The politics of emotions
Emotional discourses and displays in post-Cold War contexts

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“A second month has gone by since I was torn from you, from our home, from our Sarajevo. I have learned in this short but for me so long time what sorrow, loneliness and nostalgia mean. And suffering, real suffering” (Woman, late twenties, Sarajevo. In: Mertus et al. 1997: 93).

“People are insecure, and there is so much conflict about every little thing: over land, over anything that a person gets - there are accusations about how he got it, and then he gets mad at the accusers and soon whole families are not speaking to each other” (Woman, 50, Bulgaria. In: Creed 1999: 228).

“[Expelled Sudeten Germans] do not want to return to a Czech national state, they do not even want minority rights at a European level. They want land. It is of secondary importance whether that land will be Freistaat Sudetenland, or another federal land of Germany” (Karel Čtvrttek in the Czech Communist newspaper Haló Noviny, 1992).

From the perspective of emotions, post-socialist Europe is a fascinating area of research. As the above quotes suggest, in many parts of the region the tumultuous political and economic developments have generated strong emotions, ranging from hope and euphoria to disappointment, envy, disillusionment, sorrow, loneliness, and hatred. Over the past twelve years, the region has attracted the attention of an increasing number of scholars from different disciplines who have analyzed various aspects of what has become known as ‘the transition’ or - theoretically more apt - ‘processes of transformation’.1 Most of them have focused on the economic, political, legal, and social dimensions of this process, and have paid little or no attention to emotional dynamics.2 A number of anthropologists have made references to emotional discourses and displays in their analyses, yet without explicitly incorporating ‘emotions’ in their theoretical perspective.3

By contrast, this special issue regards emotional dynamics as an inherent part of the transformations in Central and Eastern Europe, and explores the dialectics of politics and emotions in five distinct post-Cold War contexts. The contributors, four anthropologists and one political scientist, examine processes of continuity and change in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Croatia, and Kosovo. While the Czech case study has a narrower focus on small-scale politics in a Bohemian village, the Romanian and the Slovenian contributions look at the activities of both local actors and migrants who have left the region while the Communists were still in power. The Croatian case study examines the interaction
between migrating and remigrating groups of inhabitants in the Croatian town of Knin, including Serbs and Croats who fled and later returned to their home town, and Croat resettlers from other parts of the former Yugoslavia. The article on Kosovo has an even broader scope, and explores the emotional discourses of the various international political players in the Kosovo conflict.

**Anthropological approaches to emotions**

The articles address a number of issues central to the anthropology of emotions, an area of study that has grown considerably since the late 1970s. Anthropologists working in the field have developed socio-cultural theories that have challenged traditional biological and psychological approaches to emotions. Biological theories, inspired by the work of Charles Darwin, have in most cases regarded emotions as adaptive physical processes that have developed as an inherent part of human evolution. From an anthropological perspective, however, the notion of humans as simply a 'biological species' is too limited because it disregards or simplifies the influence of cultural complexities on human life. The psychologist Ekman (1980), for example, compared people's facial expressions in thirteen different cultural settings, and claimed to have found evidence for cross-cultural universals, which in his view were generated by biological forces. His experiments and interpretations have been criticized by numerous scholars, such as Michelle Z. Rosaldo (1983) who accused him of assuming the existence of physiological universals and then simply 'adding culture'.

Most psychologists have perceived emotions primarily as intrapsychic phenomena, and have attempted to understand emotional processes through experiments with individual participants in controlled environments. This approach has been firmly rooted in a belief in scientific objectivity, and, as such, differs radically from the now dominant trend in interpretative anthropology with its emphasis on reflexivity and the subjective nature of knowledge production. Like most anthropologists, a number of innovative psychologists have criticized the common psychological tradition of lab-based experiments. Brian Parkinson, for instance, has noted that the emphasis of psychological theories on internal generative mechanisms "artificially isolates emotional experience from the ongoing social context within which it is often intrinsically linked" (1995: 24). He has plausibly argued that "although these theories may provide a relatively comprehensive analysis of individual emotion, they are still limited by their inattention to the social dimension which is crucial to many instances of emotion as it occurs during everyday life" (ibid.: 146).

Not surprisingly, the main focus in most anthropological research on emotions has been the social and cultural dynamics of emotional life. Anthropologists have conducted research in a large number of different cultural settings, and dealt with topics as varied as, for example, emotion and feeling in Sinhalese healing rites (Kapferer 1979), headhunting and emotional dynamics in the Philippines (Rosaldo 1980, 1983, 1984), anger and shame in Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin 1983), anger and shame in Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin 1983), mother love and detachment in a Brazilian shantytown (Schepert Hughes 1985, 1990), emotions and conviviality in native Amazonia (Overing and Passess 2000), and love for nature in the British environmentalist movement (Milton 2002). The most prominent anthropological approaches to emotions have defined emotions as functional realms of action, as socially constructed categories, as culturally specific narratives, as evaluative judgments, and as ideological discourses which may reinforce power relations (cf. Lutz and White 1986).

The theme of politics is of major importance in the work of post-structuralist anthropologists inspired by the work of Michel Foucault...
(cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990). These scholars are primarily interested in the connection between emotion discourse, sociability, and power in everyday life contexts. In an edited collection, entitled *Language and the politics of emotion*, Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990: 15) pointed out that “emotional discourses are implicated in the play of power and the operation of a historically changing system of social hierarchy”, and noted that emotion discourses may establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power and status differences. In other words, emotions are not only used by those in power to persuade and dominate the less powerful, but they also provide loci of resistance, idioms of rebellion, and the means of establishing complementarity with status superiors (ibid.).

