

transnationalism, nationalism, citizenship, and
property: Eastern Europe since 1989

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In the 1990s intense interest and activity have developed around the notions of transnationalism and globalization. These topics have begotten new journals (such as *Identities*, *Public Culture*, *Diaspora*, and *Third Text*) and sparked new career trajectories—not to mention the 1996 AES Spring Meeting theme for which this essay was prepared. Among the issues explored are the changing regime of accumulation with which globalization can be linked; changes in liberal notions of citizenship and state, particularly in the face of extensive worldwide migration; and the relations between “global” and “local”—as well as among transnationalism, nationalism, and identities of all kinds. Concomitantly, however, many of these same concepts have themselves fallen under scrutiny. What is “the state” and what exactly is happening to “it”?¹ What is “identity” and what hidden assumptions about it should we be questioning? What, for that matter, is “capitalism”? How can we gain some purchase on the entire cluster of phenomena long associated with liberal polities—states, nations, citizenship, property, democracy, identity, and so forth?

These questionings come from research in many places, but their broadest phrasing makes it clear that we have heard too little from one important precinct: Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Given Communist Party states’ conscious efforts to transform the very meanings of these fundamental terms—to create different kinds of nations and polities, with property and citizen-state relations different from those of liberal capitalism, and partly insulated from transnational processes beyond those with other socialist countries—this region provides us with fundamentally different bases for engaging both the phenomena associated with globalization and the literature about it.² For instance, classic liberalism saw a tight connection among certain understandings of citizenship, property, and identity. Membership in the body of citizens was heavily dependent on having property—in particular, property *in one’s person*—and identities were rooted in “possessive individualism” or a possessive relation to the self (cf.

The formerly socialist societies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union offer an unusual point of departure for considering the mutual interaction of transnationalizing and localizing processes. In this essay I explore these processes with respect to two topics—citizenship and property—important in classic liberal paradigms, which writing on transnationalism often challenges. New citizenship provisions and privatization programs in the former socialist bloc have both transnational causes and nationalizing consequences, for reasons different from those encountered in literature on transnationalism elsewhere. [transnationalism, national identity, citizenship, property, socialism and postsocialism, Eastern Europe]

Handler 1985; Macpherson 1962; Strathern 1988). In the socialist world, however, the predominance of *collective* property and the attempt to weaken possessive relations to individual selves precluded such forms of citizenship and identity. What can we expect now with the collapse of the boundary that at least partially insulated the former Soviet bloc from global processes? (Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that those processes precipitated the collapse; see Verdery 1996:30–37.) What kinds of citizenship and identity will emerge as collective property is dismantled under the press of global forces?

In the present essay I take up some of these questions for the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union—I call them the former Soviet bloc—since the breakdown of Soviet hegemony as of 1989. I do so from the angle of the 1996 AES meeting's themes: transnationalism, nationalism, and cultural identity (although I tend to elide the latter two, for in this region ethnonational and cultural identities are largely synonymous). My examples cover only a small part of what "transnationalism" has come to mean, focusing on questions of citizenship and property as these appear in the former Soviet bloc. I select these two topics in part because of their historical connection within the liberal tradition that socialism strove to alter, and in part because they are fundamental means of establishing boundaries in both liberal and socialist systems—boundaries now being thoroughly overhauled throughout Eastern Europe. These are among the boundaries whose "transgression" the literature on transnationalism often points to, sometimes in a celebratory way. By setting rules of inclusion and exclusion, citizenship and property create "belonging"—what and who is in or out, and what belongs to whom—with important effects on identities.

As a rule, I treat transnationalism and nationalism, or globalizing and localizing processes, as mutually constitutive; they shape one another both simultaneously and sequentially. I tend in this essay, however, to emphasize one side of the interactive relation: how transnationalism nationalizes, more than how local processes affect global ones. I do so not because I think the opposite movement is inconsequential, but because my data lend themselves better to this treatment. In addition, although the processes I consider vary across space in their form and effects, I do not treat variations within the region systematically but bring in one or another case to illustrate specific processes. We gain an idea of spatial variation, however, if we compare the localizing tendencies I underscore here to the rather different picture that Donald Robotham so beautifully draws for the Caribbean in the essay that follows. In it he contrasts the two regions' susceptibilities to the influence of global capital and emphasizes that instead of the "rupture" characterizing the former socialist bloc, what is more common in the Caribbean is a *realignment*.

My discussion is in three parts. In the first I concentrate on citizenship, discussing how transnational democratization prompted nationalist politics that invigorated boundaries yet also cut across them, reterritorializing and deterritorializing at the same time. In the second part I focus on property ownership, considering how transnational "privatization," particularly of land, intersects with both citizenship and national identity in localizing ways. In both parts I also seek to identify some of the features of socialism that give these processes a specific form; occasionally I invoke comparisons with the Caribbean, site of the 1996 meeting (San Juan, PR) and subject of Robotham's companion essay. I conclude with an example that links citizenship and land, transnationalism and nationalism: the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

transnationalism and citizenship

Let me begin with citizenship, a topic of greatly heightened interest in 1990s social science. Ways of thinking about this topic have multiplied its meanings, producing talk of "flexible citizenship," "the privatization of citizenship," "cultural citizenship," "destabilized citizenship," and so on.³ Discussions of citizenship quickly become entangled with the matter of national and cultural identity, as in arguments about whether "civic" citizenly commitments are

precluded by “ethnic” ones. Questions also arise about the political and cultural rights both of minorities within heterogeneous nation-states and of emigrants relative to their sending and host societies. Of particular concern is whether or not such groups should have voting rights and other forms of political influence in their countries of origin. Benedict Anderson exposes this latter issue to sharp critical scrutiny in his essay “Long-Distance Nationalism” (1992), in which he objects to the “politics without accountability” of those émigrés and refugees who contribute funds to violent nationalist organizations in their home countries while living peacefully in a suburb of Paris or Montreal.

