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A Review of the Transformation Approach and own Researches in
the People's Economy in Post-Socialist Countries

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Continuity and Change in Transformation: A Review of the Transformation Approach and own Researches in the People's Economy in Post-Socialist Countries

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Introduction

Market societies of Western Europe, their rationally acting institutions and organizations, and the politico-economic framework in which they can function emerged in an 'instituted' (cf. Polanyi 1978; Martinelli 1987) process of economic and social change (cf. Goetze 1997). Modernization theory held that this historical process was a blueprint for the same processes occurring with a time lag in developing countries, which would eventually catch up with the West. For the specific case of communist countries this theory assumed that modernization was blocked and that sooner or later these countries would implode due to their inherent systemic contradictions (Parsons 1951; 1982). But indeed, nobody expected that this would happen already 1989-1991. With these political events modernization theorists and among them particularly political scientists recaptured the theoretical and political mainstream thinking by shaping the term of transition - a short-term institutional systemic change, which would bring the former socialist societies back into Europe (Olson 1995; Poznanski 1995; Zloch-Christy 1998; Beyer et al. 2001). Market-systemic institutions should be implemented to engender the self-adjusting market, and with it democratic societies. The keywords here were 'model-transfer' and 'capitalism according to design' (cf. Kollmorgen/Schrader 2003).

Such an orthodox perspective of transition prognosticated a relatively short and difficult transitional period of structural adjustment, (topics such as 'shock therapy' and 'valley of tears' were common but in practice varied in a number of countries) with privatization of state property, rapid incorporation into the world market, emergent flourishing industrial and commercial landscapes, rapid rise of per-capita incomes, and the like. Institution-building, however, is more difficult than assumed in these neoliberal/neoclassical approaches of 'designer capitalism'. In line with various institutionalists which consider actor-structure dynamics (cf. Schimank 2000). Magdeburgean sociologists argue that institution-building is a long-term and complicated process. Institutions constitute durable norms, conventions and legal rules that structure human (inter)action and activities in everyday-life. According to Douglas North (1981; 1990; 1991:97) institutions are socially embedded systems of rules of the game in society; they can be formal and informal. Both have to match each other that transformation processes work. Empirical social scientists find North's distinction very useful¹ and adapt this conception into their transformation approach for Easter Europe. They argue that contrary to these designed and implemented formal institutions, informal norms of

¹ Hodgson et al. (2006: 11), however, criticize North in being too unspecific what this distinction aims at.

everyday life do not change as quickly as the newly implemented formal ones.² I shall take this drifting apart of formal and informal institutions as the major important reason why formal institutions often do not function. The reason is that these informal institutions undermine the formal ones³ or at least give them a specific shape.⁴

I argue in this paper that the policy of system-transfer implemented formal market institutions like private property, markets and banks, and a legal framework to make them function. However, it overlooked the informal institutions being still at work as an open or hidden agenda. Informal institutions are an outcome of individual and collective biographic experiences, ‘collective memory’ (Halbwachs 1967) or ‘collective consciousness’ (Durkheim 1984) and behaviours that have engendered a unique “structuration” (Giddens 1979)⁵ and culture⁶ which even nowadays plays a significant role in everyday life (cf. Hann 2002); in other words, such informal institutions work ‘path dependently’.⁷

This was foreseen by Stark (1992a; 1992b; 1992c) and Staniszki (1991) early on, who were very critical of neo-liberal prognoses. Instead of a rapid transition they feared that a ‘continuity in change’ (cf. Dittrich 2001) might occur. In the early transformation of Eastern Europe phase a number of scholars discovered specific hybrid forms of entanglement between policy, bureaucracy and the economy (Åslund 1995; Stark 1994), which Jadwiga Staniszki (1995) called ‘political capitalism’: a hybrid societal formation and institutional modus of restructuring socialist societies under conditions of peripheral position⁸ (cf. also Tatur 1998). Other scholars called this period with a weak state monopoly of violence in Russia ‘Mafia capitalism’ (Hessinger 2001; Varese 1994). Both concepts have an understanding of post-socialist path

² See e.g. Franzen, Harland and Niessen (2001:22).

³ To be more concrete with an example: private banks during the 1990s did not work in a market system-like way, not only because employees and customers were not used to the market-system, but also, because the customers did not trust at least in private banks and therefore did not use them.

⁴ This is that, for example, influential economic actors may, f.e. influence the process of setting up regulations and even law by lobbying (e.g. subsidies, exemptions, etc.), so that the final outcomes depart from the original intention. Cf. Cristian Timm in this volume.

⁵ According to Giddens (1979) structuration expresses the mutual dependency of human agency and social structures. He argues that social structures are intimately involved in the production of action. The structural properties of social systems provide the means by which people act and they are also the outcome of such actions

⁶ In line with Tetzlaff (2000:27-28) I consider ‘culture’ as a memory of collective experience – a system of standardized orientations toward recurrent problems. With their culture people get a subjective perceptions of themselves and a ‘fictitious differentiation’ from ‘others’ and ‘alien’ environment. From such a perspective, culture provides a dense net of meaningful structures surrounding the individual and having a formative influence on his or her action and behaviour by means of habitual perception, based upon socialization.

⁷ It should be emphasized that I do not use this term in a deterministic way rather than in the sense of open-ended interplay of actor-structure dynamics.

⁸ Scholars argued that this hybrid capitalism still functioned according to the logic of socialist systems: It is a logic of reproduction of power and dependency fundamentally different from the logic of accumulation of capital, but adapted to function under capitalist conditions.

dependent ‘pathologies’ against the folio of continental Western European (democratic⁹) capitalism; as a developmental sociologist who does not consider Germany or Europe as *the* norm I shall argue that, from a global perspective in purely quantitative terms, such types of capitalism constitute the norm.

