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Postsocialist Societies: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union

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During the twentieth century, anthropologists generated a vast literature on "the penetration of capitalism," including work as varied as the Manchester School, economic anthropology in the modernization paradigm, critical political economy and the modes of production debate, and work on rural transformation, migration, and urbanization. This literature largely addressed the constitution and expansion of a particular form of political economy worldwide, documenting how that happened, forms of resistance to it, the place of gender, class, and race in it, and so forth. But never before did the discipline face the *de*constitution of a particular form of political economy worldwide and its opening to the penetration of capitalism on such a mammoth a scale as in the former Soviet bloc after 1989. This area thus rejuvenates the study of capitalist expansion with a new twist because, as we argue below, it is a different form of capitalism from that investigated in decolonizing Africa or modernizing Latin America. The different dynamics of this new capitalist expansion mean that research in postsocialist societies has special contributions to make to anthropologies of the contemporary world.

We consider our object to be those countries that had been dominated by Communist parties and "command economies" with socialized property forms, but that after 1989–1991 saw these forms decentralized and pluralized. Our definition centers on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (henceforth, EE/FSU) and excludes Scandinavian social-welfare societies, Cuba, and Asian socialisms such as China and Vietnam (where Communist parties continued to govern despite extensive reforms of the economy), as well as African societies such as Tanzania (which did not build socialisms on the Soviet model). Our observations might well apply to some of those cases, but we will not consider the anthropological literature concerning them. These simplifications enable us to write about "postsocialist societies" in a manner comparable to the other

regions treated in this handbook, defined in a more standard geographical way (see, however, our thoughts on future directions, below).

In contrast to much anthropology elsewhere in the world, where the legacy of Western colonialism colored knowledge claims, in our area the pursuit of knowledge was framed by the Cold War. The conditions for the development of a Western-style anthropology of socialism were breaches in the U.S.–Soviet superpower stand-off that enabled anthropologists to conduct fieldwork "behind the Iron Curtain." Stalin's expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948 was the first such breach; the emergence of détente late in the 1960s produced a second, propelling a few scholars into the area during the 1970s and more in the 1980s.[1] Except for Caroline Humphrey's path-breaking ethnography of Soviet Buryatiya (1983), however, Western ethnographic research in the Soviet Union remained minimal. The Cold War helped ensure that much of the research done in this period was relatively isolated from the ethnography of other world areas and largely governed by a political-economy or world-system approach. In 1991, Verdery published a widely cited theoretical model for the analysis of socialist societies, which identified areas of tension in the political economy of socialism that would inform both the system's collapse and its aftermath (see also Verdery 1996). This model influenced subsequent scholarship in the EE/FSU and elsewhere, helping to set the stage for the impact of anthropologies of postsocialism on the discipline more broadly.

The influence of postsocialist ethnography on anthropology began to be felt only after 1989, as large numbers of anthropologists initiated fieldwork in the region and their choice of topics and theoretical inclinations diversified rapidly. Moreover, "postsocialist studies" joined postcolonial studies in standing not just for a temporal designation, but also for an arena for critical reflection on the categories of Western capitalist societies, that quintessential task of contemporary anthropology. In the present chapter, we briefly point to some of the main themes in anthropological work in postsocialist societies, then focus on three areas of research that are relevant outside regional boundaries and *should*, in our view, be influential in anthropology: religion, consumption, and the postsocialist critique of Western forms and projects. Throughout, we hope to indicate how the transformation of socialism is also becoming a transformation of "the West." Energizing this goal is our belief that with the end of the Cold War, the divisions into First, Second, and Third Worlds should be collapsed into a single analytical field, with processes and literatures no longer ghettoized in Worlds (see below, and Chari and Verdery 2009).

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF POSTSOCIALIST ANTHROPOLOGY

With the collapse of Communist-party rule in 1989–1991, some scholars already in the field turned their projects productively in new directions (e.g., Bringa 1995; Ries 1997; Berdahl 1999); others formulated new projects specific to postsocialism (e.g., Petryna 2002; Verdery 2003; Dunn 2004; Rivkin-Fish 2005; Yurchak 2006).[2] Unifying much of this early work was a challenge to mainstream "transitology," literature based on area studies concerning the presumed transition of socialist societies to Western-style,

capitalist democracies with market economies and private property. Many anthropologists saw their task as responding to the oversimplifications and distortions inherent in a literature dominated by political science and economics, which usually presumed Western-capitalist and liberal-democratic forms as normal or even natural (exemplary works include Hayden 1992; Creed 1995; Lemon 1998; Dunn 2004).

