"TO EACH THEIR OWN PLACE"
Ethnicized Memories and Inter-Ethnic Practices in the Sub-Carpathian Hungarian Social World

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The socio-cultural network and strategies of Hungarian villages and towns in the sub-Carpathian region are characterized by an increasing tension between the political reinforcement of cultural boundaries with other regional groups and the growing economic importance of informal inter-ethnic relations. The articulation of contrastive political ethnicity with the local social sphere lies in the local memory of collective deportation of Hungarian speakers in 1945 by the Soviet regime that is ritualized by commemorative monuments and events. Yet the diverse forms of inter-ethnic solidarity and co-operation are interwoven with and simultaneously effective in the fields of trade, exchange, smuggling, and temporary migrations across the border. Thus the ethnography of multi-ethnic regions on the margins of diverse national spaces susceptible to international dispute calls attention to the paradoxical inter-dependence between the durability of political ethnicities relying on the permanence of inter-ethnic solidarities and co-operation.

Keywords: inter-ethnic relations, ethnicities, memorial ritualization, sub-Carpathian Ukraine, transborder activities

This research builds on the following working hypothesis regarding ethnicity in complex inter-ethnic settings: On the one hand, there is an interdependence between the institutionalization of an isolationist and contrastive ethnicity – particularly prominent in the ritualization of emblematic *lieux de mémoire*; on the other hand, there remains a local practice of downplaying ethnic frontiers through informal trade, smuggling, and the management of tourism. This is an indispensable condition for a politicized ethnicity which maintains its legitimacy by safeguarding a specific culture, territory, and communitarian sociability in order to avoid destroying what it is meant to save. Thus, the relationship between political ethnicity and the informal economy (Sárkány 2010), the problem of the group boundaries and the ideological representations of these boundaries are at the core of the argument.

The re-emergence of informal trade and smuggling across borders was concomitant with the weakening of the Soviet system as early as 1985, and intensified with the independence of the Ukraine in 1992 which led to a complete breakdown of the economic and monetary system of this country. At this juncture, bartering locally and across borders of agricultural and manufactured goods secured

the survival of rural and urban populations – regardless of ethnic or national affiliations – as well as the reproduction of social structures and village solidarities distinguishing the different ethnic groups. At the same time, large-scale smuggling, access to institutional financing and privatization co-occurred alongside the reinforcement of the status of former *apparatchiks*[1]. Their rapid recycling in the new Ukrainian political institutions gave them power in a new setting. Those who most successfully rose in the new hierarchy enjoyed both an extended network of kin and multi-ethnic contacts, locally and across borders, and a constant diversification of their activities and resources.

The Hungarian intellectual elite elaborated a politicized ethnicity and depended on the institutional resources of the new political sphere of the Hungarian State that demanded ritualized discourses and practices, constructing an isolationist and contrastive ethnicity (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009) based on an historical and cultural singularity in this regional context. Building up or re-building *lieux de mémoire* and organizing commemorative rituals around them came to figure as the main axis of a regional touristic offer. This touristic programme, however, requires local acceptance and infrastructures for which all ethnic components must collaborate. The heritage tourism appears thus as the economic spin-off of the ethnic mobilization, its production and its legitimizing device. Managing and maintaining this tourism demands at one and the same time the mobility of ethnic elites for setting it up between Hungarian and Ukrainian institutional resources and a permanent inter-ethnic collaboration locally for the implementation of its activities.

The multiplicity of positions occupied by the elites in social, economic and political domaines is typical of the formation of new post-socialist elites and has been amply documented (e.g., Verdery 2003; Eiyal, Szelenyi & Townsley 1998). In the Transcarpathian context, this multi-positionality permeates all social milieus and integrates the ethnic dimension. Fluency in multi-lingualism as well as activation of diverse familial, ethnic and national networks ensure the permanency and the success of operations, which are both economically profitable and sources of regional and ethnic prestige.

After a brief historical survey of the region, I will illustrate the paradoxical inter-dependence between the practice of inter-ethnic relations and the political and touristic patrimonialization around an isolationist ethnicity. To do so, I discuss three different contexts of Transcarpathian daily life: smuggling, informal trade and its markets, and the dynamics of touristic activities. Smuggling and informal trade sustain investments in accomodation and publicity for tourism; they influence the inter-ethnic division of labor of rural and heritage tourism. The latter is based on visiting various *lieux de mémoire*, considered as emblematic of history, and on staging shows of folklorized rural activities.

The ethnografic research focused on the recomposition of frontiers – multi-ethnic, economic and religious – in the region of Transcarpathia, on both sides of the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. It was mostly conducted among the Hungarian-speaking minority in Hungarian, my native language, and later extended to Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Russian components of this region, with my basic knowledge of Russian, which is a vehicular idiom there. Fieldwork began with stays of several weeks in April and September 2008, and continued in the summer of 2010 and in the autumn of 2011, in the cities of Nyiregháza (Hungary), Munkasevo and Beregovo, in several neighboring villages, including two border villages (Chap Hungarian and Tiszapéterfalva), and briefly in Ruthen-speaking villages close to the Verecke Pass. I worked alone, as a paying guest of families that I accompanied and interviewed amidst their daily routines. In 2011, I collected and registered semi-directive interviews of Hungarian survivors of the Gulag (see Losonczy 2010, 2012).

The Heritage of Periphery

As a consequence of the 1920 Trianon Treaty, Transcarpathia was severed from Hungary and absorbed by the newly created Czechoslovakia. Under Czechoslovakian rule, the region was turned into a territorial unit with a distinctive name, *Podkarpatská Rus* (Carpathian Ruthenia), and many Hungar-

ian families migrated to Hungary and were replaced by Czechs.

In 1938, when Czechoslovakia was dismembered, the fringe inhabited by a majority of Hungarians was incorporated into Hungary, which annexed the rest of the region a few months later. In the autumn of 1944, the Soviet Union forced Czechoslovakia to give up the region, and annexed and integrated it into the Socialist Republic of Ukraine. Once it was incorporated into the USSR in 1945, the name was modified again, this time to *Zakarpatska* or *Zakarpattia*, which means "the region beyond the Carpathian mountains". Thereafter, Moscow compelled Hungary to refer to this region as *Karpat-Ukraina* (Carpatho-Ukraine) in all publications, but the local common language and the standard Hungarian still used the term *Kárpátalja*, which had first appeared at the turn of the twentieth century in scientific publications. After the Soviet breakdown, the term *Kárpátalja* re-appeared in all written communications for the Transcarpathian Hungarians as well as for the Hungarian authorities, while the official name in Ukrainian remained *Zakarpatska* (Fedinec & Vehes 2010).

