Buses, Metros, Shoes & Confusing Journeys

Miia Halme-Tuomisaari
August, 2015

This week we continue our thread on fieldnotes via four posts that all in their own way elaborate this thread's overarching theme: journey.

As is familiar to all anthropologists, the notion of doing fieldwork is almost synonymous with travelling. Yet increasingly, as we also know well, instead of the traditional passage from one geographic location to another, this journey is much more subtle and without clear external identifiers.

Be it ethnography at home, autoethnography or para-ethnography – to mention just a few recent articulations – our ethnographic journeys are becoming increasingly diffused with our everyday lives and selves. Consequentially both us, the anthropologists, and our informants struggle at times to deduce just what is the border between the scholar and the 'real' person, be it a friend, neighbour or 'social animal', as articulated by Priya Swamy in her post.

Yet, thinking of the longer tradition of anthropology, the novelty of these questions is only partial. Rather, the relationship of the anthropologist and her informant has always been a vicarious mixture of objective interest and personal engagement, and the drawing of exact boundaries has often been challenging despite of the geographic journey that may have accompanied the scholar's initial entry to her fieldsite.

Simultaneously it does feel accurate to note that, as these posts show, we are at present encountering circumstances that are genuinely new – after all, very few of our professional ancestors conducted fieldwork in the contexts that they called home, among people of the very same social groups that they belonged to.

> *What then defines the anthropologist when all sense of 'the exotic' is gone and by all external criteria the scholar and the informant are alike?*

This question is also a familiar one – one that we have repeatedly considered also at Allegra. Simultaneously it is a question worth highlighting as it summarises one of the central challenges that ethnographers of these 'new' contexts face.

It is also a question that deserves broader collective attention as satisfactory answers hold importance for another shared quest:

> *How can we anthropologists, particularly in the face of ongoing global funding cuts, find increasingly vocal articulations for the societal relevance of our scholarship in ways that are both understandable and persuasive?*

With these questions and themes in mind we open this week with a two-tiered post by Mina Baginova on her ongoing research from Chile. The first part of her post offers an ethnographic vignette in AVMoFA-style that forms a crucial part of her research: the types of shoes that one chooses.

> *What relevance does selection of footwear hold for research on social movements and why? Well – read for yourselves.*

She elaborates this vignette with a short description of 'radical imagination', a concept that has become a central analytical tool for her fieldwork of these social movements, and also echoes the spirt of a 'journey'.

After treading on foot, we join Amina Tawasil on a hot bus ride in Tehran via an ethnographic glimpse that concretizes different notions of learning – and also why taking a bus as a mode of transportation can be an important methodological choice.

In her post Amina Tawasil opens up also a discussion of informant identities and her relationship to them as she discusses the differences in between her personal friends and local informants; differences also reflected on their favoured choice of transport.

Priya Swamy elaborates these questions in her post on Thursday as she continues her discussion on fieldwork among Hindus in Amsterdam. How does one maintain the border in between 'professional' and 'personal' when the everyday space that the scholar inhabits is thoroughly shared with one's informants, as is the personal diasporic family background as is the case for her? What kind of consequences do these subtle interactions have on scholarly analysis?

We conclude this week with another ethnographic glimpse – this time from the metro. Sonja Trifuljesko continues her fieldnotes by sharing both a passing conversation as well as a recording of being 'on the go'. In a few weeks she will accompany these glimpses with a more analytical take as we conclude our series

of fieldnotes.

We invite you, our dear Allies, to join our collective journey once again, and hope that you will enjoy the ride! We know that we do!

Courtesy of pixabay.com

Street Corner Secrets. Sex, Work, and Migration in the City of Mumbai

Nirmala Jayaraman
August, 2015

Albertin Sarrazin once wrote, “whether you’re on the lam or whether you’re out hustling, gold is worth nothing compared to silence” (p.149). Those marginalised into prostitution are exploited for their sex and for their voiceless existence. Anthropologists and public health researchers are compelled to give their informants a voice as part of their overall goal to help the most vulnerable populations. Svati P. Shah’s ethnography, *Street Corner Secrets: Sex, Work, and Migration in the City of Mumbai*, is an attempt to address this silence surrounding the subjugation of sex workers among civilians. Shah’s effort to construct a larger discourse for HIV/AIDS prevention relates to her concerns about representations of sex and gender. Her argument, that silence can prevent us from asking more questions about a disenfranchised people, is what makes her book worth reading.

> *Her findings contribute to a deeper understanding behind the complexity and structural violence of sex workers’ lives. By giving voice to the voiceless, her ethnography can inform us on how to refine a methodology for culturally sensitive research.*

While Shah makes it clear that people across the gender spectrum are impacted by the sex-commerce industry, her particular ethnography focuses on the lives of women migrating for work in urban spaces (p.15). She interviews sex workers who find employment with construction companies, and sometimes use sex itself as a way of securing a job in sectors that are not directly linked to sexual commerce (p.26). These migrant workers seek out day wage labour for

employment at the “naka” or site for construction work (p.32).

Shah does not assert that she knows all of the answers to lessen the dangers faced by migrant workers. She is advocating for arguments that have more developed questions. The best parts of her book evoke our thinking. We are able to delve further into the economic vulnerability within the same demographic, “What could a critical examination of sexual commerce reveal about the politics of day wage labor?” (p.13). We can open up another dialogue by asking, “What does it mean to pursue multiple il/legitimate activities within a space that renders impoverished laborers visible en masse. . .?” (p.79). The different ways of accumulating income are part of a larger “complex matrix of negotiations for economic survival” (p.27).

Most of Shah’s informants will intimate where sex workers are located in the city without actually defining what their work entails (p.85). She writes, “…episodic sex work and sex trade – offers a clear explanation for how the income gap left by construction work was filled. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to claim that this was the primary means by which the gap was addressed.” (p.107). Shah does not suggest that we try to fill up the silences. Instead we can use silence as qualitative information to help us imagine what risks are taken by those turning to sex work to create a part of their income (p.110). She writes, “the silences surrounding sex work at the naka are necessarily rich, laden with innuendo, and coded for those who can hear.” (p.110). She further states, “If silences are speech acts. . . the questions of unspeakability and of secrets remain” (p.111). Shah espouses that it is possible to analyse these silences in the context of a legal framework (p.111). However, having a holistic approach that addresses the living conditions of her informants as members of their families and communities is just as important (p.111).

> *Many of her informants remain invisible, having lost support from community members to even help them leave dangerous situations in both street and brothel based sex work.*

From their perspective, the pressures to still provide for their families outweigh the cost of engaging in unsafe practices (p.121). For example, sex workers are routinely coerced into having unsafe sex with clients who refuse to use condoms (p.125). Challenging our assumptions about what questions to ask, Shah reminds researchers not to ignore "questions about housing, migration, and livelihood" (p.163).

One informant reveals that gender bias is still a problem faced by women seeking employment, stating, "What's the point of trying to work like this and protect my honor, when no one thinks I have honor anyway?" (p.167). The question of honour, or "izzat" (p.84) harkens back to an earlier argument regarding gendered labour. Anthropologists, such as Sally Cole, would agree with Shah's concerns about the gendered framework of "Honor and Shame" (Cole 1991, p.77). In the 1960's, anthropologists used the "code of Honor and Shame" to study gender across cultures (Cole 1991, p.77). This analogy stipulates that women are associated with shame as men are associated with honour; labour is divided where women are delegated to practices that are not honorable (Cole 1991, p.79).

Cole writes that "Women were victims of their sexuality not only in the honor-and-shame conceptualization of local gender systems, but also in ethnographic writing that generally saw women through their reproductive roles as wives and mothers and neglected their roles in economic production" (Cole 1991, p.78). Like Cole, Shah urges her colleagues to revise how they interpret the way communities organise and control members within their culture. Shah's observations present a dilemma of how the framing of Honour/Shame is both useful and not entirely accurate. Contemporary anthropology shows us that there is a spectrum of gender identity rather than a two-gendered dichotomy constructed across all cultures (p.156). Consider how men who identify as LGBTQ might find themselves with little representation on either side of the divide (p.156). Is it time to reevaluate the dichotomy of Honour/Shame when writing about labour and gender? For now, Shah has committed to asking more nuanced questions.

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Malthus and the #EXPO2015

Sophie Roche
August, 2015

The subject of EXPO 2015 is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", which coincides with the "European Year for Development". The European page contains the slogan "How can each make a difference?" Their suggestion: "Look at the ethical aspects of the goods you buy, labels on your food (are the workers paid their fair share?); cosmetics (are they not tested on animals and do not harm nature?), etc." [1]

These statements remind one of Malthus, the economic demographer of the 18th century whose famous 1798 text titled *An Essay on the Principle of Populations* [2] is seemingly becoming popular once again, albeit in a new technological context. Having worked with the text recently, my walk through the EXPO 2015 became a conversation between the Malthus theorem and contemporary ideas of demographical and food developments.

Let us start with a word on Malthus and his concerns for 'the poor' of 18th century Britain: Sir Thomas Malthus was born into an aristocratic family, received a private education, later studied economics, and eventually came to hold the first economic demographer professorship in Britain. His privileged life led him to reflect on the poverty around him, and he recorded these thoughts in an essay on the principle of populations. Although he later revised some of these ideas while developing others, the text has remained a historically crucial document introducing a new view on society. Among others, Charles Darwin used Malthus' argument of demographic change and food regimes for his ideas of selection.

> *Malthus saw a direct relationship between population growth and food supply, and identified the imbalance between these two factors as the main source of poverty.*

The main problem, according to Malthus, was that population increases arithmetically, while the food supply could only increase geometrically. Thus,

poverty, war and famines were inevitable if people did not reduce the number of children they were having by controlling fertility. Fertility control would, however, require the poor to become more concerned about their responsibility to feed their family and to reduce the number of children they were having. If people were unable to control their fertility themselves (preventive checks), famines, wars, epidemics and other catastrophes (positive checks) would organically reduce the populations in order to reach equilibrium again. Unlike his colleague Mr. Godwin, with whom his article engages, Malthus did not believe that people would be able to balance fertility with agriculture.

Since Malthus, the idea that the rich West is responsible for managing the food supply for the poor has remained the primary development concern for international organizations that are increasingly handing over the task to agriculture and food companies. Malthus never expected technology to advance at its current pace, which has led to the ability to feed many more people than he ever imagined possible.

So why do we still link technological developments in food production to the need to feed the “masses of poor” in the global south? If the Malthus theorem has proven irrelevant and food production develops independent of poverty, how is it that multinational companies still use this seemingly intrinsic relationship as a successful marketing strategy?