Arjun Appadurai, for example, who defined emotions as “discursive public forms” (1990: 93), pointed out that in Hindu India, ‘praise’ (*stôttiram*) is a pragmatic performance in which relations of reciprocity are created between superiors and inferiors. The case study also convincingly demonstrated that emotion talk constructs culturally specific notions of personhood and emotivity. In Hindu India, the meaning of ‘praise’ is defined by the emotional and aesthetic theory of *rasa*, which is based on the assumption that people evoke feelings in themselves and others “by exteriorizing [their] own emotions in a particular formulaic, publicly understood, and impersonal way” (ibid.: 107). This notion of emotivity stands in sharp contrast to common western perceptions of emotions as authentic, personal feelings.

Issues of power and sociality are also central in Geoffrey White’s analysis of the practice of ‘disentangling’ (*graurutha*) performed by the A’ara-speaking Isabel from the Solomon Islands. During special gatherings, villagers meet to discuss conflicts and related ‘bad feelings’. In one of the meetings, an old man expressed his anger (*di’a tagna*) at his neighbor for hitting misbehaving children. In other words, he reproduced culturally specific norms concerning the ‘proper’ expression of feelings in particular social contexts, i.e. the view that anger directed against powerless children is improper. By contrast, the old man’s own anger was justified because it was directed at an adult (cf. White 1990). The case-study shows that emotion talk directly shapes social life, and that it provides a moral framework in which power relations are being discussed and played out.

Several anthropologists have examined emotional dynamics in the context of repressive state policies, and explored what are clear connections between the dynamics of politics and emotions. Intimidation and politically motivated assassinations in El Salvador, Guatamala, and Nigaragua have evoked widespread feelings of grief, fear, and anger (cf. Suárez-Orozco 1990). 5 Years after their escape, traumatized refugees and migrants who have been part of these ‘cultures of terror’ (Taussig 1987) are still afflicted by syndromes of terror and guilt over selective survival, as Primo Levi and many others were after their release from Auschwitz.

The writings of refugees and displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia reflect similar syndromes, as well as intense feelings of loss and homesickness. The nine year old Mirsada Salihovic from Bosnia-Herzegovina wrote the following poem:

“I wish I had a mask. If I could have a mask, I would want it to be authentic/I would like my mask to be in the shape of the sun/Then I would, in the cold winter days, put my mask on/my face and I would warm my sister and all the children who are cold/If I had a mask of sunshine, I would then be above/Bosnia where I would heat my people and all the children and my father, and even more/If my wish were to come true, that I was truly the sun/my mask would allow me to see my father!” (Mertus et al. 1997: 151).

For the survivors of war and atrocities, one of the ways of dealing with traumatic experiences...
is by expressing one’s thoughts and feelings in words. The reconstruction of the trauma story is an essential stage in the recovery process during which traumatized selves are reconstituted and order is imposed on disorder (cf. Lewis Herman 1992, Stein 1993). It is important to note that trauma stories can also be politically highly significant (Svašek 2002b, Volkan 1999). Trauma narratives can be constructed and played out in the public domain, as shown by Fierke in her contribution.

In an article on the emotional remembering of the bombing of Pearl Harbor at the Arizona Memorial in Hawaii, Geoffrey M. White (2000) has used the term ‘entextualization’ to suggest the way in which survivor stories may serve political purposes when specific discourses of suffering are made routine through repetition and institutionalization. The personal stories became the object of public performance in the museum context, and evoked powerful nationalist sentiments. The dynamics of emotional memory and nationalist sentiment is another theme in this special issue.

All contributions firmly place ‘emotions’ in the cultural, political, and socio-historical contexts in which they are evoked, felt, framed, expressed, and contested. The main focus is the political dimension of emotional discourses and displays in a post-Cold War world. The analyses aim first of all to provide an insight into the dialectics of politics and emotions, and secondly, to shed light on the cultural and political complexities of life in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe.

Birgit Müller analyzes the use of emotionally powerful discourses in a struggle for power in a Czech village. Filippo Zerilli examines the conflicts between tenants and owners that have arisen as a result of the privatization and restitution of residential property in Bucharest. Zlatko Skrbiš focuses on the increasing significance of an emotionally powerful nationalist myth produced by Slovenian migrants. Carolin Leutloff looks at how emotional memories and judgements have influenced the claims for housing and ownership by Serbs and Croatians. And finally, Karin Fierke investigates emotional rhetoric in Serbian, Kosovan, and Nato discourses during the Kosovo crisis.

This introduction will first discuss some of the philosophical underpinnings of the main argument of this theme issue, i.e. that emotions are inherent in politics and political change. The article will then outline the three main themes which weave through the individual papers, and which - if in somewhat generalizing terms - can be regarded as characteristic of the transformation period as it has developed in most post-socialist countries. The themes are the resurgence of nationalist sentiments, conflicts about the restitution of state property in the context of economic deprivation and legal change, and, lastly, the interplay between local, national, and transnational political forces in a new, post-Cold War context.

**Reason is passion: the dialectics of politics and emotions**

The claim that political behavior is necessarily emotional undermines the image of human beings as purely rational political actors, an image which has been used for many centuries in the West to make distinctions between ‘civilized Europeans’ and non-European ‘savages’, between ‘rational, responsible men’ and ‘passionate, irrational women’, and between ‘wise Christians’ and ‘hot-blooded Muslims’.