The majority of Hungarian speakers either live in the agricultural zones along the Hungarian border or in the three important towns of this region: Beregovo (Hungarian Beregszász), Munkasevo (Munkács), and Uzhgorod (Ungvár). There are approximately 600 towns and villages inhabited by Hungarian speakers but more often settlements are a mix of ethnic groups; ever since the 1950s, there has been a network of Hungarian-speaking schools, after the Soviet authorities recognized Hungarians as a "nationality". The mix of ethnic groups includes Ukrainians (a majority), Roma, who are often Hungarian speakers, Ruthenians, dominant in the mountain zones, Slovaks, Rumanians, and Russians, with each group numbering some ten thousand. According to the 2001 census, some 80% of the population are Ukrainian, including Ruthens (roughly one million) and 12,5% Hungarian.

After the demise of the USSR, there was a re-awakening and extension of religious activities from the different denominations that had historically been pillars of the multi-religious character of the region. They quickly recovered and restored their religious buildings and schools which were often in poor repair because they had been destroyed or converted for industrial use.

If religious affiliation plays the role of an ethnic marker to a large extent, being very conspicuous in the local idiom and practice, it can also constitute a privileged inter-ethnic field. Thus, since the sixteenth century, many Hungarian speakers have converted to Protestantism. Nonetheless, some tens of thousands, mainly in the cities, share the Roman Catholic faith of the Slovaks, while others, along with most Ruthenians and Rumanians, say they belong to the most brutally repressed religion in the area and in the whole Ukraine, the Uniate faith (or Greek-Catholic Church). The Soviet regime persecuted them after accusing them of "Ukrainian nationalism" and "collaboration with the Nazi Germans". Among the *pravoslavis* (Russian Orthodox Church), one can still find Ruthenians and Ukrainians, often forcibly converted, but this religion does not concern the Hungarian population (Hann 1993: 201–213).

In the period between the two World Wars, the Jews in this region were culturally and economically active, and numbered approximately 86,000. Most considered themselves Hungarian. After World War II, the survivors of the Holocaust, about 25%, rapidly emigrated to the United States, Palestine, and later to Israel. Today, a few hundred elderly Jews are free to practise their religion in small, informal, recently established urban synagogues. The former synagogues were either destroyed or appropriated for other use during the German occupation or the Soviet regime.

The ethnic identification of persons or families by their religion or their principal language is the dominant usage of everyday ethnicity (Brubaker et al. 2006) in rural milieus, where it is considered the most "polite" form of description. The term "Hungarian", however, is still often reserved for ritual, commemorative occasions, or politically oriented speeches: its use indicates the degree of permeability of the local or personal language to the erudite or

political expressions of the Hungarians' memory of their internment in the Gulag, thereby communicating their ethnic claims. Moreover, the idiom of religious affiliation still appears as the only one capable of categorizing the mixed population: namely those born from inter-ethnic marriages as well as their children. This inter-ethnic dimension of local social organizations, already ancient, today performs a fundamental function in economic activities, serving as the only guarantee of survival, such as through informal trade, smuggling, and tourism. It also constitutes one of the more important premises implicit in the political and memorial discourses associated with the Hungarian identity of this region.

The post-communist context has restructured the ethnic environment of Hungarians, revealing new actors and ideological discourses. Ukrainian nation-building, re-initiated in 1992 and still ongoing, revived the historical rift between Western Ukrainians, the *Zapadency* according to the present-day Ukrainian idiom, who lived under the Austro-Hungarian, Czechoslovak or Polish rule, and are mostly Uniates (or Greek Catholics), opposed to the *Skhidnyaki*, the "Easterners" according to the same idiom, Orthodox and very Russified (Fedinec & Vehes 2010). Between them, sharp memorial conflicts cristallize around the genocidal nature of the great famine of 1932–33, the *holodomor*, and the representations of armed anti-Soviet resistance in Ukraine. Moreover, the introduction of the Ukrainian language in the educational system at all levels tends to reduce the importance of Russian as a language of communication and culture. From their scanty demographic numbers, Romanian, Roma and Hungarian minorities of Transcarpathia are but a secondary issue, but suffer nonetheless from the fallout of the Ukrainization of the territory. Some nationalistic movements, such as *Svoboda* ("freedom"), will dispute their rights, through symbolic manifestations, and by repeatedly damaging or destroying Hungarian or Ruthenian commemorative monuments.

In Hungarian daily life in Transcarpathia, mostly in villages and multi-ethnic neighborhoods, the Ukrainian presence assumes two forms: that of the power wielded by administrative officials and the economic and political elites, and that of their neighbors, often partners in the informal trade and smuggling, teachers of their children and service-mates in the compulsory military conscription; few mixed marriages exist, but they are difficult to evaluate.

The Ruthens (today called "Rusyn" in publications) form an ethno-linguistic group belonging to the oriental branch of the Slavic language family, sharing part of their vocabulary with Ukrainian. Their territorial core lies in the peripheral, mountainous zones of the northeastern Carpathian range. Their presence there is confirmed since the ninth century and has been completed by gradual migrations over the centuries, originating out of Volhynia, Galicia, and Bukovina. Woodcutters, small farmers, and shepherds used to transhumance, the Ruthens migrated, periodically or permanently, to Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland and even to Serbian Vojvodina. They dispersed among these countries, with a sizeable diaspora in the USA. The traditionally fuzzy character of the frontiers with their ethnic neighbors has permitted continuous and intense trade and economic relations: there is the century-old tradition of Ruthenian day laborers harvesting in the Great Hungarian Plain, and the exchange of their agricultural products up to the end of the Second World War.

