

## GUEST EDITOR'S NOTES

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One group of essays presented here in the Special Issue of the Anthropology of East Europe Review is a selection from papers presented at the 2005 SOYUZ Symposium<sup>1</sup>, hosted by the University of Indiana, Bloomington and held on March 4-5. The other group of papers were gathered at the 2005 European Society of Rural Sociology Congress (ESRS) conference<sup>2</sup>, hosted by the University of Georgikon, Keszthely (Hungary) and held on August 21-26.

The SOYUZ symposium was held in an American University, while the ESRS Conference in a European one. As I was thinking about how to write the introduction to the AEER, I could not avoid noting the differences between the two locations, ways of representation, and the foci of the presentations. At the ESRS conference, 80% of the invited scholars were Eastern and Central-Eastern Europeans. While at the SOYUZ symposium, the majority of the presenters were mostly Americans, or Eastern and Central European scholars trained in American colleges. Papers presented at the SOYUZ symposium were more focused on the theoretical and conceptual predicaments of how to explicate transition, and/or Great or Not that Great Transformation(s), just to invoke Polányi's phrase (1944) here, and/or "post post-socialism" (Sampson 2002). While the papers demonstrated well how the political and economic processes after the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall saturated everyday life, none of the papers alluded to Eastern Enlargement of the European Union! The scholars at the ESRS seemed to be more localized and concentrated on the process of Europeanization. The Congress' intellectual concern was definitely the predicament of 'Europe,' 'old,' and 'new,' and/or Europe at different spatial and temporal scales. The key interest of many of the papers was whether enlargement is leading to the unification or differentiation of European countries, with regard to change and/or continuity of economic and social relations not only in rural but also in urban areas.

In this issue, I made an attempt to unite the two spatial, temporal, and academic sites in order to initiate a productive dialogue between post-socialist anthropologists situated in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the former Soviet Union (FSU), and Western scholars living in the US, and the UK, etc. I believe that these scholars

contribute not only to a conceptual debate on the usefulness of the term post post-socialism but also to the dispute of what constitutes Europe and who is European.

In the hope that this issue opens up a new dialogue among scholars working on post-socialism all over the world, I selected papers that offered thick ethnographic descriptions of field sites and intellectual concerns. Consequently, our readers, whether social scientists or not can hear local voices from existing communities, contemplate what Malinowski termed "the imponderabilia of actual life" and understand, as Victor Turner puts it, "what has been lived through" in socialism and post-socialism. To my mind, the anthropologically informed papers I have selected provide rich ethnographic vignettes of the socialist past and the post post-socialist present from the given region. These papers are based on intensive ethnographic fieldwork carried out in locations ranging from Romania to Ukraine.

To my mind, anthropological projects since 1989 have been multifold and unfolding and anthropological practice has become very complex. These papers demonstrate the value of ethnographic fieldwork, which informs our theoretical claims. They not only discuss the theoretical dilemmas of post-socialism but situate them within the processes of globalization, transnationalism, supra-nationalism, and neo-colonialism.

How can we marry these above mentioned themes and anthropological concerns in a constructive and informative way? Or, is a divorce or separation (legal or not?) taking place between them in relation to what these two themes (post post-socialism and the Eastern Enlargement of the EU) suggest to us? Or, is post post-socialism actually Europeanization? Of course, these questions can be complicated by the future integration plans of the EU. What if, for instance, Russia becomes a member state of the EU, in which case, most of the EU would lie in Asia and not in Europe?

In addition, how can the literature on postsocialism enrich social/cultural anthropology in general, and inform post-colonial theory, literary criticism, historiography, and cultural

studies, just to mention a few other fields besides anthropology?

Presently, as the theme of the SOYUZ meeting indicated "post post-socialism?" is a phrase not a term, not a concept, not an analytical category that anthropologists can work with while examining different locations, regions, and social/cultural relations in the former "Eastern Bloc" and elsewhere.

Today we grapple with the question of how to describe 'what comes next,' but I still wonder if we really understood what "actually existing socialism was" (Verdery 1996). If we did not really capture what socialism was and what post-socialism could have been when we are about at the period of post post-socialism (Sampson 2002), then I argue that we are quickly moving toward skating on thin ice.

This hesitation was quietly expressed by the organizers of the SOYUZ symposium in their call for papers: "Scholars have recently begun suggesting that many aspects of social and cultural life once considered unique to socialist and post-socialist societies actually have parallels in post-colonial, post-modern, and post-welfare societies. [...] we sense that old analytical models that anticipate stability in social organization and relations, centralized systems of political power, and master cultural narratives have lost much of their explanatory potential" (Phillips & Cash, 2005). To break away from the old analytical categories, specialists not only on Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union but also on Asia, Africa, and Latin America discussed which "social and cultural patterns were best identified as 'socialist' or 'post-socialist', which are local variations of these broad patterns; and which ought better to be considered under other analytical categories" (Phillips & Cash, 2005).

That is why, the theme of the SOYUZ symposium raised the question of where to go from post-socialism conceptually and theoretically. Do anthropologists have a common language to talk about the present, *nota bene* the past? Which theoretical frameworks should we apply?

As I assembled this edition, I was looking for papers that addressed the problematics of theorization, conceptualization, and representation of post-socialism. The articles you will read in this issue connect the processes of globalization with Europeanization, neo-colonization and

capitalization while pointing at an emerging hybrid economic system.

