighbour made his bath into a Jacuzzi. I wanna try too', he said.

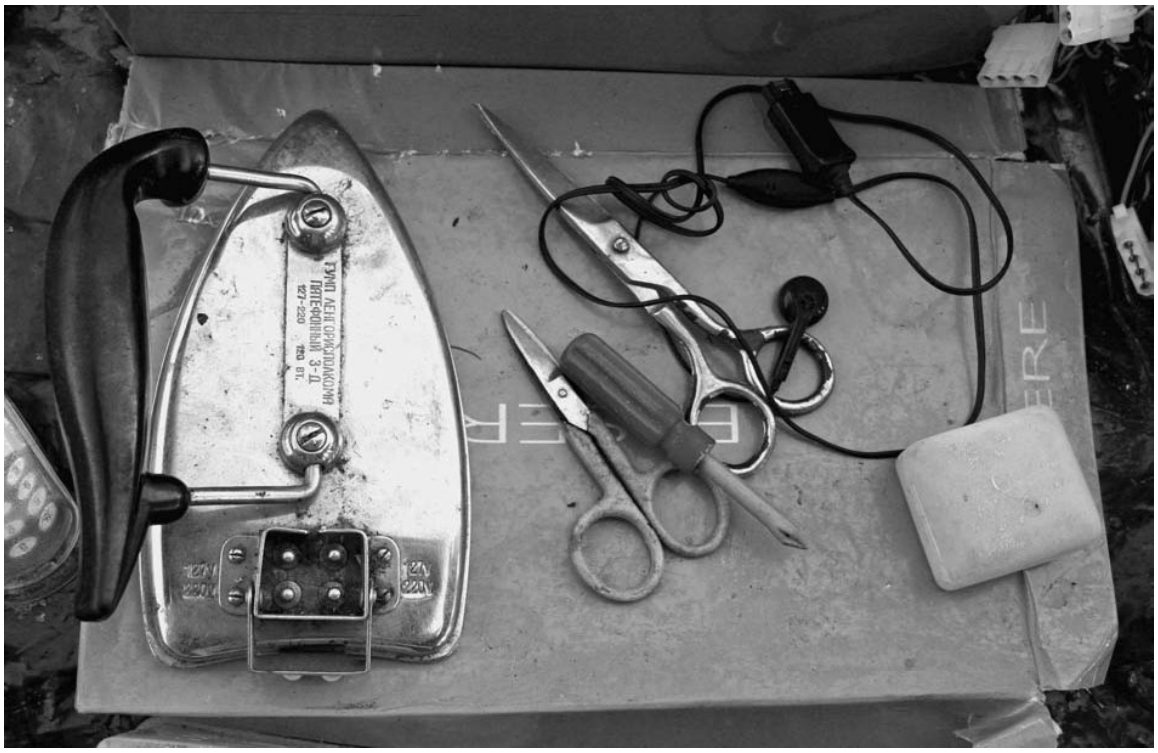

Plate 4. Broken devices for sale at a St. Petersburg flea market.

Of course, there are not only moral but also pragmatic reasons in place. Given that during times of deficit people never knew when they would get another chance to acquire a particular product, they bought more than one of whatever they could find in the shops: 'for the future', for 'when the children grow up', or 'just in case'. Things were used and then kept for the next generation, without concern for changing fashions or style. One fifty-year-old female vendor explained:

> there was a shortage, you know? Then we got used to it, that we always had to stock up on things. Everyone had, I mean, several pairs, some for children, some things, any things...so long as something was put away. And here are these stored up things; they were absolutely new, still with price tags...

Baby and children's clothes as well as objects potentially needed by newlyweds were good examples of this practice. These things were given as gifts to children, grandchildren, and children of friends or relatives. Times have changed, however, and today parents prefer to buy new clothes for their children; newlyweds prefer IKEA to granny's old dresser. Nonetheless, the older generation accustomed to the culture of scarcity, still cannot throw away absolutely new, 'almost new', or still usable possessions, so they sell these items, both to avoid throwing them away and to earn an 'extra kopeck'. This practical rationality of 'post-but-still-Soviet' people is widely reflected

in the flea market. For example, a seventy-five-year-old pensioner described how she began coming to the market:

> I brought old clothes, but L [her daughter] had said to throw them out… but it seemed to me such a pity to throw them away. I never buy anything new. I believe in making do with one's old things. At first, I listened to her and brought it all to the garbage, but then when I heard about this flea market, I thought maybe I should stop by and have a look.

All these reasons – cultural, moral, and pragmatic – resulted in the accumulation of an amazing number of unused or just useless things in postsocialist Russian flats and dachas. Thus, we should not be surprised when we see a broken teapot or worn out pantyhose for sale at the flea market – people are not dumb and understand that things are broken, though they also believe these items can be used for some other function, and such a usage under any circumstances is better than throwing things away as garbage – this way of treating things is 'nonhuman' and therefore undesirable. We believe that one could speak in this context about the process of *identification* of a person with the object he or she is selling.[12] The intermediary layer linking the feeling of self (identity) to the object is probably a sense of *nostalgia*: people view the objects borrowed from their everyday lives or reminders of their everyday lives as pieces of their broken happiness. These objects are a part of the 'old good times' that they miss now that everything is different: the world, life around them, and they themselves. These objects remind them of their everyday lives in the pre-capitalist past. Therefore, the odds and ends one can find at flea markets are more than objects; they are splinters of broken everyday lives and destroyed identities, 'footsteps of the memory about someone's lives' (Boym 1994).[13]

[12] In the literature on the culture of consumption, self-identification is often described as being based on consumed items and the process of consumption itself, however, here we are dealing with the opposite phenomenon of the seller identifying him/herself with the *sold* objects.

[13] This explains the emotional conflicts one can observe at Russian flea markets (Pachenkov and Berman 2007). These conflicts are not centred on objects but on identities, and they are about 'selves'.

Plate 5. Nostalgia objects at a St. Petersburg flea market.

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Thus, as an increasingly singular site for the reproduction of post-Soviet culture, the flea market provides conditions and opportunities allowing people to reproduce familiar patterns of consumption and everyday life from Soviet times and thereby to reproduce identities. The culture of consumption has not greatly influenced these elderly people; they still live, think, and act according to their own ideas rooted in the realities of the Soviet past. They appear out of time and out of fashion, but they do not care much. They have found their own world and have established their own community of 'Soviet survivors'. Boym describes this 'cultural identity' as based on 'a certain social poetics of "cultural intimacy" that provides a glue in everyday life […] Such identity involves everyday games of hide-and-seek that only "natives" play, unwritten rules of behavior, jokes understood from half a word, a sense of complicity' (Boym 2001: 42). It seems that the Udelnyi flea market is to some extent such a community of people whose identity is based on the shared 'cultural intimacy' of Soviet times. On weekends they come to the flea market to meet each other and to remember. The *spirit of nostalgia* comprises the flea market's emotional atmosphere, and since these people feel 'marginalised' in contemporary Russian society, the 'taste' of the Udelnyi flea market nostalgia has a nuance of sorrow and mourning.

