

Panel List – BASEES one-day Postgraduate Workshop: Modernity
Thursday 23rd January 2014, University of Glasgow, Department for Central & East European Studies

Panel 1: ‘Transitioning’ towards a ‘modern’ Europe?

The Czech Republic and EU Accession – A Czech Dream or Consumerist Nightmare?

Sam Beaton (University of Glasgow)

For many political elites in the Postcommunist Czech Republic, the goal of accession to the European Union was regarded in the context of advancement towards a modern, democratic and Westernised state. Consumerism has often been a key feature in defining this Westernisation, and has become a hallmark of a developing modernity in the transition from authoritarian market socialism to the democratised free market. The official Yes campaign in the 2003 membership referendum subsequently regarded these changes as being overwhelmingly positive and key arguments for the Czech Republic to accede to the EU.

It is within this context that filmmakers Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda created the *Czech Dream (Český sen)* documentary, exploring both the attitudes and consequences of advertising and consumerism around the time of the referendum. In the feature, the directors orchestrate an advertising campaign for a new hypermarket, which in reality is a complete fabrication; and in doing so offer an alternative to the dominant ideas of consumerism as a desirable goal. The proposed presentation will examine the critical themes of *Český sen* in relation to the campaign for EU accession, and assess the wider implications that Klusák and Remunda’s arguments have had in Czech media discourse.

Transition, Europeanisation and Hungarian Nationalism: A Research Agenda

Kyle Taggart (Queens University, Belfast)

Contrary to expectations, the European Union’s 2004 eastward expansion did not sound the death knell of nationalism in the region; rather, it signalled its reinvention and, in some respects, reinvigoration (Fox & Vermeersch; 2010). This paper will set out a research agenda of how to explore and interpret one 2004 accession state, Hungary, and its experiences of transition and Europeanisation, which have had the unintended consequence of ushering in a period of right-wing conservatism, characterised by a pursuit of unorthodox economic policies, rapid rise of the far right (Jobbik) and euroscepticism.

I will consider the significance of the disaggregate nature of the elite driven processes of transition and Europeanisation, as well as the recent economic crisis, in exploring Hungary’s recent shift to the right, and to what extent it can be interpreted as a reaction to the EU’s ‘modern’ liberalising agenda. These factors will also aid in an exploration of whether entry into the EU has provided institutional structures and discursive legitimacy for nationalists to pursue ‘old’ agendas, many of which have recently brought the Hungarian government into direct conflict with the EU itself.

Accession has afforded Hungarian nationalists opportunities to explore, adapt, and increase their ambitions in ways which run in direct opposition to the core norms and values of the EU. It is my argument that this nationalist revival should not be viewed as mere coincidence but rather as an unintended consequence of EU enlargement, raising important questions about the 'modern' concepts of transition to market democracy and Europeanisation.

The Europeanization of Russia through media in the society of tendential Modernity

Sayfeddine Mohamed (University of Gabes)

For a very long time the history of Eastern Europe was shaped by its geographic and intellectual position between East and West, and by the hegemonic influences of occidental Europe. The popular press has labeled Russia as a "transitioning economy". The main question of this research centers on the impact of globalization and transnational media in Russia. The Europeanization of the Russian society is a complex long lasting process in a national framework with an identity shaped by a historical and geopolitical specificity. This study approaches the domestication of the news released by mass media in Russia about the world events and EU decisions. The paper emphasizes the idea that mass media in Russia stand for important ways of information diffusion about the Arab world, and, at the same time, they can shape the behavior of the Russian audience regarding Europeanization. My empirical study examines the Russian news about the Syrian crisis, broadcast in Russia Today television in the period of 2012. The research data show that the Europeanization of the Russian society through media takes place in the transition process from the tendential modernity of the Russian community, to the structural modernity of the European community.

Panel 2: 'Modern' Rights and Identities

Clash of two Modernities: Ukrainian protest movement against the governmental authorities

Alina Zubkovych (School of Advanced Studies, Slovenia)

My analysis is conducted to the most recent mass protests, which take place in Ukraine.

I'm arguing that the Ukrainian governmental authorities are the dimension of the stable Modernity with fixed authoritarian rules; they are the product of the Soviet system- the great meta-narrative or believe that if one possess power it has to be attributed through the "luxurious indicators" (helicopters, casteless e.t.c)and it has to be fixed forever. The inability to reflect the world as changing space is the main characteristic of the nowadays Ukrainian governmental elite.

From the other side, the Ukrainian protesters are the dimension of other order: of the liquid Modernity, which contains the narrative of multi-inclusion of voices, complexity, flexibility, and mobility.

On the metaphorical level, the given opposition also works: government is located and is concentrated geographically in one place- at the institution, at the building, which gives the power or allows violation. Simply putting, the President is nothing if the Verkhovna Rada disappears. The

protesters, on the opposite side, are scattered all over the country, they represent different age, class, lifestyle groups, and, hence, they are the liquid, which is more difficult to attack.

One step forward, two step back? State of LGBT rights in Montenegro

Agata Biernat (University of Nicolaus Copernicus)

While respecting LGBT rights is promoted by the UN as a universal value, this view is far from being universally accepted. Europe has emerged as a world-leader in terms of the respect for and protection of LGBT rights. Montenegro hopes to be next in line for European Union membership after Croatia, but before joining, it must demonstrate readiness to protect human rights. Although Montenegrin government (as the last in the Western Balkans) has recently passed a bill against all kinds of sexual discrimination and has increased its work in favour of sexual orientation and gender identity, notably by engaging constructively with NGOs and neighbouring countries, there is still much work to be done.