The literature that I quoted so far originates from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. However, 25 years of transformation have passed, and the question that turns up is of whether these informal institutions that undermined formal ones have meanwhile changed or disappeared in the process of intergenerational change (cf. Inglehart 1989), so that the logic of the market economy is at work in economic life now. Or are these informal institutions still shaping formal institutions in particular ways, perhaps engendering a specifically Eastern European type of capitalism, by nature fundamentally different from the Western type? This perspective can be considered as a specification of the VOC¹⁰ discussion (Hall and Soskice 2001; Lane 2007) and will be reviewed at the end of this paper.

I started working in Russia and doing research in post-socialist contexts in 1997. As an economic and developmental sociologist I have a particular interest in the people’s economy, i.e. how the economy functions in everyday life. I believe that particularly in that field there is a blind spot of knowledge in both economics and economic sociology, because their perspective is mainly on large firms and high price segments. Indeed, the more we work on that level, the closer we come to economic textbooks, models of rational action, and formal institutions working in such a way. However, the farther we get away from that level and investigate the people’s economy, i.e. how people really act and behave in everyday life, the more relevant becomes the embeddedness of economic action in social structure (cf. Polanyi 1978; Granovetter 1992; Hollingsworth and Boyer 1997). With regard to the topic of institutional change the people’s economy is particularly important because in quantitative terms it covers the majority of people, so that their informal institutions may indeed influence development and change.¹¹

In this paper I take a look at the people’s economy of everyday life which I investigated in three of my works. The first one was an outcome of my visiting professorship at the State University of St. Petersburg during the period 1997-1999, where I observed informal institutions in everyday life (Schrader 2004a; 2004b) and did research on pawnshops (Schrader 2000), the second one was a joint research on small enterprises in Russia, Czech Republic and Bulgaria in the middle of the 2000s (Dittrich et al. 2006; Dittrich et al. 2008), and the third one is a

⁹ Tatur (1994) worked with the contrasts of ideal types, ‘criminal capitalism’, ‘political capitalism’ and ‘democratic capitalism’, the latter being close to Western capitalism.

¹⁰ VOC=Varieties of Capitalism

¹¹ This is contrary to the conception of economics that in quantitative terms the people’s economy does not constitute a large share of the GNP.

household survey in Central Asia in 2012-2014 (Dittrich and Schrader 2015; 2016). This means, I shall cover a broad period of transformation to analyze similarities and differences, continuity and change. I will look at these works one after another.

Spheres of trust and social capital during the late 1990s

While I taught at the State University of St. Petersburg from 2007-2009, I observed a number of examples in my everyday life of how formal and informal institutions fell asunder. When I now teach in my home university about informal institutions I can provide various illustrations of ‘how Russia really worked’ (cf. Ledeneva 2006) during that time. On one hand we saw a growing market economy in the shops and streets of Saint Petersburg,¹² on the other hand I experienced how in everyday-life people distrusted market structures and instead relied on their established social networks. One of these observations occurred when I planned my farewell party at the faculty. I asked a Georgian colleague where to buy some bottles of wine for that party and expected that he recommended me a winery shop. However, the story took an unexpected change. First of all, he told me that he needed some time to get some more information. Then he called me back saying he found out that an airplane with Georgian wines on board arrived at Pulkovo Airport and he knew somebody at the customs office...

Another story. The first is my arrival with my family. We were immediately advised by my colleagues: “If something might happen like theft etc., don’t call the police! They will take your last shirt... Don’t talk to strangers on the phone that they do not realize you are a foreigner. Never tell your address where you live... Do not seek eye contact with people in the street and particularly not with policemen”, and so on.

In the research on pawnshops in St. Petersburg I learned that ordinary people either store their money at home under the bed or, at best, bring it to *Sperbank*, the state bank, but never on rely on private banks.¹³

I could continue with a number of further examples, but everybody who knows Russia during that period probably knows similar stories. Important for many of this stories is that people had a very negative attitude towards the state bureaucracy¹⁴ and therefore its legitimacy.

¹² This means that not only the assortment of shops changed but also the infrastructure. Typical corner shops offering food and equipment for everyday-life disappeared from the center of the city while international perfumery chains, big hotels, fast-food stores, brand stores and souvenir shops mushroomed along Nevski Prospect and adjacent lanes.

¹³ This was rational. I lost a lot of money in the financial crisis of 2008 when the private bank where I had my account collapsed. I had simply taken my ‘collective memory’ from Germany that since the end of World War II there was no larger bank crisis any more so that one can trust banks.

¹⁴ I am thankful to Nikolay Vlasov who remarked that their negative attitude is not towards the state but its bureaucracy.

What I want to do now is to sociologically reflect on what was going on.¹⁵ I refer to trust and social capital with regard to their role for the functioning of society.

In social science, both the metaphysical and philosophical dimensions of trust have been deconstructed by referring to its function in personal interactions and within society. Luhmann (1988), for example, interpreted trust as a mechanism to reduce insecurity and risk in a very complex modern life world. Decision theory and game theory have taken the actor's subjective point of view, by arguing that trust emerges from repeated successful interactions; it is an experience in the trustworthiness of the interaction partner (Axelrod 1984; 1986). This and similar theories explain people's motivation to trust each other by opportunistic motives of agents. During the second half of the 1990s, the situation was completely different in Russia. Social and economic action in everyday life were very risky due to the fact that formal institutions like justice and law, bureaucracies, and also business partners did not function adequately but were in many cases open to bribery, power misuse, personal appropriation and sometimes open or hidden violence. The major stable component in this risky environment were personalized networks. Interactions were limited to such people whom one knew personally or who was recommended by close friends, and who could be controlled by moral pressure of the network. From my perspective such networks with dense binding rules and mutual expectations form 'moral economies'.¹⁶ Such moral economies provide an alternative to market relations in incomplete markets. While they are for sure not the best choice in terms of potential gains, they strongly reduce the high transaction costs of incomplete markets (risk, contracts, monitoring; opportunism, moral hazards) – acting in such personalized networks means to show a risk averse behavior. Strong ties in networks, however, may at the same time engender insurmountable boundaries, since they shape a dual world view, a sphere of inner and outer morality (cf. Tajfel 1982; Watson and Renzi 2009). To paraphrase Granovetter (1977) the 'weakness of such strong ties'¹⁷ is their tendency to be exclusive. An extreme case of exclusiveness provides the fragmented morality of 'amoral familism' (Banfield 1958) with no other option than network action and absolute loyalty. Less extreme, for example, is the form of 'familism' (Fukuyama 1995; 2000; cf. Schrader 1999). Common to these specific personal relations is that they all aim at reducing risk and uncertainty by putting the personal identity of the interaction partner and the disciplinary function of moral economies into the foreground. However, such dual perceptions of the life world stand against the emergence of a sphere of 'indifference' (Giddens 2009) which is necessary for the functioning of modern market