## 'Ostalgia': 'Mythological' and 'Imaginative' Nostalgia

'Mythological' nostalgia – as opposed to the first type based on ideology and collective memories – arises from personal experience of the nostalgiacs. The 'imaginative' nostalgia of former DDR citizens emerged between the nostalgic recollections of the older generation of former citizens of socialist states, on the one hand, and the mythological nostalgia of young western intellectuals, on the other.

### *Flohmarkt am Mauerpark*

This flea market is located in a very interesting and meaningful part of Berlin in a park that for thirty-eight years was split into two parts by the Berlin wall.[14] This means that it is an 'East Berlin flea market', which in the German context means that it is somehow different from the traditional German flea markets one finds in West Germany.[15] Among other things, the location of this flea market means that it is recent. It was established by two young business-minded Berliners in 2004, and for two years it was one of the largest[16] and most popular flea markets in the city, mentioned in all the famous pocket guides (though the total number of large flea markets in Berlin is about fifty and only three or four are mentioned in the average pocket tourist guide[17]).

The Mauerpark lies at the border of three city quarters whose names say a lot to anyone who has ever been to Berlin: *Mitte*, *Prenzlauerberg*, and *Wedding*. Managers of the flea market claim that the location is very important for the contingent of the market because all three parts of the city are

[14] We illustrate mythological and imaginative nostalgia primarily with examples from the Berlin flea market. Nevertheless, both types as well as 'commercialised nostalgia' (which we address at the very end of this chapter) can be found at Russian flea markets and, likely, in any postsocialist society.

[15] Another important notion is that this flea market is located in the biggest German city – a fact that determines the appearance and content of the market and distinguishes it from ones found in rural areas and small German towns. However, because this chapter is focused not on flea markets as such but on the issue of nostalgia, we will not dwell much on the specificities of different German flea markets. It is just important to keep these differences in mind before extending description or conclusions drawn from the analysis of this definitely not average or typical German flea market to all German flea markets. It is important to keep in mind that the flea market we describe is a (i) *recent* flea market located in (ii) *Eastern* (iii) *Berlin*. We describe below what these characteristics mean and why they matter.

[16] The market has around 250 sellers, 180 stalls provided by the market administration, and 7,000-10,000 visitors daily.

[17] Forty-one flea markets are mentioned and pointed out on the *Flohmarkt-Stadtplan Berlin* map printed in 2007. We visited several other small local flea markets in the city, but they are not indicated on this map.

populated by very different types of people. Mitte supplies Mauerpark flea market with tourists and wealthy Berliners, hunting for souvenirs and 'funny' things. Prenzlauerberg delivers people of artistic and designer backgrounds, some of whom sell and buy here, while others only come as visitors. There are also trendy Prenzlauerberg yuppies who come to look for odd goods, from clothes to household items, or to hang out drinking beers and mojitos with their friends, while their children play in the mud or are sent to the local playground. Wedding furnishes the market with Turkish, Arab, Polish and former-Yugoslavian migrants, who spend the week 'cleaning' empty apartments and picking up furniture and unattended bicycles from the streets. On weekends they sell these 'treasures' in cardboard boxes to other migrants and Berlin 'Schnäppchen hunters' (Damsar 1997). There are also people from other parts of Berlin who come to Mauerpark such as sellers of ethnic items (Jamaican flags and marijuana leaves designs) from Neukölln or Friedrichshain.[18]

At any rate, Mauerpark flea market is today a part of Berlin's cultural scene: hundreds of youngsters hang around its four cafes and the park area each Sunday, and live bands and DJs play on the flea market's three stages, with other bands typically performing in the park just next to the market. People come to the market to lie on the grass and enjoy life, drink beer, smoke marijuana in peace, and to play Frisbee, football, and volleyball. Hula-hoopers and jugglers can also be seen here practicing. Flohmarkt am Mauerpark is a very successful commercial and art project. Its only limitation relates to space and time: it cannot expand further and the land is rented for five years, with no one knowing what will happen to it once the lease ends.

## *Ostalgia by Westerners*

Mauerpark is a symbolic place for German history, a fact that is even reflected in its name. This is a place that crosses time and space, bringing together old and new and East and West Germany. Practices, people, and goods one can find here reflect both times and both societies. They all coexist at this flea market and produce it as a space 'out of time and place', with its special spirit and atmosphere.

Here the community of traders and visitors is comprised mainly of young people between twenty and forty years of age. They grew up during the last years of the GDR and West Germany, and then, in postsocialist

[18] Friedrichshain is known as a refuge for all kinds of 'alternative' Berliners many of whom have conserved their life-styles - as hippies, punks, bohemians, etc. - and, as people say, keep the spirit of 1990s Berlin alive.

times, in the newly united Germany.[19] They are predominantly left-leaning, highly educated, creative, and 'alternative' people who do not want to be classified as part of a system and mainstream society. We spoke to a thirty-year-old designer of Russian origin who had lived in Berlin for ten years. The woman, who designed and sold hand-made clothes at the Mauerpark flea market, explained:

> It [Mauerpark-Flohmarkt] is a special place.… I do not know how they do it, but… It has a special audience… Bohemian people... The laws [that regulate life in wider society] do not work… The crazier you look – the better it is, the stranger you look – the better you fit in this place.

They want to look 'different', like individuals. They love to buy eccentric, old, strange objects at flea markets because by refusing to consume new things and in preferring flea markets to supermarkets, these left-leaning Germans express their nostalgia for another world which they believe to be better, truer, and more just than the one in which they currently live.

Socialist ideology was opposed to capitalism, and people usually imagine socialism as a life without the dictatorship of profit, consumerism, and other 'bourgeois' tropes. Therefore it is not surprising that for Westerners former socialist societies became a foil of 'another world' in this dream. 'Ostalgia' is a way to build the personal identity *in opposition:* it has a shade of disagreement and challenge to capitalist values and attitudes. Thus, socialist symbols, often represented by objects from the DDR, play a significant if not essential role in the identity-building process of contemporary young German intellectuals. However, this form of nostalgia differs from 'nostalgic recollection'. These young Germans feel nostalgia not about something they have experienced and have lost; this nostalgia is not rooted in their memories. Instead, it is based upon an ideology of protest and on collective memory rather than personal recollections. Boym has coined this as 'mythological' - 'without lived experience or historical memory'.

In her book on nostalgia, Svetlana Boym uses the image of the dinosaur as a symbol for 'mythological' nostalgia – that is, nostalgia for a creature that nobody has ever seen. She believes that the dinosaur was promoted by Americans, who unlike Europeans did not have their own mythological creatures. The dinosaur is the dragon of the society without history and

[19] Of course, here like with the St. Petersburg flea market we only describe one aspect of the Mauerpark flea market audience because this chapter is focused on nostalgia. There are also people who come here to buy cheap stuff, others who come to sell items and earn money, and yet others who come just to hang around and to meet friends, and none of these people conflate the flea market with their identity or nostalgia. For them the word '*Flohmarkt*' has different meanings and connotations. We just concentrated on nostalgia for socialism, one of the many 'lines' one could follow in a flea market space.

mythology (Boym 2001: 33-34). We believe that in some sense socialism became such a 'dinosaur' for West Germans, who did not have their own. Mythological nostalgia is important for *identity building* (self-identification). Americans produced an image of a dinosaur in order to oppose it – and themselves – to Europe. 'Alternative' Germans use the image of socialism to build their own identity that they oppose to the dominant culture of mainstream German society. 'The dinosaur became a figure for American greatness', writes Boym (2001: 36); in the same sense, the socialist DDR became a figure for German alternativeness.