It should be noted that similar oppositions have also been used by numerous individuals, groups, and political actors in post-Socialist countries, in particular to reinforce their claims to moral and political superiority. The slogan ‘return to Europe’, (návrat do Evropy) for example, was used by the Civic Forum during and after the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution of November 1989 to evoke images of a more rational and just, ‘truly European’ society, and to announce a radical break with forty years of state-socialist immorality.
Ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia created similar oppositions to justify their nationalist aspirations. The Slovenian nationalists in Skrbiš’ paper, for example, claimed descent from the proto-Slavic Venets who in their view were more civilized and more European than the wild Bosnian and Serbian Slavs. The Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić described how numerous restaurants, bars, and other public places all over post-socialist Eastern Europe were renamed ‘Europe’. Referring to a cinema in Zagreb, she wrote:

“Its previous name, for many decades, had been The Balkan. All of a sudden, the old name was seen as a symbol of the past, of primitivism, of the war, of something ‘non-European’. The new name is heavily loaded with a complex of positive values (…). It represents Christian tolerance, civilised behaviour and bourgeois values” (1996: 10-11). The image of wild passion and controlled reason as opposing realms of human behavior is strongly rooted in Western philosophy. Plato (c.429-c.347 BC) imagined reason as a charioteer who dominated the unruly passions, represented as wild horses. Philosophers such as Kant (1724-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831) equally contrasted rational action to uncontrollable, passionate behavior, and saw reason as a way to obtain freedom and to attain moral truth. In this view, reason was the foundation of sound politics, whereas passion threatened the moral and societal order.

By contrast, Aristotle (died 322 BC) was interested in the ways in which emotions could be manipulated, and become powerful means by which orators, politicians, and others influenced people (cf. Lyons 1980: 33). In *Rhetoric*, he defined emotions as “all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements” (Aristotle 1941: 1380), and he thus undermined the belief in politics as a purely rational sphere of action. Instead, he regarded politics as an interpersonal process in which knowledge of other people’s emotional behavior was vital. He particularly valued information about people’s different emotive states of mind, the social context in which they felt specific emotions, and the reasons for their emotivity. The cultivation of rhetoric, “the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others”, became an important field of study in medieval universities (cf. Blackburn 1994: 330)

For empiricists such as the Scottish philosopher David Hume, the power of reason was limited, and there was no escape beyond the senses. In the *Treatise of human nature*, Hume argued that “reason is the slave of passions, and can aspire to no other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume 1739, quoted by Blackburn 1994: 319). To Hume, passions were natural events ordered by principles that can be discovered through empirical study. Sceptical about the power of reason, and regarding ‘passions’ as the core of all human action, Hume believed moral thought to be the expression of naturally evolved sentiments. In his view, sentiments evolved naturally because of the necessity for cooperation in societies (Blackburn 1994: 180). In other words, he saw sentiments as an inherent part of political life.

Leaving aside the difficult question of the extent to which emotions can be regarded as ‘natural’ phenomena, Hume’s ideas have interesting implications for the argument that politics and emotions are dialectically related. The idea that sentiments generate moral thought and forms of cooperation implies that emotional life is fundamental to political thinking and practice.

In line with the perspectives of Aristotle and Hume, the contributors to this issue argue that core emotions such as anger, fear, and joy are able to motivate and empower people to take political action. The contemporary philosopher William Lyons has similarly argued that emotions can be strongly motivating and thus produce action, as emotions and motives overlap (cf. Lyons 1980: 52).

All this suggests that the distinction between rational politics and irrational emotions
is an ideological construct rather than a universal rule. Political action always involves emotional discourse and display. Emotional action does not, however, always result in political change. The Romanian tenants in Zerilli’s paper who felt threatened by new house owners, for example, used their emotions as a source of political action during their demonstrations in Bucharest, but clearly lacked the institutional power to change their situation. By contrast, NATO successfully used emotional rhetoric to find public support for its bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia, as demonstrated by Fierke in this issue.

The politics of nationalist sentiments

As noted above, one of the characteristics of post-socialist politics is the widespread display of nationalist feelings, and this - at times worrying - development provides urgent professional and political reasons for examining the politics of nationalist sentiments. In the past twelve years numerous nationalist parties have been established, and some have gained a considerable amount of political power. Also, nationalist members of ethnic minorities in several countries have created strong links with members of their own ethnic group in neighboring states, and have questioned or moved existing state boundaries. Wars have been fought in the name of nationalism, and nationalist extremists in several countries have intimidated and killed gypsies and non-European students and refugees whom they regard as ‘polluting threats’ to the nation. In some countries, people have expressed anti-Semitic feelings.

As Katharine Verdery (1996: 102) noted, nationalist feelings had not completely disappeared under socialism.

“Instead of nudging national sentiments in a new direction (…), socialism strengthened them in ways that were not readily apparent until the changed political circumstances of the ‘transition’ gave them new space”.

The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for example, were federations of republics created on the basis of national difference. Organizational forms based on other types of shared identity were not permitted, and as Verdery convincingly argues, this explains why it was all the more likely that nationalism should serve as a strong force in group formation after the end of state socialism. Competition for access to scarce resources also reinforced networks between peoples of a similar ethnic background (ibid.).

It is common practice for nationalist politicians to select and incorporate particular historical narratives and emotional memories into their political discourse as a rhetorical device to evoke and strengthen nationalist sentiments. In general, it is of strategic importance to politicians to influence people’s perception of self, and memories that ‘almost automatically’ stir up feelings often have a strong impact on people’s self perception. Self, in this context, must be understood as a personal and a political identity. The most effective nationalist symbols collapse the distinction between the personal and the political, and portray the nation-state as a loyal kin group and an identity/place category with natural connections between blood and soil (Svašek 1999, 2000, Verdery 1999b). Those who are not included in the nation are automatically defined as polluting outsiders.