As we know from the work of T. H. Marshall (1950), citizenship is not a unitary concept: Marshall subdivided it into civil, political, and social citizenship rights and saw them in a historical progression. Different members of a given polity may have different sets of rights, such as the Arabs in Israel who have equal political rights with others but lack the social ones that accompany military service, from which most Arabs are barred.⁴ We might add to Marshall’s list “cultural” rights as well. These may constitute a fourth set, as in Rosaldo’s “cultural citizenship” (1994), or become grounds for allocating the other three, as when being culturally Croat in Croatia entitles one to certain political benefits (voting, landowning, and so on) that non-Croats lack. The concept of citizenship can be nuanced in other ways too. For instance, according to Soysal (1994), in the new global context we see not just different sets of rights, as with Marshall, but radical transformations in the very concept of citizenship. From being organized and legitimated by nation-state belonging, citizenship is shifting toward a postnational concept that is legitimated by deterritorialized universal principles of human rights and personhood, enforced by international organizations.

Although in any given case one should distinguish among different sets and definitions of rights, for my purposes here it is sufficient to follow Brubaker (1992) in seeing citizenship as a membership category, a mechanism for allocating persons to states and thus as something that creates belonging. Citizenship bounds in two ways: it distinguishes belongers from the excluded, and it ties the former to the state as the guarantor of their rights, thus incorporating them as subjects. The question I pursue is how cultural and national identities in the former Soviet bloc intersect with the citizenship criteria—such as voting rights, proprietorship, and welfare entitlements—that have emerged in the newly defined or redefined states of the region.

I note first that new citizenship provisions have arisen in conjunction with a profoundly transnational process resulting from the collapse of Communist Party rule: “democratization.” Democratization is transnational in at least three senses. First, “democracy” is a transnational symbol, by which both dissidents before 1989 and anticommunist political groups afterward invoked “the West.” Second, international electoral observers oversaw its implantation, certifying (inter alia) newly propitious climates for foreign capital investment; thus power flowing across borders intersected with political pluralization inside them. And third, the politics of this pluralization, in some cases, produced transnational definitions of voting rights and citizenship, creating blocs of voters “abroad,” as I will explain below.

In some countries of the region, an early effect of democratization was to invigorate ethnonational identities. (I say “ethnonational” so as to emphasize that in this region the idea of “nation” has long had primarily an *ethnic* sense rather than the political one more familiar to North Americans.) These identities were there to be invigorated because, contrary to the common view that socialism “kept the lid on” national consciousness, Soviet-style nationalities policy had so thoroughly institutionalized it (see Slezkine 1994; Verdery 1996:85–86; Vujacić and Zaslavsky 1991). This was especially so in the region’s three federations: the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. In these states, where the main national groups all had their own republics, the principle of national difference was constitutionally enshrined. Leaders of nationalities held power in their republics qua nationals. More important, this was so in a social environment that the Party-state had worked assiduously to cleanse of *other* organizational

forms that might compete with its own initiatives. This ethnonational organization can properly be said to have been *part of socialism*, and, although its effects were strongest in the federations, one can see echoes of it elsewhere in the region, as in the Party-membership ethnic quotas of states like Romania and Bulgaria and in the provisions for national minority rights in various constitutions.⁵ One might even say that ethnonational identities were perhaps the principal form of “collective consciousness” that socialism produced.⁶

Thus, after 1989, when the new democratic politics enabled politicians to organize popular sentiments, it happened that in a number of countries (such as Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, and Latvia) the rhetoric and symbols with the greatest electoral appeal were national(ist) ones. Among their partisans were new entrepreneurs—usually former Communist apparatchiks—who saw in nationalist politics a way to protect emerging national markets for *local predators*, rather than opening them to predators from outside. And among the people whom national symbols mobilized were voters of the candidates’ respective ethnonational groups, in countries all of which are complexly multiethnic.⁷ This way of mobilizing votes was convenient, given that parties with recognizable political platforms were, to put it mildly, nonexistent. Because national symbols proved so potent that no political group could entirely avoid them, nationalism in the region’s politics became a matter of degree rather than a distinct political option (see Verdery 1996:104–129). Thus, in the formerly socialist world, transnational flows of capital and political interest turned nationalism into political capital, within transnationally fostered elections. Here the very processes that generated cross-border influence also produced political groups and symbols aimed at reinforcing borders against, or channeling, that influence.

Political mobilization of the vote through national symbols joined with another set of nationalizing processes: the writing and rewriting of constitutions (in part modeled, transnationally, on those of Western Europe). Socialist-era constitutions had placed all socialist citizens on formally equal footing, guaranteeing the rights of coresident nationalities and providing for proportional representation of national minorities in Party organs. The collapse of socialism and of several socialist states ended these constitutional protections. In both new (post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet) states and ongoing ones (such as Albania, Romania, and Hungary), the process of writing new constitutions enabled ambitious politicians to manipulate the very definition of citizenship. This process was especially evident in the newly formed states, such as Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, and Slovenia, in which new constitutions turned nationalities once equal before the law into majorities and minorities bearing new, and differential, citizenship rights. In a number of cases citizenship became relatively easy to obtain for nonresident ethnonationals,⁸ while provisions enabling resident nonmajority ethnonationals to become citizens were cumbersome and often corrupted.⁹ Particularly restrictive citizenship procedures were implemented in the Baltic states, disenfranchising large numbers of the resident Russians (who, it was feared, might seek to reverse these states’ independence). In the Estonian election of 1992, for example, nearly 40 percent of the population (most of them Russians) were barred from voting—a privilege reserved for citizens, who were defined by native Estonian language and descent—and, three years later, the law was revised to lengthen residency requirements for citizen status (OMRI 1995: February 4).

Hayden (1992) has termed the result “constitutional nationalism.” By this he means constitutional and legal structures that privilege members of one ethnonation over other residents. Unlike Western democratic constitutions, in which the subject of rights and the collective bearers of sovereignty are individual citizens, many of the new constitutions accorded sovereignty to one *ethnonation*.¹⁰ As we might expect of socialism, collectivities thus take precedence over individuals as social actors and as bearers of rights, but the collectivities are ethnonational ones. In several cases, then, the national self-determination that gave birth to the new state became a privilege of the majority group alone; other groups would now have to live as

second-class citizens in ethnocratic states, their civil, political, and social rights curtailed by a stigmatizing cultural identity that invariably had racist overtones.