## *Imaginative Nostalgia by Former East Germans*

East Germans and former Eastern-bloc citizens are sceptical of the consumerist idealisation of the socialist past and the attempts of wealthy Westerners to reproduce a way of life they never experienced. The two parts of Germany remain unequal, at least symbolically,[20] and the paradox is that people with a 'real' (i.e. lived socialist past) sell it (or imitated forms and symbols of it) to those who 'play' at socialism and for whom 'socialism', the 'DDR', and 'Lenin' are primarily names for an aesthetic which is sort of a sub-category of vintage: trendy, hip, 'poor but sexy'.[21]

Although East Germans are wary of the Westerner craving old DDR-style objects, former DDR citizens themselves are not indifferent to the old objects produced in Eastern Germany. However, they seem to have different reasons and feelings. We spoke to a twenty-six year-old East German who was studying anthropology in Berlin and who sold jewellery she made at the market. She explained:

> There's an Ostalgia [in Germany]. It is also in my family: 'in those old days, bla-bla…' But my mother would not buy things like old stuff from the DDR. This is all for the western [Germans] and for tourists. All these Ost products… I think Ostalgia… I don't know…I think Ost people have another form of ostalgia… It's more… more… Not much material. They would not buy these clothes any-

[20] We found that the majority of sellers at the Mauerpark flea market are East Germans and migrants, while the majority of customers are West Germans and tourists. This is not so obvious when you first see the flea market, but this invisible internal border is felt and recognised at least by 'Osties' themselves (as they told us in interviews and private talks). Of course, one can also find many migrants and, for example, students among the customers as well as some foreigners among the sellers like, for example, some British people. Nevertheless, this general tendency deserves attention.

[21] The slogan '*arm aber sexy*' ('poor but sexy') was proclaimed by the former mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit as an essential characteristic of Berlin, its spirit, and specificity. Since that time it has become a point of reference for people trying to 'capture' the 'nature of Berlin', and a part of local Berlin folklore, beliefs, and identity.

> more, you know, that they were fed up with wearing… You see these sports suits – nobody from Ost, even I, who lived a little bit in that time, would wear that stuff. But Western people love it, after all these films like '*Sonnenallee*' etc. It's fashion. It's a part of the alternative fashion style […] Not so much for Eastern people. Eastern people have more associations and other things like… I don't know… We would not buy this sort of clothes.

East Germans experience ostalgia, but in their case it is less mythological and to some extent is based on 'everyday life experience'. They buy DDR objects in order to preserve the past and their own memories of it. It also seems to be true that by buying DDR objects, East Germans also produce and reproduce their *different, special,* and *unique* identity as 'former DDR people', which is also opposed to the current German mainstream. So the DDR objects become referents of internal feelings and unstable memories in the 'objective' reality. Here, we are dealing with another example of the phenomenon of a community of people sharing 'cultural intimacy' based on personal experience.[22]

East German ostalgia should be understood as 'imaginative' rather than mythological. On the one hand, this is a form of nostalgia for the lived past, childhood, and personal experience - not for ideology or style – which thus precludes us from referring to it as 'mythological'. On the other hand, some young East Germans do not remember socialism very well, which is why they need to *imagine* the times of their childhood and reconstruct from imagination those parts of the socialist past that they never personally experienced. They also need to *imagine* themselves as 'DDR people' – to reconstruct this identity in the new context of unified Germany, where the community of 'Ossies', from a formal point of view, is a purely 'imagined' one (Anderson 1991).[23] Eventually, they esteem the socialist past in a way that a collector esteems the value of the vanishing species, and this idea of 'preserving the past' also indicates a historical *imagination*.

East Germans, as well as Russians and other 'formerly socialist' people, are a bit sceptical of the 'mythological' nostalgia of Westerners. We – former Soviet/socialist citizens - feel somewhat proud because we belong to those who have experienced socialism, who have lived that way of life, and

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[22] It is thus closer to the nostalgia felt by the babushkas at the Udelnyi flea market. Once again, there are more babushkas at Udelnyi and more East Germans at Mauerpark among sellers than among consumers.

[23] Svetlana Boym tells a story about East Germans who - after the unification of Germany - launched a campaign to save their '*Ampelmann*' – a traffic sign with the figure of a man in a cute hat. They did not want their signs to be replaced by a 'more pragmatic West German image' (Boym 2001: 54). At that time, Ampelmann became a symbol of the DDR and East Germans.

therefore we believe we have a monopoly on nostalgia for socialism and related memories. However, this monopoly does not have registered copyright users; the new generations in our own countries – youngsters who have only heard stories about socialism and its manifestations - appropriate this nostalgia without asking us 'rightful possessors' for permission. Svetlana Boym describes the post-perestroika civic and political movements in Russia dominated by right-wing moods and the rhetoric of National socialists and National Bolsheviks,[24] who 'hate yuppie culture and advocate the return of the MMM – the trinity of Marx, Marcuse and Mao. […] History for them is mostly pop culture. […] [They] restore the dreams of someone else's youth, mimic the fantasies of others' (Boym 2001: 69). No former socialist societies are immune to these mutations of nostalgia.

## *'Commercialized' or 'Pop Nostalgia': 'The Past' becomes a Brand*

It is not that young Berliners are not sincere in their dislike of capitalist and consumerist values as well as in their affinity for socialist principles. However, it is paradoxical that they are trying to build new *alternative* identities by means of *consumption*. For them, the best (or easiest, or most obvious) way to create a new identity is by *buying* objects like housewares or clothes. In spite of their rejection of capitalism, free market values, and the costs of globalisation, they too are sellers and customers in the global market where symbols and images of someone's past are sold.

The problem is that 'mythological' forms of nostalgia, cut off from a 'real', lived, and personally experienced past, often take the shape of a 'fashion' and, ironically, are realised through practices of consumption. This tendency is clearly reflected at flea markets: *youngsters come to reproduce and celebrate their alternative identities in the process of consumption*. That is why we term the third type of nostalgia 'commercialised' or 'pop' nostalgia. In a commercialised and mass culture society, everything becomes a brand, and 'the past' as well as 'socialism' are no exceptions. The interest of young people in the socialist past takes the form of a *chase for the goods* symbolising it. We have to recognise the existence of a process of the 'inculcation of nostalgia' into merchandise as a marketing strategy that 'tricks consumers into missing what they haven't lost' (Boym 2001: 38). As French writer Frederic Begbeder has noted, the mass consumption system took proper account of the mistakes of the previous forms of dictatorship: it immediately transformed any critique towards itself into a commodity to be

[24] In the Russian political scene there is not much difference between the ultra-right and ultra-left; one such example is a party that has been proclaimed illegal – the National-Bolshevik Party (NBP), led by the well-known writer and political activist Edward Lemonov.

advertised and sold. The same happened to anti-capitalist values and symbols. Che Guevara, Lenin, Marx, Mao, revolution, Trabant, and DDR all became brands.[25] The global tendency is that the 'socialist past' aesthetic is becoming a part of the fashion for old things in general. The DDR aesthetic becomes a part of expensive 'vintage' style. Nostalgic images have an advantage though: they are very timely for the modern age with its problematized identity (Giddens 1991) because they provide new opportunities for constructing alternative identities. This process seems to be especially successful when the nostalgia images are adopted, elaborated, replicated, and mass-produced by the popular culture industry.

