

On the persistence of bazaars in the newly capitalist world: reflections from Odessa¹

Abel Polese, Tallinn University and **Aleksandr Prigarin**, Odessa National University

Abstract: This paper presents the case of bazaars in Odessa, a major Ukrainian port on the Black Sea where some of the most important regional bazaars are found, to engage with the current debates on informal or diverse economies. Our aim is to show that the survival of the bazaar, and the niche it has been earning in post-1991 Odessa, is not only due to its low prices but also to their capacity to provide different demand-driven goods and to respond to cultural and spiritual needs (by giving a sense of continuity to tradition and culture) as well as offering socialisation and networking opportunities. Our case studies are drawn from what we deem the two most representative bazaars in Odessa. 7-oj Km, located seven kilometers outside the city and Privoz, located in the city centre, both of which have seen the volume of their activities increase despite increasing competition of Western-style supermarkets after 1991. The article is informed by several focus groups and informal interviews integrated by participant observation and framed in a historical analysis of bazaars, and their evolution, in the city of Odessa. We conclude that bazaars, as institution and as space, are likely to continue playing a central role in the life of Odessans for some time despite stiff competition from other, possibly more comfortable and low-price, alternatives.

Keywords: Bazaar, Informal Economy, Informality, Odessa, Postsocialism, Ukraine

Introduction: the role of bazaars in Odessa

Since Polanyi's forecast of his "great transformation", a growing number of scholars have considered informal economic practices, and in general the informal sector, as deficiencies of economic systems that would otherwise tend towards complete formalisation. Although challenged by evidence (ILO 2002, OECD 2002) the predominant assumption, since then, has remained that the economic situation of a country affects the volume and role of informality. In contrast, a small emergent stream of literature has begun to suggest alternative accounts and reasons that prompt actors to engage with informal economic practices (Escobar 1995, Gibson-Graham 1996, Nelson and Smith 2009, Williams 2004).

Starting from this standpoint, this essay draws from, and contributes to, this direction in emergent literature by analysing the role and function of the bazaar (or bazaars) in the post-socialist world and in particular in Odessa, a major Ukrainian port on the Black Sea. It is suggested that their survival, despite quick marketisation and mushrooming of Western-style supermarkets, is based on factors that economic analyses can only partially grasp. In contrast, we concentrate on the symbolic meaning of the bazaar, as institution, to suggest that some of its features can only be appreciated when looking at it through the lenses of diverse or informal economies. We see them as institutions with a strong capacity to evolve and adapt throughout time and compete with more economically-effective competitors like supermarkets.

Our aim is to show that the survival of the bazaar, and the niche it has been earning in post-1991 Odessa, is not only due to its low prices but also other factors. We refer here to the bazaar's capacity to evolve and adapt, providing not only always different demand-driven goods but being able to respond to cultural and spiritual needs (by giving a sense of continuity to tradition and culture) as well as offering socialisation and networking opportunities. To illustrate this feature we concentrate our analysis on the social and cultural settings in which the bazaar has been located, fulfilling spiritual and social needs of the city as well as giving a sense of cultural continuity that Odessans are proud of.

Originally a place where meat, vegetables and subsistence goods were sold, bazaars, in Odessa, have evolved to places where virtually everything can be found, be this food, clothes, furniture, legal or illegal goods. Our case studies are drawn from what we deem the two most representative bazaars in Odessa. 7-oj Km ("7th kilometer"), located seven kilometers outside the city, has been growing exponentially since 1989, when it was moved out of the city centre. It now occupies an area of 170 acres (for comparison, the largest shopping mall in the US is 96 hectares (Myers 2006)) and has earned a reputation for extremely cheap goods but also for all sorts of illegal trade. In contrast, Privoz, located in the city centre, has seen a gradual formalisation of its activities and its offspring "New Privoz" is an elegant mall, built as an extension of the historical bazaar Privoz, with some of the newest and most fashionable shops that can be found in the city.

Methodologically, we draw from several different sources: one is a survey of historical documents and secondary sources on the city, complemented by informal interviews with two generations of Odessans identified during several long term research stays in 2005/2006 and 2012/2013 and by 4 focus groups conducted in 2012/2013 with shoppers. Finally, participant observation by the authors has served to complete the picture. One of the authors (Polese) has been spending two years in the city to complete his PhD project and devoted a substantial amount of time to the study of bazaars in Ukraine; the other (Prigarin) is a resident of the city with extensive research experience in, and long term commitment to, ethnographical studies of the region. Sources have been anonymised and fictive names used in order to protect our informants.

On the persistence of informal economic practices in the (post-Soviet) world

The word transition, or transitional, has often been employed, in post-socialist studies among others, to point at phenomena that could be considered transitory or "moving towards" something that would be then stable or more "normal". Notwithstanding this, more than twenty years after the beginning of this transition, it is still unclear a) how long this transition will last, and b) how long a transition ought to last before one can acknowledge that it might not be a transition but simply a different system, with its values, dynamics and actors.