Living on the fringes, the existence of Ruthens oscillates between relative isolation and multiple cultural influences; they appear as an inevitable crossing point for an inter-ethnic economic network across borders. Numbering at present between 900,000 and one million (75% in the Ukraine), the Ruthens write their language either in Cyrillic or Latin script. Their dominant religious affiliation is the Uniate Church, which showed a spectacular revival after the end of persecutions by the Soviet regime. This scattered community never constituted a state of its own, neither did Ruthens have cities. Their first intellectuals were Uniate priests; they appear in older publications, sometimes as Russian, sometimes as Ukrainian or Hungarian, according to the policies of assimilation of majority political external forces which were accepted by a large part of the Ruthens (Magocsi 1997). The multiplicity of

ethnonyms designating them is a clear illustration of this identitary fuzziness.

The Soviet Union, repressing all manifestations of ethnic particularism, assimilated the Ruthens with the Ukrainian majority. The demise of communism accentuated internal divisions between assimilationnists (Ukrainians, Slovaks, Hungarians or Poles) and a nascent "political Ruthenism" whose Ukrainian leaders are often supported by Russian anti-Ukrainian interests. Since 1989, the Rusyn ethnic organizations have multiplied in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic, Vojvodina, and then in Hungary. An emergent intellectual elite manning these organizations generates a form of ethnicity based on the notion that the Rusyn are a people (*narod*) constituting the genuine autochtonous population of the Carpathian Mountains. Hence there is the need to codify and teach the written language (Rucinko 2009) so as to claim and obtain all rights that the regional states grant to their respective ethnic minorities.

However, in Ukraine the Ruthenian ethnic claims so far do not appear to gather a majority. They formulate their identity in terms not of "minority" but of "autochtony". A status of "autonomy", recognized by Czechoslovakia in Transcarpathia before the war was "illegally" suppressed by the Soviet regime. Therefore, they deem it necessary to create a "Republic of Subcarpathian Rus", autonomous within the Ukrainian State. The latter, paradoxically follows Soviet heritage and still considers this population as Ukrainian and does not seem ready to grant them cultural and political rights.

Along with the post-communist opening of borders and the use of new technologies of communication, traditional Ruthenian mobility lends to this emerging ethnicity a new, inter-regional dimension with a characteristic network pattern (Magocsi 1997). Paradoxically, these same factors sustain and reinforce Ruthenian inter-ethnic circulation in commercial and touristic activities, as well as the relative frequency of inter-ethnic marriages. If industrialization, education and compulsory military service did contribute to urbanize a fair amount of the Ruthenians in market towns with a large Hungarian population, the opening of borders let them re-discover their ethnic kindred across the borders in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Romania. Along with Romanians, they are, at the present time, the privileged trade and marriage partners of Hungarians.

The explicit meaning of both Hungarian and Russo-Ukrainian denominations for the region – namely "the piedmont of the Carpathians" and "beyond the Carpathians" – implicitly refers to two rival centers of power, one in the West (Hungary), the other in the East (Ukraine). The names still share the same logic of the opposition between center and periphery.

This divided dependence between competing centers characterizes not only spatial representations, but also notions of social time. Though place names have been officially written and taught in Russian, and later in Ukrainian, for the last sixty years, Hungarian speakers and most Ruthenians only express places and itineraries with Hungarian names in their daily speech, yet remain quite at ease with the official (Russian or Ukrainian) denominations in their contacts with authorities. Similarly, although the Ukrainian territory is officially in a time zone one hour in advance of Hungarian (and Western European) time, Hungarian speakers and most Ruthenians and Roma tend to set their watches and clocks, make their appointments, open and close their shops and businesses, listen to radio, and watch television according to "Hungarian time", which is designated in the local inter-ethnic speech as *po misnamu* (local time) and derived from the Russo-Ukrainian lexicon. In sharp contrast, all official institutions, state enterprises, public transports, and street clocks operate on "Kiev time", which also sets the pace of daily life for Russians and Ukrainians who have been established there since 1946. If both temporal codes are known and punctually used by all, this duality certainly draws an identity borderline, figuring two forms of supra-local allegiance.

From National Minority to Peripheral Ethnicity

If the policies of the Soviet Union, as brutal as they were incoherent, never succeeded in suppressing the

cultural core of supra-local Hungarian identity, it is, paradoxically, the geo-political re-composition after 1989 that now seems to jeopardize cultural links and identification with Hungary, a primary foundation for the profile of a national minority. A bilateral treaty was signed in 1991 to facilitate cordial relations between Budapest and Kiev, whereby Hungary pledged to abandon all territorial claims and entrusted the fate of the Hungarians of Transcarpathia to the good will of the Ukrainian State. This treaty was felt and experienced as a betrayal by the local Hungarian elites. For the Hungarians of Transcarpathia it presents a new and conflicting image of Hungary as a foreign country.

Finally, the integration of Hungary into the EU and the Schengen Area, which imposes heavy administrative conditions on Ukrainian citizens – including ethnic Hungarians – wishing to travel, settle, or study in Hungary, seems to have spread disappointment amongst the entire population. This has progressively transformed into a widespread mistrust of the Hungarian State. In 2004, under the pressure of the nationalistic right, a referendum was organized in Hungary on the question of granting Hungarian nationality to "ethnic" Hungarians in the adjacent countries. The socialist party, then in power, campaigned for the "no", arguing with economic and political reasons of "good neighborhood". The massive abstention of voters and the victory of the "no" reinforced this representation of political aloofness and of the separation between cultural identity and national affiliation.

On the other hand, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, intense informal trade and smuggling – fundamental economic resources for the survival of this region – have increased and diversified inter-ethnic interactions between Ruthenians, Ukrainians and local Hungarians, while activating and widening family and affinal networks on both sides of the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. These practices have expanded and extended the multi-ethnic social space of Transcarpathia toward the border departments of northeastern Hungary. This is typically accomplished through the installation of families and various trans-border trading activities, thus trans-

forming the urban and social landscape of regional towns and villages. No legal intervention or police regulation can stop these practices, thus they delineate the figure of a regional trans-border identity where the prestige-scale shifts toward social competence for the negotiation and mobilization of multiple cultural, identity and interactional resources.