¹⁵ Here I follow Schrader, Heiko 2004: Spheres of Trust, Social Capital and Transformation in Russia. *Journal of East European Management Studies (JEEMS)* 4/2004: 391-410.

¹⁶ For the conception, see Thompson 1971; Scott 1976; Booth 1994; Evers and Schrader 1994.

¹⁷ Mark Granovetter investigated strong and weak ties from the perspective of network theory. The 'strength of weak ties' is their ability to open up closed networks by building bridges to other networks. Recent approaches applying Granovetter's distinction to the notion of social capital distinguish 'bonding capital' (between people) and 'bridging capital' (between groups).

societies: indifference separates people's functions from their personal characteristics;¹⁸ but this is only possible because the state provides reliable sanction mechanisms and therefore obtains the monopoly of violence (cf. Elias 1981).

Distinct spheres of morality are one crucial element in the conceptualization of trust in pre-modern, but also modern societies with incomplete formal institutions. Under such conditions social action takes place in a context of binary and antagonistic perceptions; trust is then no more functional as assumed by rational-choice theorists, since nobody is willing to make an advance of trust to an unknown interaction partner, but it is a very personal and emotional affair. To be disappointed in an interaction requires revenge. Trust is perceived as the opposite of distrust; friend at the opposite of foe. Social relations and the life world are structured according to these binary categories, and there is no place for a third, neutral category of indifference, which is backed by the state monopoly of violence.

But let us consider how trust works on the societal level. Characteristic of modern, reflexive societies is 'system trust' (Luhmann 2000). Trust in state institutions and the economy is based on experience of the predictability of institutions that work according to rule of law, formal equality and secondary liability, on experts, on 'certificates', on a stable currency, on efficient and standardized sanction mechanisms, etc. Only under these conditions can 'face-to-face' relations (Giddens 1990) be transformed into 'faceless' relations in a sphere of indifference (ibid.). These function without either party needing a personal guarantor, because both interaction partners can assume that they adhere to formal rules and laws (Christophe 1998:210), and that incorruptible state institutions negatively sanction offences. From an actor-theoretical perspective, system trust offers new scopes of action in the sphere of indifference, in which most of our interactions of everyday-life occur in a functioning market economy. However, when networks are constituted by only 'strong ties', they are closed. Missing are 'weak ties', 'bridges' to other networks (Wasserman and Faust 1994), so that in an interplay with the insufficiently functioning formal institutions a generalized trust cannot emerge.

Closely connected to the concept of trust is that of social capital. In its functional version (Coleman 1982; 1987; 1988) social capital constitutes an asset, which results from social relations and which has to be cultivated. Networks constitute the social capital which in addition to financial and human capital is responsible for economic and social success in society. The capital forms are to some degree convertible. Social capital can refer to individual agents and their networks, all network members and even society as a whole. If there is a lack of societal

¹⁸ To provide an example: in market societies I rely on an auto mechanic because he or she was hired by an auto service center and can be expected to be qualified.

social capital, Fukuyama (1997) argues, transaction costs with unknown people are very high, so that people fall back upon their personal networks.¹⁹

From this perspective, post-socialist societies may have executed the politically intended transition to a market economy by setting up market-like formal institutions, but have yet to make the transformation into a market society. The latter implies that people behave as in a market society, in spheres of indifference which open up many more and broader perspectives than the personalized networks. This presupposes not only the existence of the institutions of a market economy, but also the emergence of institutional trust, system trust, and societal social capital, so that people can choose between the market (faceless transactions) and networks (more personal relations) according to the criterion of transaction costs.

Let us now go back to the examples of everyday life which I provided. I do not argue with a typical Russian discourse on ‘national character’ and ‘Russian (or soviet) mentality’ that favours personal relations, but with collective experiences during Soviet and to some degree also pre-Soviet time which thickened into informal institutions. This concerned attitudes towards the state and the private.

In my paper from 2004 (Schrader 2004, 91–95) I discussed the political projection during Stalinist time to engender a ‘Soviet man’: a de-individualized, and easily governable mass man, being explained to be unique and superior to people of other social times and social systems.²⁰ This projection which was again and again repeated in the ideology engendering a political sharp distinction between *our* (soviet) and *alien* (capitalist) (Golov and Levada 1993, 16ff; Witte 1997). While the ideology of *homo sovieticus* was on decline in the post-Stalin era, in everyday-life a divide between public and private space emerged, as a result of spying and economy of scarcity.²¹ Behaviour and action in the public space were characterized by opportunism and submissiveness. People demonstrated a ‘hypocritical’ obedience (Fyodorov), which was reversed in the private sphere,²² where among close friends and in the family people took an anti-state stance. In economic life workers did not consider state property (e.g. tools and inventories) as a communal good but as a ‘self-service’ shop for personal appropriation, a behaviour people considered as legitimate. As Fyodorov (1993:38-39) argues, the constraint to be double-tongued corrupted people, and this drift-apart and the related antagonistic moralities were one of the reasons for the failure of socialism (ibid: 41).

¹⁹ We can consider this as a ‘bounded rational action’ (Simon 1993)

²⁰ This ‘*homo sovieticus*’ is just the alternative draft to the ‘*homo oeconomicus*’ construction.