A walk through the EXPO can convince anyone that food industries target two

groups: the individualized Western consumer, and the "poor masses" that need to be fed.

Countless slogans constantly remind the EXPO visitor that agricultural companies work to improve the world: "Nestlé: Good Food, Good Life. Creating Shared Value". Further, the Belgian pavilion draws scenarios of natural catastrophes and demography on the floor, predicting that crises and floods will occur as the world's population increases.

Malthus seems to continue to influence companies that develop technologies in the global north in order to feed the global south: the rich that look after the poor masses. While demography has remained a critical issue left to nation states, food can be discussed on a global scale using the demographic argument. Thus, feeding the poor has remained the main justification – at least for the public – for multinationals' technological developments.

A closer examination of Nestlé's catalogues that are available at the EXPO is worthwhile here. Nestlé is certainly one of the more successful multinationals who serve "more than 1 billion" consumers per day, as their catalogue explains. The company maintains 442 factories worldwide and include in their program a claim to improve nutrition, sustainability and human working conditions, all of which are part of shared values. While it is not clear what "shared values" Nestlé refers to (Is it the creation of a global culture of Nestlé consumption?) its social engagement presented in the catalogue along with technological developments goes far beyond what one would expect of a food company. Indeed, in the report Nestlé appears to be an international organization that cares for environmental sustainability, rural development, human rights and compliance, stakeholder engagement, nutrition, water, etc., more than it does for its profits. Like human rights, Nestlé is spread all over the world as the solution to nutritional problems and wishes to establish a cultural community of shared values – Nestlé values. This reminds one of Coca-Cola's and McDonald's cultural imperialism; of course the EXPO features a McDonald's restaurant and Coca-Cola has a pavilion in which

it presents its “healthy beverage”.

> *The information on EXPO 2015 carries two messages that polarize the world in a way that is alarmingly similar to the last century: first is the Western aim to develop the poor and hungry global south with technology, and the second is that multinationals care about and actually consider individuals’ health and moral values.*

The individualization of the food supply is the main issue for the global north. The consumer wants to know where their product comes from, who produced it, and what exactly it contains. Thus, the future supermarket (in the Future Food District) in which the visitor can do some shopping displays extensive details above the product. Considering that Europeans spend less and less time shopping and cooking, I wonder who will take the time to study each product in such depth. But for our knowledge society it is not so much the content – unless it is used to address serious health issues – that counts, as much as the illusion that we know or could potentially know everything about the products we consume.

Why has so much been invested in making products traceable? Since fair trade has uncovered the injustices behind food production, many people demand to have labels that certify fair trade products. This demand seems to be a powerful tool in the hands of consumer; technology now individualizes product chains, allowing the consumer to feel they are both buying fair products and also paying attention to their health. The screens above the products provide extensive information about the products' country and even the farm of origin, and gave me, a potential consumer, the feeling of buying goods right out of a global chain; this created the illusion that I personally oversee the chain myself, and hence also the fairness of production.

A small pavilion in the same area contains a video simulation explaining how food could be optimized so that consumers can meet precise dietary requirements and also maintain a broad choice of dishes. Food here is presented as prepared dishes with known amounts of ingredients and their specificities; thus, food becomes part of the optimized human being in the rich north. All this optimization, the visitor learns, is undertaken by specialists in laboratories and computer centres that control the chain all the way from the requirements of the producers, to the retailers, and then to the consumer.

Moving away from the technologies behind future food supply towards the small countries of the global south, it seems as if the future has vanished. Instead, traditions are presented as material cultures that resist time and change but often simply respond to the western longing for exotism. We are not shown the poor that the western multinationals want to feed, but rather colourful inventions of cultures meant to attract the visitor. One day is not enough to explore the countless creative inventions of the many pavilions. But not all countries have engaged in this colonial relationship of the technological west versus the traditional south; the Afghan pavilion does not address any of these expectations: the small room with glimmering plastic and eight glass display cases, each one containing a plate with dried fruits and stone hand-made jewellery, provokes the visitor.

Upon entrance, one is offered a tea of saffron and an “Afghan Food: cooking guide”. Wait a moment. This is Afghanistan? One of the countries in which the development industry has been active “saving the people from hunger” is offering a book of the most diverse dishes termed “amazingly real Afghanistan”? Interestingly, the dishes presented move far beyond the reduction of one traditional food, and instead remind one about the pleasure of food preparation

and consumption, including the creative play with tastes and the social dimension of food. The booklet seems outdated beside the "futures of nutrition" that sanctions food that may follow the rule of taste before health, the social before the individual.

> *The EXPO is full of extremes, and Malthus is at every corner, at times more actualized than ever and at times bluntly refuted by the creativity of ordinary people.*

The world is hence not yet only filled with an obsession about getting the right norms of nutrition to people worldwide. Rather, food remains an issue for individuals just as much as for companies, multinationals, and regimes. Malthus' fear of overpopulation and famines has not been overcome, but the many organisations dealing with this issue provide hope that the multinationals' technologies will not appropriate "the problem" and merely reduce the world's concern for food and nutrition to just a business plan.

Footnotes

[1] European Year for Development, a link takes the reader to Sustainable Table

[2] Malthus, T.R. 1999 [1798]. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

All photos are courtesy of Sophie Roche.

Breaking walls and exploring borders in the context of postsocialism

Allegra
August, 2015

Today we are very excited at Allegra – we continue our experimentation with serving you, dear readers, exotic and delicious slow food for thought. This time we created a menu for the upcoming two weeks with carefully selected ingredients to explore #postsocialism. And, above all, this is the first time we will introduce a new format – **#AVMoFA Personal Exhibition**.

For this thematic thread on postsocialism the keyword is **BORDERS** – walls, lines, marks that we cannot cross, do not dare to cross, prefer not to cross. Borders between states prescribe position in time and space to humans and non-humans alike. The inherent 'border consciousness' creates new categories related to border-crossings. People move and become migrants; objects move and become exported and smuggled goods. Borders within states are walls between people constructed by their origin, gender, age, class, profession, and habits. But all these borders are just a part of our social imagination, reinforced by routines and institutionalized to capture fleeting phenomena that make up the diversity 'out there', the spatial and temporal variability of life, so confusing and yet so thrilling.

During the past decades, the luxury of experiencing 'summer' as 'vacation' has become commonplace in the Western world. In summer, we tend to leave our habitual four walls – we go to the park, travel to the seaside, spend time outdoors in a summer cottage. When the sun shines warmly and 'the livin' is easy', we open up to the world out there and set off to explore what's behind the walls.

> *This summer, in the upcoming two weeks we will take you with us on a wonderful journey across four borders: art/science, performance/suspension, migration/refuge, dining/nutrition. We will explore the borderlines themselves as well as the realities they created in postsocialist space.*

On Tuesday (tomorrow), we will begin our curated weeks with AVMoFA's first personal exhibition *Die SommerWende*. We will display 22 photographs by Axel Schön, an artist from Kiel (Germany), who traveled extensively across the former Soviet Union during the 1990-s and

created a unique collection of images, deeply imprinted in the social imagination of the epoch that followed the Perestroika / *die Wende* in German / in the former Soviet Union. On Wednesday, Allegra #interview will further introduce Axel Schön as he explores walls, summer, and how the social transformation in socialist countries has affected his artistic works. This interview is inclusive of looking more in-depth at how the border between photography as an art form and photography as an ethnographic document can be defined – and whether there is one.

On Thursday and Friday we will continue to expand boundaries and cross borderlines with two contributions by Judith Beyer from our archive. *Simulacrum Crimea* is a part of the Anthropoliteia virtual round table devoted to the Ukrainian crisis that was held by Allegra in April 2014. In this post Judith suggests to look at the Crimea events as performances – legal and political. Together with Judith we revisit the current positions on Crimea while examining Axel's works that documented the Black Sea as a popular Soviet resort, a sentiment that has played a crucial role in positioning the Crimean annexation in the Russian media.

On Friday we will revisit the essay *Russian and Polar Bears Unite! A follow up* that first appeared on Allegra in February 2015 as a bijou textual and visual exploration of the bear in Russian folklore – both traditional, like fairytales, and current political, like internet memes. This essay can be seen as mirroring a sort of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', a phantasmagoric mixture of imagined and existing, when awakening, and thus realization and attribution of images and artifacts, delimit the border between a dream and a real experience.

The following week will continue with breaking walls and stereotypes. On Monday and Tuesday we will deal with migration, refugees, and materiality of border work. First, we offer you a piece by Magnus Marsden who pursued intensive ethnographic fieldwork in three ex-Soviet Union countries: Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Russia, to explore the activities of Afghan traders in the post-socialist space. His post draws attention to the intertwined nature of cross-border motilities as a

combination of economic and political 'push and pull' factors, resulting in blurring the boundary between refugee and trader/economic migrant.

On Tuesday we continue with a review of *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* by Madeleine Reeves (2014) prepared by Mateusz Laszczkowski. This reading of Reeves' work stresses the exploration of borders as events as improvisations appear and disappear with certain human practices. The work invites us to give a new meaning to, by now, a routinized description of borders as 'contested' imaginations.

On Wednesday and Thursday we will move on to seeking to understand borders in another realm, between nutrition, dining tradition, ethics and culture. We begin with a brief reportage on a EASA 2014 panel, *(Re)creating intimacy through food: searching for (post-)Soviet taste*, presented by the panel's convenor Agnese Bankovska.

On Thursday we will continue with Constanza Curro's review of the chapters on post-Soviet Russia and Lithuania from *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World* edited by Yung, Klein, and Caldwell. The review points out this edited volume's emphasis on different attitudes of the socialist past has affected people's perception and dispositions towards food practices and shaped peculiar constellations of state-market-citizen relations in the post-Soviet space.

Finally, on Friday we will conclude, wrap up, and look forward to where other walls might be falling next. This sophisticated menu we shall serve you over the next two weeks is not a mishmash with a cherry on top: adding daily ingredients allows us to show the complexity that connects borders, thus providing us new tastes or ways to think about it.

> *As our summer concludes with our thematic thread we would like to encourage you, dear readers, to think critically of each wall you encounter and reinvent the borders whenever necessary.*

Aftertaste: memories of postsocialism

Daria Gritsenko
August, 2015

Allegra's thematic thread on #postsocialism is coming to its end. We hope that the eight delicious specialties Allegra served you over the past two weeks have pleased your taste buds, dear Allies, in a nuanced and gentle way.

We joined one artist and four anthropologists who mastered both careful

observation and bold participation in their exploration of borders and border-crossing points as events, performances and improvisations. We pondered over the art of being IN and the impossibility of a "view from nowhere". We broke (or at least, imagined breaking) walls between art and science, between imagery and documentation, between observer and the observed. Today, our final thoughts regard those walls that are still standing – memories.

