

FOOD, FARMLAND AND FORESTS IN TRANSITION: THE EURASIAN COUNTRYSIDE 25 YEARS AFTER

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Speakers and key notes

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Dr Petr Jehlička is Senior Lecturer in Environmental Geography at the Open University, UK. His research focuses on environmental governance and environmental politics in Central and Eastern Europe. The governance strand of his work explored the 'Europeanization' of environmental governance in new EU member states and the implications of eastern enlargement of the EU for future directions of European environmental policy. The environmental politics research centres on the distinct Central and East European form of environmental movements and green parties that emerged during the 1990s out of traditional domestic environmental discourses combined with imported western policy approaches, agendas and know-how. Most recently, these interests have evolved into exploration of the ambiguous and hybrid nature of post-socialist environmentalism that requires culturally specific analyses of socialist and pre-socialist historical developments. The current project in this area is the politics of sustainable consumption which he is working on jointly with the OU colleague Joe Smith. This research focuses on the intersection of sustainability with 'hybrid' forms of everyday consumption practices emerging as a result of the encounter between imported 'modern' concepts and norms and 'traditional' approaches to food production and consumption.

PRESENTATION: Rural resistance hidden in plain sight: East European household food production across regimes. In keeping with the peripheral standing of East European rural spaces in transition studies, in the past twenty five years post-socialist home gardening has received little attention other than as a path-dependent economic strategy of passive and disadvantaged segments of society. The large scale of post-socialist household food production and distribution 'discovered' in the early 1990s was typically figured as a temporary residue of the socialist past set to disappear with the development of the market economy and seemed to offer little positive value both in terms of social progress and as a research topic.

The recent recognition of home gardening in other parts of the 'global North' as an important form of alternative food networks with a significant contribution to the food system and the scale of post-socialist household food production persistently high even among well-off middle classes call for alternative and more positive reconceptualization of East European home gardening. The 'global South' has increasingly been seen as generating a range of inspiring and surprisingly modern, livelihood related economic practices 'that do not take the form of wage labour, commodity production for a market, or capitalist enterprise' (Gibson-Graham 2006). In contrast, similar quotidian practices based on traditional rights of access to resources and on relations of production, exchange and distribution governed by kin and community networks in post-socialist societies are often seen in a profoundly different way as evidence of backwardness, de-modernisation and de-differentiation.

Drawing primarily on research into home gardening by non-farming rural households in Poland and Czechia (74 per cent of Polish and 65 per cent of Czech rural population grow some of their food) this presentation aims to demonstrate that post-socialist ruralities can generate insights that can 'have a wider currency and relevance beyond the region' (Kay et al. 2012). While acknowledging the importance of the economic dimension of East European informal food production and sharing in certain contexts and times, this presentation highlights the multifaceted character of this set of practices and proposes their conceptualisation as a contribution to food security and rural resilience, a site of resistance and 'quiet sustainability'.

In terms of the continuities and discontinuities between the socialist and post-socialist periods household food production and distribution turned out to be adaptable to changing conditions in both periods. This set of everyday practices extends the diversity of

food entitlements both during times of crises and prosperity and thus can be viewed as food security and rural resilience enhancing behaviour. Home gardening has always persisted beyond or outside politics, state and market and with almost no reference to formal institutions of civil society. During socialism this site of everyday resistance provided an autonomous private space out of sight of regime authorities and in the post-socialist period has offered a non-market and non-monetised space alternative to the neoliberal market relations. The concept of quiet sustainability summarises practices that result in beneficial environmental or social outcomes and that do not relate directly or indirectly to economic transactions, but are not represented by their practitioners as relating directly to environmental or sustainability goals. These practices represent exuberant, appealing and socially inclusive, but also unforced, forms of sustainability. Scaled across all developed societies, and supported by some appropriate parallel policies East European ruralities show how home gardening can make a significant contribution to food security, public health and social cohesion. These findings, and the theoretical arguments derived from them, are of particular significance in the context of rapid processes of rural change in emerging economies.

DMITRY RYLKO - The Institute for Agricultural Market Studies (IKAR)



Dmitry Rylko, Ph.D., - General Director of The Institute for Agricultural Market Studies (IKAR), Dmitry graduated with a honour from the Economics Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University. Since 1983 he worked at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He became the Head of the Centre for Agribusiness IMEMO in 1996. Among the main tasks of the Centre is a study of problems and development trends of Russian and foreign agribusiness, the main directions of scientific and technical progress in agribusiness (biotechnology), land issues in various countries around the world, marketing and pricing issues in agribusiness in Russia; issues related to the functioning of the Russian food market. Since October 2001, Dmitry Rylko is a CEO of the Institute for Agricultural Market Studies (IKAR), an information-analytical agency, carrying out a wide range of applied and theoretical research in the field of global and domestic agro-food system. In the centre of the Institute's research is analysis of current condition and forecast of domestic agricultural food markets.

