CONSUMPTION AND CLASS DURING AND AFTER STATE SOCIALISM

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Consumer culture in Croatia presents a challenge to some of the received notions about consumption and class during and after state socialism in Eastern Europe. Class and consumer culture during state socialism might seem to contradict notions of socialist equality and communist shortages; their appearance in Eastern Europe after 1989 could be easily assigned to westernization. Even so, after World War II, the party created a large, urban middle class and provided a high level of consumption to signal a new era of equality and comfort. The political dynamics of transformation mostly abolished this structure, bringing heightened awareness to consumption as a sign of political and social place in the new order, as ethnographic research conducted in Zagreb in 2002–2003 suggests. Thus, consumer culture during transformation is rooted in prior social tensions and the political upheavals of transformation.

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LITERATURE REVIEW OF TRANSFORMATIONS

As Comaroff and Comaroff argue, in their discussion of the intersection of ethnographical research and historical perspectives, social change is a dynamic process in which existing social and political tensions, local and global, are played out, with an uncertain outcome. Change is often about how competing groups come to power (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992). Consumer researchers have already applied this perspective on class, consumption, and change in places as widespread as Niger and the US, but not to Eastern Europe.

Changes in markets in these two cases heralded changes in existing social class structures and norms of consumption. Arnould describes how marketization in Niger among the Hausa from the 1920s to the 1940s altered class dynamics so that status and wealth became less related to networks of personal relationships and more to market access (Arnould, 1989). This shift also explains relaxation of laws about who would wear which clothes — looking smart could no longer be just for the old elites as a new social group could afford this standard, if not better. Scott examines the growth of the textile industry in the US in the 1840s and the social role of the immigrant Irish women who worked in the factories. These women earned money dressed fashionably. Many married men who were members of the elites, thus challenging the dominance of wealthy New England Puritan women over social class structures and norms of dress (Scott, 2005). The expansion of the textile mills brought with it a new means of entry into the class that makes the rules — through money and fashion. In both cases, changes in the local market structure — the peanut market or the textile mill — did not bring class and consumption, but brought changes to its dynamic. Extending these perspectives to Croatia, this research looks at how privatization brought changes to local class relationships in ways that influence socio-cultural beliefs about consumption.

Although class is generally understood in the literature as dynamic, consumer research in Eastern Europe tends to view it as static (Holt, 1998). Interpretive consumer research seems to approach social stratification in Eastern Europe in a binary of party members/everyone else or urban/rural. These binaries tend to focus on how the state maintained power through defining who was in or out of its favor, or how it maintained its ideology of equality (Belk & Ger, 1994). It overlooks the ways that people gave meanings to subjective positions of class through consumption. There is little interrogation of class, like the pre-war bourgeois culture or domestic production of agriculture that has been a continued influence before and after
state socialism. It also tends to overlook the urban professional class that emerged in the early 1970s and its influence on class dynamics (Reid & Crowley, 2000; Dzarin, 2002; Svab, 2002). Thus, class dynamics are an important but as yet overlooked influence understanding consumers in transformation in Eastern Europe. A specific area of inquiry of this article is how local social dynamics frame socio-cultural beliefs about consumption during transformation.

Consumer artifacts of state socialism, for example urban housing, have been described in the consumer behavior literature as if they were necessarily products of a broken system, “apartment blocks built to house workers looked old before their time as poor quality paint faded” (Belk & Ger, 1994, p. 127). The focus is on how the state structured conditions of consumption rather than how consumers made sense of it. Shortages tend to be the focus in interpretations of consumption during state socialism, “Shopping became a matter of connections, hours in lines, and constant vigilance to find goods that might unexpectedly turn up in stores and markets” (Ger, Belk, & Lascu, 1993, pp. 102–103). Few researchers investigate consumer practices of forging connections, time management, of maintaining some of the customs of pre-war bourgeois culture, and even small scale farming – the consumer behaviors of state socialism – and how they might also be a part of socio-cultural beliefs about consumption (Ditchev, 2004).

Consumer research tends to focus on class differences as examples of the ideological contradiction or inefficiency of state socialism, “Cars and televisions available to the nomenclatura, but even factory directors had to wait months or years to get theirs” (Belk & Ger, 1994, p. 127). This article, however, interprets status differences in consumption not as a by-product of the problems of communist ideology or state socialist central planning, but as a taken for granted part of the system in which people lived (Reid & Crowley, 2000).

