

Ildiko Erdei*Department of Ethnology and Anthropology
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
ierdei@f.bg.ac.rs*

What's in a Beer? Cultures that Interact in Brewery Privatization*

Abstract: This paper is based on a study of a local beer factory, located in the Serbian province of Vojvodina, which recently went through the privatization process. At the end of 2003, the Pančevo Brewery was taken over by Efes Group, thus becoming the most western operation in the process of Efes spreading across the European market. Although it is customary to conceptualize privatization as a purely economic issue, research of the privatization of such a local company by a large international producer provided us with an opportunity to observe, analyze and interpret various ways in which economy and culture inter-reacted, and became mutually dependent. The field of economic change was observed as a space of cultural transformation, where business, organizational and working cultures of "socialism" and "capitalism" met and influenced each other, both on institutional and personal levels. Different notions of "culture" that illustrate the increasing "culturalization" of economy at the turn of the century were singled out. Particular attention was paid to socialism as a legacy, operating through narrative and residual practices. At the same time, this legacy was an obstacle for desired change as well as a source for sustaining a sense of personal worth among employees faced with the approaching hegemonic narrative of "capitalism triumphant".

Key words: privatization, beer, cultures, socialism, capitalism, Serbia

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Introduction

To conduct fieldwork in a brewery might be the dream of many anthropologists who belong to the global tribe of beer drinkers, but for me its sudden realization in 2005 came with many surprises. For a researcher with rather conventional fieldwork experience, commonly carried out in some traditional anthropological field sites such as remote villages or peripheral towns, or in a more modern mode, in virtual communities, a business organization as a field site represents a challenge of a peculiar kind. At times it seemed that the company of concern here could have been conceived as a classical anthropological society, for it had a clear structure with subdivisions, ranks and groups, it had its important elders but also enormously valued young people, as well as history, tradition, customs and rituals. And, of course, it "had" a culture, or at least it was in the process of inventing one.

It is not unknown for business ventures to put significant value on the issue of culture, whether in the form of inventing the working, business, company or corporate culture, or conceiving it in a more traditional anthropological sense as a collection of nationally (ethnically) based features of difference (e.g. appearance, clothing, food, interpersonal behaviour, beliefs etc.), which gains importance in corporations and companies with many national branches. On the other side, at every step of the research I was reminded that I was dealing with an unusual anthropological population that couldn't care less for the researcher, always having more important things to do. I commonly felt that they wanted to give me the impression that they were deeply immersed into the hard facts of the business life, with no time to waste on elusive things like culture. Thus it took a lot of time and energy to overcome the initial antipathy of the subjects of the research towards the idea of research (read: "useless waste of their limited, precious time") done in the midst of their busy working agenda.

The research was done in Pančevo Brewery, a local beer factory located in Vojvodina (a province of Serbia to the north) which had gone through the privatization process. My aim was to document and analyze the cultural dimensions (encounters, dialogues, exchanges) and consequences of an economic process. At the end of 2003, the brewery was taken over by Efes Group,¹ thus becoming their most Western operation in the process of Efes

¹ Anadolu Efes is the holding company of Efes Beverage Group beverage interests as well as an operating company, under which Turkey beer operations are managed. The Efes Beverage Group is composed of Anadolu Efes and its subsidiaries and affiliates that produce and market beer, malt, and soft drinks in many countries, including Turkey, Russia, CIS countries and Southeast Europe. The Group operates with 14 breweries, 4 malteries and 9 Coca-Cola bottling facilities in 10 countries and

spreading across the European market.² The local brewery counted as one of the prosperous enterprises in beer production until the late 1980s, when the

