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Raw Milk, Raw Power: The Politics of Risk in Post-socialist East Europe

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“I am not a farmer” insisted most of villagers I met in the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2005, as I explained my interest in farming in Lithuania. “Go talk to Antanas. He has 200 ha of land, and good machines. Yes, he’s the one who owns John Deer tractors and drives the new Jeep. He is the *real* farmer” (from interview conducted July 18, 2005; this was also observed in Knudsen, n.d.). Needless to say, I was surprised. It seemed obvious to me that farming occupied a central role in the lives of the villagers I met. Violeta, for example, lives in a home with a barn, owns a tractor, land (a total of 7 ha), forest (3 ha) and a kitchen garden. Her family keeps four cows, five sows, about a dozen of hens and she grows vegetables, berries, fruit and grain for her family, for fodder and for sale. As in other similar households that are operating as semi-subsistence farms, most of her monetary income comes from selling surplus milk and other dairy products. And yet, Violeta believes her work on the land is not enough to make her a farmer in a Europeanizing Lithuania. When pressed for answers, she shrugs her shoulders and says she does not know who she is.

One may argue that this is because Violeta is a small-scale farmer. Yet, the size of the farm is a matter of interpretation. While Violeta’s farm could be considered small and poorly equipped in comparison to typical British or French farms with an average of 57.4 ha and 45.3 ha respectively, it is of comparable size and production diversity with Portuguese (10.4 ha), Italian (6.7 ha), and Greek (4.8 ha) farms (Eurostat 2005). In this sense, a devaluation of farmers’ social place in Lithuania is not based on some objective criteria or even on the local frame of reference where Violeta’s farm is comparable to others.¹ Rather, it signals a major transformation in the ways that values and subjectivities have been reconfigured where work on the farm, knowledge of farming, ownership of the

¹ Lithuania’s average farm size was 9.2 ha in 2003 (Eurostat 2005) and 11.2 ha in 2005 (Eurostat 2005).

land, and the use of agriculture as a source for one's livelihood no longer make one into a farmer.

What is most surprising about the devaluation of subsistence farming in East Europe is that it goes against the grain of what is seemingly the vision of the European Union's (EU) agricultural development. While the twentieth century was marked by the green revolution leading towards de-agrarianization of the economy, intensification of farming and massive exodus of rural populations to the cities, a new agricultural paradigm is emerging in today's EU where economic growth is supposed to be balanced with environmental concerns and social well-being. Defined in terms of sustainable development, the EU is seeking to steer its agricultural production, consumption and distribution systems into a post-productivist mode.² Keeping in mind the EU's commitment to maintaining "traditional" or under-industrialized landscapes and its efforts to protect rural lifestyles and cultural identities, it is indeed puzzling that unindustrialized "traditional" farmers in Lithuania are finding themselves alienated from their land, labor and rural politics, and estranged from the country's spectacular economic growth well into the late the 2000s.

This paper examines how such forms of identification fit in the larger environmental and developmental politics in Europe by asking why and how the processes of Europeanization have failed to incorporate subsistence and semi-subsistence farmers into its formal economic structures and political visions of sustainable development. I particularly focus on raw milk economies—both formal and informal—that emerged in the late 1990s as the key source of cash incomes and livelihood for the poor farmers.

I argue that the emergence of non-self in rural Lithuania is a manifestation of a particular form of marginalization in post-socialist Europe where poor, semi-subsistence farmers have been moved outside of the EU politics and where the diverse semi-

² For early definitions of post-productivism, see Ward (1993), for current approaches see Sivaramakrishnan and Vaccaro (2006). Ilbery and Bowler (1998) define post-productivist agriculture as a countermovement against productivist mode of agricultural production that is characterized by intensification, concentration and specialization. More broadly, in the scholarship on rural change, this mode is characterized by the following indicators: 1) policy change towards holistic rural development approach in which agricultural production is only a part of the developmental agendas, 2) growth of the organic sector based on pollution-free, high-quality, locally and traditionally cultivated produce, 3) counter-urbanization, 4) the inclusion of formerly marginal, non-governmental actors into decision-making, 5) diversification of production on the farms and more broadly, 6) moving away from a production-centered to a consumption-centered countryside (Marsden et al 1993, Ward 1993, Wilson and Rigg 2003).

subsistence lands are being treated as a territory outside of state building projects. The paper also suggests that such a marginalization is embedded in the historical reorientation that the Baltic States underwent, from being considered as the *avant garde* of national liberation movements to becoming the most underdeveloped Eastern peripheries in the EU. But even more important than such a reorganization in geopolitics and historical imaginaries that accompanied EU accession, was a shift in the governance regimes establishing regulations, standards and “audit cultures” (Strathern 2001, Barry 2001, 2006) as the organizing logic for governing over people and things. In building European institutions in East Europe, the states moved from their earlier preoccupation with national questions and human subjects to technocratic management of economies, environments, practices, and non-human nature. And even though on the surface such governance-through-things methodologies are directed at objects, they are effectively working against groups of people who do not fit the regulations and standards as external to the regime and its developmental visions.