Thus, what providing guests in your home with a green toilet paper from Austria meant during state socialism tells something of what consumer culture was like. It was stratified and display was important. Meanings resonated with pre-war and contemporary notions of culture and class (Drakulić, 1992). There was also a specific value judgment about how people consumed in the context of state socialist consumer culture. Consumption during state socialism was not strictly a by-product of broken economic structure. It was part of socio-cultural beliefs about consumption, within a historical and political moment. The interpretive consumer research approach to transformation consumers – the focus on linear change and the arrival of Western goods as discussed in this section – has left unasked many theoretical questions that are at the center of interpretive consumer research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research took place through observation of and participation in consumption in multiple sites throughout Zagreb and by composing field notes – observations, thick descriptions, emerging analysis, and reflections – and visual ethnography, during the summers of 2000–2001 and from June 2002 to August 2003. I sought triangulation across sources in Balkan history and sociology scholarship, both cross-cultural and inter-cultural works, and Croatian literature and art. Participation in consumption rituals included co-shopping for women’s and men’s clothing and shoes, women’s cosmetics, in elegant city center stores as well as flea markets at the edge of town, at new malls in the new suburbs, as well the second economy. Analysis and interpretation of data developed as informants repeated themes and stories, especially of surprise and frustration with transformation, across interviews. Emergent design, purposive sampling, depth interviews, and focus groups explored and tested analysis. Member checks brought to light insights from observations and directed the research to important new areas of exploration (Lincoln & Guba 1985; McCracken, 1988; Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989).

Depth interviews and focus groups with consumers centered on the socialist and postsocialist consumption experience, consumption aspirations, political influences, the new social structure and social values, and ethnicity. I accessed consumers from different ethnic groups and regions of Croatia. I believe that my access to informants and their stories was greatly enhanced as I told them about my background – my parents are from Croatia. Interviews were conducted in Croatian (I speak Croatian) and English, tape-recorded, and transcribed. A total of 52 informants participated. I accessed them through the snowball method, starting with my network of friends, relatives, and colleagues at the University of Zagreb, Dept. of Marketing. Some interviews were conducted at the home of the informant or the interviewer, some in the work place of the informant, and some in cafes. The duration of each interview was between one and two hours, and I interviewed many informants more than once.

CONSUMPTION IN CROATIA

Most interpretive consumer researcher acknowledges that not only market structures but also socio-cultural beliefs influence consumption (Arnold & Thompson, 2005). At the center of consumer culture in Croatia, therefore,
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we would expect to find socio-cultural beliefs about consumption. Most consumers would use these norms as a heuristic of how to consume. They might understand consumption as a way to construct a self through the brands they choose (Belk, 1988). These heuristics may form a theory for interpreting consumer behaviors, for example how subjective class positions might influence consumption (Holt, 1998). Even so, the interpretive consumer research on this region tends to focus on structural change (Ger & Belk, 1996; Coulter, Price, & Feick, 2002). There is little interrogation of the complexities the social processes of consumption past or present, or interpretation from a grounded understanding of that world. This section explores how the social and political relationships of state socialism were articulated through consumption, and with what consequences for post-socialist consumer culture. To begin with, this section outlines how consumer culture developed in Yugoslavia.

Consumer culture in Croatia was an essential part of its political, social, and economic system of social equality (Švab, 2002, p. 67). Consumer culture developed in Yugoslavia much earlier than in other socialist states. This was partly due to the unique political situation of Yugoslavia. Josip Broz Tito, President of Yugoslavia, officially parted ways with Stalin in 1948, and by 1950 moved to an independent line from Moscow in its interpretation of Marxism, international politics, and economic organization (Allcott, 2000). Yugoslavia remained outside the Warsaw Pact and started the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955. It maintained trade within the bloc, but Yugoslavia also entered into trade agreements with Italy and Germany in 1954. The state issued passports and allowed citizens to hold foreign currency, which allowed consumers to work and shop abroad (Szerbhorvath, 2002). The state condoned less formal trade relations. Satellite television exposed consumers to German and Italian broadcasts. Švarceri, or black market traders, sold foreign goods in the local informal exchange networks (Švab, 2002). Border crossing provided high quality imported equipment and consumer goods.