PRESENTATION: Farmland Investment and Agroholdings in Russia

MAX SPOOR - International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University, The Netherlands. spoor@iss.nl



Max Spoor is Professor of Development Studies, and the Chair of the Research Programme Political Economy of Resources, Environment and Population, which includes two thematic areas: Agrarian, Food and Environmental Studies, and Critical Research in Social Policy.

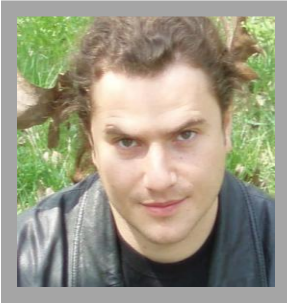
His research is related to rural and environmental issues, such as land grabbing, access to water resources, poverty, and inequality, and social exclusion. This research is geographically focused on Asian transitional economies such as China, Vietnam and the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (in particular former Soviet Central Asia), while he continues to do research in Latin America and the Caribbean (in particular Cuba and Nicaragua).

Currently his work focuses on the following research projects:

- 1) Land Grabbing in Eastern Europe and the CIS, collaborating in the ERC Starting Grant that was won by Dr. Oane Visser (and with ISS-PhD Student Natalia Mamonova).*
- 2) Quality of Life and Social Exclusion in Rural Central and Eastern Europe (together with ISS-Postdoc Luca Tasciotti; and in cooperation with UNDP Bratislava office, with which the 2011 Regional Human Development Report "Beyond Transition: Towards Inclusive Societies" was written).*
- 3) Small-scale Cotton Producers and Livelihood Change in Xinjiang, China (with Prof. Shi Xiaoping of NJAU; Dr. Murat Arsel, ISS; and ISS-PhD student Rao Fangping; based on 2007-2012 CEP Grant from the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences, KNAW).*

He is the Chair of the International Advisory Committee for a large research project entitled NEBE ("Nationalization of Extractive Industries: Conflict and Cooperation in Bolivia and Ecuador"), financed by NWO/CoCoon (2011-2017); and is participating in another large research project MOSAIC ("Climate Change mitigation policies, land grabbing and conflict in fragile states: understanding intersections, exploring transformations in Myanmar and Cambodia"), also financed by NWO/CoCoon (2014-2017).

LIVIU MĂNTESCU - Integrative Research Institute on Human-Environment Systems, Humboldt University of Berlin, “Francisc I. Rainer” Anthropology Institute of the Romanian Academy. liviu.mantescu@hu-berlin.de



Liviu Măntescu is Assistant Researcher at „Francisc I. Rainer” Anthropology Institute of the Romanian Academy and Researcher Associate at the Integrative Research Institute on Human-Environment Systems of the Humboldt University in Berlin. He holds a BA in Sociology and Social Anthropology, and completed BA in Linguistics from University of Bucharest. He has a Master Degree in Rural Sociology from University of Rennes, France and a doctoral degree in political science at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies and the University of Cologne, Germany. He studied political ecology at UC Berkeley as graduate student. His research focuses on land-use change in neoliberal context. He undertook ethnographic fieldwork campaigns in Vrancea and Bukovina regions Romania, Bretagne Region, France, Spanish Galicia and the DG Environment in Brussels.

PRESENTATION: Locating Evil: Rural Resistance Before and After 1990 in Vrancea.

Vrancea is a mountainous region in Romania well-known for its common property regime and the anti-communist resistance from the 50's. Locating evil during communism was easy for most people in Vrancea - it was Miliția, Securitate, the Soviets and, later on, Ceaușescu. All those state authorities that were denying people's access to their lands, mostly pastures and forests, were evil. A small minority considered, however, that the blue-jeans, The Beatles, the Americans, in one word the West, is the evil, and the communist ideology, together with the illuminated leader were the only hopes for a better life. The 1989 Christmas Day brought good for the many, Ceausescu got killed. Yet, in the past 25 years, locating evil in Vrancea has not been as easy as before. During the transition period, the former oppressors became the most audacious defenders of democracy, the nouveau riches, and a model for individual success. More recently, the diffusion of political decision-making on multiple layers in accordance with the EU multi-level governance model brought much confusion at the village level with regard to who is responsible for ensuring property and use rights of the land. This article traces the strategies for identifying and resisting restricted land use in one village from Vrancea region. It shows how the effectiveness of rural resistance is contingent on a coherent understanding of the foe.