²¹ This dichotomization goes far beyond the social conception of front stage – back stage (Goffman 1969) which he relates to public and private space.

²² Contrary to this few Voronkov/Zdravomyslova distinguish three spheres (Zdravomyslova and Voronkov 2002; Voronkov and Zdravomyslova 2004), due to the fact that the public sphere was again split into formal and informal public, in addition to the private sphere.

I argued in my papers from that time that due to insecurities in everyday life – and particularly due to an insufficiently functioning of the formal institutional framework – people relied on and cultivated their private social capital, being hidden in their personalized social networks. I do not want to overstress this point here, however, my conclusion is that the ‘culture of distrust’ that had emerged during the soviet period continued also during the early transformation period and undermined the functioning of the formal institutions in a market-system-like way. The political perception of ‘Russia against the West’ seems to have been revived in the present election period.

Small Enterprises in Russian Federation, Czech Republic and Bulgaria

During 2003 and 2004 my colleagues Eckhard Dittrich, Christo Stojanov and I worked on small-scale and medium entrepreneurs with three research teams in the Russian Federation, Czech Republic and Bulgaria (Dittrich et al. 2006; Dittrich et al. 2008). We collected quantitative and qualitative data.²³ The 180 questionnaires per country provided a general data basis with regard to questions of the foundation and growth of small enterprises and their economic environment, while the additional 30 qualitative interviews per country investigated the conducts of life (*Lebensführung*) in the social milieu of small entrepreneurs and investigated their role in the transformation process.²⁴ These qualitative data is what I refer to in this contribution. On a whole, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises in all Eastern and Middle-European countries had increased dramatically during the transformation period, despite of the fluctuation in that sector.²⁵ Our major research question was how far they can be considered as dynamic ‘entrepreneurs’ in the Schumpeterian sense or as ‘static persons’ (Schumpeter 1993: 172-174) that lack a combination of leadership qualities, entrepreneurial success orientation, venture readiness, economic opportunity awareness and orientation towards societal progress as found in the entrepreneur. In theory, the key characteristic of the prototypical ‘static person’ is a self-perception of ‘labourer’, offering his labour power in the form of self-employment. He is no innovator, no man of action and risk averse in his attitude. I

²³ The country projects were conducted by Tanja Chavdarova (Bulgaria), Jan Vlácil /Ivana Hollérova (Czech Republic) and Elena Kapustkina/Vadim Kapustkin (RF).

²⁴ We took data from six branches (services/ handicrafts related to housing construction; small-scale production/ handicrafts (excluding housing construction); catering trade; transport trade; and high-tech/highly qualified services). We investigated micro-enterprises that had already been established in the market for several years. The interview themes comprised questions concerning (a) information on the enterprises with regard to employees, capital and investment, support networks and supplier / customer relations; (b) information on the interviewee and / or founder of the enterprise; and (c) information on the economic framework, business success and planning. To allow for and analysis of the dynamics of development, various questions referred to the conditions in the setting-up period and the current situation of the enterprises.

²⁵ Interestingly, fluctuation was explained in such a way that very often small enterprises close down to open up under a new name and with a new address as a means of protecting themselves from racketeering.

will try to summarize our findings with regard to adaptation to market societal entrepreneurial action.

Most **Bulgarian entrepreneurs** consider themselves honest small businessmen who aim at making a living with their families. Remarkable is that the respondents rarely have a self-perception to be entrepreneurs rather than professionals, businessmen and ‘masters of their own destiny’. Typical is also the view that the profession “doesn't make one rich but the outcome should be sufficient to make a living”; there is no intention of growing and making higher profits. Again and again the material shows a strong familialistic network tendency. The interviewees rely on family and friends for finance, information, or employees and consider this reliance as a risks-minimizing orientation. At the same time they are aware of the negative effects of such strong networks, the demands and obligations in a moral economy and narrow choice options. Also characteristic is a very negative attitudes towards the bureaucracy. Mutual cross-interlocking of small entrepreneurs seems to be quite normal. This has the advantage to bind suppliers and demanders to each other and stabilize business connections. As the main impediment for their economic activities, the respondents mentioned lack of purchasing power in the population.

Most Bulgarian small- and medium entrepreneurs interviewed feel themselves as being confronted by obscure and uncontrollable social and market forces, while they find certainty and trust within their small personal networks. That our respondents keep informal institutions ongoing by bribing and corrupting local bureaucrats in their everyday business is perceived as a “necessity”. This bribery and also avoidance of taxation does not challenge their self-perception of honourable businessmen.

A similar self-perception as in Bulgaria is found in the **Czech Republic**. In none of the interviews was the term ‘profit making’ used. Czech small entrepreneurs prefer talking about ‘the firm’, which is considered to be a means to provide the living. The decision for self employment is closely related to the wish of becoming “one’s own boss”, although often push factors like unemployment caused this first step. Many respondents emphasized that they aim less at ‘profits’ than self-realization. They distinguish a “capitalism of small people” to which they belong as opposed to big “capitalism”. This distinction directly corresponds with clear-cut conceptions of friends (the personal network) and foes (the state, large enterprises), which strengthens cooperation and solidarity of small enterprises. Also in Czech Republic entrepreneurs rarely consider themselves as corrupt, although bribery of bureaucrats is frequent.

In **Russia** we found the strongest self-presentation in the sense of the Schumpeterian entrepreneur or a textbook of business administration.²⁶ Such a self-perception often goes along with an orientation towards expansion, which we rarely found in Bulgaria or the Czech

²⁶ Statements such as “I am a born entrepreneur” or “My blood contains the entrepreneurial spirit” are typical interview phrases.

Republic. This does not exclude participation in informal networks, which seem to be characteristic for Russian everyday life and the economy as well. Business friends seem to replace the family with consolidation of the enterprise, the latter being more relevant in the initial phase of setting up an enterprise. Characteristic for Russian small entrepreneurs seems to be: “With normal people one tries to find a reasonable agreement”. This also serves as the legitimization for informal payments to the bureaucracy or racketeers. “Money” seems to be the key to problem solutions. Interestingly, Russian respondents were open with regard to talking about corruption and practices in the shadow economy. The relation to the bureaucracy can be characterized as ambivalent insofar that the own networks may incorporate some bureaucrats, although the bureaucracy is usually considered to belong to the 'hostile environment'.