Memories are complex phenomena. Memories as ***living past*** represent the way in which past occupies its space in present; memories are present-time containers for gone, already lived-through moments. Memories as ***living with the past*** validate previous experience and introduce them to the ongoing process of determining and interpreting the present reality. Finally, memories as ***living in the past*** create the substance of nostalgia, a phenomenon that often goes hand in hand with idealization of the past experiences and events.

We started the thematic thread with a virtual personal exhibition #SommerWende. Photographs by Axel Schön that we have on display in #AVMoFA become a kind of visual memoir (*living past*), a personal observation about people and events that may or may not mirror the collective memory consolidated around the early transition years in the ex-Soviet Union. The stories behind the photographs – as remembered and reproduced by the artist in an exclusive #interview – add a dimension of *living with the past* to the 'neutral', documentary character of the imagery.

> *Reportage photography, an attempt to capture the situation that is unfolding now, with years passing by, becomes a memoir, a document of the time that can foster complex memory phenomena.*

Taken out of the socio-political context these works function at a personal level, as intimate life stories. Once understood within the surrounding reality and connected to the transformative events that are recognized as the milestones of a certain historical period, they become vulnerable to a speculative generalization exercise. Bare photographs, probably even more than other art forms, are both

incredibly strong in their depictive vividness and dramatically weak in their interpretative openness. Put into the virtual space of #AVMoFA, these photos become a part of Allegra's museum heterotopia, a place existing neither here nor there to capture simultaneously objects *living in the past* and placing them beyond time and space.

Almost all around the world, photos have become the most common, direct and habitual form of enslaving memories in gigabytes conveniently offered by modern digital devices. Yet, memory holding properties are inherent to symbols such as bears in Russian political rhetoric, territories that became simulacra, border-crossings, foods and eating. These memories are mirrors that generally reflect 'the big picture', but tend to reinforce and distort the nuances, all at once or one at a time.

> *Memories outline the borders between remembered and forgotten. Their inherently synthetic nature is prone to a blend of experience, affect and desire.*

The essays and reviews in our curated weeks explored postsocialism today not only as a shared, collective memory of the socialist past, but also as a very vivid and imposing experience that shapes the present of millions of people in the former Soviet Union. The phenomenon of Soviet nostalgia showed through political rhetoric on Crimea returning 'home' to Russia, as well as through collective food memories as explored by the *Searching for (post-)Soviet taste.* At the same time, this political reality can well be placed in the context of the recent proposition about the 30 years memory stagnation in Russia put forward by Alexander Etkind from Cambridge. In the light of the ongoing Ukrainian crises and distancing of Russia from the rest of Europe – and even from most of the rest of postsocialist space – revisiting and putting into the spotlight the workings of memory in contemporary postsocialist societies is pivotal.

Moving on from postsocialism to a new socio-political and cultural reality means dealing with the memories of 'the way it was not.' Though *living with the past* may be a task that requires both conscious effort and collective will, a sober

consideration of the *living past* through routinized reflexive observation of artifacts as memories and recapturing the borders these memories imply can be considered as the first step in the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with past.

Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World

Costanza Curro
August, 2015

Patterns of food provision and consumption have become objects of increasing concern among both scholars and activists. In the last few decades, the ways in which food is both produced and processed, networks of retail and distribution, as well as labour conditions in which these processes take place have been at the centre of a debate generally advocating “alternative” and “ethical” food models. The analysis of these movements has so far overwhelmingly focused on the forms and claims that “alternative food networks” have taken in Western advanced capitalist countries.

The present volume, edited by anthropologists Melissa Caldwell, Yuson Jung, and Jakob A. Klein, and published in 2014 by University of California Press, provides very much needed insights of meanings and dynamics of “ethical eating” in postsocialist and market socialist societies.

The discussion brought about in eight chapters focusing on Lithuania, China, Russia, Cuba, Bulgaria, and Vietnam focuses on issues such as food safety and moral economies in the framework of Europeanisation politics (ch. 1); the moral significance of food (ch. 2); alternative food networks and farmers' markets (ch. 3); certification and organic food (ch. 4); the connection between rural producers and urban consumers (ch. 5); the politics and ethics of vegetarianism (ch. 6); agroecology and sustainability (ch. 7); and food practices as civic engagement for building a "healthy" nation (ch. 8). In addition to providing a general account of the main points raised in the book, in this review I will pay specific attention to chapters dealing with post-Soviet countries – chapters 1 and 3 on Lithuania and chapter 8 on Russia – as part of my current research area. My study on Georgian hospitality, focusing on the pivotal role of food and drink in host-guest relations, has certainly gained fresh insight from the debate initiated by the book's contributors.

The detour from mainstream Western-focused accounts of "alternative food movements" to the postsocialist world is not meant only to point out differences between the latter and its Western European and North American "counterparts". Rather, the book investigates "the diversity of postsocialisms, capitalisms, and neoliberalisms that underlie these movements" (p. 12), in order to highlight the ways in which understandings of what is "ethic" – in this case in relation to food – are embedded in specific historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts. In the introduction, it is convincingly argued that, rather than by conceiving food as something ethical or unethical per se, these "alternative" ideas may be more interestingly investigated by questioning "how foods, and by extension personal food practices such as eating and sharing, come to be ethical or unethical" (p. 6), and how they are constructed and perceived as such. In this framework, notions of both "ethical" and "alternative" become contingent on the specifics from which they stem, at an individual, local, and national level.

> *"Alternative food movements" – and the ideas underpinning them – analysed through rich ethnographic details in the chapters cannot be understood as separated from experiences and memories of state socialism, which, to varying*

extents, continue to inform these societies' present.

Renata Blumberg's chapter on alternative food networks and farmers' markets in Vilnius shows how attitudes towards entrepreneurship inherited from socialism are linked to consumers' ongoing mistrust for market vendors nowadays. In Melissa Caldwell's chapter, contemporary Russians' positive feelings towards gardening are partly related to perceptions of gardens as intimate places in opposition to the lack of privacy entailed by the Soviet housing system.

While in Lithuania collective memories of Soviet times are largely negative, with a general commitment towards the European Union and a widely shared acceptance of the free market as the main economic models, communist legacies in Russia are met with more ambiguous attitudes. Referring to Cynthia Gabriel's work, Caldwell reports how several Russian people still define some industrially produced food in pejorative terms as "capitalist food", predominantly because it is not Russian.

Past legacies informing people's perception and dispositions towards food practices also refer to what socialism officially was not.

More specifically, informal networks of friends and acquaintances, which were crucial for gaining access to goods and services in perennial shortage due to Soviet institutions' inefficiencies, still seem to be pervasive of post-Soviet citizens' food practices. In her chapter "Raw Milk, Risk Politics, and Moral Economies in Europeanising Lithuania", Diana Mincyte points out that the introduction of new technologies complying with European regulations on the food sector – namely raw milk vending machines located in Lithuanian supermarkets – besides tackling food risk issues, somehow puts an end to informal economic networks which "have defined postsocialist Lithuania's dairy sector for almost two decades" (p. 25). Caldwell explains that the superior value bestowed by Russians upon ekologicheski chistoe, or "ecologically clean" food – that is, "a model of ethical consumption that draws on Russian values of a bionational citizenship that links

together citizens' bodies, civic goals, and a nationalised nature" (p. 189) – is linked to a sense of sociability and intimacy occurring when items circulate through informal networks, as opposed to food produced and distributed in anonymous and standardised ways.

Another prominent feature of "ethical eating" in postsocialist societies is the relation between "alternative food movements" and the state. Unlike in Western capitalist countries, where such movements are explicitly understood – yet in often contradictory terms – in opposition to "a dominant, capitalist agrifood system" (p. 10), in the postsocialist space the state itself has an active role in "ethical deliberations" (p. 10). Still, such roles clearly change from one country to another. In Russia, since the Soviet times, the state has vigorously promoted a lifestyle – in which diet has a prominent place – concerned "with the overall health and wellness not just of Russian citizens but of Russian society more generally" (p. 194). Such concerns have been translated not into a rejection of industrial food and genetically modified products, as for several "Western" food movements, but into resistance to food non indigenous to Russia at large.

As for Lithuania, Blumberg points out that institutional interventions, dating back to the energetic politics of decollectivisation in the 1990s, led to "an agricultural sector dominated by a large number of small-scale subsistence-oriented family farms that possessed few assets, received little state support, and could not compete with the imports entering the market through the liberalisation of trade" (p. 74). The 2004 EU integration, which introduced increasingly vertical regulations of food chains, further marginalised small-scale producers. Vilnius farmers' markets emerged in a context in which "categories such as "local" and "natural" gained new meanings and heightened importance" (p. 76). However, these "alternative food networks" are successful inasmuch as "they create places for well-established production and consumption trajectories" (p. 84). Cultural and social practices related to different times and space – such as the Soviet era, or city (non-farmer) markets – forge these new venues and the ways they are perceived by consumers in a tension between approval and scepticism. In Mincyte's case of raw milk, state interventions along with the European Union's

strict regulations of both the quality and quantity of produced and distributed food cast light on “disputed claims to authenticity, safety, and value” (p. 26). On the one hand, national institutions and European bureaucracies support regulated and standardised procedures of food production and consumption as a way of protecting the general public through the provision of safer food in a more hygienic environment. On the other hand, people resorting to informal raw milk networks equally stress their commitment to provide healthy and affordable food to their families through creative strategies and exchanges with trusted counterparts, perceived as more reliable than the industrial food sector.

Myncite’s point on such competitive ethics brings us back to the embeddedness of what is perceived, defined, and enacted as “ethical” into specific contexts. In my opinion, the greatest merit of this book is to put forward, through this idea of embedded ethics and the specific cases of postsocialist societies, a critical rethinking of state-market-citizen relations (p. 13).

> *The focus on “food movements” provided by Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World, while bringing about “alternative” models of these relations, at the same time questions the actual or (rather) fictitious separation and contrast between national and international political and economic institutions on the one hand, and these movements in Western capitalist countries on the other.*

A “universalising language of ethics” (p. 41), which assigns fixed roles and places to state, market, and citizens in their mutual relations, would obscure understandings and dynamics of food movements in so much as the latter are detached from their historical and geopolitical structures. This book is a valuable source of insight both for scholars and activists looking for more nuanced and “culturally sensitive” approaches to food and its social, political, symbolical, and practical meanings.

This post marks the third part of our special review section on *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World*. If you liked it, you should also read the first

part here and the second part here.