Montenegro is traditional, conservative and deeply homophobic society. Studies show that 47 per cent of the citizens have a negative attitude towards LGBT people, while almost 60 per cent consider homosexuality to be a disease. In 2010 the Montenegrin Parliament passed a non-discrimination law that includes sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination. This was one of the requirements the country had to meet for European Union membership. While these written protections are in place violence and threats against the LGBT community has not resulted in prosecutions of the perpetrators. As a result the LGBT community continues to be highly vulnerable to threats and violent attacks.

Nationality, Citizenship and Cultural Fragmentation in Latvia

Indra Mangule (University of Riga/Centre for Public Policy 'Providus')

2013 being the European year dedicated to the citizens, dialogues have been initiated between governments, civil society and academics, trying to establish what our approach to citizenship should be in the modern day Europe. However, attitude towards citizenship and nationality differs greatly across different Member States, which necessarily affects the status of the newcomers to the countries, as well as migration flow in Europe generally.

In this context, the Latvian case serves as a fascinating example of how concepts of nationality, national identity and citizenship can be seen as closely interlinked and how they, despite the presence of such modern phenomena as globalization, migration and international cooperation, can profoundly affect the everyday decision making and cultural integration of different groups residing in a shared territory.

The relationship between citizenship and nationality in Latvia is especially important - national sentiments are still very much present in the social, political and cultural life of the country, determining many of the choices made both by local residents as well as politicians. Despite the recent amendments to the Citizenship Law, now allowing dual citizenship, which may suggest a gradual change of direction in thinking, it remains to be seen how rapidly, if at all, approaches to citizenship status would change in the country.

Panel 3: Past, present & future in 'Modernity'

Hungarian folk traditions and the nation-state: a global commodity or mode of resistance?

Kirsty Kay (University of Glasgow)

With the formation of the modern nation-state during the Enlightenment, local folk traditions across Europe transformed into national symbols. In late modernity, national folk traditions are increasingly becoming leitmotifs presented on a global stage to be consumed as cultural products.

However, with the increasing fluidity of identity in the late modern period, political-cultural iconography is becoming much more individualised in the process of national identity construction. . The issue is whether folk traditions presented for neo-liberal consumption actually represent those identity markers individuals claim as their own.

Using Hungary as a case study, the presentation will assess whether those folk traditions presented at an international level actually compare to individuals' self-identity with their own national folk culture in the face of new media and more individualised forms of cultural consumption.

The issues that arise from this case study question the notion of identity within late modernity-whether there can be a consensus of a nation's collective identity regarding folk traditions, whether there is a way of presenting more multifarious expressions of national identity in a global context; or if the more individualised consumption of folk traditions is proving to be a form of resistance to the neo-liberal commodification of national cultural products.

The Romanian paradox: the obsession of modernization versus the legacy of backwardness

Ion Voicu Sucala (University of Glasgow)

The relation between Romania and Europe has been a subject of intense debates in the last two centuries. Europe has been the main reference element for the Romanian society, object of complex attitudes, from admiration and imitation to fear and rejection (Murgescu, 2010). The discrepancies between Romania and the Western countries was a subject of intense debate in the Romanian elite. The problem of modernization has been the key issue for the Romanian elites from the fourth decade of the nineteenth century until today (Tănase, 1998). This objective has been defined either in negatives terms – a liquidation of the disparities in comparison with the Western world, or in positive terms – a process of building a Western society. In spite of this objective's centrality, in the same period the gap has widened even in comparison with Central and East European countries in terms of economic and social development. The paper presents the internal and external factors that had concurred to this evolution.

"Seeking for Progress Within Neglect': Politics and development of heritage protection system in Post-Soviet Moldova'

Anastasia Felcher (IMT Institute for Advanced Studies, Lucca)

The proposed paper seeks to trace complex interplay between understanding of the nature of modernity and progress in relation to heritage within public discourse, political implication of such understanding and development of heritage protection system in nowadays Republic of Moldova.

As the vector of external politics in Moldova inclines towards European integration for already more than 9 years, it is the European Union, which is perceived as guarantor and champion of progress and modernity. Therefore, to support Moldova's urge towards this direction, European values are perceived to be a framework to be adopted by local society. Still, not many of those values are practically respected in the country, although it is claimed by majority of political actors.

One of examples of such discord is the current situation within heritage protection system within the whole country in general and the capital city of Chisinau in particular. Although careful attention to material manifestations of cultural heritage and concern for its preservation is one of the pillars of the European project, one may not see this influencing the situation in Moldova and in Chisinau, where large part of historical buildings are ruined and neglected. Transition to market-based democracy does not correlate with an understanding of value of heritage. There are multiple reasons for it, including conflicting identities, different versions of historical memory and politics of history, within which importance of heritage from Russian, Romanian, Soviet and post-Soviet periods is emphasized. Also, because of relevantly late urbanization of the capital, there are no monuments left earlier than from the beginning of 19th cent., which leads to lack of understanding of necessity of preservation of existing historical city center.

The paper seeks to show how different interpretation of modernity and progress in relation to European values may shape understanding and responses to value crisis in the times of poor economic performance, social apathy and high migration dynamics, which characterize post-Soviet Moldova.

The paper is part of my PhD dissertation on the complex aspects of heritage protection system in nowadays Eastern Europe, with the focus on Jewish cultural heritage: *"Coming to Terms with the Trauma" - Jewish Past and Management of Built Heritage in Post-Soviet Urban Environments.*