Loans and imported goods also allowed the party to direct production investment from consumer goods to armaments, making Yugoslavia one of the most armed countries in Europe in the Cold War (Lampe, 2000). Although the state did produce some goods, especially agricultural products, domestically, the party justified its investment in armaments and its foreign trade within the rhetoric of the Cold War. It needed armaments to defend its form of national socialism against the threat of takeover by other powers, specifically the Soviet Union, especially after its invasion of neighboring Hungary in 1958 (Lampe, 2000). Open borders facilitated the development of tourism, especially on Croatia’s Adriatic Coast, with the influx of foreign tourists and currency, specifically German marks (Rusinow, 1978). Participation in global networks of trade was, therefore, part of the everyday experience of consumption in Yugoslavia as well as part of Yugoslav official ideology and political practice. As an informant in her mid-forties recalled,

There were some brands that were produced by Croats under the license of their original owners [during state socialism] but some of the brands that were not present on the market were present because they were bought in Austria or in Italy then, and imported by the consumers themselves, so of course the brand concept was known to Croats long before it really opened in 1990 when we actually started our transitional movement from a different way of working through the socialist system, so basically there is a general acceptance and knowledge of the of the system of communication.

The Yugoslav government, like many others state socialist governments, promoted a specific consumer ethic. The state publicized its scientifically developed recommendations of consumption per person, usually related to industrial goods and services such as electricity or “basic needs” such as meat, that inevitably were met yearly. Through the rhetoric of quantity and science surrounding consumption, the state sought to demonstrate the historical progress of state socialism over the pre-socialist, peasant lives of most people in Yugoslavia, the high standard of living of socialist workers and the morality of the paternalistic state that provided equality for basic needs (Kligman, 1998). Consumption was a social process in which the ideology articulated by the state met with subjective experiences of class in Croatia to create consumer culture during state socialism. Yugoslav consumer culture was about the morality of material and social equality and socialist progress.

Consumer culture in Eastern Europe during state socialism was also organized to facilitate the involvement of consumers in the production and allocation process (Verdeny, 1995). This was most pronounced in Yugoslavia. The participation of self-managing enterprises in the economy was a way to include consumers in decision making. Worker’s self-management in 1950 was an effort to decentralize economic organization into units of decision making, including management of profits and wages, at the enterprise level rather than through the federal bureaucracy. Yugoslav promotions agencies, for example Oglasni Zavod Hrvatske (OZEHA) (Advertising Bureau of Croatia), started in the 1950s as state organs for promoting official ideology, and by the 1970s were creating national campaigns for global and local clients like Pepsi, American Express, and Podravka (Pecotich et al., 1994). Central planning included less formal mechanisms of decision making as well. For example, the party tended to tacitly condone the unofficial
Connections to the elites determined who would get top jobs and apartments. In the immediate post-war period, the elites organized University admission by a student’s political orientation or regional origins so that the children of the former bourgeoisie were denied admittance. The party attempted to secure its future political legitimacy by creating a newly educated class that would be friendly to the system and to reverse the pre-war class structure (Lampe, 2000). The party, therefore, organized class as red bourgeoisie and middle class. Within the middle class, it favored workers over the ex-bourgeoisie.

By the 1950s, the party had brought tens of thousands of migrants from rural regions to the cities of Yugoslavia (Ramet, 1984/1992). As one informant put it, “Zagreb was cosmopolitan, continental before the War. After World War II, people from the forest [northeast region of Croatia] came here, and after the last war, people from stones [Hercegovina, southeast] came” (Marko, bank executive, Zagreb, age 65). The party created a new aesthetic for the middle class. For example, the state advocated through popular magazines like Globus a sense of aesthetic style, especially for women’s dress, that was appropriate for specific rituals and times of day, like afternoon coffee. It supported differentiations in social and political power by suggesting how a woman prominent in the party or a working woman might dress for theater or meeting a friend at home. It blended socialist concepts of modesty and utility with Western trends to demonstrate communism’s membership in the pantheon of historical progress (Bartlett, 2004). The consumption ethic approved of fashion within the constructs of socialist good taste.