Plate 6. Advertisement for glasses at an East Berlin flea market.

In Russia one can identify the same tendency, but with a Russian folk flavour. In Russia, the 'plastic dinosaur' of socialism takes the shape of a Matreshka doll with the face of Lenin.[26] Nostalgia arising from people's real

[25] There is a hostel in Berlin called 'Ostel: Das DDR design hostel'. The rooms and lobby are decorated with real DDR objects 'in "Good Bye, Lenin" style', as the owners characterised it. The website, based on the *Good Buy, Lenin* on-line game, offers a wide variety of DDR objects for sale (www.ostel.eu).

[26] One can also find Matreshkas representing Marx, Engels, Mao and Che Guevara. This adaptation of the traditional Japanese wooden doll that became the most recognisable symbol

everyday experience has been commercialised in postsocialist Russia. Ppeople of the former-Soviet Union for whom socialism was a personal reality are forced to observe a process of 'souvenirization of the past' (Boym 2001: 38). Army hats with red stars and other symbols of the Soviet era have become popular souvenirs for Western tourists.

Plate 7. Soviet nostalgia objects at an East Berlin flea market.

Nostalgia has become profitable, and professional traders at flea markets do not hesitate to profit from the trend. They buy pieces from the everyday socialist past from Russian 'babushkas' and resell them for prices five to ten times higher to tourists infected with a mythological and romanticised sense of nostalgia (or 'ostalgia'). Even if some of those babushkas do not embrace the trend, they understand the underlying tendency of souvenirisation of the socialist past and have learned to benefit from it themselves.

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of Russian folk style exemplifies the cynical market-oriented globalisation of post-modern times.

## Conclusion

In spite of this chapter's slightly post-modern, apocalyptical mood, it should be pointed out that the flea market remains an oasis in the contemporary world of impersonal reality dominated by means-end rationality and oriented toward the objectives of profit and power. The flea market is an exception, an anomaly in the family of market places. It is a space of absurdity and contradiction, of communication and emotional conflicts. It is a place where people come to make new friends, to be surprised, and to experience the forgotten feeling of adventure and discovery.

We have tried to show that the flea market is not just a cheap market place where people come to find old items to furnish their apartments, repair broken objects, or just to spend time hanging around, drinking beer, and looking at odd people and things. It is a market where symbolic capital is transformed into financial capital but also where money and profit can be sacrificed to moral principles and emotional affections. As we have shown, there is evidence demonstrating that this is a place where the artificial decorations of market relations hide the festive spirit of people celebrating a temporary escape from the 'system'. This is a carnival space and a market place where odd identities are created and reproduced by means of consumption and for the sake of non-consumer society; a place where new economies produce new identities and vice-versa. This is a paradoxical space, someone might say, 'so typical for societies in transition'. Well, this may be true.

The flea market can be seen as a frontier where the life-worlds of people face the challenges of the system and where people learn to resist colonisation (Habermas 1984; Pachenkov and Berman 2007) or as a space of the 'off-modernity' that Walter Benjamin envisioned; a marketplace where 'stories of oppressed people or of those individuals who were deemed historically insignificant, as well as […] discarded objects from another era can be […] rescued and made meaningful again' (Boym 2001: 28-34).

Above all it is a place where (late-)modern people come in search of what they are missing: communication, feelings, emotions, surprises, fun, sympathy, and so on. This is a space where old identities based on a shared experience of 'cultural intimacy' are consolidated, as well as where resources for the production and reproduction of new 'alternative' identities are found. This is a contradictory space that reflects, like a mirror, diverse forms of social relations, trends, and processes; the task of the researcher is to be sensitive enough to perceive these elements. An attentive scholar can also be surprised at a flea market. Apart from meeting all sorts of eccentric people and apart from being able to buy odd objects, he or she has a chance to discover or re-discover his or her own identity, the signs of his or her own 'lost paradise', and the object of his or her own nostalgia.

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# PART THREE

# CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

# *Chapter 11*
# Winners, Losers, and the Neoliberal Self: Agency in Post-Transition Europe

Steven Sampson

Nearly two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and sixteen years after the break up of the Soviet empire, we have begun to discern the contours of fundamental changes in the nature of these former socialist societies. I use the word 'fundamental' because we have gone far beyond a transition stage and are now in some kind of new, more consolidated era marked by democratic (or quasi-democratic) institutions, a rampant market economy, and integration into (or domination by) EU structures. We are now beyond simply outlining how people deal with the shock of the new, as described by so many studies of transition in the 1990s. It is this new era that is the topic of this collection of papers. Rather than focusing on how people confront new, uncertain, and at times destructive forces in their everyday lives, this volume sets out to describe how people have now creatively reconstituted their lives in light of structures that, rather than being uncertain, are now 'here to stay'. In the villages of Poland, the tourist areas of Bulgaria, the flea markets of St. Petersburg and Berlin, the factory towns of Latvia, and the restaurants of Lithuania, to name just a few of the locales in this volume, people have adjusted to new economic possibilities and have adopted new lifestyles.

Faced with resources that they have reconstituted or reassessed – resources as varied as the land and the self – individuals throughout the former socialist world have developed new cultural practices and new ways of viewing themselves in the world. New economic possibilities have created new possibilities of subjectivity: not new identities, but certainly new forms of 'identification', as I shall explain below.

Who are the people in this drama? In Bulgaria, they are anti-Western punks and husband-wife hotel operators. In Poland, they are farmers trying to get EU funds and others pondering what to do with their land. In Lithuania, they are the restaurateurs, business people, and the creative elite, and in Latvia they are business operators trying to attract and deal with foreign

entrepreneurs. Finally, the post-transition drama includes pensioners selling damaged goods in St. Petersburg or marketing 'Ostalgia' in Berlin. While all of these people experienced the past two decades in different ways, the chapters in this collection show how people have striven to find solutions that enable them to maximise their cultural resources and maintain some kind of meaningful life. Social anthropology is good at describing these solutions, which can be conceptualised in terms as varied as 'millenarian movements' (de Munck) or the 'enterprising self' (Vonderau).