Caldwell, Melissa L., Klein, Jakob A. and Jung, Yuson (eds.). 2014. *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World*. Oakland: University of California Press. 232 pp. Hb: $65.00. ISBN: 9780520277403

Searching for (post-)Soviet taste

Agnese Bankovska
August, 2015

This project was inspired by a curiosity in whether people from the former Soviet states, more than two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, share similar food memories and knowledge. What better place to explore it than at the 13th European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Biennial Conference 2014 in Tallinn, Estonia, a former Soviet state itself!

The food laboratory *(Re)creating intimacy through food: searching for (post-)Soviet taste* took place on August 2nd, 2014 as a part of the experimental conference events that aimed to create different ethnographic experiences, exploring anthropological methods 'in real time'.

The (post-)Soviet taste laboratory was a staged and experimental cooking event in a student dormitory that was originally constructed during the Soviet times, albeit renovated. The menu was selected based on an informal survey among the post-Soviets on Facebook. The participants, who were of both Soviet and non-Soviet backgrounds cooked Soviet-style food and consumed it together. This took place under the guidance of two anthropologists, who had both been born in the late 1970s and grew up in the former USSR, thus tapping into the collective memory of those who had experienced Soviet cooking and creating a new memory for those who had not.

> *In the end, the Laboratory turned into a staged collage of memories and imaginaries of a food event likely during the 1980s, a time that corresponded to the childhood memories of both anthropologist-convenors.*

The participants were given freedom to decorate the room with artefacts from those times, participate in the cooking process, eat, drink and share their experiences, memories and thoughts. In the process, the participants shared intimacy through food that was captured by a professional photographer.

Laboratory convenors: Agnese Bankovska (University of Helsinki) and Karīna Vasiļevska-Das (UC Berkeley/UC San Francisco).

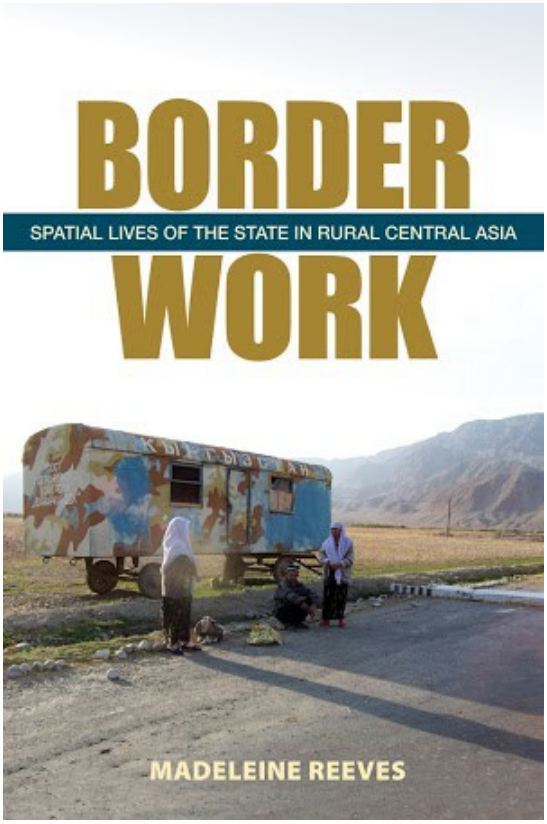
Photographer: Katrīna Ķepule

Border Work by Madeleine Reeves

Mateusz Laszczkowski
August, 2015

In contemporary political anthropology, ‘the state’ is a curious *as if* object

(Navaro-Yashin 2002). It has come to dominate the sub-discipline since the 1990s. Students of the state have continued to grapple with its intransigent ambiguity originally captured in Thomas Hobbes' image of the Leviathan: the tension between the state's apparent total reality and its only ever partial experience through particular events or practices. Thus the state remains a compelling field of study for anthropologists, despite decades of deconstruction through theory and ethnography. In recent years, one productive approach has been to study the state ethnographically in and through its margins (Das and Poole 2004) – the sites and practices where the state's presence is experienced as discontinuous and problematic. Such situations cast in sharp relief the ways the state is produced and maintained in daily life. *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* by Madeleine Reeves is an original and incisive contribution to this literature.



Clearly, international borders are one very salient kind of 'margin'. Borders are where states begin and end, on the map, but also politically and existentially, as distinct areas where particular legal, ideological, and economic regimes condition human lives. Reeves' recent book takes border studies into new territory, both literally, in the sense of a part of the world little explored so far, and figuratively, by asking empirical and theoretical questions which have rarely, if ever, been asked. While studies so far have generally focused on heavily securitised and technologically advanced borders of the central regions of the present world-system, such as the borders of the United States and the outside borders of the European Union (e.g. Romero 2008), Reeves studies borders in the remotest, arid corners of rural Central Asia – a region which has

only recently began to be charted with increased attention by anthropologists with focus on the political (cf. Reeves, Rasanayagam and Beyer (2014).

It is a region where borders criss-cross and meander, creating a jigsaw-puzzle or 'chessboard' of different state's territories. In the first two chapters of her book, Reeves charts the complex history of how this came about. Throughout the twentieth century, the Westphalian logic of borders-as-lines separating states and, presumably, ethnically distinct populations, was gradually introduced in Central Asia. Today, as a legacy of Soviet-era ethno-territorial formation, the Ferghana Valley, in particular, is divided between three states: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The pattern of meandering borders, enclaves, and exclaves means that a local road between two neighbouring towns or an irrigation canal is likely to cross international borders multiple times.

> *However, for all the abundance of borders on the map, Reeves shows how borders on the ground are works in progress. They are not simply contested – they literally materialise and dematerialise from one moment to the next.*

As Reeves' title captures, moreover, it is in every case the result of work – the work of demarcation, manning, patrolling, fixing, checking passports, placing or removing border posts, signs, and barbed wire; building or destructing roads and bridges; negotiating passage and carrying items which may rapidly shift in status between legitimate trading stock and contraband. Through an extremely fine-grained ethnography of these diverse practices – some of them mundane, some, she shows, highly charged with violence and affect – Reeves challenges the way we think about borders. She explores not only the spatiality of borders – where they run and what areas they separate – but also their temporality, borders as events: how borders are made and unmade, how they appear and disappear with distinct rhythms for specific groups of people. Moreover, Reeves studies the nitty-gritty materiality of the border. She shows how a border is not an abstract line, but an often fragile, rough-and-ready arrangement that may consist, for instance, 'of a pair of conscript soldiers with Kalashnikov rifles, a paper ledger, and a

stamp’ (p.7).

From later chapters of Reeves’ book, we learn about how these multiple borders are enacted, experienced, and produced in daily life. We are invited to follow the often arbitrarily interrupted flow of irrigation water, export apricots, and remittances – the bases of local livelihoods – across international borders. We learn about the ingeniousness of transnational labour migrants and the precariousness of the grey zones between legality and illegality, visibility and invisibility to the eyes of officials in charge of enforcing border regimes. Further, Reeves describes everyday interactions with guards at the newly-emerged borders in rural Ferghana Valley. She shows the arbitrariness with which they permit or deny passage to local residents, the danger of those encounters, but also the guards’ entanglement in criss-crossing loyalties, obligations, moral

customs, hierarchies of age and gender, and networks of economic relations.

> *Finally, Reeves studies a moment of violent intercommunal conflict which led to the bounding of state on local ground by separating a once-shared market place, separating local roads, and augmenting military presence on the border, with repercussions for the mobility of local residents – in particular women's access to healthcare.*

Reeves puts this very rich ethnographic material into critical conversation with a broad range of theory, working across numerous boundaries of a different kind: those between academic disciplines. What emerges is an original argument about the productivity of borders: a rethinking, through the prism of these particular 'margins' of the state, of how space is turned into territory, how sovereignty is produced through daily impersonations and improvisations at the border, and how state-formation is forever a work-in-progress.

Border Work is essential for anyone interested in theorising and critiquing the state and sovereignty, as well as for all students of the politics of space. It offers a set of novel, incisive arguments grounded in first-class ethnography. Finally, thanks to Reeves' light and elegant prose – the book is a page-turner. A must-read.

Subtitles to photographs by Madeleine Reeves

Header image: The Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan boundary at Ak-Sai/Vorukh in 2008. There still remains no permanent physical marker other than the signs giving the name of the village to indicate that this is the international border at the entrance

to the Vorukh enclave. However, following a deterioration in cross-border relations since the late 2000s, the road is now regularly manned by soldiers and citizens of Kyrgyzstan rarely cross into Vorukh.

1) Border market at Tojikon/Bakai in 2005. In the mid-2000s, a regular border market occurred here at the border between the Tajik village of Tojikon and the Kyrgyz village of Bakai. Many of the land parcels in this region, loaned for "long-term use" between collective farms in the 1970s, remain officially disputed between the two states.

2) Tyre-ferry across the Shahrihan say canal at Kara-Suu (Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan border, 2003). Following the dismantling of the passenger bridge across the 12-metre wide canal, informal "tyre-ferries" appeared, in which people and good could be transported across the canal to the large wholesale market on the Kyrgyz side of the border. Opportunities for cross-border movement have deteriorated considerably following inter-communal conflict in the Southern Kyrgyzstani city of Osh in the summer of 2010.

Reeves, Madeleine. 2014. *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*. Series: Culture and Society after Socialism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 312 pp. Pb: $29.95. ISBN 978-0-8014-7706-5.

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REDUX: Rethinking Refugees: Afghan Traders and Exiles in the Former Soviet Union

Magnus Marsden
August, 2015

This piece explores the activities of Afghan merchants in the former Soviet Union especially Tajikistan in Central Asia and Russia and Ukraine. It brings attention to the problems with categorising such actors either as economic migrants or refugees/exiles, and focuses instead on the combined significance of push and pull factors in shaping their patterns of mobility.

Over the past several years I have been conducting research with commodity traders of Afghan background. Between July 2012 and September 2013 I was able to pursue this research for a year long-period of intensive ethnographic fieldwork. As the security situation in Afghanistan itself wasn’t suited for long-term fieldwork, I focused my attention on the activities of Afghan traders in the contexts of the former Soviet Union, most especially in Tajikistan, a Muslim-majority republic of Central Asia, Russia, and the Ukraine. I also spent three

months in China, a country to which many Afghan diasporic traders travel to commission and purchase commodities, ranging from bags and leather goods, to children's toys and tourist souvenirs.