Contributing to this larger critical project, the anthropology of postsocialism took on a diverse array of topics, many of which concerned the effects of neoliberalization (a term referring to the form of economic globalization that occurred during and after the 1990s). Popular themes included "civil society" building and the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (e.g., Sampson 1996; Hemment 2007); changing notions of citizenship (Petryna 2002; Phillips 2008); privatization and property restitution (Creed 1995, 1998; Verdery 2003; Dunn 2004); consumption (Patico 2008; Fehérváry 2009; Berdahl 2010); market formation (Hann 1992; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Collier 2005; Rogers 2005); foreign aid (Creed and Wedel 1997; Wedel 1998); environmental politics (Cellarius 2004; Harper 2006; Gille 2007); changing welfare policies (Caldwell 2004; Kideckel 2008; Höjdestrand 2009); "corruption" and "mafia" (Ledeneva 1998; Humphrey 2002: Chap. 6; Krastev 2004); and the globalization of "standards" (Dunn 2005, 2008). For those East European countries brought into the EU, the theme of "EUropeanization" cross-cut a number of those topics (Dunn 2003; Pridham 2009). Much of the above work spelled out how the organization of socialism shaped the postsocialist period in ways that made neoliberalization in the EE/FSU substantially different from globalization elsewhere.

Among other important topics addressed were nationalism and identity, including the breakup of states such as Yugoslavia and the recasting of identities more broadly (Hayden 1992, 1996; Berdahl 1999; Lemon 2000; Brown 2003; Oushakine 2009). Beginning late in the 1980s, increasing numbers of anthropologists worked on issues of identity and transformation among indigenous people in the Soviet territories (Balzer 1999; Anderson 2000; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003; Vitebsky 2005); also touching on identity were numerous monographs centered on memory, history, and place (Ballinger 2003; Kaneff 2004; Uehling 2004; Paxson 2005; Richardson 2008). Grant's (2009) imaginative cultural history of sovereignty, empire, and kidnapping in Russia and the Caucasus was a refreshing step back from the urgency of postsocialism's transformations of daily life, explored in so many studies. Research on gender identities and gender politics produced several useful works (Hemment 2007; Phillips 2008) as well as Gal and Kligman's (2000) tour de force, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*, which argued for the centrality of gender not only to the transition from socialism but in other transforming societies as well. Increasing interest in media studies worldwide also had its reflection in postsocialist writing (Mandel 2002; Boyer 2005; Matza 2009; Boyer and Yurchak 2010), as did work on health, healing, and the occult (Petryna 2002; Rivkin-Fish 2005; Lindquist 2006; Kideckel 2007). A final area worth mention is reconsiderations of the socialist and even presocialist periods, including Yurchak's (2006) ambitious attempt to use a linguistic model to explain the primary conditions for the collapse of the Soviet

system, Kligman's (1998) work on reproductive politics in Ceauşescu's Romania, and Rogers's (2009) effort to place post-Soviet changes in religion and political economy in a Russian town in the context of three centuries of transforming ethical practice.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

Religion

Beginning late in the 1980s, religious practitioners throughout the EE/FSU sought to claim public and influential roles following decades of atheist propaganda and secularization from above.[3] Protestant evangelization drives met not only the "indigenous" religions familiar in the anthropology of European colonial encounters, but another well-established branch of Christianity: the family of self-governing Eastern Orthodox Churches. Familiar characters and topics in the anthropology of religion, from shamans and magic to Christian evangelicals and religious conversion, thus assumed somewhat unfamiliar shapes in postsocialist contexts. This range of similarities and differences allowed the study of religion there to engage the broader anthropology of religion on new terms and aid in the reformulation of some of its guiding theoretical assumptions.

As with the other topics we explore here, we understand the socialist past to have set important conditions, albeit variably, for religious transformation in the postsocialist present. Although all socialist societies experienced periodic efforts to stamp out religion as part of a broader march toward noncapitalist modernity, both antireligious campaigns and religious practice varied a great deal from place to place and from epoch to epoch. Polish Catholicism, for instance, remained comparatively vibrant and figured significantly in the Solidarity movement, while many practitioners of shamanism in Siberia understood themselves to have retained very little usable religious knowledge as they entered the post-Soviet period.