At the same time, the discourses and practices of younger Transcarpathian generations – such as festivals, touristic performances, or the creation and use of virtual space on the web – display a progressive identification with the Transcarpathian territory itself, thereby giving evidence of an emerging Hungarian identity of Transcarpathia (Karas 2008). In this process, instead of being perceived as a territory artificially separated from a common Hungarian country before 1918, Transcarpathia is turning into the main referent in the passage from a national minority to that of a new local ethnicity, thereby making new identity moorings available. From below, the Transcarpathian territory is the basis of Hungarian ethnicity; from above, the figure of the "Hungarian Nation" appears in local comments as a meta-territorial community of the *ethnos*, disseminated amongst several nation states, but with the Hungarian language demarcating its virtual territory. If the 2010 adoption by the right-wing majority of the Hungarian Parliament of a law giving *de jure* Hungarian citizenship to all descendants of Hungarians in the world brings about practical questions of opportunity and feasability, it does not seem to affect this orientation, since Ukrainian law will sanction naturalization by the forfeiture of Ukrainian citizenship.

Surviving Together: Figures of Inter-Ethnic Mobility across Borders

The revival of the informal economy can also be interpreted as the circulation of economic commodities between regions that, until the beginning of the twentieth century, all belonged to historical Hungary. Before 1920, the Carpathian basin constituted an economically and ecologically autonomous unit in Hungary. Cultural and commercial relations as well as the division of labor between the different regions

of Hungary share a multi-ethnic history. After 1920, with the new borders imposed by the Trianon Treaty, these relations have been gradually suppressed. It was only after the internal collapse of the socialist regime in the mid-1980s that the structures of popular commerce and the circulation of goods began to re-emerge. Horváth and Kovatch (1999) argue that the informal circulation of commodities and the smuggling activities (of gasoline and other goods) are nothing more than the slow re-institutionalization of the traditional, ethnic, and regional division of labor adjusting to the new realities at the end of the twentieth century. In other words, one can interpret them as a return to the trade relations which were historically and spontaneously organized between the peoples of the Carpathian basin before 1920, but new ethnic actors have appeared on the scene.

Trade and Smuggling across the Hungarian-Ukrainian Border

Immediately following the Soviet regime change, northeastern Hungary experienced a severe economic recession which included a rising rate of unemployment. Consequently, the illegal transport of petrol and fuel-oil across the border became the main resource of economic survival for hundreds of Hungarian families in this region. The quantities smuggled were relatively small – Horváth and Kovatch (1999: 121) estimated between 100,000 and 200,000 liters per month in the mid-1990s. They calculated that this was sufficient to fuel about half of the agricultural machinery of the Hungarian northeast.

The war in Bosnia brought about yet another new development. Ukrainian petrol and gas-oil were still being smuggled, but were trafficked towards the Hungarian-Rumanian border. From there, groups of Serbs and Hungarians then transported the goods across the Hungarian-Serbian border during the blockade imposed by Western powers. Petrol and gas-oil were bought in the Ukraine at less than two-thirds of the Hungarian price, and were then deposited and sold within the Hungarian border fringe, but fuel was also traded in more distant regions of Hungary. In the late 1990s, several villages on the

Ukrainian side of the border specialized in storing petrol and fuel-oil for subsequent sale. These deposits stood – and still stand – in the backyards of houses. The largest houses are equipped with tanks and petrol pumps, and can stock up to ten thousand liters; others keep the fuel in containers and use hand pumps. In 1996, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a law that made the production and labeling of vodka a national monopoly. As a result, smugglers who had specialized in the illegal trade of vodka switched to petrol and gas-oil.

When the illegal transport and passage of fuels became more difficult, or the demand for them slackened, the same routes and vehicles began transporting thousands of cigarette cartons bought from Transcarpathian Rumanians or vodka from the black market of Uzhgorod. The people transporting these goods rarely venture beyond the areas of purchase and resale, where they have acquaintances and local knowledge. They are available twenty-four hours a day and can cross the border at any time, based on precise information gathered through a very efficient network of informants. They use Western cars or minibuses with especially large tanks, also illegally imported from Germany.[2] Most of these petrol-smugglers were former employees of the Hungarian National Railways whose jobs had been cut after the fall of communism. Among the younger generation who do not typically own their own vehicles, there are the so-called "day workers" of petrol; those who drive someone else's car laden with petrol across the border.

Crossing the Hungarian-Ukrainian border usually takes a long time, mainly due to the number of vehicles, but smugglers have a tendency to help each other, often ceding places to one another in the queue for customs. In the late 1990s, about 60% of all vehicles crossing the border were petrol transporters (Horváth & Kovach 1999).

Beyond its initial capital investment, smuggling petrol implies a large amount of moral capital. Trust between buyers and sellers is essential for reproducing this trade, equal in importance to the reliability and quality of the smuggled product. In general, transporters of petrol, cigarettes, clothes and tex-

tiles, and occasionally agricultural products, each have their own regular customers; the networks thus established between sellers and buyers have been stable from the late 90s to the present day. Two groups constitute the transporters: Transcarpathian migrants and Hungarian-born citizens. Both of them enjoy a privileged relationship with custom officials and border guards, including the exchange of information, and, in turn, financial compensation for such exchanges. Smugglers are mostly men aged between 30 and 40; the first generation that started to organize this trade in the 90s have already been replaced by a younger, more aggressive one. By and large, it has remained an individual and/or family affair without the presence of the mafia on the Hungarian side.

The mafia controls the supply of backyard pumps and tanks in Transcarpathia, but does not intervene in the transport and commercialization of petrol across the border. There is a hierarchy amongst the smugglers, mainly based on the number of vehicles owned. This allows those who are better off to transport cigarettes, alcohol, and other products in addition to the petrol. The losers in this smuggling business are those who lack sufficient initial capital, those without a network of family and friends across the border, and those who cannot stabilize a pool of regular buyers. As one informant put it, "one who has not been honest enough in the selling, and not aggressive enough in the buying". Yet losers and winners do not exhibit a radically different economic prosperity, and success in the form of stable business and clients are locally attributed more to good luck than to special abilities. Social capital accrues from large families with members on both sides of the border and a wide network of acquaintances.