Scholars from various disciplines have engaged with work aimed at understanding the post-socialist transformation and economic practices (formal and informal) have been studied from political, economic, anthropological and sociological standpoints. A distinctive position is held by those scholars seeing informality as transitory and condemned to disappear as soon as the country in question can set up the right structures, institutions and policies that will

facilitate formalisation of the social and economic life. Within this position, two extremes visions exist. On the one hand we have the classic attempts to fight corruption, a phenomenon that has fed an increasing “anti-corruption industry” (Sampson 2004, 2010); on the other one we have those defined as ultra-liberal (Rose-Ackerman 2010) who see corruption, and in general informal exchanges, as making up for market inefficiency or excessive red tape. Anthropologists who have partially tapped from the ultra-liberal argument have suggested that informality springs out of a tension between the state and the citizen (Humphrey and Mandel 2002, Lomnitz 1988) whilst economists, especially from New Institutional Economics, have sometimes seen the solidarity networks generated by informality in an economic-functionalist perspective (Ergbert 2005).

A second view holds that informal economic practices are generated by the incapacity of certain actors to enter the formal sector (de Soto 1989, 2002). Also in this case, two sub-directions are visible. Some scholars maintain that those excluded from the formal sector would happily participate in the formal economic life of a society but current conditions make this difficult (Cross 2001, de Soto 1989, Perry and Maloney 2007). Others argue that even those remaining in the informal sector are all the same capable to participate to the economic and political life of their society, although in different ways (Scott 1985, Gupta 1995) and that the formal and the informal are both important because they complement one another (Harth 2005).

The above-mentioned positions imply that costs and benefits of an attitude, a behaviour, or an action are not only fully measurable but also measurable economically or monetarily. The gains of staying informal or going formal seem to depend mostly on prospective economic benefits. Whilst agreeing that there is a correlation between the economic behaviour of a state and the amount of its shadow or informal activities (Bovi 2003), a growing body of literature by scholars in anthropology, human geography and public economics has been suggesting that informal, diverse, or shadow economies are not necessarily the result of an economic choice and that, to understand the phenomenon, one might want to go beyond the capitalist framework many works have been injected with (Gibson-Graham 1996). Retrieving the distinction between the community and the market realms that persists in every economy (Gudeman 2001, 2008) anthropologists have shown that gains in economic exchanges are not necessarily material (Parry 1986, Parry and Bloch 1989, Pardo 1996) and that there is a market for “spiritual needs”. The value of informality, in this perspective, is not measurable in material terms, a thing that questions more materialistic approaches in the study of post-socialism (Gugushvili 2011, Keller and Robert 2011). The difficulty of clearly distinguishing between the market and the community (Rasanayagam 2003, 2011), the society (Hann and Harth 2005) or political processes (Isaacs 2010, 2011, Polese 2010) has pointed at a gap in theory that has encompassed several disciplines to the debate on the nature of diverse or informal economies (Community Economies Collective 2001; Morris 2011, 2013; Morris and Polese 2013; Samers 2005; Stenning, Smith, Rochovská and Swiatek 2010; Williams and Windebank 1998).

This paper furthers a concern of postfeminist geographies about the monolithical notion of capitalism and its role as sole possible economic system to be applied to the modern world (Gibson Graham 1996, Gillian 1993, McDowell 1993, Moss 2007). We endorse the

idea that exchanges in a capitalist world may not always be money-motivated (Pardo 1996, Williams 2005) and that the (fungible) social capital (Bourdieu 1980) some transactions generate may make up for the lack of economic capital accumulated (Zanca 2003). Other scholars have demonstrated the multi-faceted functions of the bazaars (Cieleska 2013, Humphrey and Skvirskaja 2010, Ozcan 2010, Polese 2006) and in particular their capacity to foster informal exchanges.

What is interesting in the case of Odessa, and the "dichotomy supermarket – bazaar" (Polese 2009), is the competition between tradition and modernity, sterilised and home-made products. In spite of supermarkets mushrooming, the bazaar has been evolving to occupy a niche in the economic and social life of Odessans and this is not necessarily, or not only, depending on the low-price of the products; in contrast, in some cases prices might be higher (or higher is the likelihood to be ripped off), conditions might be worse (no trolleys, cold in winter). Bazaars, in this respect, incarnate a desire to concentrate on values other than monetary ones and that the main reasons why the bazaar has survived in Odessa are twofold. First, the new demand in consumption has prompted a transformation of bazaars from a place where things happen to a cultural and economic space where traditions are preserved, social relationship enhanced and transactions, not necessarily money-oriented, are carried out. Second, originally a place where meat, vegetables and subsistence goods were sold, bazaar, in Odessa have evolved into places where virtually everything can be found, be this food, clothes, furniture, legal or illegal goods.