For all of this diversity, however, some notable themes are discernible across the region. Religion at the level of everyday practice was often feminized, geriatrized, and, in Tamara Dragadze's (1993) useful phrasing, "domesticated." That is, as public religious spaces were closed or brought under tight surveillance and as trained specialists became less numerous and more politically suspect, religious practice slipped into homes, where elderly women often occupied positions of power and supervised the rites and practices of intergenerational social reproduction. In some instances, these shifts in religious practice can be attributed to successful antireligious campaigns, lectures, schooling, and an environment generally hostile to religion. In many cases, however, socialist transformations of religion appear the result less of effective state-sponsored secularization drives than of the broader workings of socialist political economy, such as the heavy demands on both male and female labor outside the home (in both planned and informal economies).

At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, religion entered into attempts to shore up the often-faltering legitimacy of socialist states. In cases throughout the EE/FSU, we find these states tolerating and encouraging religious practices, commonly when their

own claims to authority were inadequate or under threat. Religion often crept back into state-sponsored socialist ideologies through the back door of national ideology or by offering vocabularies that diverted, supplemented, or challenged the new world of meaning that socialist governments strove to create for their citizens. Gail Kligman's (1988) study of Romanian peasant symbolic and ritual practice, for instance, concluded with a subtle analysis of the regime's attempt to win legitimacy among its population by glorifying and encouraging peasant traditions, many of which happened to be religious ones embedded in life-cycle rituals. In *Karl Marx Collective*, Caroline Humphrey (1983: 417) described 1970s Buryat shamanism, presenting shamans as the "bricoleurs of the Soviet world" who pieced together moments of meaning in the gaps between ideology and practice in a socialist system that "provide[d] no locus for reflection on itself."

With the end of socialism, religion rapidly emerged as a key front in the remaking of new political and economic orders and the refashioning of moralities, personhood, and meaning. Early studies documented the ways in which postsocialist citizens across the region turned to religion as a new way to claim their own identities and classify the identities of others. Religion rapidly intersected with shifting patterns of consumption, as a "market for souls" grew alongside markets for unfamiliar goods and services and as rituals suddenly became very expensive. Indeed, religious language permeated economic transactions of all sorts, from Romanian pyramid schemes (Verdery 1996) to urban Russians' assessments of value and risk in street-corner transactions (Lindquist 2000). Once-feminized religious domains were rapidly re-masculinized, and medicine and healing quickly became arenas where new religious practices proliferated, along with older ones that had been infused with new meaning.

Official condemnations of religious belief and practice in the socialist period often made the postsocialist embrace of religion a way to distance oneself from a discredited past. In some cases, assertively turning to religion was a useful way for former Communist officials to "launder" their reputations and continue to position themselves at the head of local, regional, and national politics. Likewise, sponsoring the reconstruction of a church or other religious building was a particularly effective means for new elites to cleanse ill-gotten profits and tamp down resentment about emerging social inequality. At the level of political ideologies, the link between religion and national ideologies was no longer routed through the back door of peasant tradition. Indeed, in many cases it took over the house, as in the nationalist mobilizations during the wars of Yugoslav succession or, less violently, in attempts by the Russian Orthodox Church to keep missionaries out through laws regulating the registration of nonnative religious organizations.

Although many of these studies applied insights from the broader anthropology of religion in their efforts to understand postsocialist transformations, a few studies also spoke back to this larger, transregional scholarship. To illustrate how the anthropology of a relatively "new" region can help to reformulate conversations within the discipline more widely, we highlight one area in which the anthropology of religion can benefit from postsocialist anthropology: the study of personhood and subjectivity in the context of Christian conversion.[4]

As the anthropology of religion shifted its focus from so-called primitive religions to power-laden encounters between colonizers and colonized, religious conversion in the context of capitalist expansion became an important topic. Conversion to Protestantism or Roman Catholicism, several landmark studies have shown (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Keane 2007), was a key element of colonialism throughout the European and American empires; it was a central means for fashioning new kinds of persons and locating them in proletarianized labor forces, in the expanding flow of commodities, and in understandings of modernity. Seemingly analogous transformations occurred in the EE/FSU after 1989, especially as Protestant Christianities, both native and imported from the West, intersected with new market realities. Among Ukrainian Baptists, for instance, being "born again" became crucial in fashioning new moral individuals and communities suited for life in a specifically postsocialist world, especially by providing social services to the newly impoverished, and salvation in the next world to the rest (Wanner 2007). As the Africanist J.D.Y. Peel (2009) suggested in a commentary on postsocialist conversion, the adaptability of Pentecostalism to multiple circumstances and its appeal at times of social rupture are key to its popularity in both postcolonial and postsocialist circumstances and to its continued emergence as a truly global religion for a neoliberal age (see also Wanner 2009).