Summary of the findings on small and medium entrepreneurs:

On a whole our research results in the entrepreneur study allowed us to make some cautious statements with regard to the morphology of the post-socialist order. The considered small entrepreneurs have a communitarized life-world, being characterized by informal networks which provide a security function. For small enterprises market entry and consolidation of the enterprise are no pure economic matter, because small entrepreneurs are enmeshed in their life world. They don't apply for credit from banks or state promotion programs but raise the capital from family members, relatives and friends. In our empirical material there is no clear-cut distinction between private, business and public spheres; all of them are intermingled by incorporating business friends and local bureaucrats into one's personal networks. Major business intention is the survival of the own family. The 'bureaucracy' as an abstract entity is considered as belonging to the hostile environment, but the interlocking with 'helpful' bureaucrats from the city administration, the fire inspection, the hygiene inspection, and so on, makes business work (e.g. 'blat' relations in Russia, cf. Ledeneva).

These networks had and have security function against the state in socialism, and state bureaucracy and market in post-socialism. During socialism these worked both functionally as well as dysfunctionally for the system, because they kept the economy of scarcity running but at the same time gradually undermined its legitimacy. These informal networks were media for coping with scarcity of goods by means of reciprocity relations and barter. The double morality between 'us' and 'them' was already explained in the first part of the paper. While some authors hold that the 'transgression of deficits' resulted in a starvation of such networks (e.g. Chavdarova 1996; Suchodoyeva 1996), our research findings show, that these networks and the dual perception of "us" in a hostile environment ("them") was also characteristic for small and medium entrepreneurs during the 2000s, whereas the functions of these networks have slightly changed. They provide stability and security, and their strong importance correlates to a risk averse behaviour at the expense of market opportunities. At the same time such informal

institutions seems to undermine the use of formal institutions such as banks, insurance companies, chambers of commerce and chambers of crafts or business consultancies. Bureaucracies provide ‘facades’ behind which administrators pursue their personal interest in an exchange relation with the business world.

The investigated small entrepreneurs show a subjective sense of solidarity, which astonishingly includes both their competitors at the same economic level as well as low-ranking bureaucrats. Cohesion occurs from an opposite position towards radical individualism in a market society and ‘inhumanity’ of large enterprises and the world market. Our initial hypothesis in this project aimed at the idea of an evolution from a small to medium and large enterprise (cf. Schumpeter 1993: 98, 145) but we hardly found support for that hypotheses in our interviews.

A Household survey in Central Asia

The last project to be considered here is the research of my colleague Eckhard Dittrich and myself on private households in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during 2011-2014. Major focus of this research was how after 25 years of post-socialism middle-class households²⁷ have adapted themselves to market conditions in their agency and planning and how they achieve sustainable livelihoods. The research was conducted with three research teams from North Kazakhstan, South Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.²⁸ and consists of a quantitative non-representative household survey based on 450 questionnaires (first stage), and of 120 qualitative interviews (second stage). The interviews were taken both in urban and rural regions: in the major economic centers of the two countries Astana, Almaty and Bishkek and their rural environments. The teams obtained research trainings by the applicants.

We investigated

- the process of transformation of households on the micro-level and its relatedness to macro-level transformation;
- the adjustment of households to economic insecurity and risk of market-systems;
- the differences between the households in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, representing two countries with very different economic conditions and transformation paths,²⁹ between rural and urban households, and between age cohorts;

²⁷ We interviewed middleclass households with an open household approach (Allan, Crow 2001, 3ff). By interviewing those who were supposed to know best about housekeeping, we believed to gain good information

²⁸ The North Kazakhstan team was headed by Aigul Zabirowa (L.N. Gumilev Eurasian National University Astana), The South Kazakhstan team by Nazym Shedenova (Al-Farabi University Almaty), and the Kyrgyzstan team by Galina Gorborkova (University of Central Asia Bishkek).

²⁹ Kazakhstan is rich in resources (predominantly oil, gas, uranium) but with limited secondary-sector development and sparsely populated. As a result of economic growth in recent years, a middle class has emerged, notably at least in the urban centers. Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous, mainly agro-pastoralist country with only little primary resources except water and some gold. Industrialization during Soviet times was and is still very limited. The country belonged to the poorest regions of the former SU. Today, it is politically rather unstable. Several more or less peaceful “revolutions“ occurred. Political unrest followed by ethnical disputes in 2010 caused a sharp drop in economic wellbeing and the GNI fell, contrary to the situation in

- the assets of the households (forms of capital according to the sustainable livelihoods approach SLA)³⁰ by which they can make their living and develop strategies of coping with insecurities.

We worked with the household-level approach (Hess et al. 2000). Addressing the households to name the one who knows best about the issue discussed, the respondents usually named women who keep the household emotionally together, who have important functions in budget management, and who keep strong links to family members who left the household (migration, marriage, education, etc.).

What can we say about continuity and change, of path dependency and adaptation to the market-system? First of all, we observed changes in women's roles (Dittrich and Schrader forthc.). While traditionally the head of the household is usually the eldest male, this is maintained on the 'front stage' (Goffman) i.e. in the public, but on the 'backstage', i.e. within the household, both, men and women, often even the entire family, decides about household issues and investments. Sometimes the woman is the major breadwinner and not her husband, which contradicts the traditional household head perception. Also worth mentioning is that although the ideal life perception is the family, a considerable number of respondents has been divorced. Discussions concerning alimonies are a conflicting topic in these cases, because the males do not fulfill their legal obligations. We also found lone-parent households in our sample, all headed by women. Single young women migrate to the city for the purpose of work or education. In urban settings we can also observe a tendency towards the nuclear family, which is perhaps less a result of modernization rather than of building policy (two- or three-room apartments). With regard to gender roles, the soviet model of families was not based on the male breadwinner model as in Western societies especially after the Second World War. But even though women were more equal in obtaining education and in working life than in Western European societies, women were therefore not necessarily stronger emancipated in private life concerning household tasks and decision-making. With nowadays a strong visibility of women in jobs we believe that this is to some degree path-dependent from Soviet times (cf. Allan and Crow 2001: 15). An Islamic 'counter-revolution' against women's visibility in public life occurs in Tajikistan³¹ but not yet in Kazakhstan and at least North Kyrgyzstan.