Fierke notes that the creation of the oppositional semantic categories of “us” and “them” is a discursive strategy commonly used in the politics of emotions. Such labels can create sharp distinctions between “self and dehumanized expendable others”, which can also invoke painful memories and negative emotions, as for example during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, when the labels ‘Ustasha’ for Croats and ‘Chetniks’ for Serbs evoked painful memories of interethnic aggression and suffering during the Second World War.

In a recent publication, Ger Duijzings (1999)
also pointed out that ‘the suffering nation’ can be a powerful nationalist image. In the run up to the Yugoslav conflict, Serb nationalists used the Kosovo myth and references to the Second World War to reinforce the notion of Serbs as a nation of victims. The myth referred to the battle of Kosovo in 1389, when the Serbs had been defeated by the Ottoman Turks. Like Fierke, he argued that the fate of the Serbs during the Second World War also served as an emotional narrative that stirred up vivid memories of suffering, both on a personal and a national scale (ibid.: 197).

One could give many other examples of the incorporation of references to a past of collective suffering in contemporary nationalist discourse. Czech Communists and Republicans constantly remind their audience of anti-Czech Nazi crimes in an attempt to block interregional cross-border cooperation with the Germans. In 1994, for example, the journalist Jiří Frajdl stated in the Communist newspaper Haló Noviny that the Euroregion Egrensis set up in 1992 was ‘an old Nazi plan’, a conspiracy between pro-German Czechs and anti-Czech Germans (cf. Svašek 2000).

In other cases, cross-border links have been strengthened by nationalist members of ethnic groups. Macedonians, for example, began questioning the borders between Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania in 1989. In October 1989, supporters of the Skopje football team used the emotional context of a football match to propagate the political idea of a single Macedonian nation by shouting slogans, such as “We fight for a united Macedonia”. In February, tens of thousands of nationalists demonstrated in Skopje to celebrate their identity, and to protest against the “perceived oppression of Macedonians in Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania” (Poulton 2000: 173).

Leutloff examines the dynamics of politics and nationalist sentiments from the perspective of ‘emotional judgements and claims’. Emotional judgements and claims, she argues, are reactions to socially and culturally construed expectations and norms which are also influenced by memories of past events. Such memories may or may not be politicized.

Not surprisingly, Leutloff’s analysis shows that in the post-war Croatian town of Knin, memories of interethnic aggression have evoked nationalist sentiments that have reinforced processes of ethnic identification. By contrast, however, the article points out that memories of life before the war also influence people’s judgements and behavior. Those memories - of friendly interethnic neighborhood relations - “resist the politicized reading of the past”, and are at odds with the official nationalist propaganda. Consequently, such narratives and emotions have remained part of a hidden, private discourse. Fierke’s analysis of emotion and the ritual enactment of war also draws attention to the fact that emotions may be conflicting and ambivalent.

Skrbiš approaches the dialectics of politics and nationalist sentiments from a theoretical perspective that incorporates economic metaphors. Inspired by Bourdieu’s notion of social capital, he introduces the term ‘emotional capital’, and argues that the Venetological theory of Slovenian origin, which was developed by nationalist Slovenian migrants during the late 1980s, both generated and exploited emotional capital. Emotions are here regarded as valuable assets that can be employed by socially situated individuals to gain power and authority. In the Slovenian case, the capital consists of anti-Communist, pro-religious, nostalgic sentiments that have been reinforced and transferred through particular diasporic discourses and practices.

As Skrbiš shows, certain groups of Slovenians have used the emotional capital to identify themselves as ‘superior’ Venets in opposition to the ‘inferior’ Slavs. The discourse must be firmly placed in the context of post-Cold War developments, since the Venet theory effectively accuses the Slavonic Serbs
and Croats of responsibility for the outbreak of interethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, the theory is an attempt to undermine the authority of mainstream Slovenian historians, and accuses them of Communist distortion.

The metaphor of ‘emotional capital’ is indeed useful in any consideration of the dialectics of politics and emotions. It draws attention to the ways in which people actively manipulate particular sentiments for political reasons, and points out how they may use this ability as a form of ‘investment’. As noted earlier, political parties in various post-socialist countries have capitalized on the disillusion of disappointed citizens, and have used this emotional capital to gain political power.

The metaphor of ‘emotional capital’ may, however, wrongly suggest an image of people as overtly conscious beings who simply decide to ‘spend’, ‘exploit’ or ‘invest in’ particular sentiments. Even though this may often be the case, people can also feel overwhelmed by emotions, and experience emotions as bodily feelings over which they have no mental control. Well-known sayings in different languages refer to the experience of emotions as bodily changes, as in the English sayings ‘being blind with rage’ and ‘feeling shivers down the spine’ (cf. Leavitt 1996). Certain physical changes are of course not just metaphors, but are measurable and are related to physiological changes. An increasing heartbeat, for example, is related to an increasing level of adrenaline. Some anthropologists with an interest in politics and emotions have recently included a focus on physiological processes in their theoretical framework. Karen Lysaght (2001), for example, has examined how fear, as an embodied feeling, can influence human consciousness, and affect the spatial behavior of fearful Catholics in the streets of Belfast. Such a perspective could also be used to analyze the impact of fear in post-socialist Eastern Europe, in particular in cases of interethnic violence and racist threats.