Not all religious transformations in the postsocialist EE/FSU involved forms of global or local Protestantism. Indeed, Protestant groups often found themselves on the defensive in the face of a resurgent Eastern Orthodox Christianity that benefited from national mobilization. Although no less caught up in economic and political transformations than were conversions to Protestantism across the region, rediscoveries of and conversions to variants of Eastern Christianity differed from Protestant conversion. Rogers (2009), for instance, interprets what appear to be disjunctive conversions among groups of Russian Old Believers (a conservative offshoot of Russian Orthodoxy) on a privatizing state farm as primarily experiences of Christian continuity. This is in sharp contrast to the sense of radical rupture with the past that Joel Robbins (2007), working from Protestant examples, has suggested for Christianity as a general cultural form. Along similar lines, many Christian transformations in the postsocialist EE/FSU do not bear the marks of individualization and modern Western subjectivity that Protestantism once exported to the European colonies. Instead, they are shaped by distinctively Eastern Orthodox practices of selfhood and divinity, discipline and charity, and prayer and confession (Hann and Goltz 2010). As anthropologists of Greece (e.g., Herzfeld 2004) have also insisted, models of religious and cultural transformation drawn from the Christian West are often poor guidelines for the Christian East. The postsocialist EE/FSU therefore offers excellent material with which to reformulate assumptions about Christianity, and religion more broadly, generated in other regions and at other times.

Consumption

By the early 1980s, work on consumption (along with related concepts such as desire) became a major industry in social-science writing (see Colloredo-Mansfeld, Chap. 15).[5]

It emerged together with scholarship on changes in the nature of contemporary capitalism under such rubrics as "flexible accumulation/specialization," which accorded consumption new prominence relative to production. That is, in our view the scholarly interest in consumption reflects a new phase of capitalism, one shaped in part by the disintegration of the socialist system that had defined alternative modalities of consumption and shielded hundreds of millions of consumers from capitalist circuits. Whereas earlier work on capitalist expansion and colonialism in anthropology had emphasized production (e.g., the "modes of production" controversy), researchers now became interested in mass consumption, the "social life of things," theories of shopping, and materiality. Because nowhere was consumption expanding at a faster pace in the 1990s, we see postsocialist societies as privileged spaces for exploring the place of consumption in this new phase of capitalism.

Neoliberal ideologies view persons not as producers in a community but as consumers in global markets. For ethnographers in the EE/FSU after 1989, changing consumption patterns associated with this new phase of capitalist expansion were immediately visible and often remarked. After decades of struggling (in socialism's legendary queues) to acquire goods of mediocre quality and appeal, people could now buy all manner of products from the West and elsewhere, if only they had the money. Numerous Western media explained the collapse of socialism precisely by its inability to provide adequately for consumer needs. Anthropologists vigorously challenged that interpretation (e.g., Verdery 1996; Fehérváry 2009) and produced a wealth of scholarship on postsocialist consumption, emphasizing such topics as the acquisition of consumer "fluency," the connection of consumption with new notions of citizenship, and the creation of new niche markets, consumer identities, and forms of personhood. Although a number of these themes overlapped with studies of consumption elsewhere, the postsocialist context gave them a very different valence. It was not just that postsocialist inflation and uncertainty obviated long-term planning and dictated converting savings into goods (particularly durables) regardless of need, lest the savings vanish. More important were the meanings that infused these goods: postsocialist transformations introduced Western goods and consumer practices, but they entailed meanings not customarily found in Western contexts. We focus on the peculiarities of consumption in socialism, the distinctive politicization of postsocialist consumption practices, and some identity dilemmas specific to the postsocialist situation.