In the rural setting traditional gender roles are more common insofar that the works in the house are related to women - wives and their daughters, sometimes also grandmothers - while the chores around the house and heavier work in subsistence production are related to male household members. But also in these settings most women are income earners. Also here we

Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian countries, where it has displayed a continuous rise since 2007, if we follow World Bank data. There is a lot of labor migration directed towards the big neighbor as well as to Russia and to other countries.

³⁰ cf. Asian Development Bank 2008; Chambers 1992, 1994, Espling 1999; Evans 2002a, 2002b; Morse and McNamara, Nora 2013; Mukherjee 2001; Tacoli 1998. The SLA refers to physical capital, financial capital, human capital, social capital and natural capital and their mutual convertibility.

³¹ This was shown by Master theses of Tajik female students in my department.

can see path dependency from the Soviet past where wages in the “industrialized villages” (Oswald et al. 2005; Dittrich and Oswald 2010) provided the major incomes stemming both from men’s as well as women’s work in the *kolkhoz*. However, this structure of industrialized village has collapsed. Only a limited number of public jobs in administration, education and health, usually held by women, and some private jobs in commerce and production have remained, while the majority of rural dwellers make a combined income from various labor opportunities in the formal and informal sector as well as in subsistence production.

Both countries have also experienced economic crises. But while one may describe Kazakhstan as having gone through a more or less continuous development with some depressions of the world market, the economic and also the general situation of Kyrgyzstan appears as an ongoing crisis. Today Kazakhstan can be described as a rather successful middle income country with strong traits of a resource-based state (Howie 2014, 71ff.) and a mild authoritarian rule aiming at top-down developments like e.g. Singapore (Nazarbaev 2008, 23ff.). While in the early 1990s observers heralded Kyrgyzstan the forerunner of a liberal market orientated economy and society in Central Asia, economic development is very weak. Kyrgyzstan belongs to the poorest countries in Central Asia and even on the world scale, that has run through a series of “revolutions”, that all resulted in state capture of new groups and a constant situation of political and economic instability. State authority is weak. Economic output is very weak causing a high amount of outmigration from the country and remittances as being a base of survival of many households.³²

Our data show that middle class households are well aware of the advantages and risks of market conditions. They know about the necessity to make their own living and to rely on their own.³³ Many of them combine incomes from the formal, the informal and the subsistence sector (cf. Elwert et al. 1983). Many accept changing their location for job opportunities. But while Kazakhstani households overwhelmingly migrate from rural to urban centers, Kyrgyzstani households quite often have migrant members, notably in Russia and Kazakhstan. It is a fact that the Kyrgyzstani economy does not offer many job options. International migrants abroad experience all the typical characteristics of diaspora communities, stigmatization and social exclusion in the host countries. The migration of Kazakhstanis from rural regions to cities is often connected with education. In the booming cities Astana, Almaty and some more secondary cities rural migrants find employment opportunities. The other way around, some pensioners return to their villages later on, because life is cheaper and healthier.

³² While Kazakhstani citizens overwhelmingly vote the breakdown of the Soviet Union as beneficial (45% against 25% as harmful), Kyrgyzstani citizens vote the breakdown overwhelmingly as harmful (61% against 16% as beneficial) (Gallup, acc 10.04. 2014, 21.34).

³³ Many particularly older people, however, complain about this and bemoan the soviet past.

The analyses also show that most citizens in both countries have experienced periods of unemployment. They use diversification of household income sources to lower the risks and they use options of subsistence production and of self-provisioning to render their households more stable. Intergenerational relations and kinship networks are based on mutual help norms and provide a risk insurance. In urban areas and among better off households, these networks seem to be more open socially including also friends, neighbors and colleagues. However, when wealth increases, household members begin reflecting about advantages and disadvantages concerning personal networks, so that reciprocity norms weaken. Here the preservation of reciprocity networks becomes an option, while among the lower middle class they are a necessity. Thus, among better-off households many kinship networks transform into purely social networks and lose their traditional economic emergency character, while functional networks of business friends emerge parallel to them.

Within households which usually consist of two or three generations, incomes of the household members or at least part of them are normally pooled even if children are grown up and have their own salaries. Also pensions go into the pool. Purchases and investments are taken from that pool. In cities this pool is sometimes confined to buying necessities of everyday life, while every contributing household member keeps a certain individual part as “pocket money”. Family members living outside the household often get support cash or in kind. This holds true for children in the process of studying, but also for pensioners. In general, family represents a social capital that can be activated if necessary; support is obligatory, be it monetary, in kind or by labor contributions.³⁴

Family relations are preserved even if the families are no longer located in one particular place as a result of migration, housing, etc. In various family feasts family members congregate, even when this involves an expensive flight.³⁵ Traditionally orientated ethnic Kazakhs as well as Kyrgyz claim that this is their way of living, which is different from individualized Western societies. They hold that even modernization in the cities has no eroding effect on the larger family and kinship network. Putting this issue into the context of modernization theory this would indeed be a different modernization path. However, twenty-five years of rapid modernization after independence is of course a period which is too short to draw such far-reaching conclusions, although also the communist experiment, which had enormous consequences for family and kinship, was not able to break the family tradition.

How far are savings, credit-taking and insurance provisions of private households in our sample related to the new market organizations? In general, credit options are from formal financial

³⁴ This also concerns also the help of urban relatives when the children of rural ones study in the city and become cohabitants of them.