The transformation of the city has caused bazaars to evolve from place into space over the years. We draw here from the definition of place as a locale, that is a setting and scale for people's daily actions and interactions (Castree 2009), which has also been the starting point of Tanya Richardson's works on the city of Odessa (Richardson 2008, 2009). However this definition has geographical limits, not only given the role of place-based agency, but also in that it varies from place to place (Derek 1982, Pred 1986). Such limits have been acknowledged to suggest that the global, the international and people's place-based agency are interrelated in an approach that shifts attention from an overemphasized historical dimension of phenomena to a more conscious awareness of how deeply dynamics of power, especially those created in capitalism, are inscribed in spatial relations (Giddens 1984; Smith 1984; Soja 1989).

Space, in this case, is conceived as folded into social relations through practical activities (Harvey 1996), paving the way to an idea of space as undergoing continual construction as a result of the agency of things encountering each other in more or less organised circulations (Thrift 2009). By so doing so space is no longer viewed as a fixed and absolute container where things are passively embedded, but as a co-production of those proceedings, as a process in process (Thrift 2009). Agency and reproduction of space, in this respect, become key issues that other authors studying the city have explored (Richardson 2008; Sapritsky 2011, 2012) and which we'll take as a starting point to show a unique degree of entanglement between the bazaar and the city, with the former following the evolution of the latter and its necessities from a topographic and product-wise perspective so as to incarnate the city's desires and (evolution of) consuming habits.

The origins of bazaars in Odessa

The two most prevalent characteristics of Odessa in local historical literature are possibly multi-ethnicity and trade (Bukh 1876, 1909; Skal'kovskii 1839), both of which have been entangled in a mutually-dependent relationship: multiculturalism, it was often reported, impacted the development of (international) trade which, in turn, had an impact on the diversity of the city (Odessa 1895).

Once hosting a Greek colony on the Black Sea, the region of Odessa was occupied by a number of populations during the Middle Ages. The Crimean Khanate, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Golden Horde, among others, were all trying to secure this piece of land. Conquered by the Ottoman Empire after 1529 it became part of the Yedisian region and in the 18th century the Ottomans rebuilt a fortress on the remains of an ancient city known as Hacibey (Hadjibey, named after Hacı and Giray; nowadays Hacibey is a port in the outskirts of town) and then named the place "Yeni Dunya" (New World). The region passed to the Russian Empire as a result of the Russo-Turkish wars (1787-1792) to become known under the name of *Novorossiia* (New Russia). From 1794 the name of Odessa appears in historical registers thanks to the desire of Ekaterina (Catherine) the Great to build a bastion of defence against future invasions, and the city developed extremely rapidly (Sapozhnikov 1999). Herlihy (1977, 1989) compares the city to Chicago, in terms of growth in the 19th century, but taking advantage of the fact that no fire destroyed it.

As reported by Herlihy, according to the 1897 All Russian Census in terms of religious affiliation only 56% of the population was Orthodox Christians or Old Believers. A good many were Jews, about 32%, so people from other religious groups, mostly Muslims, would have to be in the mix of the rest of the 12%. From 1795 to 1814 the population of Odessa reached 20,000 people, having increased 15 times since its foundation. This was due to a desire to populate the city as quick as possible, to make it a solid defence against Ottoman attacks, so that the authorities welcomed whoever wanted to settle into the city. Odessa became, since its inception, a shelter for people wanted by the police elsewhere in the world. Local authorities, however, were ready to turn a blind eye on the past of new settlers, and even offer land to them, as long as they contributed to the growth of the city.

Despite politically leaving the Muslim world, the city's cultural foundations draw, at least partially, on institutions and practices that perpetuate its Muslim traditions. This is visible in gathering places, with big bazaars in the city being as old as the city itself, but also in consumerism habits with a factory of *rahat lukum* and other similar sweets well spread in the city, and the fact that mutton is more popular than pork meat, which is otherwise widely consumed in the rest of the country. Because of its Ottoman legacy the bazaar was first developed as wide open with few kiosks or shops. This is probably due to the Ottoman classification, according to which a bazaar is a large square with traders coming in the morning and leaving in the evening, whereas a *çarşı* is more similar to the set of covered shops and roads that elsewhere may be called *souq* (See Gharipour 2012). This conception of the market would eventually allow bazaars to migrate more easily than *souq*, a phenomenon that happened several times throughout the history of the city.

The morphology and function of bazaars of Odessa, from shopping places to black holes



Fig. 1, Odessa, plan of the city with location of city bazaars, 1855 (private collection)

Odessa and its bazaars became entangled from the very inception of the city. Most of the buildings in the centre have only two or three levels and a big courtyard inside, where Odessans gather at special occasions like holidays or feasts. This is also visible given that its centre is composed of all parallel and perpendicular streets, for its construction was started all at once.