Nauruzbayeva's article, "What Was Socialism About?" examines the production of anthropological knowledge at the theoretical intersection of the (recent) socialist past and the post-socialist present. Her paper analyzes texts and narratives produced in Mongolia, the former GDR and Russia, discussing the practices of memory both in the socialist and the post-socialist contexts. At the same time, she explores 'memories' of the recent socialist past as representations of socialism in the aftermath of the Cold War. Nauruzbayeva acknowledges that the term "memories of socialism" is highly problematic, but for the sake of her discussion she applies post-socialism "as a collective term of reference" to indicate former socialist countries from the "perspective of the Western liberal democratic 'eye.'" Nauruzbayeva, in her account, points out that due to modern technology, there seems to be "an anxious outpouring of discussions of memory... a broad resurgence of interest in memory". While examining the given texts, she argues that memory as an analytical category has taken many directions. It is used as a counter-narrative to the past and present; it is applied as a site of resistance, a social practice of resistance to the discourses of capitalism and post-socialism; it is discussed as a collective and/or individual way of forgetting; it is demonstrated in the personal memoirs and testimonials of intellectuals; it is explicated as a hope for a better future; it is viewed as nostalgia for the past; or seen as one's view of a mirage or utopia. In her conclusion Nauruzbayeva offers a critique of the literature of memory written by anthropologists and argues that only few of them can capture what the sociality of socialism was, or "what socialism felt like, tasted like, and smelt like" (Seremetakis 1994). Finally, she suggests that to a certain degree the literature on memory of socialism is an epistemological violence, which mutes the validity of individuals', communities' or groups' own perceptions of "what socialism was about."

Chivens' article "After Post-Socialism? Transition's Obscured Inevitability," is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Poland in the late 1990s. Chivens critiques the emphasis on the theme of uncertainty within anthropological literature of postsocialism. While intended to challenge the categorical fixities of the transitological literature (socialism/capitalism, totalitarianism/democracy), the concept inadvertently reinforces them. As he puts it,

uncertainty presupposes contrast with a more unwavering, established and durable social and economic life elsewhere. Chivens insists that the social and economic phenomenon of uncertainty is not only a characteristic of post-socialist countries. In order to critically assess related concepts of transition, uncertainty and post post-socialism, he contrasts the temporal and spatial constructions of uncertainty and risk with the uncertainty of domestic life and violence. His interest lies in how different registers of risk intersect. For example, how the risk of violence can be thought of as in dialogue with economic risk and cultural uncertainties that had become associated with post-socialist transition.

Davidson's piece "These So-Called West Times" is based on field research in the former East Germany (2001-2003). It explores the predicament of everyday speech, which is complicated by the reunification of the two Germanies. What Davidson calls 'shifters' in everyday speech in present Germany are signs of a larger theoretical question that she unfolds in her ethnography. Her central argument is that the very act of picking one word over another could be a political act expressing belonging in one nation but not in the other. At the same time, it can denote nostalgia for the past and resistance to the present. Words like "here and now", "back then and there" are saturated with social meanings. For many speakers it is difficult to talk about politics and political life without referring to the past, or relying upon language from the socialist past, or at least, "to the complicated choices of national identification its demise has created."

Bazylevych's article is based on her ethnographic field research in the cities of Kyiv and Khmelnytsky in 2004. It addresses two dilemmas: how Western feminists, and feminist anthropologists view socialist and post-socialist women, and how female professionals in the fields of medicine, banking, and private business adapted to the challenges and changes dictated by the new regime.

She argues that contemporary regulations, norms and transformations threaten female professionals' social and economic status in post-socialist society. Bazylevych argues that in Ukrainian public discourse, gender categories are not applied to describe gender inequalities in employment strategies as related to the ever-changing economic laws and regulations. Her argument is focused on a comparison between the socialist past and the post-socialist present from

the perspective of employment. It is argued that post-socialist female professionals have been negatively affected by the changes. No matter how well educated they are, they cannot compete with male professionals in the new marketplace. While the socialist state encouraged women to study and become employed in socially prestigious fields such as medicine, the post-socialist government and the "free market" favor men in the fields of medicine, private business and banking. Subsequently, women lose not only their economic status but their social one as well. The distribution of labor proves to be unequal and discriminatory. As a result, some Ukrainian women in Kyiv and Khmelnytsky have no other option but to turn to petty trade at the local market or the bazaar. This "bazaar" is located next to a railroad, which allows women to travel to nearby cities, purchase goods and sell them at a higher price when returning to Khmelnytsky. Obviously, it is a survival strategy, which is part of the informal economy and puts women on the margins of the market, which is one of the outcomes of the transition.

Two papers written by Dorondel and Kemény focus on themes of collectivization and privatization. Dorondel's piece offers anthropological insights into how the privatization of fishery in post-socialist Romania has become problematic due to "fuzzy property" rights (Verdery 1999). Dorondel's main argument is that the diverse claims made on a piece of 'property' (lake and swamp) highlight the complex social relations in the village of Dobrudja. In addition, he states that the awaited integration to the EU will complicate currently existing property rights and entitlements still further, and have an influence on social relations that are rooted in cultural domains, not in the domain of the market.

Similarly, Kemény's paper offers an excellent ethnographic case of a wine-region. Due to unfavorable changes in the social structure and order of the village, the population is decreasing. Somlóvásárhely resembles the general features of social continuity and change in post-socialist Hungary. Kemény describes the history of the settlement and kinship relations there before, during and after socialism. He claims that the 'changes of systems' in the twentieth century such as urbanization, industrialization and re-privatization are reflected in the social status of individuals. The key concept that Kemény applies is *pluriactivité*, which means that people today are engaged in a range of economic and social practices. He examines the blending of new and old ways of networking, and shows that despite the

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flows of capital, ideologies, people, and technology that "difference are maintained and shaped by the local norms and historical roots." He emphasizes that Hungary's integration to the EU (May 2004) may or may not offer new opportunities to people. He concludes that it is very unlikely that the standard of living will increase and the social structure of the local settlement will transform.

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