has an annual brewing capacity of around 2 billion liters, malting capacity of 150,000 tons and Coca-Cola bottling capacity of 420 million unit cases per year. Efes Breweries International N.V. ("EBI"), which represents the Netherlands based subsidiary of Anadolu Efes, is responsible for the international beer operations of Anadolu Efes, operating nine breweries and two malteries in Russia, Romania, Republic of Kazakhstan, Moldova and Serbia-Montenegro. According to the official presentation on the Efes web site, "EBI is one of the major brewers in the region with total annual production capacity of approximately 1.1 billion litres and malt production capacity of 50,000 tons. Since the start of the commercial production in 1998, EBI has generated a product portfolio including a combination of strong local brands, many of which are market leaders in their respective market segments, and the Efes Pilsener international brand which is currently being sold in over 40 countries". EBI entered the Serbia-Montenegro beer market through the acquisition of the Weifert Brewery in Pančevo in August 2003 and completed its most Western beer operations by acquiring Zaječar brewery. By obtaining a majority shareholding in Pančevo Brewery ("Pančevo") in Serbia, located on the outskirts of Belgrade, EBI has added Serbia to its portfolio of European markets currently comprising Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova. The total number of markets that EBI operates has thus increased to 6, including Kazakhstan, one of the major markets in Central Asia. At the moment when Efes was considering to take it over, Pančevo brewery was producing 3 brands "Weifert", "Karsten" and "Standard" on the Serbian beer market and was expected to reach a capacity utilization ratio of around 50% in 2003.

² Since the original research was conducted in 2005, major changes in ownership and company organization have taken place in Pančevo Brewery. First of all, Efes sold the majority of shares to Heineken, who in 2008 became the major owner of two previously Efes owned breweries in Pančevo and Zaječar. Heineken also bought the fourth important producer of beer in Serbia, MB Brewery, thus becoming the third serious player in the Serbian beer market, together with InBev (owner of Apatin brewery) and Carlsberg (owner of Čelarevo brewery). This change in ownership has had other dimensions, including organizational restructuring, bringing about changes in the professional and private lives of employees. Shortly after Heineken bought out Efes' shares in two companies, the brewery in Pančevo was closed, with an explanation that it did not keep to Heineken's ecological standards and that the Zaječar brewery's productive capacity was sufficient to supply the market demand. The closure of brewery in Pančevo must have had consequences other than purely economic ones, having in mind its historical role and identity value. These could be seen in definitions of "urban" in the past, since production and consumption of beer was understood and represented as a mark of dissociation from the rural way of life and drinking culture (mostly based on wine and brandy) which could be successfully grown at home. It also could be recognized in urban legends and stories that document the sense of "pseudo-imperial" cultural stand of "Austrian-ness", towards people who came from "Oriental lands" just across the Danube, to "admire the refined merchandize, gaze at European style buildings and enjoy drinking beer in the open". Although the context of the ownership change and

business results started to decline, due to lack of investment and inability to adapt to new macroeconomic rules that required marketing functions and sales techniques to be more developed. Its local brands, the long-lasting "Standard", and the newer "Weifert" (named after the family that became known for beer making from the mid-19th century, and for introducing Pilsner technology to Serbia), were sold throughout a large area of Vojvodina and Serbia proper, and were exported to Macedonia. During the 1990s it became clear that it would be impossible to continue to work, unless some strong investment could be brought to the factory. Although the old management had refused to make a deal with a foreign partner for almost a decade, it couldn't resist the offer Efes made in 2003. The economic change that took place in the factory, namely its privatization, also provided for its social and cultural transformation, resulting from the encounter, interrelation, and blending of different systems of meanings and meaningful worlds, usually referred to as cultures. The dynamics of that social and cultural change was the object of this anthropological inquiry.

The main purpose of the Disocuri project was to research into possible relations between economics and culture within the particular historical and social context of the transformation of formerly socialist societies. Put in more operational terms, the researchers gathered for this project were interested in investigating the nature and dynamics of cultural encounters in an economic sphere, resulting from the various interfaces of economy and culture during the establishment of new political and economic orders. Simultaneously, we had in mind theoretical input from economic anthropology, anthropology of consumption, and cultural studies, since today it is not possible or heuristically promising to study economic and cultural phenomena separately. There is a consensus between theorists that we should approach these phenomena in their interconnection and focus on outcomes that are to be understood as hybrid forms. These represent the encounter and interaction of local cultures and what is perceived as a foreign culture. In the domain of business this is usually conceptualized as an encounter of two or more business and organizational cultures. The process of privatization is a basic feature of economic change in Serbia, so it is most exposed to cultural conceptualizations, re-conceptualizations, and various interpretations in public discourse. The much contested nature of privatization and public debates usually revolve around cultural issues while supposedly touching economic ones qualified the cultural dimensions of the privatization process to be the subject of this research.