In developing this line of argumentation this paper is organized around seven sections. In the following section I discuss the scholarship that connects self-making projects with the larger issues of political subjectivities. Sections 3 and 4 present a short history of post-socialist agricultural reforms and the changing role of semi-subsistence agriculture in the political and national imaginaries in Lithuania, from valuing the semi-subsistence farmer as the foundation of the emerging nation to considering them as the backwards peasant unfit for development. Section 5 shifts gears to focus on European politics and its governance mechanisms. Section 6 tells a story of marginalization “from below” by presenting a portrait of a farmer. The concluding section summarizes and reflects on the politics of marginalization and sustainability.

2. From Subject-Making to Poverty Politics

Central for this paper is the question of identity and self-making. The illuminating works of Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann (1995), Franz Fanon (1967), bell hooks (1981), and Charles Taylor (1989) among others have developed a nuanced theory of the modern subject-making where the self emerges as a reflexive individual imagining and

shaping their unique life histories.³ Georg Simmel argues that such identity making projects are constituted not simply in pursuit of a singular self, but emerge in tensions between an individual and society:

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external cultural and technique of life (Simmel 1971 [1903], p. 324; quoted in Lemert forthcoming).

In developing a relational approach to identities, the post-structuralist school of thought has pushed this argument further to redefine subjectivities as embedded in discourses and institutions, produced through interactions with others and performed in daily contexts. Such an approach suggests that the agency of an individual relies not in the subject her/himself, but is dispersed across the social field. Commenting on the political implications of such modern subjectivities, Michel Foucault introduces the notion of governmentality arguing that subjectivity is a constitutive part of the larger political apparatuses. Even if individuals see themselves as autonomous agents, as Foucault powerfully shows, they are effectively aligning themselves with the modern state building project.

As argued by many, standards, regulations and other measuring technologies play a particular role in the realignment of political subjectivities and establishing the regulative authority of the modern state.⁴ In East European contexts, writing on meatpacking in Poland, Elizabeth Dunn (2005) shows how the implementation of standards developed by the transnational food processing industries call for a particular re-alignment of work practices and worker subjectivities. For the products to comply with the European food safety requirements, all meat batches are continuously tested for consistency, safety and

³ For an excellent overview of the broad trends in the sociological literature on identities see Owens *et al.* (2010). While it is risky to draw generalizations on the literature as diverse as that focusing on identities, I find that there is a general preoccupation with the question of mobilization of identities and their place in social action and movements. Rather than focusing on these more social configurations of identities, I draw on the mix of post-structuralism and practice studies (Schatzki 2001) to reflect on subjectivities as emerging at the interface between the collective and the individual and between material practices and social experiences.

⁴ For an extensive review of sociological literature on standards see Timmermans and Epstein (2010), Starr and Lampland (2009), and Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000), among others.

quality. Along with testing, multi-layered auditing techniques require that the workers leave paper trails where they record observations. By so doing, they transform themselves from knowledgeable workers into subjects of administrative supervision, management, and control. Through their participation in controlled work environments, Dunn argues, the workers experience profound disempowerment. At its core, EU standards are acting as agents of social engineering that are transforming Polish men and women into self-disciplined citizens, just like those developed in Foucault's panopticon (also Dunn 2004, 2003; for a different case, see Gille 2011).

Dunn's case study highlights how biological risk management acts as a catalyst in the internalization of norms of behavior and leads to aligning the Polish workers with the political projects of the European state. In a different way than in Dunn's article, however, I argue that standardization and regulations carry discriminatory power mechanisms that punish and exclude those who cannot meet these standards or comply with regulations, as instantiated in the case of semi-subsistence farmers. Acting as a "not-so-subtle means of organizing modern life" (Timmermans and Epstein 2010, p. 70), these regulatory technologies resemble methods of raw power employed by modernist state as described in James Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (1998).

More broadly, while post-structuralism gives us insights into how subjectivities are produced in relation to others and organized along power vectors, these approaches have not been able to grapple with the kinds of non-identities and the cases of utter marginalization that I encountered through my fieldwork and that seem to be pertinent to the growing global underclass—slum inhabitants, shanty town dwellers, permanently unemployed, and the rural poor—who are finding themselves without social status and outside of the state. Zygmunt Bauman (1997) defines this class of people as the new poor and argues that their marginalization is qualitatively different from earlier forms of social and economic alienation:

[The new poor are not] the vehicle of personal repentance and salvation; they are not the hewers of wood and drawers of water, who feed and defend; they are not the "reserve army of labour," nor the flesh and bones of military power either; and most certainly they are not the consumers who will provide the effective "market clearing" demand and startup recovery. The new poor are fully and truly useless

and redundant, and thus become burdensome “others” who have overstayed their welcome (Bauman 1997, p. 5).

Following Bauman’s call for a new theory of poverty and marginalization that includes and considers these groups, this paper reflects on the changing identity politics in post-socialist Lithuania as embedded in the broader transformations in the social and material domains.

3. Post-Soviet Realities: Land, Property, and National Imaginaries

Following the announcement of independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, Lithuanian government began an overhaul of economy by reinstating private property rights and implementing land restitution. These laws returned the land to those who had owned property or their descendants on the eve of the first Soviet occupation in June 1940. As a result of such policies, the majority of state and collective farms were dispersed into a multitude of small-scale holdings.

The first type of private farms that were founded as part of privatization consisted of individual and family owned farms. While the limit was set at 80 ha, the vast majority of the farms remained relatively small, under 10 ha. Most of them were extremely diverse featuring the staples of Lithuanian diet such as potatoes, cabbages, beets, onions, and grains. In addition to growing the produce, the family and individual farmers kept livestock—often more than three cows and five to seven pigs—for their own consumption and to sell.

Additionally, there was a sizable group of former collective farm members and state farm employees who stayed in collective enterprises either because they could not claim land or because of poor health or age. They were given between 2 and 3 ha of land from the state land fund. In popular language these smallest of the lots were known as *trihektariai* (Eng., three-hectares). On the surface, these farms operated in a similar manner as subsidiary farms under socialism. In most cases, the owners of the three-hectare plots borrowed the technology from the larger farms or neighboring cooperatives and, relying solely on their own labor, were able to grow enough food for themselves and sell the surplus of milk on the market. In contrast to Soviet allotments, however, the three-hectare holders could no longer count on collective and state farms to provide pastures or safety nets in terms of fertilizers, tractors or fodder. In the context of skyrocketing inflation—

410.2% in 1993, for example—the only thing that remained stable and certain for the farmer was their own livestock.⁵

Technologies on these farms were used scarcely, if at all. While major consolidation of agricultural production has swept through Lithuania in the late 1990s, in the early 2000s, it was still not uncommon to see carriages being pulled by horses, cows milked by hand or hay collected with cycle and rake in hand. As in other similar agricultural systems, most of the labor in these small-scale farms was supplied by the household, while cash came from selling the surplus to processing companies and most often directly to consumers. In scholarship, these post-socialist changes in the land ownership and labor were defined as involution (Humphrey 2000: p. 164-174, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Zbierski-Salameh 1999), primitivization (Clarke *et al* 2000, cf. Ries 2009), repeasantization (Creed 1995, Cartwright 2001, Leonard and Kaneff 2002), and even as a return of feudalism and the medieval existence (Shlapentokh 1996, 2000, Verdery 1999).

In public discourses, however, the restoration of private land ownership in the three Baltic States in the early 1990s was framed as progress, not regression. Newspapers, TV shows, radio programs, governmental statements and discussions in private homes circled around the ideas that the new laws restored justice, that privatization returned Lithuania to the “natural” order of things, and that the land property restitution launched Lithuania on its path to economic prosperity. Writing about neighboring Latvia, Katrina Schwartz notes that in the early 1990s Latvians continued to see themselves as agricultural nations whose future economy and wealth were to be built on private property and agricultural production (Schwartz 2006, p. 120).⁶ And at the heart of this nation building project were land and farmers:

⁵ On average, in 1998, Lithuanian farmers held one cow and about one and a half pigs. On the macro level, the dissolution of collectivized farm sector has led to a significant reduction in livestock in Lithuania. Compared to 1992 only 44% of cattle, 59% of the cows, 63% of pigs and 22% of sheep remained in 2000 (Ministry of Agriculture 2003). This was primarily because with the worsening of economic situation in CIS countries, especially after the financial market crash in Russia 1998, Lithuania’s food export markets were reduced significantly.

⁶ See also Liepins (1993) who in his study of how three Baltic States envisioned their future economic development reports that 82% of respondents in Lithuania ranked agriculture as the first and most important asset in post-socialist economic recovery. In neighboring Latvia this number was 68% and in Estonia 64%.

[T]he rural way of life [was identified] as the only defense of Latvian cultural uniqueness against forces of global and European integration. “Our fields and forests,” declared a leader of the Latvian Farmers’ Federation,” [will guarantee] the Latvian way of life, which through eight centuries of foreign occupation allowed us to preserve our national identity. Thus we will preserve our tough and stubborn people, who have always been shaped by the Latvian peasant *vienseta* [Ditmans 1993].⁷” Janis Purapuke’s proverbial phrase, “one’s own little piece of land,” remained a universal shorthand for that purportedly essential element of “the Latvian mentality:” the yearning for private landed property (Schwartz 2006, p. 126).

This quote suggests that Baltic ethnic identities drew strongly on agro-nationalism that depicted the peasant-farmer as the ultimate steward of the nation and the national landscape. Privatization was defined as a way of establishing national sovereignty, while the “tough and stubborn” peasants were claimed to be trustworthy caretakers of the national territories (Rogers 2006). Defined as the foundation of the nation, the farmer was discursively transformed from the dehumanized *kolkhoznik* under socialism to the primary subject of the emerging Latvian nation.

In Lithuania, too, scholars, journalists, and politicians claimed that the Lithuanian nation had particularly strong connections to its land and nature. Pranas Aleknavicius in his reflection on Lithuanian identities states:

The key features of Lithuanian national identity are a close connection to nature, long agricultural traditions, and humanistic philosophy (Lith., *pasaulejauta*, translates into “feeling of the world”). Lithuanian ancestors settled this land several thousand years ago. Through their interactions with the land, a harmonious and dynamic ethno-ecology (Lith. *etnoekosistema*) emerged... Climate and natural environment had an impact on Lithuanian national character. As A. Maceina⁸ has stated, the most prominent trait of the Lithuanian nation is a connection to the land and love for the motherland (Lith. *teviske*, the term relates to one’s birth place and

⁷ Latvian *vienseta* is an equivalent of Lithuanian *viensedis*, meaning an individual homestead built directly on the land. Usually small and chaotically dispersed across the landscape, these farms were the dominant form of agricultural production between the two World Wars when the three Baltic States were independent.

⁸ Antanas Maceina is one of the most famous philosophers in Lithuania.

emphasizes one's belonging to the land): 'Only when a person has deep roots in their land, is she/he is strong and unbreakable, and the nation indestructible' (Aleknavicius 1991, p. 73).

In this vision, the land is part of the larger ethno-ecology that constitutes the nation. In further developing this line of argumentation Aleknavicius suggests that the Lithuanian farmers embodied the very roots of the nation. By linking nation, nature and the farmer, the discourses circulating in early post-socialist Lithuania constructed the farmer as the "organic" link between past and present, nature and culture, and countryside and the city. In terms of governance methodologies, the centrality of the farmer in these narratives suggests that they were seen as the foremost agents in the national state building projects across the Baltic States.

It is important to note, however, that farmers themselves rarely subscribed to nationalist politics and often openly refused to claim land (Creed 1995, Amelina 2000, Pallot and Nefedova 2003). Many scholars in the field noted that the national discourses were far removed from the political and economic realities in the post-socialist countryside. In his analysis of voting patterns in the early years of post-socialist Bulgaria, GERALD CREED (1995) argues that rural inhabitants voted against nationalist candidates because they experienced decollectivization and privatization as a degradation of their social status, a move from being employees of modern agricultural enterprises under socialism to becoming poor peasants in post-socialism. It is precisely in the midst of such contentious privatization politics and in search of the solid grounds for justifying their existence that the nation state placed the farmers in the crosshairs of its political projects.

4. From National Center to European Peripheries

The narratives that put the smallholder on the pedestal of the nation building project turned out to be short lived. Starting 1993, with the sobering experience of the opening of Lithuania's borders to global markets, the farmers were facing harsh realities of race-to-the-bottom politics. Having lost all governmental support, the small-scale farmers were unable to compete with heavily subsidized farmers in the Global North. Lithuania's markets were flooded with cheap commodities from the East and West, pushing small-scale farmers further into the embrace of the subsistence mode.

Economic failures were accompanied by public condemnation. The same small-scale self-sufficient farmer who had been deemed to be the savior of the nation and the steward of nature was quickly redefined as unproductive, inefficient, unenlightened, and outright backwards in the popular discourses. Additionally, the critique of farms carried moral undertones where the farmers were increasingly presented as maladjusted and dependent subjects unable to meet present day challenges. In his analysis representations of rurality in Lithuania's leading newspapers, for example, Arunas Juska (2007) underscores the strong language used in rural reporting and shows that the newspapers claimed that rural population was not successful "because of its own failing to take advantage of opportunities created by reforms to improve their condition" (p. 245).

Such a tectonic shift in the political imaginaries in Lithuania—where the farmer becomes redefined from the steward of nation to the loser in the new economy and where the nation ceases to see itself as an agrarian nation—can be understood in the context of changing geopolitics and governance practices in Europe.

In 1993, the EU opened itself up to Eastern enlargement bringing post-socialist states into its economic and political orbit. In 1994 and 1995 Lithuania signed free trade agreements. In June 1995 Lithuania became an associate member of the EU, an event that was widely celebrated in the public as the ultimate achievement of post-socialist transition. All the policies, laws and regulations that were implemented in Lithuania in the following decade were aimed solely at complying with the Copenhagen criteria and harmonizing Lithuania's economy with that of the EU. As in other candidate countries, Lithuania's political life, economic reforms and social policies were developed in the image of Europe.

In developing its rural sector, the Lithuanian state brought in experts from the European Commission and its industrial "partners" (e.g. the Land O'Lake from the US) to advise and on the direction of reforms. A separate European Committee was established under the Government of Lithuania that presided over daily meetings in the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, and Economy. It also actively participated in the drawing of range plans by providing their guidance and feedback. In addition to the institutional infrastructures, all the developmental projects were also required to be consistent and compatible all the general provisions of the Structural Funds established to support Lithuania's transition to the EU, and all the plans had to be drafted in accordance with the

requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1268/1999 and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2759/1999 where key measures regarding social, economic and environmental development were provided.

While Lithuania's rural economy of the 1990s could be considered a success story when compared to the transformations taking place in the rest of the vast post-socialist region—stretching from the Pacific to the Berlin Wall, as well as post-socialist outposts in Africa, South East Asia, and the Caribbean—the prospects of Lithuania's accession to the EU meant that the frame of reference was changed and its development was now measured against Western European benchmarks and developmental visions. Not surprisingly, it did not fare well. In the Rural Development Plans, Lithuania's rural sector was qualified as outdated, unproductive, and underdeveloped. The following passages from the Rural Development Plan are examples of such evaluations:

Like high farm fragmentation, relatively low farm technologies and use of poor quality breeds and seeds do not allow any improvement in the productivity and quality of agricultural produce (Ministry of Agriculture 1999, p. 29).

On the one hand, low productivity and poor quality of agricultural produce reduce competitiveness of Lithuanian farmers, as well limit the opportunities to increase their income. On other hand, low income means that farmers can not purchase modern farm equipment, in order to improve farm competitiveness and working conditions in rural areas (Ministry of Agriculture 1999, p. 30).

At present, farmers often use outdated farm machinery or equipment (most of it came from the former kolchoz system) that requires high energy costs... Modern milking and cooling equipment is still not widely used (Ministry of Agriculture 1999, p. 29).

Standing in sharp contrast to the earlier narratives where the farmer was constructed as the steward of nature and nation, these passages also suggest that the focus of the European evaluations was not simply on people and peopled landscapes, but on particular technological, economic and material assemblages. In other words, while in the early years of post-socialist transition East European governments were preoccupied with the national

subject (and especially, with the small-scale farmer), the process of European accession rested on a set of calculative and assessment technologies that measured and evaluated economic indicators, landscapes, practices, objects, animals and other non-human entities. Indeed, the European accession negotiations were centered on capital flows, border control, technological infrastructures, production quotas, labor migration laws, environmental regulations, hygiene requirements, and safety standards, bracketing the questions of identities and subjectivities outside of the governmental purview. Arguably, such an emphasis on regulations signals a transformation in the methodologies of governance that from paternalistic state to that of the technocracy.

More specifically, despite the fact that human subjectivities were missing in the Eastern enlargement politics, the measurements themselves operated as methods of social control and exclusion. When Rural Development Plans stated that semi-subsistence farming was inefficient, unproductive, non-compliant with the EU's hygiene, health and environmental requirements, and most importantly, as unsustainable, policy mechanisms were set up to correct the problem, while also recycling and reinforcing these evaluations. In such a matter, while Lithuania's urban elites started turning their back on semi-subsistence farmers in the mid-1990s, it was the EU's developmental politics that made them into truly redundant populations.

5. The Making of Sustainable Europe: Managing Prosperity

So far I have been focusing on the changing landscape of rural Lithuania. I now turn to the equally important subject, the broader historical and political contexts in which European rural politics was formed. I hope to show that the particular methods of governance in Europe and its rural development practices are themselves situated in the larger global settings and the politics of (neo)liberalization.

As European powerhouses—France and Germany—were emerging after the devastation of World War II, in the 1950s and 1960s, their governments defined food security as one of the primary developmental goals on the path to politically stable and economically prosperous Europe. In addition to feeding hungry cities, they also sought to provide strong support for agricultural production in Europe to keep rural populations from flocking to the cities and joining the scores of unemployment. In the backdrop of Cold War

politics, the principle of “more food for cheaper” also operated as a forceful ideological statement against the famine-struck Soviet Union and socialism more broadly.

Driven by the mix of pragmatic and ideological considerations, the newly founded European Economic Commission introduced several market management and administrative measures that supervised and leveraged their resources to encourage agricultural production, especially in the dairy sector. In 1964, the Commission signed the first agreement (13/64/EEB) that coordinated milk collection prices in Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and France. In it, the Commission made a commitment to keep dairy prices stable across Europe’s shared markets. Additionally, it increased tariffs on imports and introduced financial support for producers, setting the parameters for heavily protectionist agro-food sector.

The key mechanism behind price stability policies was intervention buyouts. When market prices dropped to the lower threshold, a policy mechanism was triggered to begin buyouts of significant amounts of dairy in the market, effectively keeping the prices from dropping precipitously. And when dairy product prices were climbing due to fluctuations in production or global markets, the state brought back the reserves and dumped them on the markets to keep the prices from climbing.

While ensuring stable prices that benefited both producers and consumers, such policies also brought unanticipated consequences, namely overproduction of milk as materialized in mountains of dairy powder, stockpiles of butter and rivers of milk poured on the roads and fields during the farmers’ protests. By the 1970s, memories of post-war food rations and scarcity dissipated, and it was plenitude, not scarcity, that became Europe’s political hot potato.

To run intervention buyouts required enormous financial resources. Additional costs were incurred by transportation and storage of the butter and milk powder. Despite numerous attempts to limit intervention through butter purchases in the 1970s and early 1980s, the costs of these policies continued to hover at more than 30% of the entire European budget (Coleman 2004, p. 17). In 1984-1985, the Commission introduced strict quota system that punished member states with heavy levies for exceeding their national quotas. This reform successfully curbed the production of dairy in Europe without totally dismantling the intervention system. But it was only a band-aid on the mounting problems

of surpluses and overproduction, something that was increasingly defined as economically unsustainable, politically threatening, socially unjust, and environmentally problematic.

In addition to domestic concerns surrounding overproduction, since the late 1980s, European protectionism has come under attack from its global competitors, the US, Canada, and New Zealand.⁹ Cornered into negotiations, the EU signed the GATT Uruguay Round agreement on agriculture going along with liberalization of agricultural markets. Following the GATT agreement, the EU has been significantly restructuring its dairy policies.

The centerpiece of this new agricultural politics is the introduction of a single farm payment (SFP). The SFP works as a measure decoupling production from the EU's support by distributing support to the EU farmers based on historical payments that are unrelated to their current production. In dairy farms, the EU farmers are receiving payments based on the historical record of their farming rather than on how much milk they produce or sell. This system continues to support the producers, but creates financial incentives to make EU's agricultural production "market oriented." It is also important to note that the introduction of SFP system significantly improves the EU's ability to supervise and control agricultural practices because the payments are contingent on the farmers' compliance with 18 major requirements falling into four major categories: (1) "good agricultural practice" standards (primarily relating to land use and soil erosion measures), (2) environmental impact regulations, (3) food safety standards, and (4) animal health and welfare requirements.

In sum, pushed by the GATT, the EU's ability to directly intervene into markets was significantly undermined, but, simultaneously, the EU gained a new leverage to monitor and control agricultural practices. Instead of governing *markets*, the EU has a better grip over *production* and *land-use*. Through an intricate system of farmers' registration, audits, regulations, and standards, the EU can effectively use its funding instrument—direct payments—to steer agricultural development towards desired goals.

But this system can function only if the producers are registered, if they are using uniform accounting systems, if their reports are accurate, and, if they rely on the EU's

⁹ For an example of the kinds of global pressures that EU agricultural policies faced, see Rieger 2000. Rieger argues that the US and other global players saw CAP as an old-fashioned welfare state, suggesting that it needs to be reforms to better fit in the "global free market."

direct payments for survival. In other words, the farmers have to be dependent subjects of the EU's regulatory regime for the EU to continue exerting control over its agriculture.

In Lithuania, the small-scale producers are anything but dependent subjects. Building social networks, the small-scale farmers continue maneuvering around the state institutions avoiding registration and reports. They do not use, and do not intend to use accounting books that expose their production; they hide their actual incomes, animals, technologies, and milk in the reports; they rely on social networks to get away from the auditors. And they are seeking to sustain themselves—they know how to grow food and how to sell produce in informal markets for cash.

Additionally, semi-subsistence farmers are unneeded producers who cut into national milk quotas but do not create value—as usually happens in formal economies where money exchange hands, taxes are paid, and added values are created that circle back into the European budgets. They may appear as poorly equipped and in need of technological support, but the real problem, from the European perspective, is that they are too productive—and also that there are too many of them.

A few numbers are instructive here. While in the “old” EU-15 the share of the population working in agriculture was only 3.8% on the eve of Eastern enlargement, this percentage reached 16.3% in Lithuania (Eurostat 2005). In 2003, the “army” of 171,455 small-scale farmers or 61.6% of all registered farmers held less than 5 ha of land. Farmers owning under 10 ha constituted 82.7% of all Lithuania's farmers and worked 35.1% of land (Department of Statistics 2006, p. 34). Such a composition of agricultural production meant that more than a third of all agricultural land in Lithuania was in the hands of the smallest of farmers, practicing diverse semi-subsistence agriculture and remaining outside of cash economies.

Not only was Lithuania's rural sector defined as overpopulated and overly productive (and, thus, economically unsustainable), but it was also argued that the “fragmented agricultural sector” hindered environmental development. The argument went that semi-subsistence farmers did not comply with the environmental regulations imposed by the EU, continuing to practice inefficient semi-subsistence agriculture, making inroads into protected areas, avoiding expensive tests and in other ways circumventing the EU's supervision. But because the EU approached subsistence as a technical problem, not as a

social and economic practice, they continued to punish the perpetrators with increasingly higher fines, disqualifying them from participation in other EU programs, or seeking administrative charges, which further marginalized the farmers and prevented them from entering formal economies.

As this brief history of European dairy politics suggests, the evaluations of Lithuania's rural economy as too crowded, economically unsustainable, and environmentally damaging in the governmental reports and rural development plans were claimed to be value-neutral, technocratic decisions, but in practice they reflected European interests and followed a path of particular historical development—that of prosperous Europe—that was far removed from post-socialist realities.

More broadly, such a finding reconfirms what others have already argued by pointing to the increasing legitimization of standards and audit culture (Strathern, 2000) as sources of economic and social control and a method for exercising power across distances. As James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002), Tad Mutersbaugh (2005), Julie Guthman (2007), Anna Tsing (2009) and many others have argued, the proliferation of standards and certifications rely on the establishment of hierarchies where certain actors are enabled to exert power over distant (and voiceless) others. In this case, the reports on the rural sector triggered powerful political machineries that worked to eradicate semi-subsistence agriculture, but in effect further marginalized its practitioners. This section also underscores the changing methods of power exercise, from governing-over-people to governing-through-things, a move that went relatively smoothly in the West, but that came unglued in the East.

6. Life at the Margins

I came to know Audra quite well. Tall with short blond hair, she radiates confidence. Audra is forty-one and she runs her farm as a professional. In addition to supplying food for use at home, she also keeps four cows to produce enough milk to sell the surplus. Since the late 1990s, when the Russian markets collapsed and milk collection prices fell precipitously, she started delivering raw milk to her aunt's in Kaunas, Lithuania's second largest city located just twenty miles north of her village. The word about her milk and cheese spread quickly not only in the apartment building where her aunt

lived, but also to other places in the city. By the time I met Audra, she was driving to the city six days a week and supplying milk to about seventy households. In addition to the expansion of the network of consumers, Audra also began collecting milk from other farmers in the village, which meant that she was effectively running a small dairy cooperative consisting of two to four farmers.

Although Audra was born and grew up in the countryside, she moved for school to Vilnius. She was trained in information technologies at a local vocational school in the early 1980s, and up until the mid-1990s she worked in a data processing center as a technologist before it closed down. After losing her job, Audra moved back to the village where her parents lived and started a farm. In addition to four cows, Audra has two sows, a dozen of hens, 3 ha of land located away from her house where she grows potatoes and grain, and a large 0.5 ha garden by the house where she has an orchid with apple and pear trees, cherries, and current bushes.

In addition to delivering and selling milk, she also produces and sells cheese, sour cream, and farmers cheese (Lith. *varske*). In late summer, Audra also delivers vegetables and medicinal herbs that are of high demand in the city. Still, she considers raw milk sales the most profitable as they constitute the most stable source of income. After delivering milk for a decade, she knows what to expect in each season and with every turn in Lithuania's volatile economy.

Dairy sales constitute Audra's primary income. Not surprisingly, she feels particularly threatened by the new food safety and quality regulations and trade laws. It is illegal to sell milk on the curbside, and this is exactly what she is doing. To obtain the permit she would have to stop coming back to her current milk delivery points, because these locations cannot be approved. According current regulations, she can pay for and obtain permits to sell milk at farmers markets, city markets, and other food operations such as supermarkets or smaller food shops. Additionally, hygiene requirements indicate that all raw milk has to be labeled appropriately and should include a warning about potential dangers, all of which translates into added expenses.

Furthermore, to follow the letter of law, Audra would also need to invest in a car with a refrigerator (she does not have one) and provide sterilized containers to each consumer. None of this is financially viable for her. She simply cannot afford to comply

with the regulations and continue delivering milk to the city. She could try selling her milk to the processor, but processors try to avoid small-scale producers claiming that they are unreliable and inconvenient. And even if she could sell her milk to the processor, she would be receiving about a third to a quarter of the price for milk. Informal market is her only way of making it as a farmer.

Audra has two teenage boys, one 15 and another 17 years old, though they are of little help to her on the farm. Her husband is employed as a driver at the neighboring agricultural enterprise, but her voice hushes when she mentions his name. He drinks a lot and does not get back home early enough to do anything around the farm. As in many other households, Audra is the center of her family life.

From the perspective of public health, she is an obvious hazard. For the group of consumers who patiently wait for her arrival, she is a godsend. Most of Audra's consumers rely on fixed incomes and rarely venture outside. As a rule they are older and socially isolated. While this may seem insignificant, for a group of the elderly to sit on a bench in the public and talk for hours in a Lithuanian city is a major political statement. In the context of increasingly ghettoizing urban environments, milk deliveries allow for these collectives of consumers to claim public space and to reconnect. This suggests that microbiological risks of drinking unpasteurized milk are minimal considering the kinds of new instabilities that recent political, social and economic changes have brought.

Similarly, for Audra the risks of getting caught or being fined seem worth taking in the name of long-term relationships with consumers and the niche that she carved out in the unsettling times. When going to the city, Audra takes precautions to protect her from being caught by the police or public health officials. Every time she drives to the city she tries to take slightly different routes to avoid police traps. She also makes sure that her car looks as clean as possible to erase any visible marks of dirt roads in the village. In addition to sprucing up the car, she also wears make-up and does her hair to look in her own words as "more civilized." All these rituals of cleaning, masking and protection are attempts at passing for a "normal" person in the eyes of the police. But maneuvering around the police is not easy for her and many others involved in the informal raw milk markets in Lithuania. Police forces have been trained to spot potential perpetrators and they are able to recognize

older cars and the women with sunburned faces and dressed in somewhat less fashionable clothes as a danger.

In commenting on her own experiences of living outside of the state and masking herself, Audra reasserts her agency. She says she is proud that she is not taking any of the EU “hand-out” money; she says she enjoys being what she calls *pati sau valdzia*,¹⁰ which translates into the powerful statement “I am my own government.” What she means here is her ability to get by without the support and supervision from the state. Just like many others around her, Audra turns the fact that the European state has failed them into a positive statement—that they are self-sufficient, autonomous agents. And yet, when I probe her, she still says that she is not a farmer.

7. Concluding Reflections

This paper explores marginalization of small-scale semi-subsistence agriculture in Europeanizing Lithuania by presenting two dimensions of rural development in post-socialist Europe: changes in discourses surrounding the place of farmers in Europeanizing Lithuania and the introduction of peculiar European governance methods. I sought to expose how the EU’s current agro-food policies zoom into risky objects and phenomena such as microbial risks associated with raw milk sales in informal markets, overpopulation of rural landscape, breaches in environmental regulations, and “un-sustainable” economic practices including semi-subsistence agriculture as organizing principles for its policy making, while ignoring local experiences, subjectivities, and social realities. Using standards and measurements, such a governance methodology pushes semi-subsistence deeper into the underground and produces rogue actors who no longer see themselves as subjects to the European state.

To give historical depth to such a shift in governance practices in post-socialist Lithuania it is worthwhile going back to the early socialist period when, after the devastation of World War II, Stalin brought terror and the extermination of public enemies as methods of rule against what were considered to be “bourgeois leaning rural

¹⁰ The phrase has been used frequently in the interviews as well as media. One particularly telling example of the use of this phrase was in a newspaper article about a 25 year old woman who keeps 10 cows with the help of her 78 year old grandmother and has not applied for the EU funding claiming that she does not want to depend on their payments; “it is best to be your own government,” states the young farmer (“Zaidimas su Gyvunais Virto Ukiu” “Games with Animals Turned into Farming” 2004).

populations” in the newly incorporated Baltic Republics. Writing about Stalin’s methodologies, Amir Weiner (1999) argues that Stalin’s post-War politics rested on the ideal of a harmonious and peaceful “garden-state” which could only be achieved by weeding the contaminated, polluted, and parasitic elements from its social body. But unlike the Nazi ideology of biological determinism and its preoccupation with pure bodies, Weiner argues, the Soviet ideology of purging rested on the social and cultural origins of parasitism and the malleability of the mind. This means that specific ethnic groups would not be targeted for full extermination, but it also meant that individual subjects were constructed as always risky and, thus, to be monitored and supervised.

Even though Khrushchev and Brezhnev renounced Stalin and his terror politics, they continued to approach individual subjects as an important arena in building socialism and the state (Fitzpatrick 2005). In the light of this, the nationalism of the early years of post-socialist transformations in the Baltic States that placed the farmer as the central subject of the reform could also be seen as an extension of the general trajectory in the human-centered governance politics, where subjectivities are the primary areas for framing and justifying political projects. The introduction of the European-style regulatory mechanisms, on the other hand, marked a break in this development. It was no longer a person who is risky (unless they are a religious Other), but microbes, dirty cars or poorly performing economic development indicators. The insertion of these governance mechanisms, in other words, marks the introduction of relatively new forms of exclusion and marginalization that have been unknown in the region. And it is in this transformation, I argue, that the modes of identification, value and personhood have been transformed.

But by no means should the above argument be interpreted as a direct comparison between Stalin’s politics of terror, nationalist politics in the early years of post-socialist transition, and the European reforms. Rather, I use this historical case to juxtapose and highlight differences in two modes of governance, the authoritarian preoccupation with people and the technocratic interest in things, while reflecting on the social and subjectivity implications of the latter. My purpose is to expose the workings of Europeanization in East Europe where many were asked for nothing less than a complete revamping of political imaginaries. Stuck between a rock and the hard place, the poor semi-subsistence farmers are now experiencing the immediate results of these shifts in having to negotiate their food

procurement practices, economic relations, new standards, public health policies, shifting political strategies, and deepening liberalization processes

Before closing I also would like to circle back to the introduction and return to the question of European environmental politics and its developmental promises. The case study seems to pose a series of challenges to the assumptions implicit in the ways that European-style sustainability operates. Originating in Western European policy debates, sustainability has been primarily defined as a conceptual tool for countering industrialization and its impacts rather than for imagining alternative systems and dealing with the diverse economic practices in the Global South. Such an approach excludes large populations in various regions including Asia, Africa, East Europe, and South America who are involved in subsistence economies as potential participants in sustainability politics. As shown in the case of the European agricultural policies that support organic farms and *terroir* legislation as the sole response to industrialization, such a definition of sustainability may lead to the reproduction of the industrialized production-consumption-distribution systems that it seeks to remedy. In broader sense, this suggests is that sustainability as a developmental vision is facing a fundamental challenge as to how to incorporate people, practices, economies and environments that do not easily fit into the existing policy models and development visions.

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