

# Power, Capitalism and Ecology in Rural Central-Eastern Europe

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In the last three decades, the reconfiguration of Central-Eastern European states to fit into the neoliberal global circuits of capital entailed deep transformations. The countryside has been particularly affected. New power relations emerged with the liberalization of markets and the privatization and decollectivization of agricultural land, implements and other assets. As these processes advanced, already existing inequalities deepened and new forms of marginalization and exclusion were created.

While the first two decades of postsocialism have been extensively studied by anthropologists, the literature on the region's recent rural developments after the EU's South-Eastern enlargement and the financial crisis has been rather scarce. Moreover, the intertwining of these social, political and economic transformations with ecological ones has been often overlooked.

The (re-)consolidation of agricultural land and technologization of agricultural work led by the EU's CAP or through corporate finance and land-grabbing, as well as the establishment of protected areas through new environmental policies are transforming the rural social fabric redefining subjectivities, power relations and human-nonhuman interactions.

Determined by these transformations are processes such as the ageing rural population and the widespread out-migration for work to the city and abroad; or the corporatization of crop and food production, distribution and retail replacing subsistence agriculture, peasant markets and informal short-food supply chains with family and large-scale commercial farming, international markets and global value chains; or the criminalization of traditional land-use and exchange practices no longer considered compliant with new environmental and economic regulations.

With this panel we seek to understand which are the emerging challenges and developments of the Central-East European countryside. While not limited to the below, we invite reflections on the following topics:

- Historical transformations and current meanings of the term "peasant" in everyday life, political, economic and scientific discourses in Central-Eastern Europe.
- Changes in access to resources engendered by agricultural land consolidation, cash cropping, de-industrialization, technologization, green securitization, climate change
- (Re-)proletarianisation, mobilization and precarization of agricultural labour
- The rural environment between conservation initiatives and neo-extractivist projects
- National politics and rural areas: patronage and clientelism, populism and abandonment
- Envisioning alternatives in old and new commons, cooperatives and short supply chains.

## POSTER PRESENTATION

### **Viticulture in Czech Republic after 1989 as a Result of Socialist Government**

*Jourová, Eva (Masaryk University, Brno, CZE)*

In my contribution, I'd like to point out the problematics of viticultural development in Czech Republic after the year 1989. During the 40 years of socialist government, there had been vast changes in agricultural politics, such as the destruction of the ancient economy system and a ban on private ownership of land. This had, of course, immense influence on the farmers' life. The political disruption of the ties between the farmer and his source of livelihood was a blow to the classic definition of the countryside. The regime not only severed the ties of ownership, but transformed the agricultural system as well, which often resulted in disrupting of whole natural ecosystems. The consequences of field-merging and heavy, large-area implementation of chemical fertilizers, that showed only decades later, are still observable even today. This problem, however, was a problem of not only the viticulture, but also of the general agricultural situation. The regime's fall was presaged by a stark economic situation and over-dimensioned, unsustainable state of the agriculture. What was typical for western viticultural areas, e.g. the "terroir" of wines, was practically non-existent in Czechoslovakia. The wines were of a fluctuating quality and the origin of the grapes was ambiguously somewhere from the Soviet Union. While there were wines distributed by the regional companies, and their names are to this day inherently tied to the viticultural locations, it is questionable whether they truly were of the top quality. After the take-off of democratization in 1989, the viticulture finally had a chance to develop, even though the situation wasn't easy. Large wine-producing companies found themselves in a great uncertainty, while the small producers were returned the land that was taken away from them during the collectivization. With the extinction of the massive state-owned companies, that shielded establishments across Czechoslovakia, came a discussion on their future. They were handed over to private operators under new laws, specifically as joint-stock companies or limited liability companies. With the disbandment of JZD (a cooperative agricultural unit) and state farms came a rapid decline in the agricultural workers. Building a new relationship to the land, founding family businesses, planting new vineyards and waiting for the first harvest. Centrally planned economic system was replaced with market system, hence it was necessary to "kick-start" the economy with

a privatization process. Long awaited new law on the viticulture, that would help both the viticulture and the trade with wine was being continuously postponed, and his release was also complicated by the separation of Czechoslovak federal republic. It came into force in 1995, when the Czech economy was trying to come close to maastricht criteria, to which the new legislature on viticulture was supposed to contribute. New opportunities opened up to steadfast farmers, especially in the ecological direction. To go around full circle, let us conclude that in the present day, wine-makers are returning to the traditional ways, and not even the small vineyards, but also the larger wine producers. The popularity efforts to participate in these traditions grows also in the wine consumers, which is possible to deduce from the numbers of visitors on wine-related events both in countryside and in urban areas.