JENNIFER CASH - Max Planck Social Institute of Anthropology, Halle, Germany, cash@eth.mpg.de



Jennifer received her Ph.D. in anthropology from Indiana University in 2004. She has conducted fieldwork in the Republic of Moldova on a variety of topics including folklore and identity, nationalism, the arts and cultural policy, economic and ritual change, and poverty. Her first monograph was Villages on Stage: Folklore and Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova (LIT Verlag, 2011); she is currently working on a second book, Bread and Wine: Labor, Respect, and Poverty in Moldova. Jennifer has served on the boards of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe, Society for Romanian Studies, and the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology. She is currently a research associate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany.

PRESENTATION: Markets and Borders: Key Problems in the Production and Image of Wine in Moldova.

This paper considers changes in Moldova's wine industry and household wine production during the last twenty-five years. More specifically, I consider the last 15 years, as decollectivization and the privatization of agricultural land and agro-industries occurred nearly a decade after the country gained independence. Moldova, along with Georgia, produced the majority of wine consumed within the Soviet Union; wine remains one of the country's most important export items; and wine is still a point of widely-shared national pride. Yet the industry has not fared well during the transition, as it has struggled to re-orient from the production of bulk wine to bottled varietals. The first portion of this paper considers the economic dimensions of the transformation: overall trends in production, sales, and export; the crippling effects of Russian import bans in the mid-2000s; and a quick sketch of some of successful private wineries. The second portion of the paper examines the connections between industrial and household production, and the effects that the changing export markets have had on the economic and symbolic role of wine in household economy. This second portion of the paper is drawn from fieldwork in a village from the micro-climatic region for producing the well-regarded Purcari wines. This village has a factory for producing bulk wines (barely operational), but it was a subsidiary to the nearby factory of Purcari, and has no bottling facilities of its own. The decline of wine production for sale (at both factory and household conditions) over the past ten years, and the gradual abandonment of prime vineyards, is thus a particularly stark example of the overall effects of transformation on an industry that still remains central to national pride and special state support.

RALUCA PERNES - Department of Sociology of Babeş-Bolyai University. rpernes@yahoo.com



Raluca – recipient of ILV Fellowship from Marie Curie SocAnth, International PhD Programme Promoting Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe.

Graduated from: Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, - MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology; Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania - MA, The Management of Regional and Community Resources.

Research Interest: Development, economic anthropology, anthropology of the state

PRESENTATION: Agribusinesses and vegetable gardens: The precariousness of subsistence farming in Corabia, Romania.

46% of the Romanian population lived in the rural areas at the 2011 census. However, agriculture is central not just in villages, but also in former industrial townships such as Corabia, Olt County. Speaking about the years of socialism, when three major factories operated in town, offering employment to most and drawing workers from the villages in the area, people tend to define themselves as industrial workers, and are firmly proud about their former status. When describing their work and careers post-1989, most mention employment precariousness and resentment in regard to the state suspending its paternalistic support. In both contexts, what remains understated is the role of subsistence agriculture. Cultivating their vegetable gardens and keeping some livestock was key to supplement industrial wages in times of food shortage under socialism, and remains key in circumstances where employment opportunities are rare and pensions too small to live on. Agricultural work is undervalued because it is rarely a first career choice for most of those doing it, but is essential for survival.

Corabia is the site of major agriculture changes, even more so as it is a very fertile area with good connections for transport. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in the world, land grabbing by multinational agribusinesses leaves smallholders more and more vulnerable. Generous EU subsidies are not available for the tiny plots. Land surveys, registration and title remain too costly for many. The newly assembled large tracts of land are used for cereal grains cultivation, rather than the more productive and more labour-intensive vegetables, fruit, and sugar beets favoured pre-1989.

I try to go beyond the concept of the “awkward class” employed by Hann (from Shanin) to make sense of the role and place of these agricultural workers in the frame of Corabia, Romania and the EU.

BRIAN KUNS - Stockholm University Department of Human Geography. Brian.Kuns@humangeo.su.se



Brian is a PhD candidate at the Stockholm University Department of Human Geography. His PhD project deals primarily with the agricultural transformation that has occurred, at all scales of production, in southern Ukraine following post-communist land and economic reforms. Another research interest is the historical geography and/or environmental history of agriculture in this region, focusing on the agricultural organization of territory in different time periods, and how farmers in different time periods solved or attempted to solve the various problems or challenges associated with agriculture. Finally, Kuns is studying Remote Sensing based crop-mapping and crop yield forecasting approaches, again with respect to southern Ukraine, and looking at how these tools can potentially be used to tell more recent agricultural history. Kuns's dissertation is scheduled to be complete in mid-2015. Prior to becoming a PhD student, Kuns worked in the development cooperation field.