After the collapse of the Najibullah regime in 1992, Afghans who had worked and studied in the Soviet Union during the preceding decades quickly spotted the business opportunities available to them in the wake of the collapse of the command economy. The rise to power of a divided array of mujahidin groups in Kabul also made life in Afghanistan dangerous, especially for individuals and their families who were associated with the pro-Soviet regime. As a result, many officials from that era left Afghanistan and established themselves as commodity traders dealing in a wide range of good across the former Soviet Union. In Tajikistan for example Afghans dealt in the wholesale of Iranian and Pakistani foodstuffs and Turkish cosmetics. In the Ukraine and Russia, Afghans pioneered the import of low grade and cheap Chinese commodities, initially travelling to the city of Urumqi in China's Xinjiang province and bringing the goods back in trucks to Moscow and Kiev.

> *Today, Afghan trading communities are to be found across the whole region in capital cities and economic centres such as Kiev, Moscow, St Petersburg, and Dushanbe, as well as in smaller commercial centres like the Black Sea port of Odessa, the southern Russian cities of Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, and Stavropol, and the historic Central Asian trade node, Khujand. During my most recent visit to Ukraine in April 2014 I even met traders who had moved their commercial operations from Odessa to the Crimean city of Simferopol, now under Russian administration.*

Importantly, these communities are no longer made-up only of one-time Soviet era official-exiles. Communities of Afghan traders continue to be replenished by new

migrants and merchants fleeing war in Afghanistan, and looking for locales in which to invest the capital they have earned over the past decade of foreign intervention. It is usual for example to encounter the recently-arrived cousins of Afghan residents who have been resident in Russia. Such individuals and their families say they have chosen to move out of Afghanistan in recent years because of growing levels of insecurity. Additionally, I have met several men in Russia and Ukraine who earned money working alongside ISAF forces in Afghanistan and then left the country with a portion of the money they had earned with the hope of establishing a profitable trading venture. Not all recent Afghan migrants in the former Soviet Union come directly from Afghanistan. I have also met Afghans who now work in settings across the former Soviet Union who have travelled there from the Americas and Europe, including Canada, Holland, and the United Kingdom. They say that the former Soviet Union furnishes the possibility of earning a living through trade, and also of passing a well-lived life.

It is tempting to think of such merchants as being war profiteers, or, alternatively, of trade as being a form of economic activity that acts as a survival strategy for refugees and migrants at times of economic and political insecurity. Yet I have been struck during my fieldwork by the extent to which my informants attach positive moral value to their way of earning a living. On the one hand, as is the case of traders in other settings in South and Central Asia, they do often complain that they find being 'traders in a foreign land' a source of shame and embarrassment, and that the only reason they make a living in such a way is because of the plight their families face in Afghanistan.

> *On the other hand, however, I am often told that trading is a 'free' and therefore honourable way of earning money, and the settings of the former Soviet Union are a good place to live because their proffer the chance of 'free work': 'the best work an Afghan like me can do in London', said Seyyid, a trader in Pakistani tangerines in Khujand, Tajikistan, 'is to be a taxi driver: here in the former Soviet Union with $20,000 a man can set up some trade in one thing or another and live a free life'.*

The traders, like those across space and time, live far more complex and precarious lives than such representations suggest. For one thing, Afghans in Central Asia, as is the case with historic trading communities in Southeast Asia and Central Europe, are often vilified by local populations and political elites alike for being low status market workers who 'love money but have no idea how to live life': Afghans in Tajikistan, for instance, routinely complain that the country's police force target them for bribes, and even frame their compatriots on drug smuggling charges.

Afghan traders across the settings to which I have travelled also say that their work is being harmed both by the growing influence of multi-national companies and of national monopolies, cartels and mafias. Afghans in Tajikistan, for instance, were once major actors in the export of asafoetida from the country – today this lucrative trade has been placed in the hands of state monopoly. Such difficulties are leading many of my informants to question how far they will be able to continue to earn an independent living as commodity trades: some are moving their activities to settings they perceive as being 'good for trade', such as Odessa in the Ukraine, or the city of Yiwu in eastern China; others are seeking to acquire refugee status in Europe. In 2014, the year the foreign military intervention in Afghanistan officials draws to an end, few, however, talk of return to Afghanistan as being either a safe or economically viable option.

During the years over which I have conducted research on Afghan trading networks, both the traders themselves and the communities amongst whom they live have experienced ongoing political and economic upheaval. My initial fieldwork in Central Asia between 2006 and 2010 took place at a period of time during which many Tajikistan-based Afghans were optimistic about the future prospects for Afghanistan; indeed, Tajikistan-based Afghan traders often spoke about Afghanistan as a base to raise capital, frequently travelling to the country for example both to visit their families and to gather funds earned through renting their properties. This contrasted markedly with my experiences during three months of fieldwork in Tajikistan between October 2013 and January 2014: during those months traders discussed amongst themselves the uncertainty of Afghanistan's future of the country in 2014 (the year in which ISAF forces would official cease combat mission in the country).

> *Many also expressed to me a sense of 'hopelessness' about the fate both of Afghanistan, and of their individual life prospects.*

The changing conditions in Afghanistan had important implications for the activities of traders in Tajikistan: a rise in the number of Afghan migrants in

Tajikistan led to greater competition in the trading activities in which Afghans were involved. Furthermore, Afghanistan's worsening economy meant that men who had previously frequently used their home country as a base to raise capital complained that falling prices alongside insecurity no longer made the making of such journeys either feasible or worthwhile.

Shifts in Afghanistan's political and economic dynamics are not the only type of event over the past eight years that has affected the lives of the traders. The financial crisis of 2007-08 had significant ramifications for many if not all of the traders introduced across its pages: Afghans in Ukraine who were involved in the import of container loads of Chinese goods to the country's Black Sea ports remember 2007 as the year after which their sales declined irrevocably. Likewise, several of the shopkeepers I came to know in London found it impossible to maintain their own businesses in the years following 2007, and thus turned to other forms of work instead, especially taxi driving. The tightening of sanctions in 2010 on Iran's financial institutions also had varying implications for Afghan traders based in Central Asia: creating opportunities for some and raising the costs of trade for others. Even more recently, the ongoing political unrest and upheaval in Ukraine (anti-government protests started in Kiev in November 2013) and the concurrent decline in the value of the Hryvnia has placed even greater pressures on Afghan importers of Chinese goods. Yet some Afghans in Ukraine have sought to benefit from opening trading opportunities in this period of flux, embarking on 'marketing tours' to the Crimea (annexed by Russia in February 2014) in anticipation of growing levels of investment in the region by the Russian state.

There are a range of issues – both ethical and analytic – that inevitably come with blurring the boundary between refugee and trader in the manner that I am suggesting here. Analytically, however, doing so is more faithful to my informants'

self-understandings. It also better represents the range of forces important in understanding their mobile life trajectories. The most sophisticated of recent work on trading networks is critical of Philip Curtin's (1983) suggestion that the origins of such circulation societies lies in migration for primarily commercial motives. Many trading networks, rather, are based on mobility caused by a combination of economic and both political "push" and "pull" factors. In his study of historic Armenian merchant networks Aslanian (2014) holds for example that in the case of that network it is impossible to disentangle commercial motives for mobility from the experience of being uprooted or displaced. Aslanian's analysis of Armenian networks is helpful in thinking about Afghans in the former Soviet Union. There is no doubt that their presence in this region reflects the legacy of imperial power struggles between the Russian and British Empires, of Soviet policy, and also of the Cold War's afterlife (Kwon 2010). But at the same time commercial motives are an important element of the explanations that these men themselves give for having travelled to the *shurawi-i sabiq*.

> *As a young man aged about eighteen told me and some other Afghans in the 7-km wholesale market in Odessa, 'we came to Ukraine not to sit around in a refugee hostel and wait for a document but to make some money and becoming something'.*

Categories such as "economic migrant" and "refugee" are far too simplistic for understanding the shifting experiences and motivations of the actors who make up circulation societies or trading networks such as that I have described here. Rather than assuming that the blurring of boundaries between such analytical categories is likely to further risk the lives and livelihoods of refugees and migrants, better recognition of problematic ways in which they are used in popular discourse is ultimately more likely to refine attitudes and policy than well-intended acts of "ethnographic refusal".

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REDUX: Russian and Polar Bears Unite! A Follow-Up.

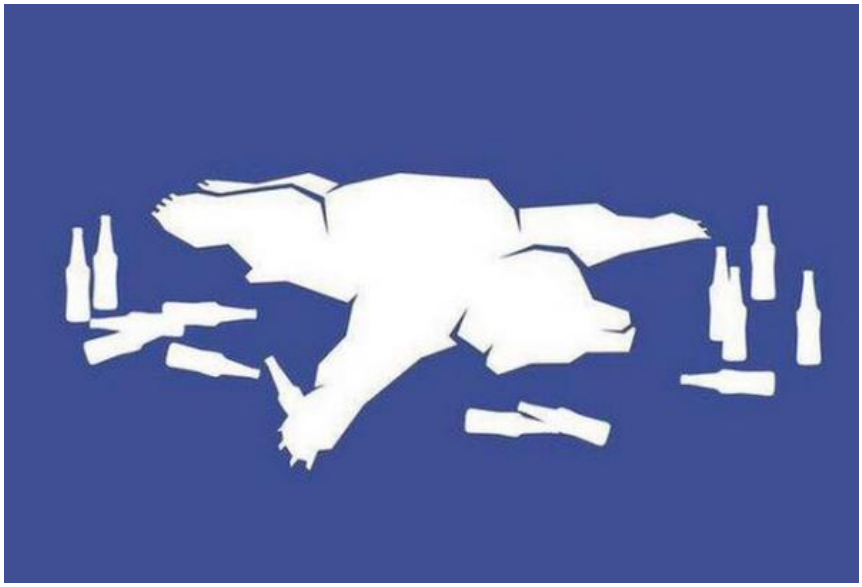
Judith Beyer
August, 2015

What is 19cm high, 20cm wide, weighs only 680grams but carries a President? Right – it's the Russian Bear!

And what is flying high into the sky? Right – the Bear, too. There is nothing he can't do – the Bear, I mean. While everyone has been concentrating on Putin, it is the bear that should interest us; that magical, charismatic hero of Russian folk tales, easily fooled by political rhetoric. It is him who is carrying the President on his back across the country (literally, if you look at the statue carefully), and who is now taking him up into the sky in the recent pictogram of Khabarovsk Airport, in Southeast Russia, close to the China border.

What is next? The moon? Oh no, been there, done that, too.

He seems increasingly, desperate, though. The Bear, not Putin. Some memes pictured him crashed, lying in a state-sponsored, vodka-induced coma.