First, postsocialist consumer practices differed from capitalist consumerism because they emerged from the shortage economies of socialism. Relentlessly productionist, socialism represented production as the foundation of wealth, morality, and worth, with commerce and consumption presented as decidedly secondary bourgeois preoccupations. The regimes considered consumption a collective good rather than an individual entitlement and heavily subsidized access to *cultural* consumption. At the same time, however, consumer goods were often unavailable and of dubious quality (though this varied over both space and time); consumption involved *work*, often of epic proportions, that required long hours and a great deal of social capital. This was the case even in

late socialism, when legitimation through improved standards of living assumed higher priority. As Fehérváry (2009: 429) has argued, alienated appropriation of products remained the norm: "Emblematic goods of state-socialist production . . . came to be seen as evidence of . . . the regime's negligent and even 'inhumane' treatment of its citizens." Even before 1989, that is, consumption practices were vehicles for political opposition based on accusations that the Party-state failed to "deliver the goods." They would retain this accusatory potential long after the fall of socialism.

Postsocialist consumers emerged from this context into the chaos of regime change, hyperinflation, macroeconomic stabilization, and massive uncertainty. Because consumption is a daily activity, Shevchenko (2009) observes, it became a common vantage point for assessing "the transition." Consumption narratives contrasted post-1989 experiences with those of before, with ambivalent results. East Germans, at first mesmerized by the array of West German products, experienced themselves as incompetent consumers; for example, Berdahl (2010: 38) quoted a friend's reaction to a bakery clerk: "Now she probably knows I'm an Ossi [East German]. I didn't know what that bread was called." Russians rehearsed their senses of vulnerability through their concern with deceptive marketing and fears that Westerners would send them poor-quality goods, since Russia was no longer a great power. These distressing experiences came together with the rather different politicization of consumption in capitalism, which presents access to consumer goods as part of democracy and freedom, seeing choice in both arenas as a fundamental individual right. Thus, postsocialist consumption became a prime site for political commentary. One sees this clearly in the often-repeated idea of "normal": of people just wanting to live a "normal" life with access to goods indexing a healthier and more efficient political and economic system, where one could live normally after the consumer aberrations of the socialist period. Such notions naturalized a consuming subject, but did so from a very different vantage point compared with consumption ideas in other parts of the world.

In this context, the shaping of identities and belonging through consumption, a major theme in other literatures on the topic, took on specific forms. First, concerning the creation of meaningful group identities and belonging, the disruption of socialist-era collectivities put the definition of community up for grabs. New nationalisms were one option and consumption-based identifications were another, but both would be mediated through the socialist experience. As time passed and some people acquired phenomenal wealth displayed through consumption (one thinks particularly of the fabled "New Russians"), others criticized those identifications in the light of socialist ideas about equality. When Serbian political activists represented belonging in terms of consumption styles that referenced socialism, for instance, the message took on a specific political edge: "representation [was] depoliticized using a socialist cosmology combined with consumption . . . [which constituted] a call for the depoliticization of everyday life under highly contentious conditions of a fragmenting democracy" (Greenberg 2006: 195, 198). For postsocialist societies, then, arguments about the connection between consumption and citizenship must take socialism into account (see Berdahl 2010: Chap. 6).

Second, concerning more individualized identities, the degree of postsocialist dislocation and the absence of reliable institutional mechanisms for addressing it tended to make consumption a privileged site for constructing personhood and notions of competent selves. As once-doxic systems of status and reward were overthrown, ruptures with the past necessitated linking senses of self across the socialist–postsocialist divide. Consumption was good for this purpose. For example, amid the flood of new objects, items acquired through heroic exertion under socialism or in the fraught years thereafter could not simply be tossed out. Old objects, redolent with personal histories, would be retired but kept; besides, one never knew whether the new washer would break and the old one be needed again. Indeed, the consumption habitus of the socialist period proved surprisingly persistent in the encounter with unfamiliar consumption patterns. In illustration, Shevchenko (2009: 89) quotes a Siberian family who bought an expensive new refrigerator, put the old one in the bedroom, and continued to hang food out the windows: "Why overuse the fridge when we have the windows?"