PRESENTATION: Swedish Black Earth: The Trials and Tribulations of the publicly listed Western farming model in Russia and Ukraine (together with ANDERS WÄSTFELT and OANE VISSER)

This paper examines the history and performance of the main “Swedish” or Nordic agrohholdings in Russia and Ukraine, situating them with respect to Soviet and post-Soviet agricultural history, and with respect to recent, global trends towards larger scale agriculture. The main question to be addressed is: why have these investments not been successful? Analysis is based on a study of corporate documents and interviews with corporate officials and investors from all the three agricultural companies active in Ukraine and Russia and listed on the Stockholm Exchange and a small number of private agricultural companies either registered in Sweden or with Swedish involvement. Since the three agrohholdings publicly listed on the Stockholm Stock exchange constitute roughly one-third of agrohholdings active in Russia and Ukraine that are listed on a European stock exchange and that focus exclusively or mostly on crop production (other, non-“Swedish”, public agrohholdings are generally instances of vertical integration where crop production is a complement to food processing of some kind) investigation of these companies can help to illuminate the challenges of this particular business model. We will argue that the problems these companies have faced are related to (1) the (inherent) tensions of the large-scale investment based model, with investors and managers at a distance from the farm site and (2) the tension between the requirements of agriculture, on the one hand, and the demands of investors, shareholders and the stock exchange on the other hand.

OANE VISSER – International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University, The Netherlands. visser@iss.nl



Oane is Senior Lecturer /Assistant Professor in Rural Development Studies. His current research interests revolve first of all around land acquisitions, farm investment and rural development in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries. He recently received a European Research Council (ERC) starting grant. This project (2013-2018) studies land investment strategies and their effects, looking at food security/sovereignty, labour issues and rural development. Furthermore, it studies the role of rural social movements in land governance. The research takes place in Russia, Ukraine and the border area between Russia and China. The project includes also a PhD student, Natalia Mamonova, who focuses especially at responses of rural social movements to land investment. This project is conducted in collaboration with Judith Pallot (Oxford University) and Tatyana Nefedova (Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow).

Visser also supervises research projects in countries such as Tajikistan and Romania, and connected to a Marie Curie project on land acquisitions in Eastern Europe (by Giuseppina Siciliano), starting January 2014 at the ISS. Furthermore, Visser conducts research on financialisation and crisis in Eastern Europe and the West. A third line of research is on ethnopolitics in Eastern Europe.

Visser earned his PhD in Anthropology from Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Before coming to the ISS he was assistant professor at subsequently the Department of Research Methods, and Dept. of Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University. He was visiting fellow at Cornell University in 2010. In the past years he won several grants (e.g. Land Academy, LDPI) to study land governance issues. Visser is an editor of Focaal- Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology.

PRESENTATIONS:

Swedish Black Earth: The Trials and Tribulations of the publicly listed Western farming model in Russia and Ukraine (together with BRIAN KUNS and ANDERS WÄSTFELT, for abstract see BRIAN KUNS);

Farmland investment in Romania: drivers, actors, impacts (together with ANNAMARIA HAJDU, for abstract see ANNAMARIA HAJDU)

ANDERS WÄSTFELT - Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University. anders.wastfelt@humangeo.su.se



Anders is an Associate Professor at the Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University. His research interest concerns the agricultural landscape and the continuous revaluation of agriculture in society. One question is which mechanisms drive localisation and changes in the reorganization of agriculture when farming becomes globally integrated. A special focus is on the interdependencies between local production and distant consumption. To study the complexity of this theme a historical perspective coupled with a landscape geographical perspective is used. One of the latest projects I have finished concerns leases in Swedish history, how lease varies spatially and what the role of leasehold for farmers and society is. Another theme is to investigate landscape changes through analysis of satellite images. Changing processes, which relate to how the changes in agrarian regime correspond to local landscape changes, is in focus. Focus is how configuration and composition change. The remote sensed images are analysed with new methods based on local spatial contextual analysis.

PRESENTATION: Swedish Black Earth: The Trials and Tribulations of the publicly listed Western farming model in Russia and Ukraine (together with BRIAN KUNS and OANE VISSER)

For abstract see BRIAN KUNS

RASMUS BLÆDEL LARSEN - University of Copenhagen. kxh582@hum.ku.dk



Rasmus is a Danish Ethnologist working with perceptions of current agricultural realities as seen from the point of view of the farmers themselves. He wrote his thesis in 2010 on European agricultural legislation and how it shapes the practice and cultural outlook of Danish farmers. He then went on to work for an organic plant-pathologist and later the Danish Museum of Agriculture, one of the largest museums in Denmark. Since 2013 he has done research on a Ph.d.-project called The Farmer's Future, a project that attempts to map and analyze the hidden diversity within the sector, in what is likely to be the last generation of independently owned farms in Denmark. He is based at the University of Copenhagen, but has lived on farms in Denmark and on Danish owned farms in Eastern Europe the last year. At the time of writing he is based in Brussels, doing fieldwork among the actors that are instrumental in creating the Common Agricultural Policy of Europe.