In the cross-border circulation of goods, services, money and people, transport has become an autonomous activity with a tightly knit network of small mobile drivers in constant communication, either amongst themselves and/or with their clients on their mobile phones. This activity also relies on family ties, those nearby and those on the other side of the border: husbands and wives, parents and children, cousins, and in-laws on either side exploit the family vehicles night and day for all-purpose transport, including a convenient alternative for travellers weary of the slow trains and endless delays due to the change of rail gauge between Hungary and Ukraine.

Today, there is both a re-composition and a fragmentation of this informal circulation of goods and services across the border. The admission of Hungary into the Schengen Area on January 1, 2008, has notably reinforced border control, especially on the Hungarian side, chiefly as a result of new military and technological equipment, particularly the increased use of computers. The intensified challenge of crossing the border checkpoints with cars and smuggled goods has resulted in the re-assessment of crossing points along the "green border", and has consequently capitalized on the local, masculine cultural knowledge of the territory. This knowledge is turning into a prized commodity for new, non-local actors, who are increasingly professional, and are often situated within the pyramidal hierarchy of the Ukrainian mafia. The latter have permanent residency and money-laundering investments in the market towns on the Hungarian side, notably in Nyíregyháza, and sometimes contribute to a certain style of urban modernization in these towns. They have also introduced weapons and "human merchandise" in the trans-border scene, through the transfer of clandestine migrants and/or prostitutes on their way to Western Europe. These actors use extortion, intimidation, and open violence in their relations with their local partners, including border police and customs officials, particularly on the Ukrainian side. In order to smuggle cigarettes, alcohol, and weapons, they use the Uzhgorod-Csap-Zahony railway line as well as trucks; many railway employees also take part in this network.

The professionalization and toughening of smuggling activities following the crystallization of the EU–Ukraine border signals the emergence of new goods and actors in an economic field ruled by trans-border logic and tradition. Thus, local areas communicate and thereby constitute the supra-local aspect in the globalization of a violent economy. The growing danger associated with these activities has fragmented the formerly more inclusive field of the

informal circulation of goods and services across the border. Ethnographically, this is remarkably clear: The passing, exchanging, and bartering across the border of both standard and prestigious objects of consumption and based on differential prices and taxes and relative scarcity in either country (such as electric appliances, clothes, shoes, and cosmetics, which are less expensive in Ukraine) formerly involved the same networks of villages and roads, of known and accessible markets, and was part of everyday conversation and commentaries. Now, the field of organized smuggling is dominated by extra-regional actors who are mobile and violent, along with their local partners; they conduct their business under a cloak of silence.[3] The sight of new houses, considered extravagant by the locals, and of brand-new powerful cars, which elicit a few involuntary words from drunken masculine voices or encourage oblique rumours whispered among some women, constitute the sole evidence of this organization. Some local actors, mostly men, may occasionally act as a small actor for one or both systems of smuggling. Neither the local small smugglers nor the customs and border officers are able to make individual, strategic choices. They appear as liminal sidekicks at the intersection and on the frontline of several worlds of norms and constraints.

Informal trade is sometimes the only resource left after the loss of opportunities due to the change of economic and political regimes. It activates and widens the local economic and cultural abilities, contributing to the accumulation of individual and family prestige, both locally and in the border zone. At the core of these abilities – convertible into capital when other sources are absent – is the ability to react to unforeseen events: the capacity to maintain, stabilize and expand (within realistically controlled limits) relational networks between all the ethnic groups present in this region and in the bordering countries of Hungary, Slovakia, and Rumania. Beyond the knowledge and the timely activation of the relational cultural codes – including that of an inter-ethnic transactional idiom composed of words borrowed from Ukrainian, Slovak and Rumanian – this ability includes having mobility between both tran-

sitory and permanent local links, and maintaining a scrupulous respect for pledges and engagements, which are always verbal. This "mestizo competence" (Losonczy 2002: 24), which is part and parcel of the masculine status, but not entirely inaccessible to women, consists of the permanent economic and social mobilization of inter-ethnicity, and of the constant strategic crossing of cultural, linguistic, religious, and state frontiers. It therefore constitutes the opposite of ethnicist isolationism, which is the domain of the local Hungarian political elites. In this trans-border economic game, the "Hungarianess" of the actors (or its negation) is but one asset amongst many resources to be mobilized in the transactions whose networks create a functional, "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 1997) among persons of various origins. This cross-border cultural intimacy does not invalidate the internal cultural intimacy particular to each group, but is instead a result of their partial intersection.

The KGST Market of Nyiregyháza

The black market appeared in Hungary in the 1980s, most notably through Poles who got into trading second-hand products after being struck by the economic crisis of their country. The impoverishment of large sectors of the rural Hungarian population as a consequence of the change of regime helped renew and increase demand for this trade. The ethnic recomposition of informal trade, particularly intense along the borders, led to a change in the designation of the black market: it was re-dubbed "the KGST market", the Hungarian initials for the now extinct Comecon organization.

In spite of the quick reshaping that affects the organization, size and the flow of goods, this market is still the place par excellence where both the ethnic complementarity and specialization are conspicuous and exploited in the informal trans-border circulation of goods and services. Initially, these activities were characterized by mobility, lack of organization, petty delinquency, and miserable sanitary conditions. By the mid-90s the municipal authorities had recognized their importance and attempted to organize and legalize them by assigning fixed spots

to sellers of different products in the market place. Nyiregyháza, the major town of the northeastern department of Hungary, some 40 km from the Ukrainian border, is also relatively close to the Slovak and Rumanian borders. Consequently, it has one of the largest KGST markets of the whole country.