The necessity to build refurbishing places was clear from the outset, when Ekaterina the Great showed a genuine interest in developing the settlement and making it grow to the size of the big city it would become. City and trade became entangled from the very beginning. As early as 1795 one could observe the setting of the *volnyj rynok* (Free Market), conceived for the sale of living goods (*zhiznennyykh pripasov*); it was then renamed "Old bazaar" and then "*Tolkuchij*" (from the verb *tolkat'* = to push) market. In 1799 sellers Afanas'ev and Samarin, among others, were allowed to chop and sell meat on the stone benches in a separate area beyond the *volnyj rynok* in the direction of the steppe. A few years later in ulitsa *Rybnaya* (Fish street) and *Sadovaya* (Garden street) stands for the selling of fish and fruits were built. In 1810 the construction of the Greek Bazaar (between the Greek place and Libknekhta street) was completed. In 1830 the Old Bazaar was equipped with a commercial centre composed of four pavilions with a main corpus in the middle, built by the Italian architect Torricelli. This structure would survive two wars and will stop functioning only in 1958 (Gubar 1999).

The Old Bazaar would be a reference for all Odessans and a starting point for subsequent modifications of the city. However, it would soon be joined by other market places. The first step was the installation at its side, near *Krasnyj pereulok* (Red Lane), of some "red lines" for selling manufactured goods. In 1827 on *Privoz* (from the verb *privozit'* -

to bring) square a huge market place was built. It would be modified several times, burnt once, and its construction would be completed only in 1913, with the addition of four two-story fruit passages but its importance would remain untouched (Gubar 1999). The construction of trading places continued and in 1842 the *Palais Royal*, a gallery of 44 stands, was built by the Italian architect Torricelli, who also added some trading rows on the territory of the Old Bazaar closer to *prospekt Mira* (Boulevard of Peace). In 1903 the New Bazaar was finally completed. Despite its name, it is one of the oldest places in the city and was built just outside the centre, in 1812, to lighten the burden of the other bazaars that were growing out of control. In the 1840s some two-story buildings with an open gallery were added, and in 1896 a corpus with high trade halls and glass roof that would be then into a room/space hall for meetings, concerts and circus.



Fig. 2, View on the “New Bazaar”, early XX century postcard (private collection)

The size of the city, and its importance as a port on the Black Sea, attracted an increasing number of buyers, a phenomenon that prompted selling points to multiply in the city. As a result, a system of “communicating bazaars” connected the historical centre – *Aleksandrovskij bulvar*- with the port, the Greek square with Privoz, passing through the “red rows” and the Old Bazaar, that extended from *Uspenskaya* to *Bolshaya Arnautskaya*.

Privoz was not used as a real bazaar until the second half of the 19th century. It first was a place used to load and unload wheeled vehicles bringing (*privozit*’ in Russian) goods, taking advantage of its location and size, that allowed easy circulation of goods and cars. This was until at least 1865 (Gubar 1999). The area between the Old Bazaar and Privoz kept on gaining importance, and some other sub-bazaars were established. For example, there was a German one for sausages, sour cream, butter, cottage cheese and eggs. Besides, some stands for row meat sided vegetable ones where country products like flour, cereals and frying oil were sold. In between those one could also buy herbs and fruits, and a short distance away the fish stands were installed. On the right hand side from meat and fish vendors offered slaughtered poultry and, not too far away, live birds (Gubar 1999).

All these trends contrasted with the rather chaotic morphology of Privoz. All products were sold close to each other, remaining coloured and diverse like no other bazaar. This non-structure was maintained until it became the main bazaar of the city in 1958, the year when the Old Bazaar was abandoned. At this point the necessity arose for more control and the first step was building up a proper place for the sale of meat in the place of the original slaughter. However, because the place had to be covered to keep higher hygienic standards, the issue of lighting arose. Following a strategy already consolidated with other places like the New Market, a Basilica-like architecture was used. Such a structure allowed sunlight to illuminate its interior while keeping most of the market covered and would also be used for the construction of further sections, such as the dairy one.



Figure 3, Trading in Privoz, end of XIX century (private collection).



Fig 4, Overview of Privoz, end XIX century (private collection).



Fig 5, Overview of Privoz, end XIX century (private collection).



Fig 6, Overview of Privoz, end XIX century (private collection).



Fig 7, Starobazarnaya ploshchad' (Old bazaar square), beginning of XX century (private collection).

The last main modification of the Soviet times happened in the seventies, when four buildings for the trade of fish were inserted between the main corpus and the railway station. In the eighties the entire Privoz street, on the west side of the market, stopped working and, after disassembling the whole block between *ulitsa Preobrazhenskaya* (former *Sovetskaya armiya*) and *Panteleimonovskaya* (former *Novorybnaya*), the regional bus station occupied its place.