**Xenophobia: the politics of fear and hatred**

Discourses of national belonging often include notions of ethnic purity, and make rigid distinctions between pure selves and polluting others. As Verdery suggested, such views were easily adopted in post-socialist Europe because:

“[m]any East Europeans are used to thinking in terms of secure moral dichotomies between black and white, good and evil. For those who also understand democracy not as institutionalised disagreement and compromise but as consensus (...) a powerful longing for a morally pure unity can easily solidify around the idea of the nation and the expulsion of polluting aliens: those who are not of the ‘People-as-One’” (Verdery 1996: 94).

In Hungary, for example, anti-gypsy, anti-semitic and other xenophobic sentiments have been propagated by the right-wing nationalist politician István Csurka who established Party of The Magyar Truth/Justice and Life (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja) in 1993. The party name is identical to the name of one of the old fascist political parties of the 1930s, and skinheads who are also party members talk of themselves as ‘Hungarists’, another word created by the fascist movements of the 1930s. The party aims at spreading fear by picturing non-Magyars as a threat to the nation, and refers to socialism, communism, liberalism, and globalization as chapters in a “world-encompassing judeoplutocratic conspiracy” (György Péteri, personal conversation. See also: Arato 1994: 106; Szalai 1994).

Csurka used to be a prominent member of the Magyar Demokratikus Forum (Democratic Forum of Hungary), which in the early post-communist years was the leading non-socialist party attracting various groupings from the decent traditional conservative Right to some extreme rightist positions. He was, however, expelled from this party in 1993 for his
radical rightism and anti-semitism, showing that his politics of fear and hatred is far from acceptable to Hungarian society at large, although his fascist party continues to have a number of seats in parliament.

The common Magyar idea that gypsies ‘don’t work’ and are ‘unproductive parasites’ has been widespread in different historical periods. It has been a factor in stirring up anti-gypsy feelings during the inter-war period and under state-socialism, and has evoked similar emotions during the past twelve post-socialist years. Confronted with increasing economic insecurity and the hard rules of capitalism, many poor Hungarians have blamed the gypsies. As Michael Stewart (1997: 7-8) noted:

“Those rare individual Gypsies who have succeeded in manipulating the new possibilities have brought down the wrath of their non-Gypsy neighbours. Often the success of these Gypsies is interpreted as the result of a cunning, simultaneous manipulation of both the market and the state benefit system - just as in the past the Gypsies were thought to benefit both from the state handouts and from the semilegal trade sector (...). It is, then, at the rich Gypsies, as much as at the half-starved Gypsy pickpockets and thieves, that the ethnic cleaners now direct their fury”.

In his study of Serbs and gypsies in Novi Sad, Mattijis van de Port (1998) has similarly argued that gypsies evoked feelings of contempt among the majority of Serbs. Interestingly, however, whereas the Serbs considered gypsy speech-acts to be an endless stream of lies and cheats, they regarded gypsy music, in all its tragic sentimentality, to be the most truthful rendering of Serbian life experiences. In Serbia, the idea that the emotions are the realm of the ‘really real’, the domain where nonnegotiable truths can be found, has a very strong appeal. It is an idea that became particularly attractive during the recent war when people felt the pain of losing relatives, friends, the homestead, communal life, and feelings of hatred towards those who inflicted these wounds. These feelings were hard to translate into words, and Serbs admired gypsy musicians for their ability to express them in music.

As in the other post-socialist countries, in the Czech Republic too discrimination against Romanies has worsened since November 1989. In a study by Weinerová (1994) Roman respondents gave several reasons why life had been better before the introduction of political ‘freedom’. Economically, they had been better off because of the lower costs of living, the right to employment, and better housing policies. Socially, they had been in a better position because people had been more willing to help each other, they had felt safer, and there had been “criminal proceedings against the expression of personal views disloyal to the regime” (ibid.: 25), which had meant that people were not allowed to form fascist groups, and had feared to express racist views in public. After the 1989 Velvet Revolution, groups of skinheads were openly violent against Romanies. In 1993, a seventeen-year-old Czech girl who participated in a televised beauty contest stated in an interview that she wanted to become “a public prosecutor” because it would enable her to “clean our town of its dark-skinned inhabitants” (Stewart 1997: 2)

Emotional dimensions of economic change

Twelve years after the ‘end of communism’, the initial feelings of hope in a better future have, in many cases, been replaced by disillusionment and scepticism. Widespread unemployment, new class differences, poverty, corruption scandals, disagreements about the restitution and appropriation of state property, and the economic advantages taken by the old nomenclature have generated increasing distrust in the new ‘democratic’ states (cf. Kalb, Svašek and Tak 1999).
The ‘morning after’ effect has evoked emotional responses among the majority of the economically less successful populations in all post-socialist countries, and in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, dissidents-turned-politicians have had to admit that their initial ideas about the creation of a new moral order were naive (Bauman 1994: 28). Those who, influenced by western economic advisors, believed in the neo-liberal promise of a rapid transition to an ideal market economy have discovered “that the idea of an unproblematic self-regulating market is utopian” (Bryant and Mokrzycki 1994, referring to Polanyi 1944: 3). By 1993, it had become clear that ‘freedom’ had a different face to what many had thought. In Prague, Czechs frequently told me that they had simply moved ‘from the zoo to the jungle’. In all post-socialist countries, the laws of the ‘jungle’ have generated insecurity, fear, and anger, and - as noted above - these feelings been exploited by extremist politicians who have offered simplistic ‘solutions’.

The following two examples serve to briefly illustrate how people who were disappointed in post-socialist economic policies used their emotions to empower themselves to take public action.