This market is held in a huge parking lot in a peripheral suburb. The spatial setting, layout of its retailers, and range of supplies were stabilized in the late 1990s. Different sections are assigned to the different groups of retailers and types of merchandise. A large section of Ukrainians – including Hungarians, Rumanians, and Roma – have a well-stocked amount of tools, cigarettes, and vodka placed under old bath towels. In the Hungarian sector, most merchants have a licence to sell specific goods, but actually trade products off licence, namely clothing from China or Turkey. Alongside them, a small group of Rumanian Roma sells second-hand goods and smuggled cigarettes and spirits. They instil fear and mistrust among their competitors and buyers because they are quick to react to alleged slights. They work in families, and are generally present in several markets in the area. Where the Poles once used to trade illicitly, the Chinese and Hungarian retailers now sell quality clothes on clean, well-arranged stands. There is also an ethnically mixed section of people from Transylvania – Hungarians, Rumanians, and some Ukrainians – who sell smuggled spare parts for agricultural machines, particularly for the Russian or Belarussian tractors used in Hungary. They also sell Rumanian-made products, such as kitchen equipment, tools, smaller electric domestic appliances and clothing. Next to them, a small group of Armenian Jews change money and sell Asiatic electronic gadgets. In the all-important food section, Hungarian retailers sell in bulk to Ukrainians and Rumanians, who pay a much higher price in their country for the same products. Next to this market, in a separate area, there is a small Chinese section, nicknamed "the Chinese Yard" by the locals. In the early 1990s, the Chinese supplanted the Polish and Hungarian merchants. Their aggressive commercial stance made them unpopular and caused them to be mistrusted by their colleagues; thus, they ended up

separating their market space from the KGST market space. After some initial success due to their low prices, the poor quality of their products and their separateness made customers scarcer.

The profile of merchants has professionalized over time: most of them are either qualified workers, or graduates from technical schools who lost their jobs at the end of the communist period. After a period of itinerant trade, they settled into this market. Their type of commercial activity is basically illegal, since retailers do not pay taxes. Nonetheless, they abide by a strict rule where keeping one's word is fundamental. Thus, the verbal contract is superior to the written, and long-term financial engagements are scrupulously respected. Apart from this basic component of the system, the ability to react rapidly to changes in the tastes and demands of customers is also important: clothing fashions, innovations in electrical appliances, and new brands of cigarettes and vodka are carefully observed.

This market, along with smaller ones on the Ukrainian side of the border, fulfils a fundamental social function in a region where the middle-classes have been downgraded by the change of regime and the newly impoverished have proliferated. Non-Hungarian buyers in this market are often retailers from Slovakia, Ukraine or Rumania (mainly from areas inhabited by Hungarians) who buy in bulk and resell in their home countries. But Rumanian, Ukrainian, and Slovak sellers also come periodically to the KGST for a day or two either monthly or quarterly. Local buyers are mostly unemployed people, the recently impoverished former members of the communist middle-class; however, members of the economic and intellectual elite of the city also frequently visit the market. While the former categories typically buy food and clothing, the wealthier elites practice a kind of neighborhood tourism. They browse through an exotic world where they can find, with a bit of luck, interesting, decorative, or traditional popular objects from Hungarian-speaking regions of the neighboring countries.

The daily attendance at this market is between two and three thousand people on weekdays, but rises to almost twenty thousand before Christmas,

when dozens of buses and coaches arrive from Po-land, Slovakia, Ukrainian Transcarpathia and Rumania. During that period, the number of mer-chants is then over one thousand. Thus, the mar-ket contributes simultaneously to reinforce ethnic limits through commercial specialization and the inter-ethnic relations by facilitating interactions and strengthening a common interest in its permanency. Moreover, this continuous movement of goods and services will definitely enhance the survival and the regional ethnic prestigious status of those who suc-cessfully manage inter-ethnic commercial dealings and conflicts.

Yet smuggling activities are not limited to these stabilized "grey" zones where they have been chan-neled into markets now tolerated by the authorities. In spite of the Schengen process, smuggled goods from Transcarpathia are still distributed on the sly along smaller roads, out of car trunks, in farmhouse backyards, in private residences, and in small vil-lage pubs. In this flexible, informal trade, buyers and sellers are inter-dependent, and they switch their roles as they cross to either side of the Ukrainian-Hungarian border. Those involved in these grey and black areas of the economy are assured of the success, stability and reproduction of this mode of living. Reasons for this include the opportunity to pass quickly from one commercial role to another, to adapt immediately to changes in demand for diverse products, and to supplement their income through other activities that also rely on permanent, trans-border mobility.

Among these activities, the Transcarpathians have developed both formal and informal varieties of tourism, such as receiving tourists, organizing small-scale tours, and commercializing touristic products. In this activity, however, there is a clearer division of labor: Transcarpathians – typically Hun-garian Transcarpathians – are the sellers, Hungar-ians the buyers.

Homeland and "Limes" as an Inter-Ethnic Heritage

The wider context of this incipient tourism is, obvi-ously, the fall of communism in Hungary as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union, which has resulted in the resumption of trans-border mobility in the region. Yet one should not underestimate the impor-tant role played by the post-communist Central Eu-ropean cultural policies. These policies attempted to tie ideological bases with instruments of patrimony management, and national identity with tourism, in order to construct a "national" cultural capital which could be negotiated politically with neighbor-ing countries having a Hungarian minority, while simultaneously promoting internal and external tourism. Whereas the main target of this policy "across the border" inspired by a kind of "transbor-der nationalism" (Brubaker 1996) was indeed Tran-sylvania,[4] the extension of these identity premises toward all adjacent Hungarian speakers particularly by Duna TV – even before the fall of communism, this television station was conceived as the central voice of pan-Hungary – suggested a new economic perspective to the Transcarpathian Hungarians and provided an idiom which they could use to build up a virtual image of their region. Concurrently, it promoted a touristic demand for Hungarian iden-tity within Hungarian borders. Moreover, as in most regions of Central and Eastern Europe, the rural character of Transcarpathia with its scant industry and weak infrastructure generated the emergence of small-scale, local tourist entrepreneurs offering urban and rural bed-and-breakfast services, along with organized tours of the symbolic sites of the re-gion. In spite of local tourist associations in towns and villages (usually headed by female members of the local intelligentsia, such as schoolteachers, pro-fessors, and engineers finding employ in touristic activities), the trans-border, inter-ethnic networks of kin and affines still remain the main informal vehicle for "passing" tourists from hand to hand, and from place to place. Similarly, personal con-tacts, or contacts through relations (such as school or religious event organizers or tourist agents from Ukraine and Slovakia), allow these entrepreneurs to receive an increasing number of non-Hungarian families and groups.