It is tempting to summarise this scene by classifying these people into 'winners' and 'losers'. Winner/loser rhetoric is common throughout the former socialist world and in the academic literature. It is a rhetoric or even a discourse, that is used by intellectuals, locals, policy analysts, consultants, and by those trying to analyse social problems and find solutions. 'Winners' are those who have been able to profit from the political and economic transition by appropriating or transforming their land, social networks, and even *themselves* into valuable commodities in a world characterised by the presence of the EU and globalisation. 'Winners' are invariably Westernised, or are at least Western-oriented. They understand that change is inevitable and have adjusted their views of land, material goods, and their own capacities in order to succeed in the new environment. Chief among the 'winners' is the new middle class, which is now not only a social category, but as Buchowski points out, an ideology in its own right. The lifestyle of the new middle class requires a millenarian faith in progress (as de Munck emphasises) and requires that individuals ask themselves 'Who am I'? (Vonderau) and 'Who I am not'? The middle class is optimistic but, to use Barbra Ehrenreich's (1989) title, its members have a profound 'fear of falling'.

The 'losers', meanwhile, are depicted as those who have been unable to adjust due to their social or class situation, or unwilling to adjust, having failed to understand the new requirements of post-transition society. 'Losers', in this imagery, seem not to act but to react. They are viewed as lacking either the skills to exploit new possibilities or the inclination to use them; possibly, they lack the talent or the character to act at all. 'Losers' are represented as angry, depressed, and nostalgic. As Klumbyte points out, this nostalgia has little to do with a wonderful past but a lot to do with a horrible present.

The rhetoric of 'winners' and 'losers' is not peculiar to the postsocialist transition. We see it in virtually all elite discourses about the masses. In Barack Obama's presidential campaign, there was controversy over his statement that working class Americans turn to guns and religion for refuge. In Denmark, where I live, the centre-right government is constantly talking about the challenges of globalisation and the need for industrial and office

workers to develop 'readiness for change' (*forandringsparathed*). Denmark is famous for its 'flexicurity' model, in which firms can hire and fire workers easily, but in which the state is responsible for either retraining such workers between jobs or taking care of them if they are compelled to take early retirement. 'Flexicurity' seems to be the very opposite of the drama depicted in these papers.

Winners/losers rhetoric has its limits, however. As a metaphor, it connotes the idea that there is some kind of game or lottery in which some people happen to succeed and others fail. In real games, however, there is usually only one winner and one or many losers. The postsocialist transition was not a lottery or a game. The rules were made up as it went along, the playing field was uneven, the referee (Western donors and institutions) was often partisan, and the play was brutal. There were, so to speak, injuries on and off the field. And for some, this pseudo-game is still going on. As EU accession imposes ever more complex rules, new members do not even know what it is they have won or if they should have played at all. Hence, the winners/losers trope needs to be reformulated. Several of the papers in this volume help us in this task. They provide not only conceptual formulations but also ethnographic examples to illuminate what has been happening over the last twenty years. To see the situation in terms of 'winners' and 'losers' is to be both simplistic and ethnocentric. The chapters herein provide ample demonstration that ostensible 'winners' are constantly afraid of 'losing' and that those seemingly excluded from the economic development of EU integration still pursue strategies whereby they, too, can 'win'.

Any discussion of economy and identity is also a discussion of how class position, cultural practice, and subjectivity interact. The nexus is not identity as such but a more dynamic practice, what I would call 'identifying' or 'identification'. If identity refers to the question 'Who am I'? then 'identifying' and 'identification' involve the questions 'Where am I headed'? 'Who are my travel mates'? and 'How will I get there'? Several of the chapters in this volume describe what I would call 'technologies of identification', i.e. the practices and tools that serve as markers or instruments for achieving these life projects. Hence, Cimdina describes how Scandinavian and Latvian business partners, who are also competitors, use each other to reaffirm their own life projects. The Scandinavians are seen as naive and simplistic, while Latvia is a place where Norwegian businessmen can act out their project of taming 'the wild east'. Bogdanova and de Munck describe how in Bulgaria and Lithuania respectively an ethos of individual effort and hard work is invoked to justify and explain ephemeral prosperity and to distinguish oneself from jealous or merely unfortunate neighbours. Describing a Polish village, Pilichowska reveals how farmers reconstruct their relationship to

land, as either heritage or instrument. And among the new elites of Lithuania, Vonderau details the ways in which talent or inherited ability helps persons to depict themselves as progressive and thereby to differentiate themselves from backward workers and from more vulgar *nouveau riches*. Rather than identity as such, then, we must talk about numerous processes of identifying or identification.

How does identification proceed? How do people create a subjectivity that gives them a semblance of security in a changing world? There is no single solution. Bulgarian punks start with the remaking of their own bodies, with provocative hair, rings, and tattoos, adding musical forms, clothing, and slogans in order to construct themselves as anti-Western and not just vaguely 'progressive' or artistic. They are 'losers' who are perceived not just as a nuisance but also as dangerous. Flea market vendors in St. Petersburg and Berlin pursue identification with a variety of material objects. As described by both Klumbyte and by Pachenkov and Voronkova, 'things' signify nothing without the meanings human attach to them. In the case of the flea markets, things are attached to a past that is lamented and, in the case of Berlin, becomes a site for creating new taste in the form of Ostalgia. Comments about nostalgia are comments about 'losers' clinging to the past. Only elites who see themselves as comfortable in the present can talk about such nostalgic practices.

The classical sociological alternative to the loose vocabulary of 'winners and losers' is class analysis. The articles by Buchowski and Schröder take this concept seriously but argue that it needs to be reconceptualised in terms of configurations of resources and not operationalised on a simple vertical scale comprised of upper, middle, and lower class. Buchowski's discussion of the 'new middle class' is instructive. This category is both ill defined (including functionaries, creative intellectuals, and owners of small businesses) and ideological. All of the 'emerging economies' are placing their hopes in the new middle class. Members of the middle class view their lifestyles as some kind of calling. Western donors see them as the linchpin of a stable society, the enlightened politicians of the future. In contrast, Buchowski's anthropological approach draws attention to the diverse cultural practices of various groups. There are many middle classes and middle class trajectories: some groups are upwardly mobile, while others are moving downward. Others may be moving sideways, like Bogdanova's Bulgarian hotel owners and Pilichowska's farmers, who may have a middle class living standard but none of the typically associated cultural panache. Being in the 'middle' is not simply being in-between, or intermediate. It is also a situation of anxiety about the 'fear of falling', about expectations and aspirations that cannot be achieved.

Schröder is right to remind us that the formation of the middle classes in postsocialist space is not simply a result of the diffusion of Western norms and practices to eager acolytes waiting to fill up their lives with consumer goods. The postsocialist middle classes have their own projects, but they seem to depend more on individual life courses than on political or social goals. The middle classes depicted in this volume such as striving Lithuanians, Bulgarian hoteliers, Polish farmers, and Latvian business agents are all running fast in self-determined directions. There is still agency after EU accession.

Several of the chapters describe the economic transition in postsocialist Europe as a neoliberal nightmare of uncertainty and market impact on people who lack the resources or knowledge to deal with these things. Only those who can recreate themselves as 'enterprising selves' (Vonderau) can adjust to a neoliberal regime in which all social relations and resources must be assessed in terms of market value and investment returns. Anti-neoliberal cant is very popular within anthropology. But these papers also demonstrate people's ability to resist, distort, adjust, and creatively rework neoliberal limits. Fascist punks and flea-market pensioners are just two such examples. Polish farmers who have completely changed their views of inheritance provide a third.