PRESENTATION: The Danish Pig-farmer came with a suitcase full of money. A reality-check on Danish farm-investments in the new EU-member states.

This paper describes parts of the historical background for Danish farming's ambiguous success, expounding on a few of the key turning points and figures. The country's rampant structural development, aka the drive towards bigger technologically advanced high input/high output farms, is explained as a result of the combination of history, legislation, propaganda, pig-production and the land value bubble. The investments Danish farmers and farm-investors have put into the Eastern European countries since the fall of the wall in 1989 are traced back to the Danish tax-system and land-value bubble - and to some degree peer-pressure - and are put into perspective through the stories told by Danish farmers producing in Poland and the Baltics. The first part of the paper is based largely on common historical facts and public statistics and the second part on material collected on Danish owned- or managed farms in Poland and the Baltics in 2014. Much of the second part is hear-say and subjective views, reflecting the realities as perceived by the farmers. In this part of the paper I do not attempt to sort out the facts or analyze the cultural and environmental impacts of these investment-practises at home or abroad, but presents the agro-reality of the Danes in a more descriptive narrative.

CHRIS LANDER - Oxford University Centre for the Environment, University of Oxford. christopher.lander@chch.ox.ac.uk



Chris is a D.Phil. student at the Oxford University Centre for the Environment. Prior to Oxford, he gained two masters degrees from the University of Birmingham: a MEng in Chemical Engineering in 2007; and a MSc in Enterprise, Environment and Place (Human Geography) in 2010. Chris was awarded a place on the Alfa Fellowship Program in 2013 – an international initiative that offers young Americans and Britons the opportunity to complete a high-level professional development program in Russia – where he conducted much of his research, and is now entering the final stages of his D.Phil.

PRESENTATION: The Role of International Agro-Food Corporations in the Re-emergence of Russian Agriculture: a Case Study of Cargill Russia (together with JUDITH PALLOT)

The paper focuses on the newly developing area for Russia of food processing and trade activities downstream of the farm which, according to Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International, is a “powerful, unique and poorly understood sector” (Murphy et al., 2012: 3); it is a sector which needs to be made ‘visible’ “if food is to be susceptible to democratic regulation” (Friedman, 1995: 29). We look to identify the well-known criticisms made in the literature of agro-food corporations, specifically foreign multinational corporations (MNCs), examining their relevance in the case of Cargill Russia. Further, we attempt to ascertain the country-specific nature of Cargill’s operations, and how the company responds to these general criticisms. Five main points of discussion that this paper analyses are: 1. food security; 2. the power to shape and constrain the practices of farmers; 3. the setting of purchase prices with farmers; 4. the control of grain prices; and 5. agro-food corporation priorities, and early information for use in speculation.

JUDITH PALLOT - Oxford University Centre for the Environment, University of Oxford. judith.pallot@chch.ox.ac.uk



Judith is a Professor of the Human Geography of Russia, University of Oxford, with an established reputation in the field of Russian 'peasant studies'. Her early work focused on the responses of the Russian peasantry to the reform initiatives of the late Imperial government (particularly, the Stolypin Land Reform), and the struggle for common property rights in the Soviet period. In the 1990s, she extended this interest to the post-Soviet period, to examine rural adaptations and household food production during the transformation to a market economy. As well as peasant studies, Prof. Pallot's research interests lie in Russia's penal geography.

PRESENTATION: The Role of International Agro-Food Corporations in the Re-emergence of Russian Agriculture: a Case Study of Cargill Russia (with CHRIS LANDER)

For abstract see CHRIS LANDER

STEFAN DORONDEL - Francisc I. Rainer Institute of Anthropology Bucharest of the Romanian Academy ; the Institute for Southeast European Studies in Bucharest. dorondel@yahoo.com



*Ştefan is a Senior Researcher at Francisc I. Rainer Institute of Anthropology Bucharest of the Romanian Academy and is affiliated with the Institute for Southeast European Studies in Bucharest. Ştefan completed a Ph.D. in History and Ethnology at Lucian Blaga University Sibiu in 2004 and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Humboldt University Berlin in 2007. He carried postdoctoral research within Yale University, New Europe College Institute for Advanced Studies (Bucharest), Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle), Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich and University of Cambridge. His research interests revolve around issues such as post-socialist environmental changes, land use change, property rights, and strategies to cope with floods. In 2013 he received a 3-year research grant from the Romanian Research Agency for a project entitled "Taming Post-Socialist Nature: Floods, Local Strategies and National Policies along the Lower Danube". His latest published volume includes *At the Margins of History - The Agrarian Question in Southeast Europe* (2014) coedited with Stelu Serban.*

PRESENTATION: Postsocialist Agriculture vs. Nature: State, Land Improvement and the 'Invisible Infrastructure' in the Lower Danube Floodplains

The paper analyzes the struggle between agriculture and nature in the former floodplains along the Lower Danube which were drained during socialism. Due to the lack of improvement works which should be made by the postsocialist state the nature comes back in the former floodplains along the Danube impeding agriculture. Whereas small farmers cannot do anything with the land they got back 'in the swamp' through decollectivization the large arendatori (land tenants) obtain EU subsidies which cover their loss. This paper looks at how large arendatori, having access to political power and administrative decisions play the 'nature comeback' in their favour.