The tourist associations operate the web pages and manage the sites of their localities, and often

serve as intermediaries between the regional political elites, who promote and ritualize *lieux de mémoire*, and the small local peasant entrepreneurs, who set up activities in relation to the patrimonialized landscape (wild nature, hiking, horse cart riding, and fishing) as well as traditional crafts (weaving, cooking, farm-restoring, pastry, home distillery of spirits, and pig slaughtering).

Similar to other rural areas of post-socialist countries, rural tourism emerges in Transcarpathia as a gradual process whereby some local customs of family hospitality, traditionally intended for kin and affine, are progressively dropped from the system, which still regulates the private sphere. They are stylized according to a changing tourist demand, but also adopt the symbolic tourist images offered by the media. Thus, after the almost hermetic closure of borders, the first tourists, who arrived in the 1980s, were members of the German minority who had either been expelled or had fled following the annexation of Transcarpathia by the Soviet Union, and who had organized active memorial associations and communities in Germany (Ilyés 2003). After all those years away, they were returning to the village where they had been born, and to the friends and family long lost to them. Called *Heimattourismus* in German anthropology,[5] this tourism of the "lost country" is part of a memorial practice, a collective elaboration of mourning aimed at repairing the consequences of deportation from their native land. The associations created by this German population of Eastern and Central Europe began this form of tourism in the late 1970s, and the movement accelerated for a few years after the fall of communism. Around 1995–97, this tourism transformed into an alternative, recreational practice; one linked to the memory without remembrance of the new generations born in Germany.

Homeland and Passage: Identity Tourists and their Inter-Ethnic Reception

At the beginning of the 1990s, tablets, tombstones, and monuments were set up through the initiative and donations of local actors and ethnic organizations who actively mobilized allied politicians and Hungarian political parties. However, these external allies are now progressively appropriating and sacralizing regional *lieux de mémoire* – symbolic of a more distant Hungarian past – as if the *memory core* built around the Gulag had opened the way to the re-organization and re-territorialization of the entire commemorative landscape. Thus, at the onset of the political struggle to introduce and incorporate Hungarian history into the curriculum of Transcarpathian schools, more ancient *lieux de mémoire* were renovated and equipped with commemorative tablets. Some examples include those linked to the anti-Habsburg insurrection led by Prince Ferenc Rakoczi, a native of the region, or to the stronghold of Munkács (Munkasevo), where there was a protracted Hungarian resistance against a siege by the Turks; both have been ritualized through annual commemorations.

Yet the core of this localized narrative of Hungarian history seems to be one of the most symbolic locations in Hungarian national mythology: the Verecke Pass in the northeastern Carpathians. This pass, located in an area traditionally inhabited by Ruthenian shepherds and peasants, was reputedly the point of entry for the tribes whose sedentarization, coalition, and conversion to Christianity constituted the foundations of the millennium-old kingdom inaugurated by Saint Stephen in the Carpathian Basin. Later, in the thirteenth century, the Tartar-Mongol army invaded Hungary through the same pass. Still later, at the beginning of the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies fought another hard battle there. Finally, during the Second World War, the Hungarian defence line – called the "Arpad Line" against the Red armies – also included this pass. The original monument commemorating this place as the boundary between "historical Hungary" and the Russian empire was erected by Hungarian authorities in 1896 to celebrate the millennium of the Kingdom. However, by the end of the 1940s, the Soviets had destroyed the commemorative tablets, later dismantling the whole structure.

The new monument, built by the sculptor Peter Mati from Munkasevo, was erected in several stages, with work beginning as early as the late 1990s.

Though its construction was marked by polemics as well as several minor acts of vandalism, in 2008 it was jointly inaugurated by the Hungarian and Ukrainian authorities. The open monumental portal – a symbol for the passage between East and West according to tourist pamphlets – is composed of the vaulted superposition of seven massive stone slabs, each one representing the seven foundational tribes of the Hungarian nation.

By telescoping mythical and historical references in a majestic panorama, this place offers Hungarian tourists a sort of wandering passage through time and space. Such wandering is supposed to convert mythical history into identity memory centered around a symbolic founding frontier. This includes an outpost, facing the ever-menacing East, where the guides invite the tourists to deposit a commemorative bunch of flowers encircled with a tricolored band. Subsequently, the place has come to constitute the central, culminating focus of the tours offered by associations and travel agencies connected to local or Hungarian political elites, as well as by the local small-scale, informal touristic entrepreneurs. The "national" memorial interpretation of this ancient border – offered to and reinforced by this form of tourism (Dallen 2001) – erases the multi-ethnic and multi-secular character of this region, and obscures the complex web of inter-ethnic relations and conflicts.

Yet, as the tourist guides and brochures in Hungarian indicate, several landmarks co-exist on this *limes* that are in the process of becoming patrimony. Close to the commemorative portal there is a sober white pillar, topped with an orthodox crucifix and marked by a commemorative tablet, recently erected to commemorate the Ukrainian partisans executed by the Hungarian army in 1939, when the region was returned to Hungary. Every year, commemorative rituals are held there, including decorative wreaths made by Ukrainians from the region of Lviv. Behind the pillar, one can see a statue, erected during Soviet times to represent the stylized figure of a Ruthenian mountain shepherd. Thus, the Verecke Pass, sparsely inhabited by Ruthenians, has also been integrated into the Ukrainian memorial narrative. It symbol-

izes the process of nation-building, while simultaneously becoming a place of convergence for rival memorial and symbolic activities, as well as a contested object of conflicting interpretations between local religious elites, namely the Greek-Catholics, and the Calvinists.[6] This marking and ritualization of *inter-patriotic* places (Losonczy 1997), equally invested with symbolic value by other ethnic groups such as the Ruthenians or the "national" Ukrainians, then continues to feed political counter-rituals like vandalism, the dismantling of monuments, or the construction of rival insignia and monuments, accompanied by polemics in the media and the occasional diplomatic incident.