To ease political and class tensions that came with socialist industrialization and urbanization starting in the late 1940s, for example between the pre-war urban middle class, and the newly urbanized, the party in Yugoslavia and other countries sought to create a specific aesthetic, ritual, luxury, and technology of consumption. One of the first signs of the new classes and consumption culture were state-provided apartments for the newly urbanized villagers (Buchli, 1999). The state promised living quarters to all workers as a way to legitimate its ideology of equality. The state-provided apartments were also a way to promote modern aesthetics and urban styles of living as a break from the agrarian and bourgeois past. Creating Yugoslav domesticity allowed the party to establish its ideology within timeless notions of domesticity and fashion. Still, housing was often in short supply and of limited comfort, and party leaders lived in the best apartments in the best locations. Even so, state socialism created a sense of entitlement to equality in living standards.
These homes and clothes were designed by people unfamiliar with urban life, making do in the rush to create a middle class. Aesthetics tended to be a shoddy duplication of pre-war local fashions or styles reported from Paris. Many consumers in Zagreb who had lived there before the war understood housing quality or availability not as a problem of central planning but as an outcome of the lack of cultural know-how of the red bourgeoisie (Bartlett, 2004). However, they also understood the Yugoslav system's political and economic success through consumption experiences they considered "European" or "Western" like use of charge cards, owning cars, and vacation homes, as well as modern domestic goods. Alongside the home and dress, signs of the material progress of communism, equal access to housing and an absence of poverty signified the officially acclaimed moral superiority of state socialism over capitalism. The state promoted middle class consumption just as high as the west, but without the problems of poverty and homelessness as in the capitalist west (Ditchev, 2004; Verder, 1996).

Decorating the home was a way to show pre-war class and regional origins – city or peasant family – by the books in the shelves, the types of decorations on the walls, or even the cleanliness of the apartment (Drazin, 2002). In the mid-1960s through the late 1970s, after the post-war rebuilding, yet before the recessions of the late 1980s, consumers had it all: state-provided housing, hi-fi from Austria, and clothes from Italy, all guaranteed by the state. An informant described that her husband, because he worked for a state company involved in international trade, traveled to West Germany frequently and brought home the best German appliances that she still uses.

Consumption was a competitive display of middle class status, especially in Yugoslavia, with its access to goods in Italy and Austria (Svab, 2002). Participation in second economy trade networks required a woman to demonstrate she had goods (coffee, cloth, lipstick) or services (i.e., hairstyling, a husband who repaired cars) to trade (Berdaahl, 1999). It was also a way to show knowledge of fashion and elegance, of what was good, and when and how to consume it, a knowledge the party lacked. As an informant, a woman manager aged 45 looked back on it, "if you were going to visit someone [at home] and bring them some liquor, you know you brought Chivas Regal, that was considered top style." In Croatia, a Western standard of living was a sign not only that people "beat the system" and its scarcity, but also that local culture was surviving the state's notions of culture, and that they lived in a more Western country than their neighbors to the east (Drakulić, 1992).

Status was not so much about comparison to the elites, but to other people in the middle class. If the party leaders had more, that was fine.

Those who were most dedicated to achieving Marxist goals – the red bourgeoisie and the newly urbanized party officials – received goods equal to their efforts. They had the best apartments, cars, and other luxuries like colored toilet paper (Drakulić, 1992). Because everyone else was theoretically equal, standing out as unequal, as having less, drew suspicion. This drove a specific sort of status competition: if your neighbor had it, you had to have it, too, just to prove you were as good as anyone else (Ivan, MBA student, early 30s, Zagreb). Thus, there was sense of acquisitiveness and status, funded on specific networks of credit, to project not an image of upward mobility, but an image of membership in a mass middle class (Pecotich et al., 1994).

The young urban professionals who emerged in the affluent early 1970s were a new strata within the middle class. They re-introduced bourgeois individualist style to local consumption practices and challenged what it meant to be middle class: not just modern and affluent, but also an individual. They wanted to show, especially through wearing Italian fashion, "that they were different, that they had different needs than you know vast majority, so this need for difference just forced them to save money and to go to Trieste or to Graz and buy something else" (Zagreb woman, 40, marketing director). Goods were a sign of individuality and access in a system in which social equality was the ideal (Svab, 2002). This search for something else had a political dimension in that it sought liberalization of the system, and an aesthetic dimension in stylistic forms of expression, yet it was not a criticism of state socialist ideals of equality.