Polish peasants, who had been much better off during the last decade under socialism, were extremely disappointed in the economic reforms introduced by the post-1989 Solidarity government (cf. Bauman 1994: 22; Kocik 1996). The new policies, also known as ‘shock-therapy’, included production constraints as “higher costs of production resources, uncertain demand for agricultural outputs, and increased the arbitrariness of business transactions” (Zbierski-Salameh 1999: 202). If anything, the peasants were indeed ‘shocked’, and voiced their anger during mass demonstrations in 1990 by organizing road blocks, occupying government buildings, and dropping tons of potatoes in front of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In 1995, the Hungarian government evoked similar angry protests when it presented a proposal to restructure the welfare system. As Haney described: “When the doors opened, a stampede of women rushed into the [welfare] office. Their emotions ran high, fluctuating between anger and fear. ‘I cried when I heard the news last night’, one female client remarked” (1999: 151). The women were furious and upset as they expected that the new neo-liberal welfare regime would not give them enough space to pursue their own interests.

Evidently, if we want to know more about the political impact of public protests, it is necessary to deal with the issues of agency and institutional power, and look at the ways in which willing influential political actors are able to translate emotional and moral claims into effective legal and policy changes.

Emotions and changing property relations

One of the key issues of economic change in post-socialist Europe is the privatization and restitution of former state-owned property. Several anthropologists, who all regard ownership as a multidimensional socio-cultural phenomenon, have explored this process (cf. Abravams 1996, Hann 1998). Chris Hann, for example, noted that:

“A concern with property relations requires investigations into the total distributions of rights and entitlements within society, of material things and of knowledge and symbols. It requires examination of practical outcomes as well as ideals and moral discourses, and an appreciation of historical processes, both short-term and long-term” (1998: 34).

Verdery (1998: 161) similarly claimed that property “is best analyzed in terms of the whole system of social, cultural, and political relations, rather than through more narrowly legalistic notions such as ‘rights’ and ‘claims’.”

It seems evident that emotional dynamics
have an important impact on the ways in which such relations evolve, in particular in societies in which property relations change rapidly. Emotions are inherent to ownership partly because people’s sense of self is often influenced by the ways in which they relate to their social and material surroundings. ‘Being’ and ‘having’ are dialectically related, and consequently, losing or gaining property may generate strong feelings and sentiments. In a small village in West Bohemia, for example, the various actors involved in changing property relations used emotions as a form of empowerment to reach their conflicting goals: to claim, buy, or temporarily use particular buildings and plots of land in the village. They also used different emotional arguments to justify property-related moral discourses of self and society (Svašek 2002a).

Leutloff (this issue) also argues that emotions have a strong impact on property claims. She analyzes the emotionally loaded conflicts over property and housing rights that arose when Serbian house owners, who had left Croatia during the war as refugees, returned to claim their possessions, and found them occupied by new, uncooperative Croatian settlers. Her paper shows that the claims by Serbs and Croats alike were initially influenced by emotional judgements based on group-specific war-experiences along national lines, and deepened by Croat nationalistic political propaganda. Pre-war convictions concerning social and private property rights, however, became ever more influential, and came into conflict with nationalist propaganda.

The sentimental attachment people have to property is the core of Zerilli’s analysis, which introduces the notion of ‘sentimental drama’, and argues that the ‘dramas’ orchestrated by the Romanian house owners and the tenants can only be understood when placed in national as well as transnational legal contexts. Zerilli shows how both the tenants and the owners transformed personal feelings of loss into competing discourses with the aim of appealing to a wider audience. The tenants used expressions such as ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘deportation’ to fight against one of the consequences of privatization, i.e. losing the right to live in the formerly state-owned flats that had been given back to the former owners as part of the politics of restitution. The owners, on the other hand, played out their memories of traumatic loss caused by the communist regime, and branded its policy of forced nationalization a criminal offence. In the light of the future enlargement of the European Union, they approached European institutes to back up their legal battles, thus staging their ‘drama’ for a larger audience.

The theatrical metaphor of ‘sentimental drama’ acknowledges that people are often able to hide or exaggerate their feelings, and that they can play emotional ‘roles’ with the intention of creating a certain effect in their ‘audiences’. The metaphor of the ‘theatre’ was also used by Scott (1990) in the concept of ‘hidden transcripts’ which he used to analyze the complex political dynamics of domination and resistance in oppressive political systems. Applied to emotion theory, the notion of hidden transcripts can also be used to examine the emotional dimensions of political processes.

Evidently, people are not completely free to create and perform emotional dramas of their own choice. As Parkinson noted, emotional roles are partly constrained by institutional and cultural pressures. In other words, “enactment of institutional and cultural scripts about emotion depends crucially on the allocation and renegotiation of roles, and on the state-setting that has been done behind the scenes before the acting ever takes place” (Parkinson 1995: 202; see also Goffman 1967). In the case of the Romanian house owners, for example, the emotional discourses and displays played out in the context of institutions such as the European Commission had to conform to specific discursive and institutional traditions.

The role concept has also been incorporated into various psychological and sociological theories of emotion (ibid.). Hochschild
(1983) argued that institutional roles and cultural scripts influence the ways in which emotions are expressed and felt, and Averill (1980) and Sarbin (1986) claimed that the enactment of emotions is influenced by the cultural content of emotional meaning. These insights support the anthropological view that emotional dynamics are intrinsic to cultural and political processes. With regard to the privatization and restitution of property in post-socialist Europe, this implies that it is necessary to examine the ability of particular politicians and interest groups to influence political processes through culturally-specific emotional discourses and displays. Such issues should be central to future research.