Let me give some examples. The starkest come from the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union (especially those states having a substantial minority population of Russians),¹¹ where the exigencies of new nation-state formation have been vividly apparent. The preamble to Macedonia's 1991 constitution, for instance, defines Macedonia as the "national state of the Macedonian [ethnic] people, which guarantees . . . permanent coexistence of the Macedonian people with Albanians, Turks, Wallachians, Roma, and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia."¹² (Note the distinction between "the people" and "other nationalities.") The constitution of Slovenia defines a three-tiered system of privileges: there is the "sovereign Slovene [ethno]nation," then there are recognized "autochthonous" Hungarian and Italian minorities, whose cultural rights the constitution guarantees, and last come all other minorities (Serbs, Macedonians, and so forth), lacking any such support for their cultural rights (Hayden 1992:659). In that country (as in neighboring Croatia), citizenship and the right to vote are much easier to acquire for fellow ethnonationals living abroad than for nonnationals living on the state's territory—all of whom the new constitution declares to be "foreigners."¹³

A third example is Latvia, where Latvians comprise barely half the population and Russians 34 percent.¹⁴ The new Latvian constitution—represented, like so many others at the time, as an act of "restitution"—was not in fact new but largely restored the old constitution of 1922, when the population was overwhelmingly Latvian. One could not say, then, that it was written expressly to discriminate against non-Latvians (many of whom qualified for citizenship anyway, despite the lengthy residence requirement).¹⁵ Nonetheless, implemented in multiethnic post-socialist Latvia, it had that effect. As in many other countries of the world, resident noncitizens (in Latvia, overwhelmingly non-Latvian) hold basic civil rights, such as freedom of movement, expression, and religion, but not important political and social ones: the rights to vote, hold civil service jobs, buy land, own shares in joint-stock companies, receive state benefits, or possess weapons (Bowring 1995:123–129). Moreover, the extreme nationalist parties found even this law too generous and, in January 1996, sought a referendum on a more restrictive alternative, for which they fell just short of the necessary number of signatures—one-tenth of the voting population. (Indeed, the parties had asked the election commission to extend the deadline so as to secure signatures from Latvians abroad, but they were refused despite protests from such groups as the Latvian Council of Canada.)¹⁶

Constitutional nationalism is not limited to newly independent states (or even, Hayden notes, to the former East bloc).¹⁷ The revised constitution of Romania, for example, states that "national sovereignty belongs to the [ethnic] Romanian people." Sometimes, as in the Latvian case, the ethnocratic effect results from a strict restoration of pre-Communist constitutions, an act governed not by discriminatory intent but by the desire to wipe out all vestiges of the socialist period. In cases such as Croatia, however, which had no prior constitution, the ethnocratic effect would seem intentional. Hayden's term for it is "bureaucratic ethnic cleansing."

With manifold examples of this kind, we see that citizenship rights have become an arena of tremendous struggle in the former Soviet bloc, involving majority and minority nations particularly within the new countries. This has not happened because people chose or were forced to move, as is more usual with transnational ethnic communities of refugees, exiles, or immigrants; when new diasporas in the former Soviet bloc were formed, what moved was not the people but the borders.¹⁸ These citizenship struggles are also international, involving Western countries and NGOs: for instance, the U.S. and West European governments have pressured the Czech Republic and Latvia concerning citizenship laws seen to "hinder European integration and foreign investment."¹⁹ The stakes of these struggles, however, are not control over flows of labor, as in so many other cases (including much of Robotham's Caribbean—see, e.g., Maurer 1995). Perhaps reflecting the dominant role of politics rather than "the economy" in the socialist

organization of power, the stakes in the former Soviet bloc are, rather, access to "democracy," to state making, and to the political and civil rights that can affect the very form of the polity and people's relation to it. This is particularly the case in the states formed or re-created from the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, where newly empowered ethnonational groups fear that resident members of the once-dominant nationality (Serbs, Russians) will try to reestablish that group's dominance.

So far I have been speaking of how constitutional provisions have reorganized citizens' belonging, differentially distributing civil, political, and social rights within these states, and I have suggested some links between the ethnic bias of citizenship here and the organization of socialism. The provisions have also reached across state borders in various ways to protect and enfranchise coethnics abroad. For example, the Hungarian constitution announces, "The Republic of Hungary recognizes its responsibilities toward Hungarians living outside the borders of the country and shall assist them in fostering relations to Hungary" (Dimitrijević 1993:52). Similarly, the Albanian constitution "looks after the recognition of national and democratic rights of the Albanian population living outside the boundaries of the Republic" (Dimitrijević 1993:52). Such expansive attitudes elicited predictable complaint. For example, when the prime minister of Hungary declared in 1990 that he considered himself head of all the world's 15 million Hungarians (only 10 million of whom live in Hungary), he inflamed Hungary's diplomatic relations with neighboring Romania, Slovakia, and Serbia, each of which has a substantial Hungarian minority.

Solicitude for members of diasporas becomes concrete in the case of voting rights for people who had emigrated or been exiled during the communist period, losing citizenship that in most of these countries has now been restored. Some countries allow these émigrés to vote: Hungary permits this only if they return to live in Hungary; other countries, such as Estonia, Poland, and Croatia, permit émigré citizens to vote wherever they live. In the 1995 elections, Polish émigrés could vote only in the primaries, while in Croatia they voted in the general election as well. (Given that there are now more people holding Polish citizenship in Chicago than in Warsaw, it is no surprise that preelection polling failed to predict the results of that election.) The electoral laws in Croatia provide the most extreme case: these permitted voting by *all* émigrés and ethnic Croats abroad, whether they were Croatian citizens or not.²⁰ In Croatia's November 1995 elections, 145 polling places in 41 countries recorded Croat preferences.