But someone recently had a useful suggestion: Sarah Palin, ex-Governor of Alaska, who, allegedly, said "you can see Russia from my house." She has had a longstanding, complicated relationship with bears herself, summarized by The Guardian in 2008 into the question "Sarah Palin vs The Polar Bear – who will survive? It's 2015 now and both Sarah Palin and polar bears have become more endangered, but she is still "seriously interested" in running for President next year. She recently called up her fellow-countrymen to rise up against an overarching American state, shouting: "'The Man,' can only ride ya when your back is bent. So strengthen it. Then 'The Man' can't ride ya."

I think the Russian Bear should take this exhortation seriously, throw that naked President off his back, form an alliance with the Polar Bear and chase both Putin and Palin all around Little Diomede Island.

Judith Beyer is, among other things, Allegra's Reviews Editor. Follow her on Twitter.

Note: The Bear in Space-pictures are taken from Mikhailov, B. 1973. “How the Bear flew into Space”. Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR. (Б. Михайлов “Как медведь в космос летал” Изд. “Художник РСФСР”. Ленинград 1973).

INTRODUCTION: UKRAINE & RUSSIA

Allegra
August, 2015

Every once in a while we have to remind ourselves of the motto that governs Allegra’s operations: our Academic Slow Food Manifesto. What can we say –

except that there are simply so many compelling themes and fantastic scholars whose work we have been privileged to feature that taking things slow is not that easy.

Yet simultaneously we realize that the volume of our posts has grown so great that following all of them feels difficult – on occasion even for us at the editorial board. Consequently for the next two weeks we want to slow things down and re-visit a theme that has grown, sadly, increasingly compelling over the past year. We refer to the crises of the Ukraine and Russia.

Looking back it feels difficult to imagine that, indeed, this entire crises only commenced an ample year ago, as now new worrying accounts pour in on an almost weekly basis. What is going on – and just how worried about Russia should we be?

We begin our discussion by revisiting posts that appeared at allegralaboratory.net in spring 2014 – posts motivated by our desire to offer alternative insights into world events making global headlines.

Tomorrow we revisit Judith Beyer's post 'Which Constitution? What Order? Constitutional Politics in Ukraine' that was first published at Allegra in March 2014. The post considers the Ukrainian situation from the viewpoint of constitutional order, discussing how constitution-making has historically been the main legal tool (and a highly contested one) used for dealing with political transformation. As she compellingly asks: given all the amendments and new versions that have been introduced of the Ukrainian constitution, indeed, which constitutional order has been addressed in the crisis?

On Wednesday we feature Elizabeth De Luca's post 'Returning to Crimea'. Elizabeth DeLuca reflects on the status of Tatar minorities in Crimea under Russian occupation and on their long struggle for political recognition. How has the Ukrainian crises impacted this struggle?

On Thursday we revisit the post by Karoline Follis & Lidia Kuzemska 'The Euro in

‘Euromaidan’, in Hindsight’. Follis and Kuzemska discuss the vote by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2014 which condemned Russia and showed support to the new government of Ukraine by suspending the voting rights of the Russian delegation. It is difficult to see these acts as anything other than merely symbolic support, and it is from this vantage point that they revisit the significance of the ‘Euro’ in Euromaidan.

We conclude this first REDUX week into the Ukraine & Russia with post-soviet nostalgia via Daniel Gallegos’ AVMoFA entry featuring Kazakh Delights; delights that have very different connotations today than at the time when they first appeared at Allegra.

We set these two weeks off with this timeline of the Ukraine crises compiled by our very own Manager of Things & Stuff Ninnu Koskenalho. The timeline features a detailed summary of the events last spring, reminding us of just what happened in the early days of this crises.

Next week we continue be revisiting posts that focus explicitly on Russia from last fall and this spring. We hope that jointly these posts will help all of us to get a better understanding of just what is going on with this crises – and why.

However, vowing to take it slow or not, this would hardly be Allegra if there weren’t a few other surprises – reviews and what-not – forthcoming this week also. So do stay tuned in!

UKRAINE TIMELINE

In its mission to promote anthropology’s societal relavance, Allegra has launched a discussion with the insights of specialists of the region into the current

Ukrainian situation. In this mission we joined forces with a virtual roundtable with Anthropoliteia – Part 1 and Part 2. Here is a short recap of the main events is in order – just WHAT is going in with this crises, and WHEN has everything started concretely?!

With this goal in mind we have summarised the events into a timeline, starting with November 21, 2013 – summarising all the joint wisdom by the Allegra & Anthropoliteia 'Ukraine teams' and constructed with wonderful diligence by Allegra's very own Ninnu Koskenalho!

The backstory for the crisis in Ukraine begins with Russia's historical affinity with the Crimean peninsula, and with the power politics of Ukrainian leaders Viktor Yanukovych and Yulia Tymoshenko. The current crisis is seen to have begun late last year, when political decisions sparked protests that quickly grew in size. As with the Arab Spring, the iconic location of the protests is the Independence Square, Maidan Nezalezhnost, in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev

2013

November 21

President Yanukovych's cabinet abandons an agreement on closer trade ties with EU, instead seeking closer co-operation with Russia. Ukrainian MPs also reject a bill to allow Yulia Tymoshenko to leave the country. Small protests start and comparisons with the Orange Revolution begin.

November 24

Over 100,000 people gather in Kiev to protest President Yanukovych's rejection of an agreement that would strengthen trade with the European Union. Police launch first raid on protesters, arresting 35. Images of injured demonstrators raise the international profile of the protests.

November 30

The Berkut (special police unit) are instructed to violently clear the Maidan of the student protesters. Among the injured are students, bystanders, and members of the media. Tens of thousands of citizens come to the Maidan. Public support grows for pro-EU anti-government protesters as images of them bloodied by the police crackdown spread online and in the media.

December 1

The Maidan is occupied by about 300,000 protestors. The City Hall is seized by activists. An immense tent city springs up, and grows in numbers throughout December. University professors, doctors and church leaders are followed home on a regular basis by undercover Berkut or police. Some are awakened in the middle of the night by loud knocking on their door, followed by verbal threats.

December 11

A second Berkut raid in the night has people coming to the center from all over Kiev. Taxi drivers announce that all trips to Maidan will be fare-less, something they will continue to do in the future.

December 17

Russian President Vladimir Putin agrees to buy 15 billion dollars of Ukrainian debt, and to reduce the price of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine by about a third.

2014

January 1

The occupation in Maidan continues into January. A Council of the Maidan is elected and significantly avoids being dominated by the political opposition.

Maidan is taking its place as an independent social and political force.

January 16

Parliament passes restrictive anti-protest laws that made it illegal to wear helmets and block public buildings. They are quickly condemned as “draconian”, and citizens don helmets, as well anything that looks like a helmet, in defiance of the law.

In response to the Parliament’s passing the laws, protests gradually (until the 19th, when they erupt with a new force) increase. On January 17 Yanukovych signs the laws, but they are not published until a few days after, which creates a situation of uncertainty for protesters.

January 19

Following a call of Automaidan leaders, protesters peacefully march on the Parliament building in order force MPs to cancel the laws. In Hrushevskoho street, they are blocked by a Berkut cordon. Violent skirmishes start between protesters and the police; street fights in Hrushevskoho street will continue for almost a month.

January 21

On a night/early morning if Jan 21, activists Serhiy Lutsenko and Yuriy Verbytsky are kidnapped from a Kyiv hospital. Lutsenko, who is found later that day out of Kyiv, reports being detained, interrogated and tortured together with Verbytskyi by a group of unknown people.

January 22

Three protesters die after being shot with live ammunition. There are also reports of a person being thrown from the arch over the stadium, but no official report of the death. Dmytro Bulatov, activist and leader of the protest group AutoMaidan, disappears amid violent protests.

January 23

The body of Yuriy Verbytsky is found with marks of torture. Torture and physical intimidation by police targeting people coming to and from Maidan square are reported. Protesters begin storming regional government offices in western Ukraine.

Two protestors die of gunshot wounds as clashes turn deadly for the first time.

January 26

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, where Euromaidan previously had a marginal support, relatively large-scale protests against the killings of activists are violently suppressed by Berkut reportedly helped by hired thugs. Thugs ('titushky') and militias (e.g. Oplot militia in Kharkiv), allegedly commanded by the police, acted alongside Berkut to provoke unrest during the entire course of Euromaidan.

January 28

Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov resignes. Yanukovych offers the post to one of the opposition leaders, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who refuses. The parliament annuls the anti-protest law.

January 29

After a consultation with protesters at Maidan, parliamentary opposition was forced to reject the conditions and passed an amnesty bill promising to drop charges against all those arrested in unrest if protesters leave government buildings. Opposition rejects conditions.

January 31

Opposition activist Dmytro Bulatov found outside Kiev after being'detained for 8 days and tortured by unknown people in a manner consistent with kidnappings of Lutsenko and Verbytsky'

February 6
An explosive device detonates in the Trade Union House, one of the supply bases of Maidan. Two protesters are severely injured.

February 16

All 234 protesters arrested since December are released. Kiev city hall, occupied since 1 December, is abandoned by demonstrators, along with other public buildings in regions.

February 18

18 people die in clashes between Maidan and Berkut, including seven police, and hundreds more wounded. Violence begins when protesters attack police lines after the parliament stalls in passing constitutional reform to limit presidential powers. Protesters take back government buildings. Some 25,000 protesters are encircled in Independence Square.

The Opposition puts forth a bill to change back to a mixed Parliamentary/Presidential system. The Speaker of the House does not register the amendment, thus preventing it from being debated in Parliament. The Opposition question the Speaker's manoeuvre. Yanukovych calls for a truce and at the same time, for anti-terrorism measures (ie. free reign on violence) to be taken against disruptive forces.

February 19

Police fire grenades into the building where Maidan organisers were based. People die in the flames.

February 20

Kiev sees its worst day of violence for almost 70 years. At least 102 people are killed in 48 hours. Video shows uniformed snipers firing at protesters holding makeshift shields. Snipers are shooting people who cross the perimeter of the

Maidan; people are shot in the head, chest, and neck. Shots are aimed at medics as they rescue and carry out the wounded. Over 500 people are wounded.Snipers, reportedly belonging to the Ukrainian Security Service's (SBU) 'Alfa' special forces, shot at Berkut as well.

February 21

After hours of negotiations brokered by EU foreign ministers, President Yanukovych signs a compromise deal with opposition leaders. They agree upon early presidential elections and a return to the mixed Presidential/Parliamentary constitution. Maidan is sceptical. They demand Yanukovich's immediate resignation and the arrest of all those implicated in the deaths on Maidan. Yanukovych refuses to resign.