NATALIA MAMONOVA - International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University, The Netherlands, mamonova@iss.nl



Natalia is a PhD candidate at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University. Her doctoral research focuses on land grabbing in the post-Soviet countryside, and on land conflicts and rural social movements in Russia and Ukraine. Before starting her PhD she worked as a research associate at Radboud University Nijmegen (2010–2012). The projects she was (is) involved in are: 'Land grabbing in Russia' (2010, LDPI grant), 'Large-scale land acquisition in the FSU' (2011, LANDac grant), 'Black Earth, Red Barons, 'Green' Investors and Grey Communities in Ukraine' (2012, LDPI grant), and 'Land grabbing' in Russia: Large-scale investors and post-Soviet rural Communities' (2013-2016, European Research Foundation)

PRESENTATION: Behind the veil of Russian rural ‘quietness’. Explaining popular responses to deprivation and inequality in the post-soviet countryside.

Poverty, mass unemployment, social exclusion, and violation of small-holders’ land rights have become the scourge of Russian countryside after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under such conditions one could expect an outright social resistance and large-scale protests, while Russian rural dwellers seem to show remarkable tolerance and peaceful acceptance of existing deprivation and inequality. The peacefulness and endurance of the post-soviet rural population are often explained by the socialist history and contemporary non-democratic regimes, which create a structure that prevents dissenting expressions. This research looks beyond this common explanation, and aims to understand the so-called post-Soviet rural ‘quietness’ by studying different *spaces for contestation*. These spaces (social, economic, political and cultural) influence rural dwellers’ perceptions and practices, thereby, their attitude to the existing order and politics of change. By analysing various dimensions of rural everydayness this research explains why the existing socio-economic tensions in rural Russia do not escalate to a civil protest and large-scale mobilisation. This analysis aims to contribute to a better understanding of peasant politics, social relations, and mobilisation practices in the post-socialist context.

MONICA VASILE - Humboldt University, the Integrative Research Institute on Transformations of Human-Environment Systems - IRI THESys. vasilemo@cms.hu-berlin.de



Monica was born in Romania in 1980 studied and taught Sociology and Social Anthropology at the University of Bucharest, where she obtained her PhD in 2008. From 2008 to 2009 she was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Köln, and from 2009 to 2013 a researcher at the Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle-Saale. Her research interests in the area of environmental & economic anthropology include: forest management and forest use; property relations, commons and local governance institutions; socialist and capitalist transformations; godparenthood and ritual practices. Her current project at Humboldt University, at the Integrative Research Institute on Transformations of Human-Environment Systems - IRI THESys - examines production and trade of timber in Romania, with a focus on local informal economy and social relations entailed by commercial practices.

PRESENTATION: Time, Inequality and Forests: the Question of Age in the Postsocialist Entrepreneurial Turn

What kinds of temporalities intertwine with emerging inequalities? Anthropological approaches to this question tend to prioritize a focus on historical temporalities: How different historical periods such as feudalism, capitalism, or socialism, give rise to different regimes of inequality. At the same time, there is a tendency to focus on the relation between different historical temporalities: Studies of the ‘past’ in the ‘present’, or of how the ‘past’ informs present configurations and representations of inequality, are quite common in anthropology as well as in studies of postsocialism. This paper explores the intertwining of a different kind of temporality - what Schutz called ‘inner time’ pointing to age and the life cycle - with the making of inequality. I am particularly concerned with emerging inequalities in postsocialist transformations. Drawing on ethnographic examples focusing on timber traders from the forested highlands of Transylvania, I argue how persons of different age seize differently certain historical moments, and I show how at this intersection between historical time with biographical time, specific hierarchical configurations get created. Starting from one village of timber traders in the Apuseni Mountains, different persons took different ‘routes’ of trade, some specialized in petty trade, from door to door, others built middle-range saw-milling companies, others went for the big business, buying entire marketplaces in the western part of Romania; yet others became senators and “timber barons”. The paper explores these differences in relation to age. Although often implicit in ethnographies of change and class formation, the question of age and its role in shaping agency remains rather obscure in anthropological literature. Grounded in the idea that agency and subjectivity have a role in shaping rising inequalities, the paper explores age in relation to subjective dispositions such as courage and anxiety, risk and prudence, showing how ‘inner rhythms’ affect the seizing of possibilities at specific times. Capturing a short time interval with a high density of events, 20 postsocialist years ranging from economic boom to economic crisis, the paper sheds light on the linkages between ‘inner time’, entrepreneurial risk, and inequality in contexts of radical social transformation - changing land use and market configurations. Exploring both market boom (1990s) and economic crisis (2008-2009), it shows how subjectivity related to age shape entrepreneurial success or failure, and thus get translated into specific inequalities, and ultimately into specific configurations of forest logging.