What are the effects of these transnational citizenship rights? Or, to use the broader phrasing of political theorist William Connolly (1994), what is the place of nomadic elements in constituting a democracy? On evidence from the former socialist bloc, it seems that the participation of such elements in elections strengthens ethnocentric tendencies. The reason is that these émigrés and political exiles have tended to vote nationalist and to press for ethnonational definitions of sovereignty against the democratic rights of coresident ethnic groups. In Poland, Communist Party leader Kwasniewski's margin of victory over (the more nationalist) Lech Wałęsa in 1995 would probably have been greater without the émigré vote (Carole Nagengast, personal communication, 1996). In Croatia's 1995 elections, while President Franjo Tuđman received only 35 percent of all votes cast in the capital city, Zagreb, the diaspora vote in toto was 90 percent for Tuđman's party. It won its parliamentary majority thanks to the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose votes formed 80 percent of the diaspora total and for whom 12 special seats are reserved in Croatia's parliament, even though many of them are not even Croatian citizens.²¹ This is Anderson's "politics without accountability": the votes of Croats abroad maintain in power a chauvinist regime waging war with the bodies of Croats (and their non-Croat neighbors) at home.

Implicit in émigré voting (other than in the Croat case) is the question of dual citizenship, a subject of particularly intense struggle in the former Soviet Union. Soon after that country's disintegration, the government of Russia, seeking to increase its leverage over the post-Soviet

successor states and to “protect” the 30 million Russians now living outside Russia’s borders, began pressuring those states to legislate dual citizenship.²² Fearing excessive Russian influence, however, governments in the successor states protested that dual citizenship would cause “divided loyalties” and provoke instability. Illustrative of this reaction is Estonia’s revised citizenship law, passed in January 1995, which banned a specific category of citizens *inside* Estonia—resident Russians who had received Estonian citizenship—from claiming dual citizenship, but permitted it to ethnic Estonians who were citizens of other countries (OMRI 1994: November 28–29, 1995: January 20). Thus ethnonational identifications pad Estonia’s citizenship rosters with an international archipelago of ethnic Estonians while disempowering similar archipelagos for others on the state’s territory.²³ I emphasize again that the causes of these particular national-transnational configurations lie both in the odd way in which the “diasporas” were formed (by creating new state borders) and in peculiarities of the socialist experience, with its reification of the principle of national difference.

The end of socialism meant importing “democracy,” but it entered a context that was peculiar in several ways. First, the post-1989 obsession with repudiating the communist era entailed restoring older forms from the various countries’ supposedly democratic precommunist past. Often this produced discriminations between citizens and noncitizens that coincided with ethnonational differences. Second, the communist-period organization of ethnonational groups reified national consciousness rather than suppressing it, even while undermining other foci of collective and individual identification. This consciousness, coupled with the general privileging of “collective” ideas, made national difference a ready vessel for new political struggles. Finally, the history of the concept of *nation* in this region made it an ethnic concept, rather different from the liberal-democratic one meaning individuals’ collective sovereignty.

Western purveyors of “democracy” (etymologically, “rule by the people”) therefore brought it into an environment predisposed to ethnicize it. As external observers came to ratify that elections were free and fair, they failed to ask *who* “the people” were who would be allowed into the social contract creating citizens and rights. In the history of democracy in the United States, “the people” was bounded to exclude persons of the “wrong” sex and race. In the former socialist world, the criterion that crosscuts citizenship is *ethnonational being*. Here, “people” connotes the sovereignty of an ethnic collectivity rather than the joint sovereignty of individual “social contractors.” The sovereign thus becomes the ethnic collectivity; democracy becomes ethnocracy. Constitutions and elections have traveled transnationally, then, but with unanticipated effects, producing transnational citizenships that nationalize. With this, the relationships among sovereignty, citizenship, and national or cultural identity diverge both from those thought basic to modern liberalism and from those characteristic of transnationalism in many other contexts.²⁴

privatization, property, and identity

Some of the questions raised by new citizenship provisions in the former socialist bloc spill over into the unfolding of a second major process occurring there: privatization, or the creation of individual ownership from the once-collective property of socialism. With the collapse of party rule, the return of socialist property to private owners was a top priority both for postcommunist governments in search of legitimation and for Western lending institutions and NGOs. Like “democratization,” privatization involves the transnational flow of ideas and personnel. Especially visible agents have been the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which since 1989 have regularly made indicators of progress in privatizing land and state firms the benchmarks for according or withholding loans. Privatization connects with citizenship as well: some of the formerly socialist countries require that those who wish to recover landownership or to obtain other privatized socialist property be citizens or local residents or

both. I mentioned above, for example, that the Latvian constitution accords only to citizens the right to buy land and to own shares in joint-stock companies; in addition, Latvian citizens received more privatization coupons than other, noncitizen residents (Bowring 1995:129; RFE/RL 1994: November 29). Although countries of the region vary in their citizenship requirements for owning property, it appears that they place restrictions on landowning more often than on other forms.

The return of private property is complexly tied both to changes in the form of states during this period of enhanced globalization and to national identities. To begin with the obvious, dismantling collective property weakens the socialist state by divesting it of its direct control over revenue; privatization therefore changes the nature of the state's relation to its subjects. More generally, liberal political theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, and Hegel argued over the relations among property ownership, democracy, freedom, particular forms of state sovereignty, and certain conceptions of the individual—that is, of the person. While I do not have the space to explore the different positions (see, e.g., Macpherson 1962; Tully 1993), I mention them here to further the point that in the former Soviet bloc, impropration (the return of property) necessarily entails rearranging state-subject relations. As Biolsi (1995) observes of the totally different process whereby Native Americans were made property owners in the late 19th century, for instance, impropration creates individual subjects who look to the state to guarantee their property rights. No such state-subject relation was possible under socialism, where individual property rights were insecure and highly circumscribed. Thus, as with citizenship, establishing certain rights (this time, to private property rather than to voting) both protects persons and incorporates them into the state—and differently so from what happened under socialism.