Within the official rhetoric of class and consumption in Yugoslavia and its participation in global trade, consumption had less to do with shortages or subversion and more to do with identity and status. Consumption as display of membership in a class – the red bourgeoisie (communist elite), the middle class, youth culture, and the working class – was embedded in everyday life. It was not isolated to the elites or to political resistance or subversion by the rest. Its meanings were hidden and collective, related to historical nuances of differences as well as party rhetoric of equality and progress.

The system allowed very little social mobility, except for those who participated in party leadership, or state companies. The most obvious class differences would have been between the communist elite and the rest, but perhaps the most nuanced differences were within this large group. These differences were communicated through consumption oriented to private and public spheres – the home and education or on clothes or cars. Differences in the public sphere referred to an awareness of Western fashion and
in the private sphere more towards Western ways of living. Consumption was a way to show individuality within a larger social group. (Bartlett, 2004; Švab, 2002).

Official consumption rhetoric and class stratification was set against a backdrop of urbanization and political change that brought pronounced cultural differences together in Zagreb. Consumption during state socialism was about how demographic shifts of urbanization and political changes of power influenced subjective positions of class. Thus, consumption after state socialism has much less to do with influx of forms and ideologies of Western advertising and consumer culture like brands and class as Croat consumer were participating in global consumer culture throughout state socialism and lived with local class dynamics that influenced consumption. Similar dynamics of class would continue to influence consumption after state socialism.

The next section examines how subjective positions of class and sociocultural beliefs about consumption influence interpretations of the social processes of privatization. It also explores how marketization – the transfer of much of the socialist state’s structuring of the market and consumption through ideologies and practices like equal rights to housing – has influenced interpretations of consumption of goods for public and private display. One of the most striking similarities between socialism and postsocialism in Croatia has been the rule of politically connected elites from rural areas. Often, some of these elites are former communists who have become nationalist capitalists. One of the most important differences between state socialism and postsocialism is the role of the state and its class ideology in organizing consumer culture.

PRIVATEIZATION IN CROATIA

One of the main issues of marketization in Croatia was not the introduction of Western advertising and brands. As this article has discussed, Croatia was integrated into the global consumer economy during state socialism, and developed a specific consumer culture and aesthetic. Thus, unlike prior research, the focus of privatization in this article is not the influx of advertising and brands. The focus of understanding privatization asking how, as this informant phrased living with the socialist market situation people are adjusting from “working through the socialist system” to working through the market system. This raises new questions about how the system has changed and how it influences consumer behaviors.

Yugoslavia, like most countries in Eastern Europe, was already in a recession by the late 1980s. The end of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union meant the end of established trade relations across Eastern Europe. In Croatia, the war caused serious damage to infrastructure and trade. Tourism, the most profitable economic sector in Croatia, had been in decline in the late 1980s. The war more or less brought travel to Croatia to a halt. War damaged existing infrastructure and the expense of war eliminated the possibility of updating the transportation infrastructure, on which not only tourism but also market distribution relies (Pecotic et al., 1994). Critics in Croatia have pointed out that regardless of the economic problems of independence and war the way privatization was carried out exacerbated the economic problems of the transformation era (Glavaš, 1994).

Many Croats expected market liberalization to facilitate economic growth. However, the ways that it was carried out have still not, and of course, not been expected. After independence, migrants from Hercegovina, a region that covers the southeastern border of Croatia and Bosnia that was part of the Republic of Bosnia–Hercegovina during the Yugoslav era, moved to Zagreb, consolidated political power within the Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (HDZ) (Croatian Democratic Union), the majority party, and privatized state assets. Privatization was organized to consolidate Croatia’s economic assets and natural resources within the control of 200 Croat families, many of whom were from Hercegovina or had party connections (Glavaš, 1994). Asserting national control of resources rather than marketization was a reaction against party control of the economy during state socialism. It happened in other countries as well, but the case of Croatia has been criticized as the least transparent (Verdery, 1996). Informants generally saw privatization similarly to this woman, a media professional in her early 30s: “The war and that period when the, uh, HDZ was in the government and all of privatization, and all that happened with it was horrible.”