STELLA SERBAN - Institute for South East European Studies, Bucharest, steluserban@yahoo.com



Stella is a sociologist at the Institute for South East European Studies, Bucharest. He holds a PhD degree in political sciences, University of Bucharest, 2003. His research interests cover the topics like post-socialist transformations in South East Europe, everyday life in rural societies in South East Europe, long-run political modernization in a comparative perspective, ethnicity. He has conducted fieldworks in rural settlements in various areas from Romania (Maramureş, Covasna, Bacău, Constanţa, Teleorman), as well as in Bulgaria (Pleven, Varna, Vidin). Revolving around these research fields he has carried out projects that were financed by Soros Foundation (Bucureşti and Timișoara), Research Support Scheme (Prague), Romanian Academy Grants, Ethnographical Association Kriza János (Cluj Napoca), Center for Advanced Studies (Sofia), Department for Allover Romanians (Romanian Government). He participated at international conferences in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, and authored about thirty articles in academic journals and collective volumes.

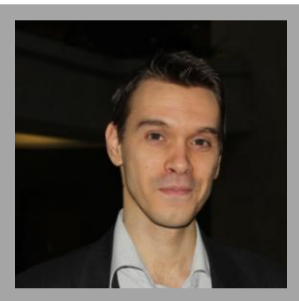
PRESENTATION: Agricultural expertise in small farms in Northern Bulgaria

The paper bases on the fieldwork I did in one village near Vidin town, Bulgaria, in 2013 and 2014, and on the researches in the local state archives. The village locates in the small corner on the three bordering areas of Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia, on the Danube bank. The focus is on the multiple functions the agronomists who before 1990 have been worked in the collective farm accomplish now in the village.

In the past the village was regularly flooded by the Danube. Still, after one catastrophic flood in 1942, the Bulgarian state took the decision to dam the area. Around to 1970 the dam was heightened so the flood threat greatly decreased. Nevertheless one small part of the rescued land was used for cultivating cereals, while an important surface remained for grazing.

After 1990 the breakdown of the socialist regime has led to the dissolution of the former big agricultural enterprises in smaller village associations while in the mid of 2000s the land became to be cultivated by the local leaseholders/arendattori. Although the arendattori exploitations are smaller, the biggest one touching almost 150 ha (the village arable land is around 1300 ha), the agronomists are called to share their expertise. The effects of their involvement are strange. The cultivated surfaces with cereals and technical crops cover much more land that at once and stretch narrowly to the dyke on the former flooded area. At least partly this paradox of the land use is due to the prestige and authority the former agronomists grant. Thus, whether in the past, even in the socialist period, the agriculture in the village had one certain degree of diversification, combining the cultivation of cereals, different technical crops (tobacco, rape, sun flower), and orchards, with husbandry, this year, 2014, almost all of the village land was cultivated with three cultures: wheat, barley, and sun flower.

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PRESENTATION: Social Partnership in the Post-Soviet Countryside: Between Socialism, Capitalism and Populism (together with ALEXANDER NIKULIN)

The presentation seeks to show the diversity of social partnership relations in Post-Soviet rural Russia. 4 cases will be described: Belgorod region, Altai Krai, Kuban, and Archangelsk region, which cover main agrarian areas in Russia. Each case represents its own, unique pattern of social partnership: Belgorod region illustrates a state-led perspective; Altai Krai shows grassroots emergence of social partnership; Kuban exemplifies the outcomes of severe struggle for valuable resources; and Archangelsk region shows the problems of self-organization in the extremely unfavorable rural environment.

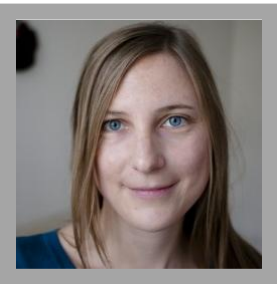
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PRESENTATION: Social Partnership in the Post-Soviet Countryside: Between Socialism, Capitalism and Populism (together with ALEXANDER KURAKIN, for abstract see LALEXANDER KURAKIN)

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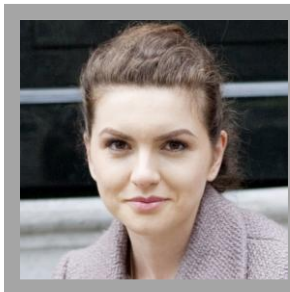


Christina studied International Cultural and Business Studies with a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe in Passau and in St. Petersburg. Currently, she is a PhD student and a lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna. She is a member of the Department's research group on International Political Ecology. From August 2011 till July 2014 she was part of a DOC-team project on agrofuels and socio-ecological conflicts, which was funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. During that time she has been a visiting PhD student at Lancaster University, CEU in Budapest and Visiting Junior Fellow at the IWM in Vienna. In her PhD thesis "In-between Boundaries: The Agrofuels Project in Ukraine" she examines agriculture, land and energy issues in the post-Soviet country by combining critical state theory with political ecology.