More generally, initial infatuation with Western goods gave way to nostalgic quests for older ones and prideful loyalty to old socialist-era brands (East German Spee or Romanian Dero detergents, Trabant or Fica cars, etc.), along with a preference for (cheaper) things made at home rather than imported. Consumption, Shevchenko (2009: 107) concludes, "provided a way of articulating one's position vis-à-vis the succession of political regimes, inscribing one's past and present into a coherent narrative and thus creating a meaningful story of one's life." Such reactions to the devaluing of one's "own" products are not typical stories of consumption in the global market; their socialist histories lead us to Mauss, Melanesian ethnography, and actor-network theory more readily than to theories of mass consumption based in the Western capitalist heartland.

These thoughts on postsocialist consumption suggest two final generalizations. One concerns possibilities for modeling: not modes of production, but modes of consumption. Socialist societies participated in a characteristic mode of consumption, considered a collective rather than an individual good that involved specific skills requiring social, not economic, capital; markets mediated neither appropriation of objects nor identity formation. These and other features distinguish it from the mode of consumption characteristic of contemporary capitalism and suggest possible hybrid modes we would not likely consider if capitalist consumerism were our starting point. A second generalization concerns the relation of macro-structures and micro-practices. The collapse of socialism massively disrupted accustomed structures and institutions, privileging micro-practices and thereby creating space for the latter to produce autonomous effects. In such circumstances, consumption as basic practical activity acquires great theoretical importance, an insight we could explore in other contexts of societal disruption. The relatively unified model of political economy underlying socialist societies, the extraordinary magnitude of socialism's collapse, the numbers of people affected by it, and the patterned diversity of their efforts to regroup—all give these processes a clarity we might not grasp in other settings.

Critiques of Western Forms, Categories, and Projects

In an inventive commentary on postsocialist media, Boyer and Yurchak observe increasing similarities between a certain parodic style from late socialism and a new style in U.S. media, most evident in *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. One of their observations sets the agenda for our final example of the broader utility of postsocialist studies. They write (paraphrasing an East German respondent), "knowing socialism teaches you not so much to recognize the liberties of Western civil life but, rather, to pay greater attention to the West's internal tensions, crisis points and to its own tendency toward overformalization" (Boyer and Yurchak 2010: 181).

After 1989, the former Soviet bloc was overrun with Western "experts," both invited and not, whose job was to make postsocialist societies more like the West, with more democracy, more private property, more market transactions, more rule of law, more religious freedom, and so on. These intended transfers of Western "technology" rarely accomplished the goals their designers had in mind, but they almost always had the unintended effect of enabling observers to see more clearly the defects and contingencies of the model being transferred. Thus, postsocialist anthropology, in a manner distinct from postcolonial studies and development studies but from a similar impetus, became a basis for the critique of Western forms and categories. We illustrate this claim with two brief examples, focused on a range of institution-building efforts and shifting regimes of property and value.

The postsocialist period in the EE/FSU coincided with anthropologists' increasing interest in studying bureaucracies, states, and other powerful institutions as important vectors for reconfiguring power relationships and subjectivities. Transformations of these institutions were all-encompassing in the former Soviet bloc in the 1990s; they usually involved both decoupling the state apparatus from the Communist Party and simultaneously designing new, allegedly more democratic institutions fashioned with Western assistance. In addition to the sheer scale of these projects, the backdrop of noncooperation and noncommunication during the Cold War meant that anthropologists were often in a position to track the earliest encounters between Western and former-socialist experts as they sought to build new state agencies, NGOs, and other bureaucratic institutions. The result is a rich ethnographic literature on the fate of Western projects directed at postsocialist contexts.

Kimberly Coles (2007), for instance, studied the international aid workers who arrived in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina to set up democratic elections. In contrast to the presumptions of so much Western political theory projected Eastward, Coles shows that building "a democracy" is, in fact, a process fraught with contingencies and dependent on shifting, politicized notions of what counts as a "free" election and proper democratic participation. Jessica Greenberg (2010) takes this type of argument one step further, showing that "voter apathy" in 2000s Serbia indicated the failure not of democratic institution-building but of some key concepts in Western social science (such as Robert Putnam's vaunted social capital; Putnam 1993, 2000) to comprehend

postsocialist, postwar Serbian political subjectivities. An analogous point informs Michele Rivkin-Fish's (2005) nuanced study of the World Heath Organization's (WHO) efforts to improve women's maternity care in St. Petersburg hospitals. The WHO projects she traces were unable to anticipate or incorporate the critiques of Russian doctors and patients, critiques partly rooted in socialist-era expectations about personhood, morality, and medical expertise. Some of the processes revealed in these examples, in which projects begun as "technology transfer" turned into new critiques of Western categories, appear in particularly fine detail in Julie Hemment's (2007) "Participatory Action Research" on women's NGOs in Russia. Hemment traces the postsocialist history of her own collaborative feminist activism in Tver, Russia, and her Russian activist friends' reciprocal visits to Massachusetts. In the course of tracing these movements and friendships, Hemment disturbs common Western expectations about civil society, NGOs, and what it means to be a feminist and an activist on both sides of the former Iron Curtain.