A main feature of the bazaars in Odessa is their oscillation between legality, extra-legality and illegality. The control imposed, or attempted, on the flow of goods in the USSR paved the way to a growing informal sector where alcohol, clothes, goods and many other things were exchanged (not necessarily for money; exchange of favours or long-term relationships, like *blat*, were also common). The place with the highest availability of uncontrolled goods and exchanges was the bazaar. In Soviet times Privoz was well known as the place where everything could be found. After 1989 this role was gradually taken up by Sedmoy kilometre (7th kilometre), which is now the quintessence of “total sale” where everything can be bought. Odessa's location, in this respect, facilitated such developments since the high maritime traffic allowed for bringing in virtually everything. In addition, its location close to Transdnistria allows for further variety of goods to be brought in, given the peculiar political status of the region (Ó Beacháin 2012, 2013).

This earned Odessa a reputation as a place where “alternative” products could be found. Among the “miracles” practised at the everyday level in local bazaars one could witness: the production of several kinds of gems, sold as true ones; second-hand (used and dried) black tea; and fake amber accessories and watches. But the most interesting stratagems were

perhaps the selling of low cost goods on which the profit would be limited, but still considered worth it. Fakes included: coffee, butter, sunflower oil and a range of products that urged the city administration to create a special commission, headed by chemistry experts, to investigate the various “ripping offs” organized in the city. The popularity and function of the bazaars prompted the creation of other selling places that happened to be called bazaars and were placed in populated areas. Since the city’s earliest expansion, several bazaar-like places were built in different areas of the city. *Cheryomushki* and *Malinovskij* are in the southern *Malinovskij rayon* (area), the *Severnyj* (northern) in *Suvorovskij rayon*, *Yuzhnyj* (southern) and *Kievskij* are in the *Kievskij rayon*. The Greek bazaar has resisted until nowadays but is now replaced by a modern variant of the bazaar, the *Afiny (Athens)* shopping-mall, a four-story building with a food court and Western imported goods.

Post-1991 bazaars and their challenges

Ukrainian Independence, achieved in 1991, was accompanied by a “thirst for modernity” that was associated with goods from the capitalist world. Many still remember the endless queues outside the first McDonalds and the neologisms “Euroremont” and “Eurostandards” became widely used to refer to goods imported (or copied) from Western Europe. This prompted a demand for Western goods that, regardless of their quality, were considered better than the local offerings. Jennifer Patino described this phenomenon as “consuming the West but becoming third world” (2003), referring to the fact that Western companies offered low quality goods that were in high demand for their symbolic, rather than real, value. New restaurants were striving to offer “European cuisine” (without specifying whether it was French, German or Bulgarian cuisine—it was all Europe for them); shops were selling “furniture from Europe” (“Europe” is normally associated with Western Europe and such branding was a marketing strategy for goods from Romania or Bulgaria); plastic bags also came to represent a new world and their use grew beyond real needs (an informant went to buy a pack of chewing gum in a supermarket and was asked “do you need a plastic bag?”). Contemporary literature also reflected this thirst for modernity (for one thing, think of Pelevin’s, *Generatsiya P* [Pepsi]).

All this modernity was not available for everyone to the same degree. A division, depending on the cost of labour of different strata of the population, emerged. Homemade food is cheaper and still considered more genuine, but it costs more time, whether in terms of time taken to prepare it or to visit the person who prepared it instead of going to the supermarket. Supermarket food is likely to be more expensive or, at the very least, less “genuine” because it is not homemade, but it saves you much time. Since in urban areas wages have risen much faster than in the countryside, those urban dwellers whose earnings are rapidly growing prefer to have less time but more money at their disposal, which enables them to simply buy what they exchanged or bartered before. With leisure time one can buy extra working hours and thus extra earnings, and alcohol or food can be quickly bought in a supermarket (Polese 2006, 2009).

These changes had very contrasting effects on the bazaar as institution. On the one hand supermarkets and Western food become the new fetishes; on the other hand, however,

the importance of bazaars increased because they became the place where demand and supply of homemade goods meet. Only in bazaars could garden-originated products be sold, often with little control from the authorities. This went as far as to reinvent some bazaars as mostly places where beyond-state-control transactions were happening. Institutions such as the Stadium in Warsaw, 7-oj Km in Odessa and many more became the only way people could survive the turbulent 1990s (Cielewska 2013; Polese 2006, 2012; Sasunkevich 2013). Nowadays bazaars seem to incarnate not only the illegal aspects of the economy but also the informal ones, with a desire of socialisation and the necessity to keep long term relationships or personal contacts, as an informant recalled:

The bazaar for me is the place where you can interact with the sellers. Not only can you try things before buying them, not only it is possible to find fresh and tasty goods, it is also the place where socialisation is important. You know the same people and they know you, your taste, they might even keep things for you instead of selling them to other people. These small things make a real difference to me. It's true that supermarkets are more comfortable, there are carts and everything is there, but perhaps we should think of a way to merge the good of bazaars and supermarkets (Mariya, 24).