The interplay of local, national, and transnational emotional and political forces

The various contributions to this special issue demonstrate that after the end of the Cold War, as a result of the globalizing forces of capitalism, migration, forced migration, and the creation of transnational forms of political and military cooperation, the emotional discourses in and of the regions have been influenced by a variety, or rather a dense interaction, of local and extra-local factors.12

The planned enlargement of the European Union has shaped the political debates in various post-socialist countries, and has generated emotional exchanges between the proponents and antagonists of future membership. It has also created tensions between those countries that have been accepted in the first round (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic), and those that have not.

The existence of transnational, European political and legal bodies such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Court of Justice has transnationalized post-socialist local and national discourses. Numerous local actors and interest groups in different countries have addressed these European bodies to protest against particular national policies, and attempt to gain certain rights.

The complex interconnection between local, national, and European political and emotional dynamics in the post-Cold War period is obvious in the case of the Sudeten Germans, for example. The Sudeten Germans, who were expelled to Germany and Austria after the Second World War, and who have been calling for Heimatrecht, the right of return to their lost homeland ever since their expulsion, have fiercely protested against the Czech Republic’s intention to become a European Union member state. The spokesman of the Sudetendutsche Landsmannschaft, Bernd Posselt, who is also a member of the European Parliament, has linked the emotional demands for Heimatrecht to political debates about human rights in the context of European Union law. Together with other German and Austrian parliament members, he recently presented a proposal to annul the post-war constitution of Czechoslovakia (in particular the Beneš decrees) which legalized the expulsion and provided a general amnesty for excesses committed against Sudeten German citizens during the expulsion. These demands have been supported by the right-wing Austrian politician, Haider, the Austrian prime minister Schüssel, and the Hungarian Premier Victor Orbán, who made similar demands for the ethnic Hungarians expelled from Slovakia. Another significant politician who supports the Sudeten German case is the German Christian Democrat Edmund Stoiber whom some political observers have recently tipped to become the next Chancellor of Germany.

The demands have led to emotional turmoil among the Czechs, many of whom fear that the annulment of the Beneš decrees will open the legal doors to the large-scale restitution of Sudeten German property, which will strongly increase German influence in the Czech republic.

The Czechs have turned for political support to representatives of the European Union
and leaders of European member states. During a visit to Prague in April 2002, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair assured the Czechs that the Beneš decrees will not hamper Czech entry into the European Union. The same assurance was given by Günter Verheugen, head of the Commission for European Union Enlargement, who stated that he was concerned about the “overheated atmosphere”, and feared that “this highly emotional question” would affect the political attitude of Czech citizens during the referendum (Mocek 2002).

The case shows that European institutes are being used strategically by local interest groups as transnational political platforms in an attempt to influence national and European politics. In this issue, Zerilli similarly describes how thousands of Romanian former house owners sent complaints to the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg in an attempt to force the Romanian government to change ownership and restitution laws.

Transnational discourses and practices may be used strategically, but transnational models are not ‘automatically’ applied to local conditions. Even though various post-socialist countries have chosen to introduce western-style democratic systems, and to adopt a western-style market economy, they have not simply ‘reprogrammed’ themselves according to a unitary western model. Ethnographic studies have shown that democracy and privatization have many different faces in Central and Eastern Europe.

The following two examples demonstrate that the transformation itself can bring about unexpected outcomes. In a Transylvanian village undergoing decollectivization, the villagers revalorized certain forms of collectivism, and resisted the transition from public to private ownership (cf. Verdery 1999a). In another cultural setting, Bulgarian villagers who had been critical of Communist party policy, began to give their support to the Socialist Party as a form of protest against the post-socialist economic reforms (cf. Creed 1999). In other words, local processes counteracted transnational neo-liberalism.

Müller (this issue) similarly shows that Czech villagers did not apply ‘ideal’ democratic standards to the local political arena. In her contribution, she analyzes the reaction of Czech villagers to their Mayor’s plan to invite a German investor to establish a large cement factory near the village. Despite the official democratization of Czech society, the political debate that followed did not in any way mirror ‘western-style’ democratic culture. Instead, the debate turned into slanderous attacks and the writing of unpleasant anonymous poems which were basically personal accusations on the basis of old enmities. The poems did not reflect the ideological differences between the two main political factions in the village - the communists and the ecologists - but instead served to fuel personal battles and to express and generate negative emotions. In Müller’s view, the emotional exchange fundamentally differed from ‘proper’ democratic discourse, in which representatives of various political parties may passionately discuss standpoints about society in public “without fear of personal reprisal be it from public authorities or fellow villagers”.

The interaction between local and transnational emotional politics is possibly the most evident in Fierke’s paper, which argues that NATO responses to Serb politics of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo were based on allied and American collective memories of three earlier wars, i.e. the Second World War, the Vietnam War, and the war in the Gulf. Fierke uses Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘bewitchment’ to argue that emotionally evocative language actively constructs a context of political response. References to the Second World War, symbolized by the image of ‘genocide’, evoked memories of intense suffering and feelings of guilt, which generated a public outcry for immediate intervention in the former Yugoslavia. By contrast, the American trauma of ‘body bags returning from Vietnam’ demanded a policy of diplomatic pressure and military nonintervention. In combination with
the more recent experience of the ‘clean and short’ war with Iraq, the conflicting emotional images eventually triggered the bombing campaign against Serbia which, ironically, intensified the policy of ethnic cleansing. NATO finally reenacted the 1945 liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe by liberating Kosovo, thus saving itself from its own legitimacy crisis.

