EDITORIAL

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BOOK REVIEWS - ANNOTATIONS
PERFORMING STREET MUSIC-CUM-BEGGING IN SWITZERLAND: THE NEGOTIATING AND SHIFTING OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES AMONG HUNGARIAN-SPEAKING ROMA MIGRANTS FROM SLOVAKIA

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The paper focuses on one specific example of recent temporary labour migration from Slovakia to Switzerland. It presents a case study of several Hungarian-speaking Roma from the south-east Slovakian borderlands. In Geneva, these predominantly male migrants manage to get a living by performing music-cum-begging on the streets of the city. Although hardly any of these Roma would call themselves ‘professional musicians,’ by performing street music they manage to get by and send remittances back to their relatives in Slovakia. An important underlying assumption of their tactics is the popular representation of the ‘Gypsies as authentic bohemian musicians.’ I will look at ideas and ideologies concerning ‘authenticity’ in relation to the kinds of tropes and performances employed by the Roma themselves.

Keywords: migration, performance, social categories, modes of belonging, identification, ideologies of authenticity, Roma/Gypsies

‘DEVUSHKA’AND CIGARETTE: FLUID MIGRANTS ACROSS THE EU BORDER

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This article explores the relationship between cross-border migration, identity of moving objects, changes in their ontology and political practice. Via the ethnography of transborder migration between Poland and Belarus I pursue how both state borders/borders of the EU and migrants are performed and enacted. Methodologically, I use actor-network theory as it has been modified by the work of John Law, Annemarie Mol, and Susan Star with James Griesemer. Migrations of devushka (a generalization of local transborder petty traders) and cigarettes (representing the commodities most in evidence in the borderland) across the external EU border illustrate the character and power of social networks, which are the very source of identity. From this I develop the discussion of boundary objects, incoherent practices and fluidity in actor-network theory. Analytically, I argue that studying human and non-human migrants as boundary objects reveals how border procedure constructs and makes intelligible a particular relationship between politics, experience and practice at the external EU border. Treating petty traders and transferred commodities as ‘methodologically one object’ therefore has important analytical consequences for how we understand their practical efficacy.

Keywords: Europeanization, territoriality, actor-network theory, the EU external border, Poland, Belarus

COMMUNICATION IN THE ASYLUM COURTS: LIMITS OF INQUIRY

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This text offers an inquiry into communication amongst people present at asylum court public hearings: judges, representatives of the Immigration Bureau, legal representatives, asylum applicants, interpreters, witnesses, public. I focus on how the performance of court attendees is determined by the setting in time and space, by the bureaucratic methods of inquiry and by institutional and personal notions of justice. Communication in the courtroom is presented as a manifold process of interpretation to and from: diverse cultures, diverse languages, diverse social statuses, diverse legal positions. I argue that the current ways of inquiry unnecessarily limit both sides: investigators and asylum
applicants. Cross-examination provides insufficient information to the people in charge of the lives of asylum applicants. Moreover the format of the questions that is derived purely from legal justifications is partial and might be interculturally insensitive. Definitions of applicants’ trustworthiness and verification of evidence also vary significantly amongst asylum applicants, lawyers and social scientists. In order to understand such processes of legitimacy, participant observation and ethnographic interviews with different court attendees were made between the years 2006 and 2008 at the appeals courts, the Immigration Bureau and in refugee camps in Slovakia.

*Keywords*: social communication, asylum courts, representations of justice, methods of inquiry

**TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE USE OF THE CONCEPT OF THE TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD AS AN ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK**

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The aim of this study is to draw attention to transnationalism – a new conceptualisation of migration, which is based on the assumption that migrants do not inevitably exchange their old homes for new ones, but often create active social fields between their country of origin and the country to which they have migrated. Resulting from the everyday transnational practices of migrants, a social field is emerging that connects the social space of two nation-states. The author points to the fact that the world of migrants’ lives is formed neither by the original home nor the new home, but by the transnational social field. Thus immigrants are active subjects, so it is not essential to incorporate/integrate them into the majority society, and the process of incorporation and integration is thus not determined by the host country, since migrants participate in both countries concurrently. The author states in conclusion that the more transnational the immigrants are, hence the greater the intensity of their transnational activity, the less necessary it is to incorporate them into the host society.

*Keywords*: migration, migrants, transnationalism, transnational social field