Bazaars, in the collective imaginary, are often associated with genuineness, freshness and quality that you cannot find elsewhere. One should not forget that a substantial amount of products sold in Odessa bazaars come directly from gardens and small lots of land where there is a direct relationship between the farmer (or simply the owner) and their vegetables, meat or eggs. Other informants reported:

True, in a supermarket you can always be sure of the quality, everything is wrapped, boxed and possibly more hygienic. Even service is better since in a supermarket it is unlikely that they will "tell you off (*poslat' tebya*)" if they get tired with your requests. However, the bazaar is the place where meat and dairy products are always fresh and I prefer to buy them there. It is like you could feel they are coming from someone's place (*domashniye*) and they do not compare to anything else (Oksana, 27).

In a supermarket you can exchange things after you purchased them if you are not satisfied, but in a bazaar you can try before you buy them, vegetables are fresh and genuine and prices are lower (Anton, 35).

This is not to say that bazaars are suitable only for goods. The case of 7-oj Km, where virtually everything but food is sold, shows that bazaars can evolve around different products. Many informants pointed to the bazaar as a place where cheaper clothes, furniture, equipment and make-up could be easily found and where it would be cheaper to buy them than in a

shop. The real competitor of the bazaar, at least for such things, is internet shops, some informants reported. However, they require the capacity to pay online with a credit card, something that not everyone is able or willing to do in Odessa at the moment. As a result, the bazaar is the place where you can touch (*shchupat'*) the things you want to try and check their quality before buying them, be this meat, clothes or vegetables.

Consumers' habits may be influenced by scale economies. Big supermarkets and international retail chains are able to offer food at prices lower than in the bazaar. Meat is chopped, cheese is packed, time is saved. In addition, packaged foods last longer in your fridge and you do not need to shop every day. Those who have more money than time may just opt out from popular culture patterns and save time by buying in supermarkets. Supermarkets may also win some customers due to a generational gap. Going to the bazaar means having to negotiate the price of most goods, keep relations and invest some time in keeping up with the price of products, with the risk of being ripped off, if one is not knowledgeable enough about local prices. In a supermarket prices are fixed and there is less need to make efforts to learn the prices.

If the bazaar is connected to traditions and history, those who are more for modernity might tend to prefer the shops, or the capitalist version of the bazaar, the hypermarket. This is also connected to another phenomenon, that is the change in demand for goods, especially food. In recent years there has been an increasing tendency to purchase Western food and drinks. Where possible, French cheese, American soda drinks or Italian wine—promptly joined by local variants—have entered the range of possible items to accompany a dinner. Likewise American style pizza has come to challenge traditionally oven baked foods for the simple fact of representing modernity and prosperity. Finally, with the adoption of demanding hygienic standards sellers get under pressure and scale economies might work better in keeping the price low.

A final issue is the change in the demand. The peak of the change in the demand is perhaps represented by the increasing demand for electronic and high technology goods that might not fit a bazaar. The issue is that they now normally come with post-purchase assistance. Buying high-tech means not only to buy hardware but also software and assistance, with the assurance/insurance that should something happen, the retailer or the producer would take care of it. That part of the risk in the purchase of an expensive good remains with the seller, a guarantee that shopkeepers might not always be able to offer, or that it would be more time consuming than in a bigger shop, where the broken or defective good might simply be exchanged straight away. In spite of all this, bazaars in Odessa continue to prosper and are even expanding, as the next section will show.

The transformation of bazaars

Marketisation has prompted the bazaars to change their structure and functioning; it has changed their role and the way people live them. Bazaars have remained a core component of the city's life but have evolved towards different models. A common feature is the widening of the availability of goods and non-edible goods have increased exponentially, just as their availability on the market has increased. This section takes the case studies of two bazaars

that can be considered the most representative for Odessa. Privoz has moved in this direction: it used to be the largest food bazaar in the city where everything was findable informally; it was a matter of asking the right people (urban legends insisted that the person wishing to purchase a bomb could easily do it in Privoz). While remaining a food market, Privoz has been elected a symbol of the city and has undergone a modernisation process that no other bazaar has lived through. Being in the very centre of the city, and a two-minute walk from the central station, a park and an *akvaterrarium* (where small fishes and amphibians are displayed), urban planning has wanted it to be clean and modern. The informal role of Privoz has been taken up by 7-oj Km, an expanding market seven kilometers from the city centre that has grown to 170 hectares as result of a growing demand and its capacity to repair virtually anything. 7-oj Km may be seen as a city inside the city, with selling and buying of anything (legal and illegal, with papers or without) mostly beyond the control of the city administration, let alone the Ukrainian authorities.