Privatization in its first phase was an unregulated consolidation of power among a new group of elites. Political connections, especially within people from a rural region, continued to determine social class. The economic problems and the cultural clash that came with privatization and independence were a problem for many Zagreb natives. Many middle class, urban Croats anticipated postsocialism would be a combination of socialist and pre-war norms of consumption, like the emphasis on the home and a “Western” aesthetic, within a market economy. As the prior section described, privatization fell short of many people’s expectations for restructuring the economy. Jagoda, an informant in Zagreb, a professional woman in her late 30s, summed up the reaction of many people in Zagreb to the new
structures of class and patterns of consumption. “Young girls driving BMW at the University, things like that, that’s usually the mafia – the ones responsible for the pilage of Croatia.” This resonated with an experience I had. In the second floor bathroom of the Philosophy Faculty of Zagreb University, I read graffiti written in English on the wall of the women’s stall, “Hercegovci Go Home.” The next section discusses further how privatization re-organized the context of consumption.

The process of privatization ended the state structure and ideology of morality and consumer entitlement. Consumers no longer progress as they did through the state socialist system: education, employment, and housing. The pressures of privatization could be felt in the new education requirements for the job market, for example requiring a University degree, the new uncertainty of the job market, and the new expenses of housing. These pressures of privatization pushed many consumers into poverty, especially those who had been in the working class during state socialism. Many people who had been in the professional middle class – who could capitalize on their connections, education, or homes-managed to maintain or enhance their positions, but still regret the loss of the socialist middle class. A retired professional woman remembered: “We have, now [society] is very layered. Always before there was very, before in the time of socialism, we had a middle class, very big and powerful enough. But these poor people, there weren’t many, and now we have very many poor people, the middle class we practically don’t have, and we have again one small group of people who are very rich, but that [former] layering has left very suddenly and now after this most recent war.”

Subjective positions of class during state socialism have been an important influence on how consumers experience post-socialist transformations. The processes of marketization have influenced the meanings of social capital in Croatia (Bourdieu, 1984). Their positions of maintaining the status quo in Zagreb are challenged by the new structuring of class and consumption. The next section discusses how the new organizations of class have influenced socio-cultural beliefs about consuming for display in public and private spaces.

Many informants ask how the new elite can afford consumption for both the public and private spheres. An informant, a woman in her early 30s, a professional, summed it up, “people from that part of Croatia and Bosnia, they do not invest in some real values like homes, having friends, et cetera, they just want to show how well they’ve done and how much money they have, but it’s totally wrong logic, I don’t know, I will never understand it, but whatever.” This describes the shifting class relationships in the context of socio-cultural beliefs about consumption. Public display causes many to wonder how others can afford to maintain a home as well – how well they can adhere to “normal” beliefs about consumption. Those who have the social capital to know the “right” way to consume in Zagreb are in conflict with those who have the political and economic capital to assert new definitions of what is “correct.”

Most consumers feel the pressures of the privatization of housing, as they now have to buy an apartment in Zagreb. This translates into public display, according to informants, as many people would lie about where they lived and say they lived somewhere better. Because home phone numbers indicate the neighborhood in which one lives, for example 46 is for the exclusive center of town, while 35 is for the less affluent eastern suburbs, giving an acquaintance a mobile number only is a good alibi. For locals, telling someone you are “from Zagreb” has a specific meaning, implying that you are not a newcomer, you are an established person. These are also the people who commented that they missed the old practice of inviting people into your home. Thus, there is a tension between new and old socio-cultural beliefs of consumption and between old and new structures of consumer culture. Just as the new elite has mastered generating envy through their consumption of goods to display in the public sphere, especially of cars, the old middle class is trying to translate its consumption in the private realm into public display.

Consumption during post-socialist transformations is about how social relationships are contested through consumption. For the prior middle class, public display of cultural know-how, of envy provocation, and individualism expressed through consuming for the home or public display continues. Many Zagreb locals, both working class and middle class, see the new elite as a challenge to their norms of consumption from state socialism and their expectations of consumption after marketization. The elites have established their position as consumers of luxury.