The implications of privatization for national identity are, like its implications for state transformation, multiple. First, privatization's impact on state-subject relations in itself affects national belonging—a state-subject relation fundamental to the modern world. One consequence is a sharpening of national identities, as such groups contest each other's property claims (see, e.g., Verdery 1996:157–158). Second, although it is too much to say that through socialist property communist parties successfully created a collective subject, a weaker variant of this outcome may have contributed to the reinforced *national* belonging I noted above. As socialist nationalities policy facilitated ethnicizing the subject of state sovereignty and the definition of citizenship, which new constitutions in some (although not all) of these states confirmed, it might thus have contributed to ethnicizing the subject of property rights. Thus socialist regimes created a special nexus among state, property, and national identity that takes specific forms in the changing global order.

To explore the connections, I will give some examples concerning privatization of property rights in land.²⁵ Land has a special place in post-1989 Eastern European economies, for, in the inflation that has plagued them all to some extent, landholding is the ultimate insurance policy and pension plan. This is true regardless of the distribution of the labor force across sectors but is most important in countries experiencing high inflation and massive industrial restructuring. For people who lose their jobs and whose savings evaporate in the inflation, to control land—or to have kin who do so—increases the odds of having something to eat. Bounding land and establishing its relation to particular persons, then, become critical. Although land represents only part of the values being privatized, I focus on it because changes in land ownership show with particular clarity how transnationally fostered privatization intersects with citizenship and property laws in ways that reterritorialize. That is, through ideas about property, enhanced flows of capital and concepts serve to tie interests to specific places. They do so in two ways: through legal restrictions on land ownership, and through localized understandings about personhood and kinship. The former follows directly from changes in socialism's property regime, the latter less so.

As in Latvia, where only citizens have the right to buy land, a number of other formerly socialist countries have linked citizenship with territory. The links are still being forged, for policy concerning land ownership fluctuated throughout the 1990s as a function of international pressure and of internal politics in each country. In Romania, for example, the 1991 land restitution law enabled Romanians living abroad to claim their land only if they retained their Romanian citizenship and chose Romanian domicile; émigrés who for one reason or another renounced their citizenship forfeited their land rights. The Romanian constitution, however, legislated after the land law in a different political climate, eliminated the requirement that citizens be resident to own land. A new government in 1996 strengthened this policy and moved to permit some foreign land ownership, which Romania, along with other countries such as Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics, had precluded (thus treating noncitizens much like Jews in earlier periods of European history).²⁶ In Poland and Estonia they could do so only with the permission of local or national governments; in Lithuania new laws in 1996 enabled noncitizens to buy land only if it is not classed as agricultural. The change aroused protest from Lithuanian nationalists (see *Baltic Independent* 1996; OMRI 1996: March 31).²⁷ Although no stable outcome has yet emerged in these countries (as of June 1998), the tendency has been reluctantly to allow foreign companies to own the land beneath the buildings they purchase or build but to prohibit them from owning agricultural land.

News reports indicate that restrictions on landowning, designed to impede the “foreign takeover” of land, were the agenda of nationalist political groups. Striving to make land an “inalienable possession,” in Annette Weiner’s words (1992), these groups have seen as their opponents both transnational forces and local parties arguing for a “return to Europe”—a Europe that insists on full alienability of property rights as a condition for European integration. Property rights, particularly in land, thus constitute a terrain of struggle between transnational and national forces. If we follow Weiner, this makes sense. In her analysis, inalienable possessions fortify group identity, symbolizing a group’s ancestry or mythological origins; what marks such possessions is friction against ready transfer (such as the prohibitions on sale of land to foreigners in many formerly socialist countries). I will adduce some ethnographic evidence to fill out the linkages conjoining land and ancestry, land and inalienability, and land and national identity.²⁸

My data come from my fieldwork carried out in a Transylvanian village during 1993–94 and 1996–97 on the privatization of land.²⁹ From this research I learned that in conflicts over land, villagers often justify ownership claim-rights by *prior* ownership, kinship, and work. They defend someone’s claim to land on the grounds that it belonged to that person’s ancestors and that the claimants or their ancestors worked it. Villagers suing for their family land say they are doing so because they owe this to their parents, who worked so hard for it. When asked if they planned to sell land they could not now work, nearly all expressed reluctance to part with family holdings.³⁰ While these emphases on kinship and work may owe something to socialism, they have roots in presocialist village notions about personhood as something constructed through labor and possession— notions that Martha Lampland (1995) has illustrated for Hungary. One’s tie to the land was in part a connection through substance with the ancestors who had labored to acquire it. Thus self, work, family ties, and possession of land are all mutually entangled (see also Hann 1993; Shanin 1990:112–113).

Sometimes the connection is even more direct: the ground where the ancestors are buried gives us, their heirs, strength and makes our crops fertile. For Romania, particularly vivid illustration of this from earlier times is found in the protest written by Transylvanian writer Liviu Rebreanu concerning the “dismemberment” of Transylvania in 1940, when Hitler moved control over part of that region from Romania to Hungary:

For us, Transylvania can only exist whole, flesh of our flesh. . . . For thousands of years, millions and millions of Romanians shed their sweat in labor and their blood in battle, and died mixing their mortal dust everywhere in this ancient soil, such that all the valleys and hills and all the mountains are drenched

with Romanian blood, and the feet of passersby tread on soil commingled with the dust of Romanian bodies. [Rebreanu 1941:9]

Although such notions were muted during the socialist period (particularly among younger generations), many persons are still alive for whom these ideas are very potent. When people fight now to control land, it is not only over the resources for physical survival that they fight but also over the resources for social existence as persons living in meaningful human communities.

Ideas such as these are not limited to village communities in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.³¹ Among the many other instances one could adduce, I signal one from the Caribbean. Drexel Woodson (1990) has written at length on symbolic aspects of land tenure in Haiti after the end of slavery there.³² He describes notions of personhood that derive from people's relation to land, notions that link social status with having land and having land with being free; owning a place became a condition for "being somebody." These notions have a transnational dimension as well, for Haitian emigrants have long sent remittances back home for the purpose of buying land and situating their "persons" in this way. The parallel with Eastern Europe is not serendipitous. Both there and in the Caribbean, "coerced cash-crop labor" (Wallerstein 1974) defined agricultural laboring regimes into the mid-19th century; the breakup of plantations in favor of peasant smallholding occurred in both (and in Eastern Europe, yet again!); and, in both, landownership after enslavement defined the "free," worthy person.