Privoz

Privoz is a bazaar that has been of strategic importance to the city since its inception and where legend has it that you can find anything, from pomegranates to bombs. As a journalist reported:

I headed over to Privoz market, which is sort of like a cross between a department store on the one hand and a recycling center on the other. There's caviar, shoes, accessories, food, perfume, toiletries, things like that. And then there are the guys selling things like rusty old tools laid out on moth-eaten blankets. Or the old school five and a quarter inch floppy disk drives. There's even somebody selling wheels, just wheels, including a matching set of three that were obviously taken from a perambulator at some point (Nyad and Manasek 2002).

In the post-USSR chaos, thanks to its tradition of black market, Privoz remained a main reference for Odessans and a number of other people. Strategically located on the Black Sea and close to the Moldovan border, the tradition of smuggling in Odessa is such that virtually anything could be found in Privoz, given that the right connection is made and the right amount of money is paid.

Some people still remember the notorious *odesskij vorovannyj chaj* (Odessa stolen tea). The standard tea in Soviet times was a black variety produced in Georgia (*gruzinskij chaj*) and used by millions of people. Taking advantage of the increased exchanges with the rest of the world it was possible to find a mix of black teas with a taste different from the classical Georgian one that some Odessans with some degree of wit and honesty made up a brand named "Odessa stolen tea."

While the transition was bringing huge gains for a number of people in the city, a number of Odessans, and Ukrainians in general, were undergoing harsh hardship. For those people Privoz was a way to survive. Immediately after the end of the USSR, in a moment

when finding goods became very hard, Privoz was the place to go in cases of necessity. This is not to say that all the shadow trade had to pass through the bazaar but that Privoz became a space with its own laws where there were chances to buy, sell or barter.

In a moment when the cost of labour was extremely low, all those who used to produce something at home could use their skills to barter it on the black market. A growing number of families would go to the market and look for goods, sell goods or look for mediators who would take their goods. The market became close to an immense shadow stock exchange, where everything could have a value and be tradable with other goods.

The market is nowadays one of the main references for the city economy and the city administration, aware of it, decided to change its face and regulate it more. Wishing to offer better hygienic standards, but also to keep control on the trade of the bazaar, a restructuring of the market was initiated and several store buildings were built. These make up the New Privoz, which retains nothing but the name from the old and legendary market. A Western style supermarket and shops now dominate the eastern façade of this four-story (soon to be five) shopping mall, built beside (or better, inside) the old Privoz bazaar, where traditional marble tables for other living goods still remain in use.

The new morphology of the bazaar is now a mix of tradition and modernity, of different selling and living styles. On the one hand we still have traditional bread brought on old trolleys, whereas on the other side big trucks offer large quantities of factory produced goods. Modern shops, boutiques with appealing names such “Golden Cherry”, “Alex Horse”, or “Venetsiya (Venice)” sell gifts, sunglasses, fashion clothes, jewelry, and even erotic toys. Around the mall, a number of Western-style fast food joints have opened. A few meters further homemade street food and “*stolovyje*” (traditional Soviet canteens) serve the intrepid, or simply tradition oriented, hungry customers. The new morphology of Privoz places the old and the new together, accommodating several categories of consumers who, for economic or other reasons, prefer either section of the market.



Fig 8, Old selling banks in Privoz, by Aleksandr Prigarin 2011. In background “New Privoz” constructions

This contrast is now also visible on the Web. New Privoz has a dynamic website, <http://www.newprivoz.com/>, with a picture of the glass facade building dominating the main page. Here all shops are listed, news is announced and directions to the market show the best way to get there. The self-proclaimed official webpage of the “old” Privoz is a basic and old page with most links not working but promising work opportunities to those who want to provide the retailers with food (the page states “Exclusively comfortable cooperation” or “Extremely Favourable cooperation” as the English version reads. Also included are a short history of the market and a section on health, where a rehabilitation clinic is advertised (<http://www.odessaprivoz.narod.ru/index.html>).

The importance of Privoz, and bazaars in general, is visible from the fact that price indexes are still calculated on the price for meat, milk, and potatoes in the different bazaars (*Novyj, Yuzhnyj*) of the city. Most of the shadow trade has moved to 7-oj km which, given its location, is more difficult to keep under control.

Sedmoj Kilometer

Whilst Privoz seems to move towards a legal framework, the necessity to boost informal transactions has been satisfied by another open air market, described as:

“...part third world bazaar, part post-Soviet Wal-Mart, a place of unadulterated and largely unregulated capitalism where certain questions — about salaries, rents, taxes or last names — are generally met with suspicion.” (Myers 2006)



Fig 9, Overview of selling stands, rykok Avangard (7Km) (by Aleksandr Prigarin 2010).