A decade ago, we were trying to analyse these changes as instances of a transition from socialism and the uncertainty this causes. Today we are using models based on EU accession. Being assimilated into the EU and subjected to its policies certainly has greatly impacted these societies, but this does not mean that we should treat these societies as inert objects. We need to ask under what conditions these societies can become subjects. Here again, Buchowski and Schröder provide us with useful tools. New social categories are formed not only by outside forces such as the EU but also by the cultural desires of individuals to consolidate their subjectivity. Vonderau's Lithuanian elites, eyeing each other at their restaurants and health clubs and competing for the newest interior design – albeit in a refined way so as not to stand out – provide an empirical example of class formation.

Of course this is not a class in terms of ownership of the means of production but only in terms of its technologies of identification and lifestyle. For Marx, a focus on lifestyle would have been inadequate. But analytical categories are only useful if they help us to identify key processes and structures. Class is most useful when we link it with the everyday practice and experience we call culture. Subjectivity is useful when we link it with people's everyday efforts to see themselves in their own world and in the world they would like to inhabit. Each of the contributions to this volume describes some form of imaginary in this sense. De Munck even views these

visions in millenarian terms. We hear people talking about possibilities, potentials, obstacles, goals, and strategies. Both so-called 'winners' and 'losers' have a distinctive social imaginary.

While many members of the new middle classes seem to replicate each other in terms of visions of who they are, how they got where they are, and where they are going, they have yet to form *movements*. Among non-middle class groups, there is a denigration of the new middle classes as egotistical or consumerist. The papers in this volume take the new middle classes seriously as subjective actors creating their own worlds. For instance, the Latvian businessman who deplores the impropriety of his Norwegian counterparts finds Norwegians boorish by the standards of his own cosmopolitanism.

Social science theorising begins with typologies. We have been talking about 'winners' and 'losers' for so long that we have forgotten that postsocialist transition was more than a ludic performance. Our informants know this. Thus, let us learn from them by observing their practices with an attention to the kind of ethnographic detail depicted in this volume and by reformulating the key categories of class, culture, and self. By emphasising identifying and identification instead of identity and then describing the collective or individual nature of these identification processes, we are making a good start. The transition may be over and the accession process may be completed, but agency is as strong as ever.

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# *Chapter 12*
# Subjectivity after Socialism: An Invitation to Theory Building in Anthropology

Elizabeth Cullen Dunn

Historically, there has traditionally been a regional division of labour in anthropology. Ethnographic work done in some regions such as Papua New Guinea or West Africa is presented as the source of concepts and theories broadly applicable to all of humanity. Other regions — China is the paradigmatic case — are more often seen as special cases. Theories developed for these regions tend to be particularised, applicable only to that particular place or society, and circulated in journals of regional studies. On this scale, Eastern Europe has almost always been seen as just shy of China. The region's inaccessibility during the Cold War and Marxism-Leninism's claims to be constituting a new society with 'new socialist men' combined to make the countries under the Soviet umbrella into unique and special cases, interesting for the comparison of actually existing socialism to Marxist utopian visions but not much else. Ethnographic work in the area, as limited as it was, was mostly confined either to folklore studies or to analyses of the peculiar institutions of state socialism. While Malinowski — a Pole — definitively influenced British and American studies of the colonial world, his approach had relatively little traction in the study of his own region. Instead, the study of Eastern Europe was overwhelmingly dominated by political science and economics, disciplines that privileged the use of models and the study of elite politics over understandings of everyday life.

The fall of the Berlin Wall opened the area to an influx of anthropologists and new anthropological methods. As this volume demonstrates, American and Western European anthropologists joined their Eastern European colleagues in applying some of the foundational concepts of Malinowskian participant observation and of Anglo-American socio-cultural anthropology to the study of postsocialist societies. Led by the small band of anthropologists who had studied the region before 1989 — Katherine Verdery, Caroline Humphrey, Robert Hayden, and so on — a new wave of anthropologists entered the field. They brought with them new interests in

nationalism, urban life, globalisation, popular culture, and the organisation of capitalism, as well as traditional foci such as kinship, ethnicity, and religion.

It was an opportune moment. The collapse of socialism offered anthropologists the opportunity to put some of the most basic elements of modern market democracies in question, largely because they were in question for Eastern Europeans themselves. What was a market, and how should things that had never been bought or sold on a free market be valued? What was value, anyway? What was the nature of property, and what bundles of property rights should be assigned to whom? What did it mean to create a democracy, and how should political rights be reallocated in the vacuum created by the collapse of the Party-State? The fact that the political opposition in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and (to a lesser extent) the other Eastern Bloc countries had activated these notions and made them politically charged symbols made the questions more complicated rather than clearer. Anthropologists had the extraordinary opportunity to see these questions being worked out not over the *longue durée* of Western modernity but in hyper-speed, over months and years rather than decades and centuries.

Anthropologists had the intellectual opening to make statements about the building blocks of modern society, too: given that most economists (with the notable exception of Janos Kornai) had failed to predict the collapse of the centrally planned economy, and given that political scientists had seen the Communist Party-State as strong when in fact it was weak, the two disciplines that had so long dominated the study of Eastern Europe in the West were left without much to say. In the wake of the revolutions of 1989, the importance of studying life at the grassroots was obvious. It was the anthropologists' moment, and they suddenly had the opportunity to use the Eastern European transition to create more widely applicable theories about globally important formations of property, markets, human rights, and political enfranchisement.

The history of postsocialism is particularly useful for understanding these issues of global relevance because the anthropology of postsocialism so eloquently demonstrates that problems of property, democratisation, and marketisation cannot be stripped of their historically and culturally specific elements. While both Eastern European political leaders and foreign aid agencies initially believed that ideal typical models of democracy and market capitalism would suffice as blueprints for the 'transition', the changes in the region during the last twenty years have shown how deeply all of these processes are inflected through subjectivity. The outcomes of the second great transformation were shaped not only by people's objective social positions but by their deeply held feelings about what economic and political

changes meant to them and what kinds of persons these changes made them into. What is important for us, though, is not just whether identity is ascribed or achieved but a far more profound insight that emerged from the study of societies in massive flux. The earliest working presupposition in both economics and political science was that a fundamental human nature — *homo oeconomicus,* a freely-choosing rational actor — underlay both markets and democracy. Indeed, in the early 1990s, it was widely assumed that once the constraints posed by the Communist Party were removed, a market democracy would spring into being as the emanation of human rationality and a desire for 'freedom' (which was usually not defined in any specific terms). In the mid-1990s, when it became evident that neither markets nor electoral democracies were going to spring naturally from the ashes of Communism but rather would have to be built, neoliberals — both of the American academic variety and the Eastern European dissident intellectual variety — wholeheartedly subscribed to the notion that ideas and behaviour patterns are only appropriate in relation to specific institutional frameworks (like state socialism, for example) and become not only inappropriate but damaging in other institutional frameworks (like capitalism) if they are not abandoned in time. The implicit neoliberal plan was to have most people's identity and subjectivity change automatically under the pressures of market democracy. For those who would not or could not change, there were stringent penalties: they would be fired, retired, or otherwise removed from public life (see Dunn 2004 on layoffs among both managers and employees, for example).