A particularly thorough-going set of postsocialist transformations that are intimately caught up in the critique of Western forms and projects occurred in the realm of property. On the assumption that socialism had amounted to a "property vacuum," early privatization programs began delivering property rights into the hands of individuals and firms, heedless of the specificities of socialist property forms. Privatization proved everywhere to be a nightmare, raising unanticipated difficulties that prolonged the process. Verdery's (2003) study of property restitution in Romania revealed the limitations (which had serious consequences for postsocialism's rural populations) of thinking of property only in terms of "rights" when external conditions precluded exercising those rights effectively (see also Humphrey 1998).

Verdery's work, along with Dunn's (2004), set the standard for thinking about property in the EE/FSU, while also throwing other upheavals in value and ownership into unexpected light, among them the global financial crisis of 2008. A major problem with privatization in the EE/FSU was the question of who actually owned the assets held in state ownership—a problem echoed in the bundling and slicing of mortgage securities on Wall Street, which obscured who the owners were: the banks? the holders of securities? the insurance companies? Similarly, EE/FSU privatizations foundered on the impossibility of valuing firms and assets for sale, just as no one could tell what the ailing investment firms and mortgage securities were worth in the 2008 financial meltdown. One result was a proliferation of liquidity crises, something postsocialist citizens had already become accustomed to after 1989 (Rogers 2005). Finally, just as privatization in the EE/FSU amounted to privatizing assets and socializing liabilities as various "entrepreneurs" cherry-picked state firms, so the U.S. Troubled Asset Relief Program planned to saddle taxpayers with the debts of failing banks, whose assets the government would bundle and sell at bargain prices while private firms grabbed the assets that remained (e.g., Barclays Bank's selective "rescue" of bankrupt Lehman Brothers assets). This comparison points to a two-decade global upheaval in what constitutes value and how to assess it. As future histories of the global financial crisis of 2008 are written, we

should see the former Soviet bloc as in the vanguard of value transformations in recent capitalism.

THE FUTURES OF POSTSOCIALISM

Like other regions, the EE/FSU as we have presented it is internally diverse. The primary division is between areas that became socialist or Communist through an indigenous revolution (much of the former Soviet Union) and areas upon which those forms were largely imposed after the Second World War (the countries of Eastern Europe, including the formerly Soviet Baltic republics). Later accentuating this division were the incorporation of much of Eastern Europe into the European Union; the growing importance of Central Asia as a region of its own (including but not limited to former Soviet Central Asia); and increasing attention paid to other regions recognized less often, such as the circumpolar north. The EE/FSU, we have argued, nonetheless derived coherence from the commonalities of the socialist experience and the continued relevance of the socialist past for understanding the postsocialist period.

Unlike other regions, however, ours is also anthropology's newest region, emerging precisely at a time when the notion of "area" was becoming problematic owing to challenges to the culture concept, the increased visibility of "native" anthropologists, more frequent fieldwork "at home," and globalizing phenomena such as diaspora and transnationalism. Moreover, the coherence of this region is a Cold War product; it has been fragmenting ever since its founding moment in 1989. For these reasons, the very label under which we write, "postsocialist societies," is uncharacteristically ephemeral and elastic for an area designation; it thus speaks eloquently of a sea change in the anthropology of regions. The designation "postsocialist" will gradually become obsolete, and with it some of the ways in which we have framed our discussion here. This will not happen overnight, nor should it, and so we conclude with short-, medium-, and long-range views of what we see happening to postsocialist studies.

In the short term, we expect that the study of postsocialisms will continue to contribute to more general anthropological theory along the lines we have outlined. Indeed, postsocialisms should be especially useful for continuing our interrogations of the relationships between region and theory in anthropology. Arjun Appadurai's (1986) essay on center and periphery in anthropological theory argued that anthropology's regions have often generated "gatekeeping concepts" that serve as touchstones for work on that region and inform the larger suite of anthropological theories. The study of socialisms and postsocialisms has its gatekeeping concept, to be sure: Verdery's model of the socialist mode of production, discussed above.