Sedmoj Kilometer was once established as a local market situated in the centre of the city. Eventually it was moved out to the *Moldavanka*, one of the oldest parts of Odessa and later, when its size was growing beyond control, it was relocated once more, this time to the outskirts of the city. This allowed for expansion enabling the trading of a higher quantity of goods but also made it easier to escape strict state control. The 1989 date of birth of the market given by the Guardian (2012) seems, in this case, to refer to the time when the market was moved outside the centre.

After 1960 *Sedmoj Kilometer* became practically illegal but it remained active and functioned as the biggest smuggling market of the USSR (Nikolskij 2006). Given its location as a border city (less than 50 km from the Moldovan border) Moldovans have a long history of trading with Odessa in order to obtain what was lacking in the rest of the region and what Odessa sailors and traders were able to ship into their city through their networks. Odessa's markets were, and are, the place where any item (from Japanese cars to Italian mopeds) can be found for sale if you are willing to pay.

In recent times, two phenomena have increased the variety of goods purchasable in Odessa: the opening up of Ukraine to foreign imports, which started with *perestroika* and the overproduction in some neighbouring countries, especially Turkey, of what could easily be shipped across the Black sea.

Located seven kilometers from the centre of Odessa, on the Odessa – Ovidiopol highway, the

market spreads over 70 hectares and opens every day but Friday. 7-oj Km now has around 16,000 traders and a central staff of 1,200, mostly security guards and janitors, making it the region's largest employer. An estimated 150,000 shoppers come each day, traveling in hundreds of buses from as far as Russia more than 500 kilometers away in search of the bargains that the evident avoidance of customs and taxes make possible (Nikolski 2005). "Over the 15 years of its operation, it has been called different things," the Ukrainian newsweekly, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, wrote in 2004, "but in fact it is a state within a state, with its own laws and rules. It has become a sinecure for the rich and a trade heaven for the poor." (Myers 2006).

It is open 24 hours a day; during the daytime normal goods are traded while at night time the typology of goods traded is unknown to most. Low cost goods are received mainly from Turkey and China but also from Russia, Poland and, at least officially from places such as Italy or Slovakia. The rental of a container to store goods can cost from \$1,500 USD upwards (prices for cars, apartments and other goods are unofficially quoted in USD in Ukraine). As a result, although numerous people go to the markets simply to shop, there are others who live on the daily export and smuggling of goods. Some of the workers from neighbour factories are paid in goods rather than money and come to the market to get some cash or products in exchange for what they have to sell (Myers 2006). For instance those working in factories producing fluffy animals are paid in animals and come to sell them

The increasing number of migrants attracted by the city has expanded its surface and the scope of its activities, with unofficial exchange offices, containers and any sort of goods now shared between CIS citizens and new migrants, particularly from China and Vietnam. The size and importance of the market is also visible through its websites. The official site of the market administration (www.7km.net) has information about the market, how to get there, and the kinds of goods and shops one can find there. A second website, most likely set up by some sellers, is an electronic bazaar (<http://7bazar.com.ua>) where it is possible to find wholesale and retail goods. There is a section about the sellers, which are listed by name (no surname is given) with the number of the container and a mobile phone contact. Being so far from the city centre, and having people literally living there, not only is the bazaar equipped with restaurants and toilet facilities far beyond those one would expect in a bazaar, but even a big first aid point and a fire station have become needed features.

The flow of informal transactions that happen in the light of day make one only imagine what happens during the night. Growing Chinese and Vietnamese communities are increasing their trade with the city and the place seems to gather people from the whole of Africa, Asia and Europe, who tend to avoid the city centre so as not to be bothered by the authorities (Humphrey and Skvirskaja 2010). A number of them are not fully regular with documents so that, from time to time, policemen might catch a whole bus of Asian-looking persons and detain them until they pay a "release fee".

The future of bazaars in Odessa

Despite the challenge of external influences and western style supermarkets that are threatening practices long-ago consolidated, the bazaar has responded to a change of

environment by surviving as a two-fold institution. On the one hand it represents values such as genuineness, tradition, and socialisation, which are not necessarily present in modern supermarkets. On the other hand, it responds to a demand for cheap, illegal, or extra-legal goods that may be seen as arising from the incapacity of the state to carry out reforms (Polese 2010).

By giving more importance to traditions, kinship and social networks, people acknowledge the importance of social capital in a country. Most of what escapes state control, be this smuggling or fiscal evasion, socialisation, or networking needs, passes through the bazaar. This is all the more important in a country that has not secured even development for the whole population and where, aside from a very rich economic class (the so called “New Russians”) a great portion of the population struggles to get to the end of the month. For a number of people the bazaar is the place to exchange time with money, spend more time but pay less, or invest time in long term relationships that will bring some benefits in the future. This will be used to create the connections and ties that may secure cheaper goods, help to find a job, some extra income, or simply meeting the need for socialisation people have.

It is hard to predict who will win the bazaar-supermarket competition. What may be said, however, is that the bazaar, as institution and as space, will continue to play a central role in the life of Odessans for some time.

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