These examples show us land as a spatial realization of personhood: persons are propertied, and land is part of persons. Land belongs to them and they to it. The ownership relation in question is not, however, that of Euro-American liberalism's property ideas—exclusive and individual—but collective, enmeshed in networks of kin. In this context, privatization of land is not inherently individuating; rather, it underscores the extent to which the condition of possibility for "individuals" is the group. Clusters of such groups form the *collective individual*, "the nation"—the same collective that has been constituted as the bearer of citizen rights and sovereignty (see above). It is collectively *possessive*, as well, owning a "national patrimony" (*sic*) that includes both the land (associated with the nation's ethnogenesis) and *cultural property* as well.³³ Such ideas, linking kinship, nation, collective individuals, and property, ramify widely in directions I cannot explore here.³⁴

I have been pointing to conceptions of land and person that are localizing—that tie "identities" to the soil and place friction in the way of its market transfer as land is privatized. This friction is connected to the broader legal constraints I have described on alienating land outside "the nation." Immovable property is thus made inalienable—precisely as "foreigners" hover over the nation's more movable wealth, hoping to acquire decisive ownership shares in it. A clue to what may be happening lies in Weiner's view of the role of "inalienable possessions," a formulation similar to Max Gluckman's (1965) concerning immovable property: symbolizing group identity, these possessions serve to stabilize hierarchy and political order against erosion by "free exchange." The hierarchy and order being stabilized in the former Soviet bloc are at one and the same time internal to nation-state borders (ranking the various ethnonational groups on state territory) and external to them (in the global hierarchy of nations). Land would appear to be very significant as an inalienable symbol of group identity, not only because of the modern association of states with territories but also because of the connection between ancestors and soil.

I am suggesting, then, that certain conceptions of property and property rights—let me call them "nationalizing" conceptions—participate in political struggles; they constitute resistance to transnational forces, efforts by particular national(ist) groups to prevent "their" nation from slipping in the hierarchy of nations in a period of global uncertainty. This observation reminds us that "nation," like those comparable differentiating constructs of "gender," "race," and "class," not only creates categories of same and different but sets up relations of dominance

between them; in this dominance, property plays an important part.³⁵ Once again, transnational and national processes appear as mutually constitutive.

This is not news, but perhaps it is worth underscoring against those tendencies in transnationalist scholarship that emphasize *crossings* rather than the borders being crossed, and whose horizontal imagery of circulation through global *networks* may obscure how the networks' elements are *hierarchized*. Circulation metaphors privilege flow; yet flow occurs against obstructions and also precipitates further obstructionism by those whom circulation will drain. An important political task for anthropology, I believe, is to call attention to the fixing, racializing, and hierarchizing that seem everywhere to accompany global transformation, even as we explore the emergent networks of quickened flow that are its sign.

land, identity, and citizenship in the Yugoslav succession

The best example in the formerly socialist world for showing that our era is not simply one of greater flow but one of reconfiguring the relations of flow and obstruction comes from the wars of Yugoslav succession. In the pages above I have given many examples to show how these reconfigurations affect citizenship; I will now briefly link them with questions of land and identity, bringing the themes of this essay together in yet another way. My vehicle is Susan Woodward's superb analysis of the breakup of Yugoslavia, *Balkan Tragedy* (1995). In it she describes how land became central to this conflict, not because of decollectivization (in Yugoslavia land had never been collectivized) but because the collapse of multinational Yugoslavia resulted in a fierce struggle to form new nation-states, which were to be based on control of territory and filled with a homogeneous population—the classic agenda of nation-statehood. That the populations were *not* homogeneous led to the "constitutional nationalisms" I have already mentioned, through which the Croatian, Serbian, Slovene, Macedonian, and other constitutions defined the bearers of sovereignty as the titular nationalities and restricted full citizenship rights to them.

New constitutions, however, did not solve the problem of carving up territory, necessary because, despite global changes in state forms, secure and recognized territorial demarcations are still what define states in the international system. Producing them in ex-Yugoslavia was a matter of drawing lines in space according to which national groups lived where. In Woodward's view, the problem was exacerbated by the European Union's decision to ratify the new territorial borders by referendum, rather than simply to impose new borders by international fiat. As Woodward puts it, "the fight to create states out of nations in territories that are ethnically mixed essentially becomes a fight over persons and their rights to live on particular tracts of land" (1995:241). It was therefore essential for Croatia's and Serbia's politicians to assure the vote in territories of mixed residence by killing off or chasing out groups other than "their own." This meant full-fledged physical (rather than just bureaucratic) ethnic cleansing.

As formal institutions and state guarantees collapsed, localized populations throughout the various ex-Yugoslav regions fell back on their communities and households, relying on their control of land and the kinship obligations associated with it to ensure their survival. This localized resort to land-cum-kin ties intersected fatefully with the state-creating actions of nationalist political elites, for whom securing borders inevitably meant localized warfare toward controlling particular settlements. To bring state-level politicking home to localized groups, nationalist politicians manipulated the notion of *hearth*, used as a "metaphor for property, community, citizenship, and patriotism, all in one." People's "hearths," with the land they occupied, came to be defended by and in the name of localized kin groups and village communities (Woodward 1995:237, 242). Thus the Yugoslav wars as a whole were about establishing new nation-state borders, while their local conduct was driven by people's defense of communities and land rights. In this way, Woodward's analysis brilliantly links land and

kinship with larger issues of state-forming, nationalism, and international relations, all tied together by that archetypal democratic ritual—voting—transnationally enforced.