The elite Berkut police unit, blamed for deaths of protesters, is disbanded. By next morning, the entire city has been vacated by police and special forces, leaving barricades, trucks, and even food and mattresses behind.

February 22

Yanukovych disappears, and protesters take control of presidential administration buildings. Parliament, now controlled by the opposition, claims the right to rule. Parliament commences to pass laws rolling back most of the repressive measures implemented under Yanukovych. Yulia Tymoshenko is freed from jail. May 25 is set for fresh presidential elections.

Yanukovych appears on TV, stating that he was ousted by a coup d'état. Russia supports this, and regional leadership in Kharkiv and Crimea support the Russian narrative, arguing that events in Kyiv have overturned a democratically elected government.

February 23

Parliament names speaker Olexander Turchynov as interim president.

Protests between pro-Yanukovych/Russia supporters and pro-Maidan supporters erupt in Kharkiv and Crimea. The Kharkiv regional governor states that Yanukovych was too soft on the demonstrations and should have shot them all.

February 24

Ukraine's interim government draws up a warrant for Yanukovich's arrest, and the acting president warns of the dangers of separatism. Meanwhile, people continue in Maidan community organised groups to occupy Maidan.

A senior officer of the elite police unit verifies protestors' claims of the sniper activity by someone dressed in a Berkut uniform. He states that the sniper(s) were shooting at both protestors and the police and points to a "third force".

February 25

Pro-Russian Aleksey Chaly is appointed Sevastopol's de facto mayor as rallies in Crimea continue.

February 26

Crimean Tatars supporting the new Kiev administration clash with pro-Russia protesters in the region. Opposition forces negotiate a new unity government to be headed by Arseniy Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister. Members of the proposed government appear before demonstrators. Members of the cabinet are presented for approval to the people continuing to protest and stay in Maidan, prior to the formal presentation in the Parliament on the 27th.

Russian troops near border with Ukraine are put on alert and drilled for "combat readiness".

February 27

Yanukovych is granted refuge in Russia. In Simferopol, pro-Russian gunmen seize key buildings. Yanukovych issues a statement through Russian media, saying he is

still the legitimate president.

Armed men encircle the Crimean Parliament, chanting in support of Russia. The Crimean Parliament dismisses the government of the Autonomous Republic and elects Sergei Aksyonov Prime Minister. Aksyonov is the head of the small Russian Unity party and has long called for Crimea's annexation by Russia.

February 28

Armed men in unmarked combat fatigues seize Simferopol International Airport and a military airfield in Sevestopol. The interim Ukrainian government accuses Russia of aggression.

United Nations Security Council holds an emergency closed-door session to discuss the situation in Crimea. The United States warns Russia of militarily intervening in Ukraine.

Yanukovich holds a press conference in southern Russia. Speaking in Russian, he claims his status as president and says he opposes any military intervention or division of Ukraine. He accuses the interim government of a coup, and apologises to his country for failing to stabilise the situation.

Russia claims military movements in Crimea are in line with previous agreements to protect its fleet position in the Black Sea.

March 1

Pro-Russian demonstrations are held in several cities outside Crimea. Any pro-Ukrainian protesters are removed by unmarked officers. Russia supporters in the South and East are being told by Russian news sources that they will be exterminated by the Ukrainian government.

Russia's Parliament approves a request by President Vladimir Putin to use Russian forces across Ukraine. In response, Ukraine's acting President Olexander Turchynov puts his army on full alert. Putin says Moscow reserves the right to

protect its interests and those of Russian speakers in Ukraine. Russian forces take over Crimea. Armed check points are set up across the peninsula. Barack Obama tells Putin to pull forces back to bases.

March 2

Ukraine's interim Prime Minister Yatsenyuk says Russia has effectively declared war. So far, no shots are fired as Russia continues to claim they are there at the request of the rightful, democratically elected President Yanukovych to protect Russian citizens. Ukrainian troops are barricaded into their military base in a standoff with Russian troops outside of Simferopol. Kiev has ordered them not to fire the first shot. The US says Russia is in control of Crimea.

March 3

"Black Monday" on Russian stock markets as reports suggest Russia's military had issued a deadline for Ukrainian forces in Crimea to surrender. The reports are later denied. Russia's UN envoy says toppled President Yanukovych had asked the Russian president in writing for use of force.

NATO says Moscow is threatening peace and security in Europe and claims that Russia said it would not help stabilize the situation.

March 4

Putin gives his first public statement to the crisis, saying that Russia will not recognise the outcome of upcoming presidential elections in Ukraine if the current terror continues. He denies that new Russian troops were sent to Crimea. He also says that Yanukovich's political career has ended, but stands by Russian 'humanitarian intervention' in Crimea. Putin says his country reserves the right to use all means to protect its citizens in eastern Ukraine. Russian forces fire warning shots on unarmed Ukrainian soldiers marching towards an airbase in Sevastopol.

March 5

US Secretary of State John Kerry seeks to arrange a face-to-face meeting between Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers. However, Sergey Lavrov refuses to talk to his Ukrainian counterpart, Andriy Deshchytsia, and warns against Western support of what Moscow views as a Ukrainian coup, saying that could encourage government takeovers elsewhere.

Meanwhile, NATO announces a full review of its cooperation with Russia. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sends 35 unarmed military personnel to Ukraine for "providing an objective assessment of facts on the ground."

The EU freezes the assets of 18 people held responsible for misappropriating state funds in Ukraine, echoing similar actions in Switzerland and Austria. Russia suggests it will meet any sanctions imposed by Western governments with a tough response, and Putin warns that measures could incur serious mutual damage.

March 6

Crimea's parliament votes to join Russia and schedules a referendum for 16 March. Hours later, the city council of Sevastopol in Crimea announces joining Russia immediately.

Warnings and threats of sanctions have been issued by the USA, EU, Canada and others. EU leaders have frozen talks on visa-free travel with Russia and threatened asset freezes and economic sanctions if there is a stalemate or if the situation in Ukraine gets worse.

March 7

Ukraine offers talks with Russia over Crimea, but on the condition that the Kreml withdraws troops from the autonomous republic. Meanwhile, top Russian politicians meet Crimea's delegation with standing ovation and express their support for the region's aspirations of joining Russia.

Russia says it will support Crimea if the region votes to leave Ukraine. Russia's state gas company Gazprom warns Kiev that its gas supply might be cut off.

The referendum of March 16th depends on the pro-Russian support from the Crimean Tatars. The Tatar community is unanimous in its backing for the government in Kyiv and announces it will boycott any referendum on joining Russia.

In Sevestapol, journalists are reported to have been beaten by Pro-Russian groups. Armed men confiscate Associated Press equipment.

March 8

US and France warn of "new measures" against Russia if it does not withdraw its forces from Ukraine. Warning shots are fired to prevent an unarmed international military observer mission from entering Crimea. Russian forces become increasingly aggressive towards Ukrainian troops trapped in bases.

March 9

Yatsenyuk vows Ukraine would not give "an inch" of its territory to Russia during a rally celebrating 200 years since the birth of national hero and poet Taras Shevchenko as rival rallies in Sevastopol lead to violence.

Trains have been diverted from reaching Crimea. Travel is stopped and journalists attempting to enter the Crimean peninsula are stopped, searched and intimidated by unidentified men in military uniforms. There are numerous stories circulating about journalists who have gone to Crimea and are now are missing.

March 10

Armed men seize a military hospital in Simferopol.

The only legal troops on Crimean soil are the Russian army. Crimea has closed its airspace to commercial flights. NATO announces it will start reconnaissance

flights over Poland and Romania to monitor the situation in neighboring Ukraine where Russian forces have taken control of Crimea.

Russian opposition leader Mikhail Khodorkovsky speaks to students in Kyiv Polytechnic University. He says Russia is ruining its longstanding friendship with Ukraine by its aggressive and pro-separatist actions in Crimea.

March 11

The EU proposes a package of trade liberalization measures to support Ukraine's economy, offering Ukraine trade incentives worth nearly 500 million euros. Crimean regional parliament adopts a "declaration of independence". Ukrainian MPs ask the US and UK to use all measures, including military, to stop Russia's aggression.

March 12

Obama meets with Yatsenyuk at the White House in a show of support for the new Ukrainian government and declares the US would "completely reject" the Crimea referendum.

The Council of National Security and Defense of Ukraine claims Russia has deployed more than 80,000 troops close to the border. Russian Defense quickly denies this. Reporters Without Borders issues a warning that media are being targeted throughout Crimea.

Foreign diplomatic talks continue. The G–7 leaders issued a letter calling on the Russian Federation "to cease all efforts to change the status of Crimea contrary to Ukrainian law and in violation of international law." They state that they will not recognize the referendum: it will have no legal effect.

March 13

Ukraine's parliament votes to create a 60,00-strong National Guard to defend the country.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warns Moscow of potentially "massive" long-term economic and political damage. Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Czhemilev calls for a referendum boycott and NATO intervention to avert a "massacre".

Demonstrations continue, some turning violent. One demonstrator is killed, many on both sides injured.

March 14

Diplomatic efforts before the referendum fail in London, where Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meets with US counterpart John Kerry amid threats of sanctions against Russia if it annexes Crimea. Lavrov insists that "there is no need for an international structure in dealing with Russian-Ukrainian relations."

In preparation for Sunday's referendum, the residents of Crimea receive blank invitations for the referendum, which do not contain either names of the voter or polling stations or territorial district numbers.

March 15

UN Security Council members vote overwhelmingly in support of a draft resolution condemning an upcoming referendum on the future of Crimea as illegal. Russia vetoes the action and China abstains. Claims that Russian troops have landed on a strip of land in the southeast between Crimea and the mainland.

50,000 people march in central Moscow against Putin's invasion of Ukraine. People are being promised free food if they come out to vote in favour of Russian 'protection'. Two people are killed in clashes in Kharkiv.

March 16

The referendum takes place in Crimea. Official results say 97% of voters back a proposal to join Russia. The freedom of the vote is a matter of debate. The referendum is said to have offered no option that would have maintained Crimea's current status of limited autonomy from the Ukrainian government.

The turnout in Crimea was announced to a total 81.36% of the voter population. The head of the referendum commission announces that 1,250,426 people voted. Once Sevastopol is included in the total, 1,724,563 people will have voted. At the end of last year, the population of Sevastopol stood at 385,462 persons. Therefore, 123% of Sevastopol citizens voted to join Russia.

March 17

The EU and US impose travel bans and asset freezes on several officials from Russia and Ukraine over the Crimea referendum. Putin approves a decree recognizing Crimea as an independent state. Local assembly chief says Ukrainian soldiers in Crimea must switch sides or leave.