its social and cultural consequences in the local community (or, rather, the absolute absence of reaction) is an extremely interesting problem for analysis, I will remain within the initial time frame of research, covering the period shortly after Efes privatized the brewery (2003-2006).

Firstly, some methodological remarks will be shared with the reader to elucidate the unease which the researcher felt upon entering the corporation as a fieldwork site. After that, a short history of the brewery will be outlined, finishing with the period immediately before Efes took over. In the next section, various aspects of change brought about after the Efes take over are presented, with an emphasis on views and interpretations offered by various parties. In the concluding remarks, emphasis is put on various conceptions of culture, used in economic and business discourse in this particular case. Some of the issues around which alternative (sometimes opposing and thus conflicting) understandings are based are also singled out. Finally, in the concluding remarks, an attempt will be made to show how the legacy of socialism and its working culture has functioned as an important obstacle for the projected business change desired by the company owners and managers.

Business environment as anthropological field: Methodological remarks

The research was conducted in three phases. The first consisted of making initial contacts and getting approval for research during March and the beginning of April 2005, which appeared to be the most difficult and delicate task. During this phase I managed to get a green light for research and conducted the first, and one of the most valuable interviews, the opening interview with the General Manager. The second phase comprised a first set of interviews during June 2005, while the third phase consisted of carrying out a few remaining interviews in September 2005, during which I also revisited some of the previous interviewees to get more detailed information on specific issues. Ten interviews were conducted until the end of June, covering different sectors of the company: management, marketing and sales, logistics, finance and production. All but the first two interviews were performed during June, when I completed eight interviews and spent 13 hours in conversations with selected members of the brewery staff. I also arranged to spend some time in the production plant, to get information about all the procedures in making beer, as well as to observe the working process.

The investigation revealed that the timeframe of our research project did not correspond to the company's seasonal working cycle. Nevertheless, almost all showed a considerable interest in the research subject, since it gave them an opportunity to articulate their thoughts and opinions, and enabled them to reflect on their working and personal identities. It was common for interviews to start with an appeal for concise questions and to finish the interview in one hour, but to end after almost two hours of stimulating conversation, in which I was also asked to give comments and refine their formulations. As time

passed, the employees and managers started to get accustomed to my temporary presence in their working premises, and became more open and willing to share occasional information, attitudes or evaluation. It seemed that they somehow started to take me more seriously, particularly during the second half of the research period, because they realized that my research commitment to their organisation was firm and stable.

As for methodological issues, my research experience and the quality of material collected drove me to opt for a more flexible methodology. Although the methodological orientation had as a potential outcome that the interviews would not be easily comparable on the most explicit level, at a deeper level some structural issues could be singled out. These were common to all the interviewees and came out regardless of not being a product of a structured interview, or any other "disciplined" research strategy. Therefore, my research experience tended to opt for loosening the research scheme and making it more flexible, by adjusting techniques to the individuals interviewed. As for the structure of the interviews, I usually started the conversation (after a short introduction about the aims of the research, with a few introductory questions about the interviewee's position in the firm and previous working experience), and a simple question about what they felt had changed in the brewery after Efes took over. The answer to this question led us in various directions, and I tried to ask further questions, deepening the interview on issues that appeared to be important and stimulating for the interviewees themselves. Thus the interviews are not easily comparable, or at least not at the first and most explicit level, since they only contain a few identical or similar questions.