The Yugoslav case shows us a hierarchy of transnational and national boundary processes, reconfigurations of exclusion and inclusion, which were governed by the ownership imperative of modern nation-states: that the collective individual, "nation," should "have" its "own" territory. Two sets of boundaries, of belonging, came together: those concerning relations among persons with respect to the polity, and those concerning persons' relations to things—specifically land, defended as the collective property of kin groups. The critical transnational and national elements of these processes, to recapitulate, were as follows. First was the transnational imposition of liberal Western procedures—referenda and democratic process. It was more important to other European governments to press for voting than it was to find ways of ensuring the participatory rights that Yugoslavia's socialist constitution had guaranteed to the national minorities who lived in a republic dominated by some other nationality. With Yugoslavia's disintegration, no comparable form emerged to mediate incompatible territorial claims. Second, "long-distance nationalism" came from the transnational support of émigrés—especially Croats in Germany, who pressed for early German recognition of Slovenia's and Croatia's independence.³⁶ Third, skillful use was made of Western public relations firms and the international media (see Copley 1992; Thompson 1994). Fourth, Croat and Serb nationalist politicians manipulated symbols, including not only the notion of "hearth" but also a meaning-saturated politics of corpses, evoking the "memory" of wartime massacres (see Denich 1994; Hayden 1994). Finally, the peculiar nationalities policy of socialist Yugoslavia (transnationally imported from the Soviet Union) reinforced a sense of national difference as a fundamental fact of the political order.

conclusion

For those who envision a new transnational world, the unrelenting insistence of participants in the wars of Yugoslav succession on having nations rooted in the specific soil of their particular states seems oddly anachronistic. How can this be happening when other countries are experimenting with "diversity"—that is, with the assumption that what gives a nation strength is the *heterogeneity* rather than the homogeneity of its population? How do the grim acquisitions of territory and voters in former Yugoslavia make sense in this transnational time, when peoples of many kinds across the globe are carrying their portable nations with them as they move? I have pointed to just this kind of portable and deterritorialized nationalism even among East Europeans, as citizenship and voting reach across national borders or Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia seek the backing of the government of Hungary in their quest for local autonomy. So why such rooted, ethnically cleansing nationalisms too? It is because the two forms implicate one another.

Just as the history of state forming, like the history of global capitalism, has not produced uniform effects everywhere, Eastern Europe (along with other areas of the world) continues to generate flurries of the older kind of nation-state legitimation alongside new evidence of transnationalism. These flurries themselves, as I have shown, result partly from the transnational influence of national émigrés and other so-called external forces and partly from national(ist) policies specific to socialism. Much of the turmoil in the former Soviet bloc comes precisely from its hosting *both* sets of processes (national and transnational) with such intensity. The processes are linked to changes of global scope—that is, they are not peculiar to postsocialism. Their unusual intensity in Eastern Europe, however, comes from the earlier failed attempt in that region to create states and property regimes different from those prevailing elsewhere: not parliamentary democracies based in private property but Party-states as collective proprietors, organized on different principles, and insulated to some degree from larger movements of

capital. Those principles and that insulation have ended. Replacing them and adjusting to global capital flows—even as “capitalism,” too, changes form—involve dislocation, violence, struggles over citizenship and ownership, protectionism, and new attachments to land, all infused with the specificities of the socialist experience that undergirds the region’s postsocialist transformation.

notes

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1. For a very thoughtful and provocative treatment see Rouse 1997.
2. Because none of the societies in the Soviet orbit claimed to have reached the stage of “communism,” I prefer to use the term *socialism*.
3. These phrasings appeared in papers delivered at the 1996 AES Spring Meeting.
4. I Thank Talal Asad for this example and the larger point.
5. The Romanian Communist Party claimed, for instance, to represent the national minorities proportionately in its membership and governing bodies. This sort of “affirmative action” program necessitates, of course, a prior reification of group identities.
6. This was partly so because many people in these countries refused to identify themselves with the collectivist goals of the Party.
7. The reasons for the extensive group interspersal are numerous and span millennia; they range from successive waves of immigration over many centuries, to deliberate settlement of different peoples by historical empires, to forced colonizations and deportations in Stalin’s time, to widespread migration within socialist states toward their most industrialized regions (e.g., from Macedonia to Croatia and Slovenia in Yugoslavia; from Central Asia and Russia to the Baltics in the Soviet Union). Especially noteworthy is that 25–30 million Russians live in what were formerly republics of the USSR and are now independent states headed each by some other nationality.
8. Sometimes, as in Latvia, this easy naturalization of nonresidents was later modified.
9. Among the examples of corrupting these provisions are Estonia’s suspension of decisions about citizenship two months before the March 1995 parliamentary elections, an action that meant fewer non-Estonian voters; Macedonian manipulations of citizenship definitions to disenfranchise Albanians; and discriminatory application of citizenship provisions concerning language use, uninterrupted residency, and “cultural” proficiency. See Hayden 1996:792–794, OMRI 1995: January 5, and RFE/RL 1994: October 27.
10. This is partly a consequence of the reified nationalism of Soviet-era constitutions, as discussed above.
11. The problem is particularly acute in Latvia and Estonia (where Russians amount to 30–35 percent of the population), less so in Lithuania (where the “majority” Lithuanian population constitutes 80 percent of the total and Russians only 10 percent).
12. This is quoted from Dimitrijević 1993:51; see also Hayden 1992:659. I add the word *ethnic* in brackets because the Slavic word *narod* that appears in these constitutions has precisely the ethnic meaning, rather than that of “people” as in “We the people of the United States.”
13. Their applications for citizenship are often delayed or turned down on technicalities (Hayden 1992:667–668). To illustrate: 25,000 ethnic Slovenes from outside the country have obtained citizenship while 50,000 non-Slovenes inside it have been denied, and in 1995 there was a broadly popular move to *revoke* the citizenship of the latter. According to polls taken at the time, one-third of all Slovenes supported this idea (Pamela Ballinger, personal communication, 1995).
14. These Russians, overwhelmingly manual workers, were brought into Latvia during the industrial drive of the 1950s; many speak little Latvian, but they have minimal interest in returning to Russia, considering themselves citizens of Latvia.
15. I thank Daina Stukuls for this observation.
16. The new law would have limited naturalizations to 0.1 percent of the population per year. See OMRI 1996: January 17–20 and *Baltic Independent* 1996). I thank Ray Abrahams for passing along the latter.
17. He cites the ease of obtaining citizenship for Irish and Jews outside the borders of the states of Ireland and Israel, as compared with the difficulties for non-Irish and non-Jews inside those states (Hayden 1996:793).
18. The lifting of the Iron Curtain permitted some of this same kind of movement and thus the formation of comparable transnational communities, especially from the former Soviet Union—although the movement has been far less than many in those countries hoped, because they now find the Curtain reconstituted from the other side in the form of restrictive visa requirements to enter western countries. The

anti-immigrant sentiment of developed states seeking to limit flows of labor thus impedes the formation of new diasporas from the East.