However, as anthropological studies have shown, the relation between subjectivity and larger political and economic structures was not so automatic: it was *not* the case that political and economic structures emanated from some fixed kind of subjectivity ('human nature') or even that the existence of a particular set of political and economic institutions would dictate the emergence of a particular kind of subjectivity ('homo oeconomicus') but rather that, in order for markets and democracy to emerge, fundamental transformations in subjectivity had to be worked out among real people in concrete daily existence. What the Eastern European societies were to become depended to a large extent on the kinds of people that postsocialist Eastern Europeans made themselves into. Anthropology's sophisticated take on agency — one that sees subjectivity as shaped by larger structural formations but not determined by them — opened the door to the study of the ways that Eastern Europeans actively and strategically transformed their own personhood in diverse ways and showed how those new forms of personhood dramatically shaped the ways that social actors created new political, economic, and social structures.

These questions were first of all organised around classic sociological categories of national identity, ethnicity, and gender. In Yugoslavia, the question of ethnicity – and of access to material wealth on the basis of ethnicity — was dire enough to spark bloodshed (see Woodward 1995). While onlookers and analysts assumed that ethnic identities were primordial or at least antedated socialism, it soon became clear that ethnicity, as a primary form of subjectivity, was as much a product of the conflict as a cause of it. People, who a decade before had valorised their occupational identities or Party membership and who had seen ethnic identity as so unimportant that they married across ethnic lines or famously declared themselves 'Yugoslavs', 'light bulbs', or 'refrigerators' on the census to avoid ethnic identification, were now assigned polarised ethnic identities that dramatically affected their personal safety and access to the material means of life. While the question of ethnicity was less dire in other places around the former Soviet Bloc, it was often experienced with surprising intensity (see Ballinger 2003; Feldman 2005). Ethnic or national identity became such an important organising principle of social life that it was even central in places where there were no ethnic others to speak of, such as Poland.

Gender, too, became an important category through which people reworked their own identities and their own histories, inserting themselves in new social spaces and reorganising social hierarchies. The first questions that presented themselves were about what it meant to be a man or a woman in this rapidly changing society and how gender roles should be reorganised in the absence of Marxist dictates about feminism (see Fodor 1997; Gal and Kligman 2000; Dunn 2004). But these gender questions soon became proxies for other kinds of problems, as the politics of gender were layered onto industrial restructuring, economic development or collapse, agrarian privatisation, and other massive social reorganisations. The question was not just, 'What does it mean to be a man here (in Poland, in Bulgaria, in the countryside, in the city)'? but a more complex question about what it meant to be a man now that the gendered division of industrial labour that had once favoured men was vanishing along with the factories that made it material, and occupational specialties such as accounting or medicine, once seen as less important under socialism and hence suitable for women, were being valorised in the market system (see Fodor 1997). How were people reallocating elements of daily practice such as wage work, buying and selling, cooking, and childcare in ways that shaped not only the gendered division of labour but the ways in which gender identity was experienced and created?

The most important social category in the 'transition decade', however, was the one most difficult to speak about: class. It was ironic but perhaps not coincidental that just at the moment that Eastern European

societies began to experience widespread income differentiation and the dramatic cultural elaboration of new social classes, the most effective theoretical language in which to critique rising economic and political inequality was suddenly devalorised. Most Eastern Europeans rejected analyses with any whiff of the stale discussions of the Marxist-Leninist thought once required by the Party. Many Eastern Europeans, particularly new economic and political elites and those with a liberal (or neoliberal) political bent, have sought to dismiss economic inequality as the price that must be paid for having a 'normal' country. The celebrated former dissident Adam Michnik, for example, once told me that blue-collar workers and the unemployed in Poland must 'simply understand that in capitalism there will be winners and there will be losers'. (He found the idea that there would be winners and losers much harder to accept, apparently, when the Communists were the winners and intellectuals like him were among the losers). The lack of attention to class formation and the production of social inequalities were echoed outside Eastern Europe. In Western European and American academic circles, the fashion drifted away from sombre studies of production and inequality and towards playful studies that celebrated consumption and downplayed inequality. Cultural studies' strong emphasis on agency and on self-fashioning directed attention away from the structural bases of oppression and often overestimated possibilities for strategic action and resistance. The theoretical space for a critique of the processes that were massively enriching some in Eastern Europe while sending others cascading into poverty dramatically narrowed as Eastern European and Western neoliberal discourses closed in. Class, in the rigorous, structurally-based Marxist sense of the term, seemed at times like a fusty relic of the Cold War.

Yet, the issue of class cannot be ignored. This is not just a theoretical claim – although Ingo Schröder makes a compelling argument that class cannot be ignored theoretically, either – but an empirical one. The objective differences between the rich and the poor in the new Eastern Europe have simply skyrocketed, and this is a fact that must be taken account of even if politicians and social critics in the region are determined to turn a blind eye to the plight of the new poor.[1] Acknowledging objectively existing economic inequality does not tell the whole story, however. The 'turnips', as the new poor are known, are not only objectively poorer than they were in the Soviet

[1] I would argue that Eastern European politicians ignore the new poor at their peril. As David Ost has argued, successful politics is often based on the organisation of anger, and the new poor have not only wistful nostalgia but also plenty of anger. Nationalist politicians have been effective at mobilising this (e.g. the Kaczyński twins and Andrzej Lepper in Poland), but even the most progressive liberal forces have not. This has often led to reactionary, racist, and homophobic policies, as nationalists pander to the anger of their constituents, but it has done little to address rising economic inequality or unemployment.

era, but subjectively feel themselves as relatively less than the new rich both in terms of money and in terms of dignity and worth. In some cases, the discrepancy between the incomes and possessions of the new rich and the new poor is so great that the new poor themselves feel they have been turned into non-persons, as Victor De Munck's heartbreaking story of his assistant's encounter with an elderly gentleman shows: When asked for an interview, the man, who was picking through garbage, replied, 'I used to have a job and then I was a man, then I could talk with you. Now I have nothing, I am ashamed and cannot talk to you'.

The subjective experience of class in the postsocialist context raises a theoretical conundrum. On the one hand, as Michał Buchowski (this volume) points out, today it is inappropriate to use a single standard to arbitrarily categorise people as members of a given class. No longer will a simple income cut-off such as 'the poverty line' suffice to determine who is a member of what class, nor will a simplistic concept of an individual's relationship to the means of production. Even people with similar income levels, similar relationships to production, or similar occupations may have very specific and divergent social genealogies, educational histories, political viewpoints, cultural models, and habits of everyday life. They may have radically different visions of what kinds of people their wealth or the lack thereof turns them into. On the other hand, as Ingo Schröder (this volume) argues, a focus on these divergences runs the risk of reducing class – and the resulting attention it directs to injustice – to mere identity. By portraying subjectivity as a matter of playful self-fashioning, this cultural studies manoeuvre depoliticises subjectivity and conceals the difficult and sometimes desperate struggles of people to fashion identities that will give them access to the jobs and money they need for social reproduction. One of the central theoretical dilemmas posed by the anthropology of postsocialism, then, is how to talk about the kinds of freedom that market democracy presents for self-making and agency without neglecting a rigorous, deep investigation into the constraints posed by emerging structures of inequality and new forms of oppression.