If local tourist activity builds up the commercial profile of these places by drawing generously from the stock of "national" memorial narratives while enriching them with selected local stories and anecdotes, it does so precisely by circumventing the rigid and conflicting identity frontier established and shaped by institutionalized memory. As is often the case with collective tourism (as with schools, associations, and religions), the logistics of certain stages of the tour compel the collaboration of Ruthenians, Rumanians, and Ukrainians in mixed-population villages. On these occasions, the organizers try to put forward tokens of identity labeled "Hungarian" in the presentation of culinary, choreographic, agricultural, or artisanal activities. These attempts feed "patriotic tourism", enacting a certain sort of secular pilgrimage by individuals, families and groups coming from Hungary, as well as Hungarians from other countries, to commune at places considered ethnic identity reservoirs beyond state borders. However, the desire to receive Ukrainian, Russian, or Slovak tourists also demands the co-operation of inter-ethnic allies and partners. In this effort, the same game switches identities, and Hungarians – who may speak Russian or Ukrainian – offer tourists an alternative reading of the commemorative portal, this time as a symbol not of the passage, but of the opening up between East and West. Their commentary includes other places to visit, typically centered around untouched nature, the diversity of local cuisine, the antiquity of *all* churches and monuments,

and the shared experience of both communist repression and its ultimate demise.

Amongst the smaller-scale, local tourist entrepreneurs, conflicts are more suggestive of occasional commercial competition, rather than a rivalry over memorialization, which thereby legitimates regional political elites and their local delegates. According to their touristic audiences, whether they are Hungarians, Ruthenians, Rumanians, or Ukrainians, the promoters of local tourism will draw on the symbolic memorial reservoirs produced by rival elites whenever necessary. Furthermore, they will not hesitate to appeal to the relational network of their kin and allies belonging to other ethnic groups in order to widen the recruitment of tourists.

Yet the ethnographic observation of the daily and religious life in villages, towns, and peripheral neighborhoods – with a particularly close watch on the current practices that often tend to travel across borders – leads to an obvious conclusion: a large part of the local economy and social organization of the Hungarian area of Transcarpathia is deeply embedded in the economy and organization of other ethnic groups, both regional and trans-border, and activates family and local solidarities which have existed long before the polarized political networks. If these practices depart from the political logic of ethnic isolation, then the dominant set of norms of the latter serve to reinforce their ties to the sphere of the *informal*. Illegal as they are according to national juridical norms, these practices tend to be perceived by the ethnic elite as illegitimate, since they polarize the local social world between the beneficiaries of legitimate economic resources and the insecure actors attempting to capture illegal resources.

Conclusion: Borders and Crossings

The intense memorial elaboration around the deportation of Transcarpathian Hungarians to the Gulag, which emerged at the end of the Soviet regime in Transcarpathia, has been appropriated and politicized by the Hungarian-speaking elite over the years. It has been utilized in the construction of a Transcarpathian Hungarian ethnicity, entertaining complex and moving relationships between the

Hungarian authorities and political parties and the Ukrainian government. This political ethnicity has generated new cultural frontiers with regard to other regional or external ethnic groups; it defends and favors the ethnic isolation of Hungarians in a region traditionally characterized by trans-border economic and family networks. At the same time, the opening up of state borders along with the reactivation, patrimonialization, and ritualization of ancient and recent *lieux de mémoire* has created new opportunities for informal trade and exchange across the border in this rather impoverished region. It has also contributed to new local symbolic capital which joins a Hungarian cultural policy heavily tinged with identity concerns and which feeds patrimonial tourism. The informal trans-border trade, smuggling, and small-scale tourism thus appear as privileged resources for survival, serving to rekindle and broaden local transactional skills whose inter-ethnic logic is contrary to that of the ethnicist cultural isolates. Yet, it is by staging the latter that new forms of nostalgic tourism are constructed via the institutional patrimonialization of an historical mountain pass posing as a frontier, but one that is unable to receive tourists without mobilizing inter-ethnic resources. Furthermore, supplying tourism based on the appeal of an ecological country life and fully intact natural resources, which reflects contemporary globalized sensitivities, seems to question the central symbolic role of ethnic singularity.

Despite the conception of an ethnic frontier that would form a dividing line between self-contained cultural entities, is promoted by an intellectual and political elite, and grounds political discourse as well as the constructed touristic image of the ethnos, the everyday life of villages, neighborhoods, and multi-ethnic networks of this region takes place in a zone of ethnic and social diversity. This "intersection area" (Losonczy 1997: 184) linking social spaces of diverse groups works as a membrane through which memories, techniques, skills, and local identity stories can mix, interbreed, and complement or correspond to one another. If it is the case that this ancient regional knowledge of border-crossers is precisely what allows the Transcarpathian Hungar-

ians to circulate between the rigid world of political ethnicity and that of its various conversions into exchangeable goods, then the question raised here is more general. The models of ethnicity advanced by Central-European ethnographers of a folkloristic orientation and by the new actors constructing politicized ethnicities are readily borrowed by various ethnic political leaders. Yet they are not capable of accounting for the functionality of daily sociabilities or the reproduction, change, and autonomy of the social relative to the political in these societies. Furthermore, the ethnography of multi-ethnic regions on the margins of diverse national spaces susceptible to international dispute calls attention to the paradoxical inter-dependence between the durability of political ethnicities relying on the permanence of inter-ethnic solidarities and co-operation.

Notes

1 In Russian, a higher echelon bureaucrat.
2 Most of these cars are various types of diesel-powered Mercedes, especially equipped in Germany with extra-large tanks for taxi drivers, lest custom officials suspect makeshift tinkering with the vehicle.
3 Since 2000, the Transcarpathian press is replete with stories of threats and violence against customs and immigration officers, including Hungarians, typically following the confiscation of even small quantities of goods. Similarly, through the Hungarian language webnews *karpataljainfo.ua* and conversations with customs officers one can estimate the volume of this smuggling: hundreds of thousands of cigarette cartons, dozens of clandestine migrants – male and female – and hundreds of gallons of spirits per week. The silence of these actors becomes more eloquent when dealing with arms and drugs traffic, considering that they are caught between the pressure of EU regulations for border protection, a lack of means and personnel at the border – often with their families living nearby – and the intimidation of mafia actors in collusion with the Ukrainian central administration.
4 Some of the reasons for this centrality of Transylvania in the national imaginary are examined in Brubaker et al. (2006). See also Losonczy (1997).
5 This phenomenon has generated many studies in Germany; see Bausinger (1987), among many others.
6 A comparable process of patrimonialization of an ancient boundary in the Gimes region, in Transylvania, has been analysed in greater detail by Ilyés (2005).

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