The remaining middle class argues for its position as the carriers of morals of social equality bourgeois consumption aesthetics. Consumption is also about how the structural changes of privatization – the influx of people from Hercegovina and the consolidation of economic capital among this group – challenge socio-cultural beliefs about consumption and morals about spending. The new economic capital of membership in the political and economic elite challenges the social capital of state socialist, urban middle class consumer culture know-how. Consumers are not responding to the arrival of Western advertising and goods, but to new norms of spending and consumption brought by the cultural, political, and economic dislocations of the privatization and democratization process in Croatia.
DISCUSSION

Most of the consumer behavior research in Eastern Europe tends to overlook how social class relationships frame consumption patterns in transformation. Still, class is acknowledged as a central framework for consumer practices (Holt, 1998). Moreover, Arnould and Scott, in examining market transformations, point to the ways that social class dynamics are part of the ways the consumers contest socio-cultural beliefs about consumption—who can consume what and how (Arnould, 1989; Scott, 2005). This research takes such views of class and transformation and applies them to Eastern Europe. It does so by looking at the transformation as the uncertain outcome of the changing dynamics of consumption patterns, social relationships, and market structures of state socialism. Thus, research in Croatia followed the lead of prior work on class. Rather than following the lines of questioning that have previously been asked in Eastern Europe, it follows the lead of prior historical work on marketization outside of Eastern Europe.

During state socialism, consumer culture was a way to demonstrate Marxist progress and the moral superiority of state socialism through entitlement to a high standard of living for the proletariat. Class differences were only a manifestation of this notion of progress: most people were equal, while those who were most devoted to Marxism were so rewarded. Consumption was a way to show the political power of Yugoslavia as a state that managed to be independent, yet maintain ties to both Soviet and market economies. Consumer culture during state socialism was about how consumers expressed their subjective class positions, responded to envy and expressed notions of cultural know-how of the west. Consumption for the domestic sphere fit in with notions of socialist domesticity, but also with pre-war cultural understandings of consuming for the home as appropriate. Socialist consumption ideology, for example providing housing, sought to fit in with local norms of consumption and socio-cultural beliefs about consumption.

Structural and cultural changes of postsocialism have challenged these norms about consumption, especially as they relate to the domestic sphere. New patterns of consuming for the public display of the private space are likely to emerge from the transformation. In the context of transformation, it would allow the continued articulation of cultural values about the home and socio-cultural beliefs about the domestic space as a sphere of investment within the context of class tensions. Postsocialist consumer culture is less about adjusting to westernization or global consumer culture. It is more about adjusting the spheres in which competitive consumption is played out. This takes place as privatization and democratization alters the structures of consumer culture. It introduces new structures of power to define consumption norms, in this case the new elites, who are kept on the outside, but work from the center of power. Middle class consumers make sense of these changes through their historical experiences, expectations of the future, and socio-cultural beliefs about consumption.

Other postsocialist countries in the region experienced similar structures of consumption during state socialism, like the morality and entitlement of equality. Within the socialist middle class in East Germany, showing western brands was a way of communicating subjective positions of social and economic capital—for example, access to these goods through relatives in western Germany (Berda, 1999). Processes of transformation in other countries, for example Bulgaria, have not brought the expected outcomes. Many consumers in Eastern Europe are similarly negotiating marketization with many of the same skills they used as consumers in their everyday experiences of state socialism (Creed, 1998). Even though this article provides some pointed questions to understanding postsocialist consumption—looking at its roots in the consumer culture of state socialism and pre-war culture, looking for continuity with the past, exploring local social class relationships, taking apart the processes of marketization—this research has a broader implication for consumer behavior scholarship.

This research looked for the roots of contemporary consumption practices and market structures in Eastern Europe in everyday experiences of consumption during state socialism, socio-cultural beliefs about consumption, and state policy and rhetoric of consumption. Moving beyond Cold War constructs of planned and market opened a window on what is happening from the point of view of locals and their notions of class and socio-cultural beliefs about consumption. Thus, the roots of postsocialist consumer behavior lie in state socialist consumer culture. Marketization is not a natural outgrowth of this system or a sign of the failure of planned economies and their replacement by a better system. Its future success or failure is not a reflection of the totalizing and empty or liberating nature of market globalization. As the dashed hopes of many consumers describe, marketization has been mostly a national process of addressing local social, cultural, and political relationships of state socialism. It was the structures and processes of state socialist consumer culture that laid the groundwork for consumer culture after state socialism. Thus, consumer behavior in the region is much more the debris of state socialism than a forecast of the future.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Department of State, which administers the Title VIII Program, and the IREX Scholar Support Fund. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed.

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