19. The Council of Europe announced that no one with such laws would find an easy path into the European Union or post-NATO structures; members of the Council as well as the U.S. Congress repeatedly criticized the Czech citizenship law, for instance, which denies citizenship to unprecedented numbers of Gypsies, and EU representative Max Van der Stoep spent considerable effort trying to reconcile Romania's political leaders and its Hungarian minority behind positions consonant with NATO and EU membership. These transnational pressures, however, sometimes fuel nationalist reaction, as nationalist politicians complain of European imperialism and unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. See OMRI 1996: January 18, February 8, February 23; RFE/RL 1994: October 27.

20. See Election Commission of the Republic of Croatia, "The Principal Acts Regulating Elections," 1995. I am grateful to Robert Hayden for providing me with this document.

21. Tudjman received low support, however, in the precincts (*sic!*) of Dayton and Paris, indicating that émigrés did not favor nationalist politics uniformly. I thank Steven Tull for this information, and for the further datum that the diaspora vote was nonetheless disappointing to those in power in Zagreb: only 27 percent (109,389 people) of eligible diaspora voters participated in the election, indicating considerably less interest on the part of Croat émigrés than had been expected.

22. Yeltsin, for example, made the dual citizenship provision a condition for signing the Russian-Ukrainian friendship treaty in February 1995. See OMRI 1995: February 2.

23. Ethnonational identity is even stickier for Poles. Procedures for shedding Polish citizenship are so complicated that few émigrés bother to try, making dual citizenship the "default option" for Polish émigrés (Carole Nagengast, personal communication, 1996). Nagengast suggests that this stickiness probably stems from socialist Poland's desire to facilitate repatriating foreign currency by Poles resident abroad.

24. I might note, however, that in a provocative review of democratization in Eastern Europe Ellen Comisso (1997) calls the political variant I have been discussing "national democracy" and considers it a specific substantive type of democratic order, defined by giving priority to communal rights over individual ones but otherwise employing procedures common to liberal democratic polities.

25. There are equally interesting examples in the domain of movable property as well. From Elizabeth Dunn's research on American factory management in Poland, for instance, we learn that, in both public and private discourse, Poles puzzled over whether such firms were "Polish" or "American." When the U.S.-based firm Gerber (itself wholly owned by the Swedish firm Sandoz) bought 98 percent of the former Polish state firm Alima, was Alima still "Polish"? The newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* argued that it was, because all the managers were Poles. Some of these, however, were born in the United States of Polish émigré parents; they responded to the Polish government's entreaties that Poles abroad "come home" and set up businesses, but they retained their U.S. passports. Are they, Poles wonder, still *Poles*? Polish workers at Gerber-Alima saw the production buildings as "Polish" and the administration building next door as "American." The examples show Poles thinking about transnational flows of capital and managerial expertise in a "national" idiom, rife with ambiguities (Elizabeth Dunn, personal communication, 1996).

26. Noncitizens may, however, lease land, for periods that differ from one country to another.

27. I thank Ray Abrahams for the latter reference.

28. My material here helps to give greater substance to ideas such as the following, quoted by Herloff-Mortensen: "Being Latvian means living on the territory defined as the residence of the Latvian ethnic group" (1996:23).

29. The research was supported by grants from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and the National Science Foundation. For further discussion see Verdery 1996:133-167.

30. They are able to retain land because the community formed an association, or producers' cooperative, which works village land given over to it by those who lack the means of cultivation or adequate labor.

31. See especially the Caucasus (Sergei Arutiunov, personal communication, 1995), and Madagascar and many parts of Africa (Gillian Feeley-Harnik, personal communication, 1996). It is for this reason that resettlement schemes—like those entailed in building dams—so often produce resistance, as people are forced to evacuate land where their ancestors lie and to allow them to be covered with water.

32. I am indebted to Brackette Williams for this reference.

33. In Romanian, the term used for collective property—even in particularized form, such as the property that once belonged to a collective farm—is *patrimoniu* (patrimony). The same word refers to the collective cultural repertoire of Romanians as a people: they speak of the cultural patrimony of Romanians, which includes novels, poetry, academic writing, even the ideas and creations of Romanians living elsewhere in the world (such as Nobel prize winner George Palade, sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, and avant-garde writer Tristan Tzara). In this sense, Romanians collectively *have a culture*, just as they *have a territory*: a relationship of property, of possession, defines both. Romanians are not, of course, the only people to have such constructions of personhood and nationhood. Richard Handler (1988), for instance, has discussed the importance of "having a culture" in his discussion of Quebec, where the same term—*patrimony*—is also used.

34. I offer two brief illustrative examples. First, such ideas ground the appeal of nationalist politicians who raise alarm that irredentists (e.g., Hungarians) may be planning to "amputate" a nation's (e.g., Romania's) territory, the collective patrimony of generations of its people. The spatialization of personhood writ large as "nationness" is what makes the territory of a country as (like) its flesh. Second, together with citizenship, this complex of kinship, nation, and property enters into ideas about gender and the politics of reproduction. Pronatalist nationalists, opposing abortion on behalf of "murdered fetal citizens" with slogans

like "a fetus is also a Croat," portray pro-abortion feminists as selfish individualists responsible for the "death of the nation." For more on this subject see Huseby-Darvas 1996, Salecl 1993, Supek 1991, and Verdery 1996:79–82.

35. One wonders whether this might have something to do with the growing nationalist emphasis on the inalienability of cultural property too.

36. Germany's early recognition of Croatia was in part precipitated by the stand of the influential *Frankfurter Zeitung*, one of whose main editors is a Croat (Susan Woodward, personal communication, 1995).

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