³⁵ This orientation seems to be strongest among ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz.

organizations or from kin, sometimes friends. Among better-off households we find some who use formal credit for investment, for higher consumer purchases or for school fees. The majority of respondents use their kinship networks for taking – mainly interest-free and run-time independent – credits,³⁶ many of them reporting from negative personal experience with banks or such of relatives or friends. In rural regions households take micro credits from micro credit organizations or from their networks.

High amounts of saving on a savings account or in financial instruments such as stocks could not be observed in our sample. This can be due to the fact that transformation happened only two decades ago and within that rather short period middle-class households invested in real estate (for own use or even for rent returns) and higher consumer goods rather than in financial products. Besides, however, much saving is done at home. Not that banks do not offer such accounts for middle-class households, but the majority in the sample, both urban and rural, simply do not trust private banks.

In both countries poorer households quite often declare their inability to save in cash. For them subsistence production or the help in kind by members of the family network are of utmost importance to decrease living costs and to survive. For many rural households cattle represents savings, investments and insurance against risks simultaneously.³⁷ Overbridging short term cash squeezes by credits can be found among certain rural households and certain urban jobholders because of the seasonality of their incomes.

The organized insurance business for life, old age, health etc. is negligible from the perspective of private households – apart from the obligatory forms, that exist. It is obvious, that the state security systems do not or insufficiently supply the citizens with: housing, health care, pensions, and free (higher) education.

For a view on the endowment with capitals, rural-urban differences are very important. On one hand, rural households are more vulnerable concerning cash but food scarcity plays only a little role while in the urban contexts, food is a crucial issue due to high (and rising) prices. Of course, this difference is closely related to subsistence production as access to natural capital what we find far more spread in rural areas than in urban ones. Compared to urban households rural ones complain more often about scarcity of and low paid, inadequate jobs thus causing them to organize survival with help of different forms of self-provisioning. Some rural households also complain about the endowment with physical capital, especially the bad transport and schooling

³⁶ This also concerns larger sums, in our sample sometimes exceeding US\$ 25,000.

³⁷ But also some urban households with rural network links own cattle, sheep or horses that are managed by their kinfolk in the countryside. Some of them emphasize the multiple functions of this: to accumulate by breeding, by reaching stability against inflation, by selling to obtain cash, by reaching food security through slaughtering in possible worst case scenarios of world economic crisis or civil wars.

facilities. The job situation, the need of subsistence production, as well as bad physical capital and human capital options make up for push factors concerning migration.

Social capital is not only a valuable means to enhance household options for economic wellbeing through mutual help. It also touches ‘*blat*’ (Ledeneva 1998; 2006) relations, the inclusion of influential people in one’s networks, and the nourishment of these relations by presents and the like. *Blat* and all other forms of bribery are frequent for the purpose of gaining jobs, having access to subsidies for housing, finding kindergarten places, paying for the access to and good results in the educational system, getting justice, being fairly treated by the police and by public officials and civil servants, getting medical treatment immediately, etc. That is, all spheres of their lifeworld are touched, and respondents openly report on it. Despite the complaints of the interviewees about corruption in general, most give and take bribes in everyday life. Some see this as a pure necessity without which certain services or positions are not available. For them it is part of the struggle for survival on all levels of society. Others differentiate, naming as corruption only the immoral behavior of the rich and the persons of influence in society. Others explain it as a national characteristic of gratitude and mutual gift exchange. However, it undermines the emergence of a meritocratic system.

Households develop enduring practices in order to create sustainability. They save if possible for coping with life events like births, marriages, anniversaries, funerals etc., but also shocks that stem e.g. from criminal actions, bad harvests etc., and they thus react to the risks of capitalism as perceived by them. These strategies are deeply intertwined with the assets, the forms of capital, the households can build upon and their convertibility. We followed Zoomers (Zoomers 1999; de Haan and Zoomers 2005) by distinguishing four strategies: (a) at the bottom end *security*, a sustainable strategy especially for those households that are near to the subsistence minimum, being characterized by risk aversion and living from hand to mouth, a muddling through everyday life, and dependence on security networks, subsistence production and mostly irregular cash incomes; (b) above that *compensation*, a condition where negative developments or shocks can be compensated through e.g. the use of social capital or the sale of economic values; (c) above we find *consolidation*, where the household has the security of existing resources and efforts by purposeful investments and planning (e.g., in house building, purchase of a car, buying larger quantities, buying hay in summer, etc.); and at the top (d) *accumulation*, a long-term strategy to create a resource basis in order to enable future actions of the households being more ‘profitable’ than the present one (e.g. by deposits, investment in children’s education etc.).

As can be expected accumulation strategies are found among the better off households while poorer middle class households largely fit into the security strategies to reach sustainability. They live in more precarious constellations; their vulnerability is high. Therefore, many of such households cannot gamble about chances and losses; they show a risk-averse behavior and

therefore do not sustainably change their living conditions. Moreover, all middle class households have a high appreciation of education to render households more secure by transferring better life chances to the next generation. Therefore also many poorer households try to pursue such goals. Most struggle hard, and many do not succeed. Poorer households only dispose over few assets with low convertibility, and often we find relatives in similar life circumstances in their networks so that it is difficult to help each other. All in all, it is clear that the strategies of this class of households mainly result in keeping their present position, upward mobility being rather improbable.

Better off households are not only able to compensate for losses, shocks and vulnerabilities in general but they are able to consolidate their households and thus to live completely different lives than the poorer households. This includes, f.e., long-term planning which may decrease living expenses when one buys anti-cyclically. They may invest in real estate and human capital. The financial capital of these households also allows for regular vacations. The networks of these better off households support their accumulation strategies. They may include colleagues, people from the administration and from politics and professionals who can give advice. Some of these households report about considerable savings and investments that document their financial power. They display a lifestyle near to affluence: big SUVs, housing in well protected fashionable regions, accentuation of a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle, or use of service providers. Some donate and thus take a public role. The accumulation strategy often combines positions in the state sector with activities in the private one. On average, all members of the household have good positions with good monetary incomes. These households have fully accommodated to the risks of capitalist market societies and specifics in their countries.