Questions of structure and agency are omnipresent in the social sciences, of course. But because the postsocialist condition almost requires that these questions be routed through the lens of class, it offers Eastern Europeanists the opportunity to build new theories of social life that serve both intellectual and political ends. On the intellectual side, the ethnography of postsocialist Eastern Europe calls for new – and better integrated – understandings of the relationship between political economy, subjectivity, and social relations. Laying these relationships bare, however, offers the opportunity to critique highly politicised discourses that see the development of

class and the unequal allocation of both resources and life chances as natural or inevitable. The widely diverging paths that the former Eastern bloc countries have chosen show in stark terms that economic inequality and social exclusion – on whatever basis – are neither natural nor inevitable. In this sense, our theoretical machines contribute to what David Ost (2005) says all politics are about: the organisation of anger.

In navigating between the Scylla of agency and the Charybdis of structure, the papers in this volume challenge the neoliberal idea that people construct their identities in a voluntaristic and unconstrained manner. That is not to say that any of the ethnography herein insists that subjectivity is somehow purely ascribed: these papers show that Eastern Europeans manage their identities very self-consciously because they see identity and subjectivity as strategic resources. From punk rockers to old-age pensioners, from groups of sufferers seeking to be compensated as Chernobyl victims to alternative medicine patients, and from entrepreneurs to workers and welfare recipients, people across Eastern Europe are finding a plethora of identities and strategies for making claims on others (see both Cimdina and Barova, this volume; see also Haney 2002; Petryna 2002; Phillips 2008). By affiliating themselves with particular subcultures, communities of practice, or institutions, they have diversified the means of creating identity dramatically over the last twenty years. Ingo Schröder is clearly correct when he argues that the way postsocialist subjectivities are created is not easily predicted from *a priori* knowledge of their class status or political leanings. But as the papers in this volume show, the remaking of personhood in Eastern Europe is not merely unconstrained *bricolage.* Rather, the making of selves is strategic precisely because it happens in the midst of overwhelming structural changes that dangle the hope of wealth and power while constantly presenting the risk of socio-economic failure. Self-making is happening in the interstices of massively shifting social structures, and while there are rewards for the agile, many people are permanently barred by virtue of their age, disability, or history from ever joining the ranks of the winners. Perhaps this is true almost everywhere in the age of globalisation. But it is particularly easy to see in Eastern Europe, where the current social system was put into place so quickly that there has been little time to conceal it with ideological window-dressing. The hyper-individualism of Western neoliberalism, in which wealth and poverty are seen as emanations of individuals' personalities, has yet to be naturalised in Eastern Europe. Its very foreignness, coming so soon on the heels of a forty- or seventy-year project to build collectivity, means not only that researchers can easily see the ways it is being constructed but that the Eastern Europeans being subjected to it can easily see it as well, and most of them do not shy away from commenting on

it. To listen to their commentaries and to weave them into ethnography is a political statement by its very nature, a refusal from both informant and ethnographer to mutely accept that 'there will be winners and losers' and a demand to understand the ways in which inequality is an outcome of politics.

There is more work to be done, though. While it is one of anthropology's most worthwhile tasks to bring the poor and the powerless back onto the political stage and to insist that their plight be accounted for, it is not enough just to describe conditions. We need a new theory of the way inequality is produced. That is not an easy task, and not just because the language we currently have to describe inequality seems to reek of bell-bottom pants, polyester, and late communism. With the rise of new property forms (such as mutual funds) and new links to markets (such as micro-credit enterprises in which the poor become capitalists, self-exploit, and usually remain poor), individuals' relationships to the means of production have become complex and difficult to link to class status. Self-fashioning through consumer behaviour has become culturally significant, and the social meanings of various forms of consumption mean that social groups can no longer be hierarchised in a straightforward way. Clearly, the time is ripe for a new theory of the formation and reproduction of social inequality. How are large-scale economic structures and individual identities mutually constitutive? What opportunities do particular forms of subjectivity provide for opposing or blunting the effects of new market structures, and what opportunities do they provide for advancing the interests of agents in the market economy? How does class come to be invested in human bodies and self-images, even (or especially) when people don't perceive themselves overtly as members of social classes? Are there systematic links between social class and new modes of production? How do mediated relations to production such as stock ownership, receipt of government funded pensions, and NGO-subsidised employment opportunities shape people's subjective experience of class? How do globally experienced but locally inflected reorganisations of time and space change production, consumption, and social reproduction? In what ways is social inequality embodied, both in terms of health and the movements of bodies in space? There are many provocative theories floating around, but they are partial and de-linked from one another, and while they are often beautiful and interesting, they are rarely useful for engaging in political debate outside anthropology. But Eastern Europe, with its long history of struggles for social justice and its tradition of using both local and foreign intellectual theories as the basis for concrete action, is fertile ground for the development of a more coherent, more engaged, and more powerful theory of contemporary inequality. The papers in this volume, with their rich

ethnographic detail and profound interaction with ideas of both subjectivity and social justice, offer a starting point for the development of such a theory.

There is an old European legend about a tramp who comes to a village and declares that he can make soup from a stone. He borrows a pot from one villager and gets another to haul water. As the villagers cluster around the boiling pot of stone soup, the tramp mentions that a bit of cabbage would be a nice garnish, and then suggests that a smidgen of carrot would enliven the taste, and then suggests that somebody put in a sprinkle of salt for seasoning. As the villagers each contribute whatever vegetables they have to offer, a delicious and nourishing stone soup almost miraculously appears in the cauldron. The papers here offer anthropology a large cast-iron pot, a fire, water, and the stone at the centre of new theories and a re-engagement with important issues of equality and difference. There is an opportunity here for other social scientists to add their own work and to bring these ideas together in new combinations. The result, I hope, will be intellectually and politically nourishing theories that Eastern Europeanists can offer the rest of the discipline.

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# Contributors

**Vihra Barova** is a PhD candidate in the Institute of Ethnography, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria.

**Zlatina Bogdanova** is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany.

**Michał Buchowski** is Professor of Social Anthropology at Adam Miczkiewicz University, Poznan and Professor of Comparative Central European Studies, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany.

**Agnese Cimdina** is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Department of Anthropology, University of Bergen and at Aalesund University College, Norway.

**Victor C. de Munck** is Professor at the Department of Anthropology, State University of New York at New Paltz.

**Elizabeth Cullen Dunn** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Program in International Affairs, University of Colorado, Boulder.

**Neringa Klumbytė** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Miami University, Ohio.

**Oleg Pachenkov** is Deputy Director and Research Fellow at the Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg.

**Anastazija Pilichowska** is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale and at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Lodz. She is also project assistant for the Foundation for European Studies at the University of Lodz.

**Steven Sampson** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology at Lund University, Sweden.

**Ingo W. Schröder** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and a Privatdozent at the Department of Anthropology of Philipps-University, Marburg.

**Asta Vonderau** completed her PhD at the Department of European Ethnology at Humboldt University, Berlin, in 2008.

**Lilia Voronkova** is a Research Fellow and Curator of Visual Projects at the Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg.

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