The international ‘community’ has continued to play a role in the post-war nation-states in the former Yugoslavia. The International Yugoslav Tribunal in The Hague has successfully demanded the extradition of Milošević and other politicians whom they regard as responsible for crimes against humanity. One of the issues about which Milošević is being questioned is his involvement in the massacre at Srebrenica. In 1993, Srebrenica was designated a ‘safe haven’ for Bosnian Muslims, protected by UNPROFOR peacekeeping forces. In July 1995, the Bosnian Serb army, Vojska Republika Srpska, occupied the enclave to the surprise of Dutchbat, the Dutch battalion of peacekeepers. When Dutchbat made its questionable decision to cooperate with the army and to withdraw, thousands of Muslims were massacred by the Serbs.

As a result of emotional outcries in the media, which sharply criticized the politicians responsible for the mission, the Dutch government commissioned the Dutch Institute for War Documentation to investigate the Dutch role in Srebrenica. The report was published in April 2002 (NIOD 2002), and a few days later, the Dutch government decided to accept its responsibility by stepping down. This again demonstrates that in the post-Cold War period, the emotional and political dynamics in what used to be the ‘West’ and the ‘Eastern bloc’, are closely intertwined.

This Focaal issue aims to open up a debate about the significance of emotions to political, economic, and social life in post-socialist societies (and elsewhere). As this article has emphasized, the members of those societies use emotional dynamics in an attempt to actively generate and respond to a wide variety of changes. They must be regarded as active players in a complex field of interconnected local, national, and transnational political - and therefore emotional - settings.

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### Notes

1. For a critical discussion of the terms ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’, see Bryant and Mokrzycki (1994: 3-4) and Stark (1992: 22).
4. Not all psychologists and anthropologists dif-
fer as fundamentally in their approaches as Ekman and Rosaldo. Numerous scholars in the disciplines of anthropology and psychology have also influenced each other. Various clinical psychologists have developed a sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of emotional discourse and display. Due to large-scale migration, therapists all over the world have been confronted with a variety of patients from different cultural backgrounds. This has led to debates about the culturally-specific nature of certain behavioral problems, and to the development of specific therapies that take cultural dimensions into account. Such therapies agree with Obeyeskere’s view that universalistic approaches to diseases such as depression “impose medico-centric interpretations on decontextualized observations” (Lutz and White 1986: 414). In recent years, a number of anthropologists have been inspired by the work of innovative psychologists such as Damasio (cf. Lysaght 2001, Milton 2002). The anthropologist Whitehouse (2000, 2001) has developed theories of ritual and religion in response to the work of cognitive scientists.

5. It is important to note that acts of violence and terror should not be reduced to politics alone. Torture and punishment can become “a drama of its own rather than merely a political tactic” (Aretxaga 1995: 124; referring to Graziano 1992; Obeyesekere 1992; Suarez-Orozco 1992; Taussig 1987).

6. Various anthropologists have analyzed the politics of emotion in non-European communities. In 1980 Michelle Rosaldo examined the importance of headhunting in the Philippines, and found that indigenous notions of ‘passion’ and ‘knowledge’ were crucial to Ilongot political behavior. Another well-known example is Lila Abu-Lughod’s study of the oral lyric poetry through which women and young men in a Bedouin community in Egypt express personal feelings that violate the moral code underlying the political system (1986). Other anthropologists have - albeit more indirectly - dealt with the political aspects of emotional discourse and display in places such as Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin 1983), the Solomon Islands (White 1985), India (Seymour 1983), and Nukulaelae (Besnier 1987). The political dimension of emotional life was also one of the topics discussed recently at a workshop on emotions organized in 2001 by Kay Milton and myself at the School of Anthropological Studies at Queen’s University Belfast. Some papers examined the significance of emotions and emotional management to politically-relevant cultural processes, such as the construction of social identities and memories, uses of space, and ritual behavior. The participants agreed that, even though emotions do not necessarily generate political action, political activities always involve some sort of emotional dynamics.

7. In the case of anger, he posed the questions: “what is the state of mind of angry people?”, “with whom do they usually get angry?”, and “on what grounds do they get angry”? (Lyons 1980: 34).

8. After the Second World War, members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party propagated the establishment of close connections with the Soviet Union, partly because of their disillusion with Britain and France after the ‘betrayal’ of the Munich Agreement. They were - amongst other things - motivated by their anger with the allied forces, their fear of a future invasion by Germany, and their gratitude towards the Soviet liberators (cf. Svašek 1999). In this case, fear and anger had clear political consequences.

9. Romanies were also the victims of discrimination in the job market. Private employers took advantage of their difficult situation, and often employed them without any form of legal recognition, health insurance or rights. According to Renata Weinerová (1994), the increased internal economic differences within the Romany communities in Prague between a small minority of prosperous Romany entrepreneurs and the majority of the poor unemployed, have increased feelings of inferiority and helplessness among the latter.

10. These included a Dutch entrepreneur who bought large plots of land and numerous buildings in the village, and who established a pheasant shoot with the help of a British gamekeeper, the social democratic Mayor and his supporters, and former Sudeten German inhabitants who were expelled from the village to Germany after the Second World War.

11. The notion that emotions ‘empower’ people to take political action may wrongly create
the impression of humans as passive individuals, steered and overwhelmed by their passions. Even though at the other extreme - the image of people fully in control of their feelings - is equally unrealistic, people do actively manage their emotional life, and induce or suppress particular feelings through what Arlie Russell Hochschild has called “emotional labour” (1983: 7). Politicians are involved in such ‘labour’ when they strategically evoke or strengthen people’s sentiments or when they justify ideas and policies through moral arguments that appeal to commonly shared feelings and emotions.


References

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