

WHAT IS CAPITALISM AND WHAT COMES NEXT?

First Joint Biennial SASA – CASA Conference

September 21-22 2009, Pezinok, Slovakia

CALL FOR PAPERS

The title of the conference refers, first, to the collection of essays *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next* (1996) by Katherine Verdery, a seminal book in the anthropology of postsocialism, and second, to the nature and prospects of contemporary capitalism in the context of the present economic and environmental crises. We are calling for a discussion on how the anthropological studies of postsocialism can contribute to the understanding of these crises.

We believe capitalism in its various models should not be conceived of and studied only as an economic but also as a political and moral configuration whose specific activities are interlinked with wider social, technological and cultural processes and their particular historical developments. Economic practices are embedded in social spheres such as community, religion, kinship, and science. As many anthropologists have demonstrated, forms of production, distribution, exchange and consumption are not only based on abstract cost-benefit logic but are involved in social ontologies and relations, socio-technical and religious practices, and power configurations. An anthropological analysis of capitalism should therefore focus on the conditions, moral expectations, ideas and actions that depend upon and result in the re/production, distribution, exchange or collapse of various forms of capital.

It is not the stability of capitalist systems but their ongoing change in time and space that is at issue. Bearing in mind the empirical grounding of anthropological knowledge, we believe that the debates on post/socialism and post/capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe should contribute to a) discussions about the current global economic and environmental crises as they are understood and manifested in local settings, and b) identification and description of modes of production alternative to those dominating contemporary capitalisms.

We believe it is time to put capitalism, particularly as it is manifested in Central and Eastern Europe, under analytic scrutiny, as anthropologists (Verdery, Hann, Humphrey, Yurchak, and others) have done with post/socialism. A key insight from those scholarly discussions was the identification of incoherence and internal tensions within systems and of the role of different forms of resistance at the edges of state socialism. The space opened up by the ongoing economic and environmental crises allows for an examination of the dynamics of contemporary capitalisms at the centre and the margins.

The first biennial conference is organized jointly by the Slovak Association of Social Anthropologists (SASA) and the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA). We believe that conferences that bring together these professional anthropological associations offer an excellent opportunity to introduce the discipline to a wider academic public.

The keynote addresses will be delivered by Chris Hann (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle) and Stephen F. Gudeman (University of Minnesota).

The conference aims to address the following questions and themes:

- What are the key practices of capitalism in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe? How have understandings of work, work ethics, work relations and work discipline been changing in the postsocialist period?
- What are the things that capitalism and the welfare state cannot deal with? How do social exclusion and inclusion and welfare regimes shape the lives of the people on the margins, and vice versa?
- What is the interrelationship between migration and migrants on the one hand, and the long-established division between the labour market and the market for goods and services on the other?
- How can we describe the relationships between nationalism and capitalism? Is it a paradox of capitalism after socialism, or a necessary symbiosis of capitalism and nationalism if ethnic

hatred influences politics in most of Central and Eastern Europe? How might we analyse economic nationalism and nation-state protectionism from the perspective of everyday life?

- What are the moral foundations of capitalism after state socialism? Has religion offered a complementary or alternative moral underpinning for the development of capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe? How can we describe the relations between state welfare systems and religious ideas and practices of charity, sharing and social assistance?
- How is anthropology (along with other social sciences) shaping and shaped by capitalism? In what forms and with what consequences is “academic capitalism” brought to bear in Central and Eastern Europe? How has the ‘native experience’ of socialism influenced the ways in which capitalism has been theorized by social scientists? Has that experience worked as a kind of anthropological distance or rather as a lack of it in the production of academic knowledge?

Organisation of the conference:

This two-day conference will consist of one plenary session focused on the central theme followed by parallel panels connected to that theme. A plenary discussion will be held to bring together findings from the panels and draw conclusions.

The language of the plenary session is English.

The organizers particularly welcome panel and paper proposals that address the problems faced by the anthropological community in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The languages of the panel sessions are English, Slovak, and Czech.

Important deadlines:

Paper proposals for the plenary session should be sent via email **by May 30, 2009**.

If you are interested in organizing **panel sessions dedicated to a particular topic**, you should send panel proposals, names of proposed participants and abstracts **by May 30, 2009**.

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words.

The titles and abstracts of panel sessions, to which individual papers shall be addressed, will be announced via email by June 15, 2009.

Individual applicants will be informed about the outcome of their paper proposal by June 15. All proposals as well as organizational inquiries shall be sent to SASA.CASA.09@gmail.com

The conference fee of 50 Euros covers the costs of the two-day conference, dinner and a one-night's accommodation in a local hotel for each participant.

The conference preparation committee:

Juraj Buzalka, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia

Jakub Grygar, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Davide Torsello, University of Bergamo, Italy

Tomáš Samek, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic