Issue 17:
Consumer Nationalism:
Symbolic Economies of Prosumption

EDITORIAL

Issue 17 expands on the topic of mundane practices of patriotic (non)consumption that we explored in Issue 16 'Patriotic (Non)Consumption: Food, Fashion and Media'. In fact, articles 17.1-17.4 were prepared by the team of guest editors—Olga Gurova, Ekaterina Kalinina, Jessie Labov and Vlad Strukov—and articles 17.5 and 17.6 were specially commissioned by the journal editors.

Our main objective in Issue 17 is to demonstrate how consumption can be ideologised to produce combative forms of belonging. In some context, these practices relate to existing nation-states; in others they have been formed by online communities in response to and through stewardship of neoliberal forms of consumption. From consumption of nationalistic symbols to organization of flashmob, our authors observe how the arrival of neoliberalism and the legacy of late socialism have intersected to produce commodified social and political realities. In this context, prosumers simultaneously participate in neoliberal consumption with its seemingly global agenda and their own nationalistic project. Our authors argue that this is due to the proliferation of commercial platforms that encourage online shopping, virtual banking transactions and transnational exchanges of capital. At the same time prosumers focus on creating localised and tailored content, which binds together communities in new ways outside of economic transactions, much in the same ways that the internet developed before e-commerce industries dominated the internet.

The lead image for Issue 17 shows a young male enjoying a drink of beer. The naked skin, the shaven head and the tattoo featuring the word 'troll' speak to the stereotype of an Eastern European and/or Russian nationalist, or even a skinhead. On one level, the image reveals the offensive nature of cultural stereotypes; on another, it points at the dynamics of cultural memory and global digital networks which circulate images and stereotypes as a

form of cultural commodity. The image, taken by Vlad Strukov at ARS17, a major showing of contemporary art hosted by Kiasma in Helsinki (Finland), is a photograph of a digital installation produced by Ed Atkins, a London-based British artist. The work, entitled *Ribbons,* was premiered at the Serpentine gallery in June 2014. It was part of an installation of text, images, videos and interjections; the image—the figure of the young man—was produced digitally, in other words the male figure is a synthecian and is used here to symbolize the expansion of neoliberal systems of consumption that fuel local forms of nationalism. As a sort of sub-horror genre with references to video gaming with its use of violence, sexism, monstrosity and abhorrent corporeality, the image compels us to enquire about how we consume information online and what value we attribute to messages available on the internet.

Sandy Ross' article on 'Object Nationalities' (**17.1**) looks at the topic of (non)consumption from commodities' country of origin, drawing on qualitative research of consumption by affluent migrants in urbanised areas of Russia. Ross sees how national stereotypes are considered and internalized when consumers assess commodities in post-socialist societies, aligning these findings with previous studies on commodity stereotyping in advanced capitalist societies. For Ross, it is not just that people think of qualities, either real or imagined, of people living in a country, but that these attributes are grafted onto commodities themselves. Ross' article mirrors recent trends in anthropology and sociology that reconsider a 'thing'-centered approach to material culture and the ontology of objects.

Andrew Chapman (**17.2**) is the second author across the two issues to discuss queues as a kind of patriotic (non)consumption. Chapman analyses the many flashmobs that have appeared across the post-socialist landscape, where participants queued in lines as a type of performance that subverted the practices typically found in commercial spaces. His article uses a variety of sources, from interviews to internet media to discuss how these groups form, from online communities to create new local communities in transient urban milieus. While queuing flashmobs may not reference any overt patriotic or national sentiment, they playfully recall the nostalgia for the queue and the quirks of socialist consumption opposite current discourses of ever-present abundance brought about through neoliberalisation and globalisation.

Article (**17.3**), co-authored by Marianne Meiorg, Katalin Mikó, Neda Petrovska and Mirjam Sági, looks at how consumer objects perpetuate ideological formations by way of creating material realities for the ideas, symbols and rhetoric of nationalist sentiment. Their study looks at nationalist cakes in Hungary as one of these products that have become part of the popular culture of consuming patriotism. The authors trace how nationalist cakes are presented on social media platforms such as Facebook and Tumblr. Interesting contradictions arise when nationalist movements (anti-globalist by definition) must utilise social networks, whose ideologies promote the free, globalised flows of information that characterise neoliberal market growth. Nationalist symbols spread worldwide create communities along common lines of interest, but the authors find that the connection to national symbolism is sometimes approached in less solemn ways, through irony and whimsy.

Elena Gapova (**17.4**) explores the reinvention of the Belarusian folk commodity *vyshyvanka*. She traces the geometric ornament's revival as part of both a global and post-socialist movement that saw national branding revive old peasant and traditional symbols, much like Russia's fascination with the orange and black St. George's Ribbon. Gapova's artticle traces the *vyshyvanka* from a material, fashion object to its digital remediation as online content,

where younger prosumers digitally manipulate the *vyshyvanka*'s geometric imagery into on-line graphics. Gapova concludes that rebranding such national symbols in the digital realm fosters a new kind of social cohesion, as urbanites rediscover folk cultural in cosmopolitan, techie contexts.

In 'Where Broadcast Digital Cultures Collide' (**17.5**), Mariia Terentieva looks at how the production of public service content is caught between the digital and broadcasting worlds. Her article's case study contrasts two media outlets, Hromadske and UA: Pershyi, to high-light the differences between digital public service content providers, who adapt content de-livery through egalitarian means of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing, with public service broadcasters, who remediate televisual content on digital platforms. Looking at the Ukrainian media landscape, Terentieva surmises that the most effective form of nation binding can be achieved through confrontation, debate and negotiation between values and ways of life. This strategy stands in direct contrast to the broadcast model, which overlays a set of fixed identi-ties and values that try to shape public opinion through the consumption of media.

Lastly, Saara Ratilainen (**17.6**) writes on the world of travel blogging, which has ex-ploded on Runet in the past decade. Ratilainen finds that the symbolic economy of travel blogging gives travelers social value in the form of recommendations, local knowledge and insight into 'authentic experiences'. The article views this type of peer-to-peer information sharing operating outside of, and often in opposition to, the economy of commercial service providers. The digital representation of travel thus moves away from the flow of global capi-tal, and towards that of a global community, which freely shares its alternative symbolic economy as a social and cultural construct.

The first four submissions of this issue were prepared by a team of guest editors—Olga Gurova, Ekaterina Kalinina, Jessie Labov and Vlad Strukov—and produced in collaboration with the journal editors. The journal team for Issue 17 consists of editors Andrew Chapman, Pedro Hernandez, Gernot Howanitz, Natalia Kondradova, Henrike Schmidt and Vlad Strukov.

Andrew Chapman and Vlad Strukov