### **House Wine of Moldova: the problem with heritage**

*Ana. Daniela (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), GER)*

House winemaking is a prominent activity in the villages of Moldova, encoding a multitude of social and economic aspects: the winemaker displays skills, knowledge, virtues and feelings to those who share the fruit of her or most frequently, his labour. It also bears economic importance, in various ways: it is a means of payment, a product for petty trade and an affordable alternative to more expensive commercial alcohol. It is a product borne out of cleaner agriculture, tied to a flow of local knowledge that comes from ancestors, having a particular taste that can be reproduced at will, not industrially but inside the home. This paper looks at the controversial aspects of house winemaking in Moldova, where the private wine sector makes efforts to enlarge a very narrow domestic market for bottled wine.

### **Waste pickers and 'green value' in the Serbian recycling economy**

*Schwab, Eva (Frau, Herdecke, AUT)*

In 2012 the EU has adopted the Circular Economy Package (CEP) for waste recycling. The CEP advanced the ambitious goal of making recycling-work clean work and keep the recycling value chain within the EU, instead of letting the waste travel outside the EU for the dirty parts of the revaluation process (Gregson et al. 2015). Clean recycling is promoted by the CEP through a set of economic instruments that operate through particular modes of producing 'green value': These modes of production are high-tech, expert-driven, forms of turning waste into value, while low-tech, livelihood-driven forms of turning waste into value are disregarded (Alexander 2013). In this paper I will look at the export of the CEP to Serbia in the course of EU enlargement. My paper is based on field research in Serbia with the German International Cooperation (GIZ) that is a major player in the field of exporting environmental technology from Germany, while offering 'developmental help'. I will show how the commercialization of recyclables from household waste is undergoing fundamental changes through the introduction of one CEP instrument: the Extended Producer Responsibility (short: EPR) system. EPR is based on the collection of eco taxes from producers of packaging materials and it reorganizes the recycling market around 'green value' - a logic that brings with it ideological changes into what forms of waste work are considered adequate in the process of recycling and which are not. In this paper I will show how the Serbian recycling industry constructs competing notions of green value, as they depend on the work of waste pickers, while the GIZ undertakes programs to open the recycling market for foreign investors with high-tech solutions, while trying at the same time to invent 'inclusion programs' for waste pickers in order to promote recycling as a green economy that combines 'poverty alleviation' in sustainable green growth.

### **Village off-road, hunting, and the children's park: ways of using the outside by the people of a village in Bistrița-Năsăud County**

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This presentation analysis three ways of seeing, moving through and using the outside by the people of a village in Bistrița-Năsăud County: a group of off-roaders with quads (ATV) and SUVs; the local hunting group using the nearby mountains and forests; and the moms and children using the newly built children's park. We argue that these are hybrid ways of using and shaping rural space between urban influences and rural life-worlds. While these groups create their own social sphere within the village life, giving birth to various forms of social inclusions and exclusions, they also shape the space of the village and its surroundings. Off-roading produces new ways of experiencing the landscape as well as tracing new roads. Nevertheless, this mode of movement is often considered destructive, while being part of the group and, therefore, being part of experiencing the landscape this way is only accessible to a select few. Meanwhile, both the exclusion of other villagers from this group and the disturbance of the many living beings in the forest are seen to be diminished by the charity activities organized by this group. Being part of hunting, similarly, reinforces an elite social status within the village through the very activity of hunting, as well as through its by-products (meat, trophies), and creates political and entrepreneurial relations. However, hunting also plays part in the structure and inter-relationships of the ecosystem. The frictions and tensions between these two elite groups are reflected on the life of the forest. As opposed to off-roading and hunting, both male dominated activities, the children's park is not only mostly used by mothers and their children, but its activities are not restrained to group membership. It is a public space that has been for long requested by the members of the public, seeing it as a form of progress, a standard of the urban neighbourhoods, an urban corner within the village public space. Through the movements of the three groups in the outside space we propose to trace how they shape space and create various forms of sociality between people, the forests and animals inhabiting these spaces. Therefore, we ask ourselves what kind of networks are created through these different groups? How

do they see and produce the outside? How is the space shaped through relations and tensions between people? What kind of new relations between forests, wild animals and the use of the outside space and villagers are created?