However, in part because the socialist world lay outside *all* of the regions explored by Appadurai and his contributors, we think that postsocialist studies might also contribute useful perspectives on the state of regions in contemporary anthropology more broadly. We have, therefore, looked beyond gatekeeping concepts to other modes in which anthropology from our "new" region might speak to more general theory. We

argued that adding a new region historically dominated by Eastern Christianity can serve as a corrective for theories that had slipped far too easily from the Protestantism and Catholicism of Western Europe and its colonies and postcolonies to Christianity as a whole. In discussing consumption, we showed that revisiting an old theme (the penetration of capitalism) in a new phase of region-wide capitalist expansion can shed light on transformations of capitalism itself, particularly its internal shift from an emphasis on production to one tilted toward consumption. Finally, our suggestions about the resemblance between privatization in the EE/FSU and the global financial crisis of 2008 can generate new insights into the genesis and spread of recent capitalist transformations and crises. We expect similar kinds of interventions to enrich our field in the short term. Such illuminating anthropological projects should not be short-circuited by prematurely dismissing the utility of region-based postsocialist studies.

In the medium term, we see postsocialist studies posing a productive challenge to conceptions of regions. Particularly promising opportunities lie with anthropologists working on socialisms, postsocialisms, and various hybrid forms elsewhere in the world (see also Rogers 2010). In the scholarship on the EE/FSU that we have reviewed here, such comparisons were often implicit, perhaps accomplished by means of a chapter or two on China in an edited volume on the EE/FSU. Projects in progress as of this writing manifest growing interest in these comparisons, as do some programmatic essays (for African socialisms and postsocialisms, see Pitcher and Askew 2006; for China, with its own large literature on the socialist experience, see, e.g., Kipnis 2008). Such historical and ethnographic scholarship on global socialisms and postsocialisms would explode traditional regional boundaries, reveal hidden connections and circulations among parts of the erstwhile Second World, and afford novel vantage points with overlapping histories from which to triangulate anthropologies of the present.

In the longer term, we hope that even this focus on the Second World will fade from view. Chari and Verdery (2009) argue that it is time for anthropologists and their interdisciplinary interlocutors to abandon the Cold War's Three Worlds altogether. In this effort, they suggest, postsocialist studies' most promising partner is postcolonial studies; should these fields transform and transcend each other, we might finally leave behind the regions and topics of the twentieth century and attune our scholarship to the emerging global divisions of the twenty-first. If postsocialist studies is, in the end, erased in this process, then it will have served its purposes well; it will have helped to spark an "iridescent metamorphosis" capable of transforming far more than the region that generated it at the turn of the millennium.[6]

NOTES

1. This literature is substantial. We refer readers to Halpern and Kideckel's (1983) review, which included over 200 titles.
2. Initially, most of this work appeared in articles or edited volumes (e.g., Kideckel 1995; Bridger and Pine 1998; Berdahl, Bunzl, and Lampland 2000). A number of valuable

collections were also published in the 1990s and early 2000s under the editorship of Chris Hann at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany.

3. The following works have shaped our discussion in this section: Bringa (1995); Balzer (1999); Berdahl (1999); Creed (2002); Humphrey (2002); Lankauskas (2002); Goluboff (2003); Wanner (2003, 2007); Caldwell (2004); Paxson (2005); Lindquist (2006); Pelkmans (2006, 2009); Zigon (2007); Willerslev (2007); Steinberg and Wanner (2008); Ghodsee (2009); and Rogers (2009).
4. Other areas that we do not treat in detail here would include the anthropology of Islam and the emergent anthropology of secularism (see especially Wanner 2007; Luerhmann 2011).
5. Our discussion in this section draws in particular on Berdahl (1999, 2010: Chaps 2–4, 6), Humphrey (2002: Chap. 3), Mandel and Humphrey (2002), Shevchenko (2002, 2009), Dunn (2004), Greenberg (2006), Harper (2006), Patico (2008), and Fehérváry (2009).
6. We borrow the pleasant term "iridescent metamorphosis" from Rodney Needham (1970), who used it to advocate the dissolution of anthropology as it transforms all corners of the social sciences and humanities.

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