PRESENTATION: Agrofuels and the financialisation of farmland in Ukraine

In 2009, the European Union introduced a ten per cent blending target for agrofuels as part of the Renewable Energy Directive. As a result of controversial discussions regarding the socio-ecological consequences this target got lowered for the 'first generation' – fuel that is made out of food crops – to six per cent. Despite this reduction feedstock for the production of agrofuels still needs to be imported. Ukraine is one of the important providers of 'flex crops' for the European Union. Their production drives land grabbing and supports agribusiness. Within the land-grabbing process, the financialisation of land is an important but still under-researched component. This is particularly valid for the post-soviet region. In this paper I sketch the increasing financialisation of farmland in Ukraine. I show how the ruling class, the Ukrainian oligarchs, use the (international) state-economy relations to get farmland under their control. Agroholdings are the key instrument in this regard, an instrument which enables the oligarchs to pool capital from international financial market actors. This rise of agroholdings furthers the agro-industrial model and crowds out small-scale farming.

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Anna is a Research Assistant at the ISS-International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (part of Erasmus University Rotterdam). She studied Business Administration and gained two masters degrees in Systems Ecology and Sustainable Development from the University of Bucharest (MSc 2010) and in Environment and Resource Management from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (MSc 2011). She coordinates a research project on land investments in Romania since 2013 in collaboration with the Transnational Institute (TNI) Amsterdam and Ecoruralis, Romania. She has previously conducted a research on ecosystem services in southern Brazil for a proposal funded by the University of Glasgow and her main focus lies on interdisciplinary environmental research.

PRESENTATION: Farmland Investment in Romania: Drivers, Actors, Impacts (together with OANE VISSER)

Romania is expected to be the most dynamic European market in the coming 5-10 years for agri-investors, according to a Rabobank report (Look East for European F&A growth, 2013). The Dutch bank is one of the many foreign investors who aggressively purchased

arable land in Romania. Buying scattered plots and consolidating them is a method used since the 90s by foreign investors who registered Romanian SRLs (LLCs) to purchase land in the Eastern-European country.

My focus is on Romania's political environment as the support base for welcoming and enabling foreign investors to purchase large areas of arable land. I discuss the main drivers for these investments such as the food crisis, undervalued farmland, soil fertility, the ageing of the rural population, the conditions negotiated by Romania for agriculture at EU level as well as emigration. In a further chapter I give an overview of the main actors, active in Romania in the agribusiness sector and the impacts resulted from their activities. I point to the economic, social and environmental impacts and argue that more interdisciplinary research is needed among environmental, anthropology, political and economic scientists. Such overarching studies can represent a less biased view of large-scale farming and can be a supportive tool for the civil society in advancing policies for local livelihoods and small-scale farming.

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PRESENTATION: Farmland Dilemmas: Blended Categories and Conflicting Identities in Reordered Land Ownership and Sale.

Prompted by the inflow of new investors in the area of agriculture and by the expiration of the moratorium on farmland purchases by foreigners, a public and especially parliamentary debate took place in Slovakia, eventually resulting in passing through a new legislation regarding land acquisition and sale. Drawing on the statements, explanations and arguments pronounced in the debate, this paper analyses the criteria of differentiation among the various landowners and the array of subcategories which the enrolled binaries create. By applying discourse analysis, ethnomethodology and the sociology of critique, the study focuses on the positioning of diverse owners and land rights in the realm of values, stakeholders and actions that have been discussed in relation with Slovak farmland. It is argued that not only the plurality of owners, identities and vested interests but also the unfounded dichotomizing between domestic and foreign or farmer and non-farmer left the legislation questionable and confusing.

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Ian is managing director of NOVİROST Limited, which provides strategic advisory and corporate finance services to food, agribusiness, biofuels and forestry sectors in emerging markets. Prior to this, he developed the agribusiness advisory platform for the International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) covering the former Soviet Union. He was previously Managing Director Agribusiness at Lonrho Plc where he directed a diversity of activities in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, including management of over 500,000 hectares of farmland in 3 countries. He has worked in Russia and the CIS since 2002.