Conclusion

The intention of this paper was to go through my observations and researches in post-Soviet societies during the period of the mid-1990s until now. The core question underlying all the researchers was how far the system change from a socialist system of planned economy to a capitalist system has been successful or whether it is still ongoing, showing formal and informal institutions that do not match each other, so that informal institutions may undermine formal ones. If the latter is true, the next question turns up, of whether this is only a not yet completed process of intergenerational change, or whether we can assume in a variation of the VOC approach that a specific post-socialist capitalism has emerged, having certain distinct elements not being found in the other variations. I want to get a little bit deeper into this discussion.

With regard to our transformational approach chosen I would like to emphasize that we do not consider organizational innovation as an *Ersatz* (replacement) in the sense of transition; what we can observe are configurations and rearrangements of existing institutional elements side by

side with market-like structures. Once we apply such a view, it is possible to assume that in post-socialist societies specific economic and societal orders are at work that have a linkage to the Soviet past, perhaps to be grouped as a specific type of capitalism (cf.. Nölke, Vliegenhart 2009; Myant, Drahekoupil 2011, 299 ff). We can assume that during the early transition a new *Landnahme* (Pentzold 2007, Dörre et al. 2009) occurred, in which property rights, power over things were appropriated. In this redistribution process personal and political connections (specific forms of social capital, being related to the former power elite) were key constituents. This explains an identification of ‘political capitalism’ during the early transformation period, which hints at a strong interminglement of the economic and the political spheres. The problem of property rights, however, is always that – once property rights were acquired – nobody later on asks, how, but as a matter of fact this stabilizes power relations. From my perspective this is an argument for a continuation of political capitalism in certain socioeconomic spheres.

Beyer admits that in post-socialist countries the differences to the liberal and the coordinated types (cf. Hall and Soskice 2001) of capitalism are indeed large, but on the other hand, he emphasizes that we can so far not speak about a pure type of post-socialist capitalism. Nevertheless, we should treat this discussion of a new variety as serious (Beyer 2009, S. 94 f) and ongoing. Myant and Drahekoupil (2011: 310ff) meanwhile distinguish five such variations, three of them - “oligarchic or clientilistic capitalism“, “order states“, and “remittance and aid based economies” having democratic deficits. In political science we also discuss “defective democracies“ (Christophe 1998; Merkel 2003). Characteristic for them is a high degree of corruption (Merkel et al. 2003: 91).

Taking the distinctions of Myand and Drahekopupil which are ideal-types, for our investigated societies I would label Russia and Kazakhstan a mix of “oligarchic or clientelistic capitalism“ and “order states“, both constituting ‘façade democracies’ or ‘guided democracies’ (cf. Mommsen and Nußberger 2007), while as a very poor state Kyrgyzstan would more relate to the type of “remittance and aid based economies“.

Our researches have shown particular characteristics which seem to be different to the Western Continental European and Anglo-Saxon types. I want to summarize them as follows. (1) First of all, most worlds of everyday life, which we investigated, show a clear-cut double morality. Both the state bureaucracy and the rich capitalists (and the coalition of these two) are considered to be foes, against which the small people have to protect themselves. This happens by avoiding taxation, invisibility in the small-enterprise lifeworld or even as a citizen.³⁸ Furthermore, security provides one’s personal face-to-face networks and risk avoidance of ‘pure’ market transactions.

³⁸ Small enterprises sometimes open and close again after as short period to start anew in a new environment. Owners tells us that this is a means to avoid racketeering by either Mafia or police. In everyday-life it is still common to avoid eye contacts with police or even strangers.

(2) But whenever it is necessary to cope with the bureaucracy, it is advantages to know somebody in the lower bureaucracy (*blat* or other forms of bribery). This is often necessary when bureaucrats do not act to serve the citizens but for their own personal benefits, misusing their power and giving signals that some money would fasten the bureaucratic process.³⁹ In the field of small enterprises typical institutions that have to be bribed are the fire inspection, the hygienic inspection, other technical inspections, the customs and airlines, the registration office, and so on, not to talk about the police in traffic and transportation issues; from the perspective of normal people almost the entire lifeworld is corrupt and requires bribery to achieve what is intended. ‘Blat’ relations can be interpreted as a form of nourishing one’s social capital. One keeps good relations with influential people even then when one does not aim at support right now but as an investment, so that one can instrumentalize these relations whenever it is necessary.

(3) The double morality is directly connected to the strong reliance on personal face-to-face networks, and avoidance of formal institutions, by self-organization of loans and familial “insurance” mechanisms of reciprocity, by employment of people whom one knows (shared biographies), and the like. In all our researches we observed such strong network ties, whereas our household research, however, shows a gradual change in the composition and use of such, because the better the income situation, the less depend such households on informal networks as “insurance mechanisms”. This means that personal networks become options side-by-side with formal institutions such as banks or insurance companies. Also unconditional reciprocity in family relations (moral economy) become scrutinized by judging of whether the respective family member “deserves” support. It may be rejected, for example, when the potential supporter judges him to be unfit for life. Due to their financial buffers such agents can take risks, make higher gains or losses and act more like market agents.

Coming back to the question of a specific variation of post-socialist capitalism, there are indeed a number of indicators on the level of everyday-life and people’s economy that support such a thinking. At the same time, however, some indicators show that with intergenerational change (cf. Inglehart 2003) and with rising incomes values and attitudes may change. The latter would hint at dependency between income level of society and market action. So indeed, many of our investigations support the transition approach of informal institutional continuity even after 25 years of post- socialism, while others clearly show change. It is therefore perhaps still too early to make a final statement about a specific variation of post-socialist capitalism.

³⁹ By the way, I learned that in the transformation it becomes more and more difficult to bribe, because one has to know who can be bribed (personal communication during the early 2000s).

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