March 18

Russian President Vladimir Putin addresses parliament, defending Moscow's actions on Crimea. He denies that events in Crimea amounted to Russian aggression, saying there had been no shots fired and no casualties. Putin then then signs a bill to absorb the Crimean peninsula into the Russian Federation.

The West, China and Japan, among other nations, have refused to recognize the annexation of Crimea, stating that Russia is isolating itself.

Kiev says the conflict has reached a "military stage" after a Ukrainian soldier was shot and killed by unidentified, masked gunmen who stormed a military base in Simferopol – the first such death in the region since pro-Russian forces took over in late February. Crimea's pro-Kremlin police department says a member of the local self-defense forces was also killed in the same incident.

March 19

150 civilians break through to Ukraine's naval headquarters in Sevastopol without using violence. The pro-Russian crowd rips down the Ukrainian flag and replaces it with a Russian one.

Ukraine starts drawing up plans to withdraw its soldiers and their families from Crimea, after pro-Russian forces seized two naval bases and detained the Ukrainian navy chief in an unknown location. Ukraine also decides to leave the Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) alliance, and will ask the United Nations to declare Crimea a demilitarized zone.

OSCE is reported to decide within the next 24 hours whether they will have a monitoring mission in Ukraine. With the exception of Russia, all OSCE member countries agree to a mission of 100 experts sent to monitor the political situation in Crimea.

March 20

EU leaders gathered in Brussels condemn Russia's "annexation" of Crimea and extend the list of individuals targeted for sanctions. The US also extends sanctions.

Angela Merkel states 'the G8 doesn't exist anymore, not the summit nor the format'. The upcoming G8 meeting in Sochi has been cancelled. The UN is deploying a 34-member human rights monitoring mission to Ukraine. Britain, Sweden and East European countries are pushing for arms sales to Russia to be halted.

The government in Ukraine demands the release of the naval commander and a number of pro-Ukraine activists previously detained in Crimea. In Kiev, the parliament adopts a resolution that states that it will never recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea and will fight for the 'liberation'.

March 21

Ukrainian troops have been deployed to Ukrainian border with Russia. The European Commission produces its final verdict on the Crimean Referendum, stating that the referendum to join part of the Russian Federation is unconstitutional. Ukraine says it will never accept loss of Crimea while Moscow

signs a bill to formally annex the peninsula.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk signs the political association agreement with the EU at a summit of the bloc's leaders. This is the same agreement that Yanukovych had backed out of last November in favour of a $15 billion bail-out from Russia.

March 22

Soldiers take control of Ukrainian air base in Belbek, as Novofedorovka naval base is seized by pro-Russian activists. A journalist and Ukrainian solider reported to be injured. About 100 Ukrainian troops were forced from their Novofyodorovka base, also in Crimea. Russia seized a Ukrainian submarine.

Crimea celebrates joining Russia. In Kiev, Yatseniuk said Ukraine would need energy from the European Union to protect it from repercussions of its standoff with Moscow, on which it depends for over half its oil and gas.

The Right Sector declared as a political party. The party incorporates other nationalist groups of the Ukrainian National Assembly to support Dmitry Yarosh for elections in May 2014. The Ukrainian National Assembly, now Right Sector, shares political views with the British National Party, the National Front in France, Golden Dawn in Greece and National Democratic Party in Germany.

March 23

About 189 military sites in Crimea are now under the control of Russian troops. Obama calls an emergency G7 meeting, excluding Russia, to be held as an off-shoot to Monday's G8 nuclear security summit.

Thousands of people rallied in Maidan to march for Ukraine's territorial integrity and against Russian invasion. The crowd unveiled a huge Crimea Tatar flag blended with a Ukrainian flag. NATO's top military commander stated concern that Russia's presence in Eastern Ukraine posed a threat to Moldova's mainly Russian-speaking separatist Transdniestria region.German Defense Minister

called for greater NATO backing of the Baltic states.

An emergency meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers was held to work on new laws to stabilize the situation and reduce corruption. The three main tasks of the government now are fighting “corruption, illegal weapons and thuggery”.

March 24

Leaders of the Group of Seven nations, meeting without Russia, agree to hold their own summit this year instead of attending a planned G8 meeting, due to have taken place June 4-5, in Sochi, along the Black Sea coast from Crimea, and to suspend their participation in the G8 until Russia changes course. They warn Moscow it faces damaging economic sanctions if President Putin takes further action to destabilise Ukraine following the seizure of Crimea.

Ukrainska Pravda reported that on May 9, 2014, a new law takes effect in the Russian Federation that criminalizes public calls for violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. The law (Federal Law of the Russian Federation No 433-FZ) was approved in Russia late last year, but now will impact discussions on the status of Crimea.

March 25

Interim President Turchynov orders troops to withdraw from Crimea after Russia seized and annexed the peninsula. Turchynov tells legislators that both servicemen and their families would now be relocated to the mainland.

Prime Minister Yatsenyuk announces that a new Constitution of Ukraine will be presented to Parliament on April 15. The new constitution will include a large package of reforms. Parliament insists that with this constitutional change there must be substantial reform of local governments.

March 26

Interim President Turchynov fires the Permanent Representative of the President

in the Crimea, Sergey Kunitsyn, for ‘improper performance of duties’. Six of the Ukrainian officers kidnapped in Crimea are set free.

The World Bank forecasts that if Putin continues to escalate the situation, Russian GDP will drop by 1.8% in 2014 (compared to the 1.3% growth in 2013).

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Warm thanks to Maria Jose for editorial assistance!

Simulacrum Crimea (Anthropoliteia Virtual Roundtable PART 2)

Judith Beyer
August, 2015

Today we re-post our conversation with Judith Beyer from a joint virtual roundtable with Anthropoliteia. In her commentary, Judith answers the question: **"What has struck you the most, or been most noteworthy, about the developments in Ukraine—from EuroMaidan to Crimea—so far?"**

SIMULACRUM CRIMEA

By Judith Beyer

What I find fascinating about the specific way in which Crimea was annexed is the

eloquence with which (pro-) Russian key actors engage in 'legal talk' and their devotion to uphold 'legal form' while simply ignoring all laws they do not like. On March 16, the citizens of Crimea were given two options in a referendum: either return 'home' to Russia or reinstate the 1992 constitution of Crimea giving the peninsula greater autonomy from Ukraine – including, for example, the right to secede and join another state. There was no option offered to vote for keeping things the way they were. Two days later, President Putin stated in a speech in front of the Russian parliament that the event was "in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms". He then put forward a request for consideration of a constitutional amendment endorsing the creation of two new constituent entities within the Russian Federation: the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, "in accordance with the people's will".

There is no doubt that the referendum was unconstitutional according to Art. 73 of the Ukrainian constitution, but was it a "sham display of democracy", as Ian Berill called it in his article? I argue that what we are witnessing in the case of Crimea is not so much sham, defined as "a thing that is not what it purports to be", thus a simulation, but a simulacrum – something that can no longer be measured against an "authentic" original (Baudrillard/Deleuze). Instead of trying to assess the situation in Ukraine in reference to idealized notions of 'democracy' and 'rule of law', we are better served by looking at the recent events in Crimea as performances. It is through the staging of political and legal performances that (pro-) Russian actors tap into discourses and concepts often considered to be accomplishments of 'Western civilization', and hallmarks of Western discourse, redefining them as they go along. All the while, these actors, especially Putin himself, are holding these discourses and concepts up as a mirror to those criticizing their actions. In his March 18 address, Putin asked mockingly: "What do we hear from our colleagues in Western Europe and North America? They say we are violating norms of international law. Firstly, it's a good thing that they at least remember that there exists such a thing as international law – better late than never."

By holding up this mirror, Putin effectively forces the West into the role of

> *being the audience of its own performances, of reflecting its own attitudes. This turns our attention to the question of the intended audiences of political action. In a general sense, anthropologist Richard Bauman defined performances as "actions undertaken by someone for someone", creating "a consciousness of consciousness" (1989:48). For sociologist Erving Goffmann, the audience was equally central to the concept of performance, which he defined as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers…" (1959:1).*

There were several 'observers' present during the referendum: first of all, the citizens of Crimea. Those who decided to vote did so in polling booths with curtains arranged in the colors of the Russian flag, while melodramatic Soviet music was being played in the background. Outside the polling stations, a second group of 'observers' patrolled public places: around 12,000 soldiers of a "self-defense force" – as Putin labeled the military personnel that had entered Crimea in the preceding days – who joined pro-Russian camouflaged "illegal forces", in the terminology of Human Rights Watch. A third group were the 'international observers' recruited by a Brussels-based NGO called Eurasian Observatory for Democracy & Election who had invited mostly dubious left- and right-wing politicians from Russia and the EU to monitor the referendum. The OSCE had also received an invitation, but did not send observers, as it does not recognize Crimea as a sovereign state. A fourth group were journalists from Russian state media networks writing in English for an overseas audience, who claimed that 97% of Crimeans voted to join Russia, thereby countering reports from British or American news outlets, for example The Guardian or Al Jazeera America.

Within hours after the ballots had been counted, Russian flags were raised over public office buildings, the letters on the building of the Crimean parliament were dismantled, and the Russian army began to take over all Ukrainian military posts on the peninsula. On March 19, Russia began handing out passports to its new citizens. On March 21, it was announced that the Crimean 'self-defense forces' would enter the ranks of the Russian military. These symbolic measures served to

emphasize the transfer of state power to Russia. Russia, one could argue, arranged for the necessary 'raw material' needed for a referendum – citizens, comrades, commentators and critics – and then leaned back and watched as the play unfolded. After it had accepted the referendum and thus validated the performances in Crimea, it changed its own constitution (Art. 65, I), thereby finalizing the annexation, again via legal means.

International law might be "just paper that has lost its value long ago", as Alexei Malashenko from the Moscow Carnegie Center claimed in light of these events, but 'legal form' and 'legal talk' continue to be key in the way politics are performed in Russia. When on March 28, the UN General Assembly voted to declare the annexation of Crimea 'illegal', Russia called the decision "counterproductive", this time pointing the mirror at the Ukrainian interim government. In performance studies, it is assumed that if a performance does not match accepted conventional procedure or appropriate circumstances, it will not be 'successful'. Russia's choice of vocabulary becomes understandable when one takes into account that for the simulacrum that is the situation in Crimea 'illegality' has no semantic place since references and adherence to law(s) are arbitrary on all sides. To call something 'illegal' is therefore to miss the point; rather, what has occurred is a failure to recognize that there is no safe place from which we could passively 'observe' – and judge – the on-going performances on all sides.