History of Pančevo Brewery

Pančevo Brewery has a long history and a great tradition of beer making, which today, as their general manager pointed out, constitutes part of Efes Weifert "winning formula" in the battle for the market share on Serbia's newly established beer market. Historical records usually date the foundation of Pančevo brewery to the early 18th century. More precisely, it is commonly stated that the contemporary Pančevo brewery represents a continuity of almost two centuries of beer making in this community. The strength of this argument is further supported by the fact that the first Weifert brewery was founded in Pančevo in 1722. Nevertheless, historians of the brewery and its managers seem to overlook the fact that the first information on beer making is related to several persons who, during the 18th century obtained the right to produce beer. This right was not long-term but was to be applied for annually, which represented the way in which local authorities controlled the quality of beer produced. Thus, one of the first names recorded was the name of

Abraham Kepis, who organized the production of beer in Pančevo from 1722 to 1725. These first breweries had nothing in common with the Weifert family, whose members became the most important and most famous beer producers during the 19th and the first half of 20th century (1847- 1944).³ A concise overview of the developments of the Weifert brewery could be discerned by tracing changes in its legal status and basic features of the production process, showing that its history is marked by a series of discontinuities regarding issues of ownership, technological developments, business policy, brand development policy, organizational structure, development policy and possibilities for development. And it was indeed so, in spite of strong claims which the present management and marketing leaders wish to make about continuity with the genuine Weifert brand, originating from the mid-19th century.

The early 1990s introduced new circumstances into the business operations of the Brewery. Shortly after the first Privatization Law was passed in Yugoslavia,⁴ many successful companies were privatized. Nevertheless, the first wave of privatization was conducted under specific conditions. In addition to the above mentioned cases in which the ruling elite took over firms under favourable conditions, there existed a model of privatization in which the majority of shares were distributed to the workers under extremely favourable conditions (possibility of long-term repayment which, due to the hyper-inflation, turned out to be almost free). Thus, the legal status of the firm was transformed into a shareholders' company for the second time in its history (since after 1936 members of the Weifert family had become shareholders) with one slight, but crucial difference – the new owners from the 1990s had no idea what the consequences of this changed ownership status would be. Z.E., who was then a member of the management team, describes the outcome of the first privatization as a "continuation of self management". He said that the majority of workers were not able to perceive either what it meant to possess shares, or what rights and responsibilities followed from that fact.

M.I., the present Director of the Department for Legal Issues and a member of the top management of the brewery during the 1990s confirms this opinion of her colleague, with an even more elaborate description of the state of the company before privatization:

"From about 1993 we had been progressively increasing debts, mostly toward the state, for we couldn't regularly pay the taxes. At one moment the debt was so big, that the state could have practically closed the factory if they wanted to. We found the temporary solution to the situation, by putting mortgage on our property. On the other

³ See: Koršoš 1972, 17-35.

⁴ The first Law on Privatization was issued in 1991.

hand we began the search for a strategic partner. I have to say that during these years many big successful companies from the beer industry were trying to make business deals with us. Representatives of Heineken, Carlsberg, Interbrew kept coming during the nineties, together with members of various investment funds and banks. Some of them were persistent and came several times. Nevertheless, I think that we were not yet ready to understand that we had to make a break. Our managers were convinced that 'we can do it alone', that 'we do not need foreign capital'. That was the main way of reasoning until the mid nineties, when the business started to collapse. That was the moment when most of the managers realized that we urgently needed a financial injection. Thus, the Assembly of the firm made a decision to look for a strategic partner." (M.I.)

That was the moment when Efes came in. Since during the 1990s the management of the Pančevo Brewery had been avoiding taking into consideration offers from the greatest beer companies, Efes came in as a partner with whom they had not had any previous contacts or negotiations. They had also made an offer that seemed fair enough to enable further negotiations. M.I., who took an active role in the process, says that it lasted several months, went through several stages during which particular issues were discussed and clarified, and during which the old, local management tried to work out the best possible price to invest in the factory. She declared that the negotiations started during summer 2002, continued over the following few months on a regular basis, and discussed issues that were agreed upon in advance. From April 2003, representatives of Efes came to Pančevo Brewery to stay and prepared the forthcoming takeover in detail. The privatization procedure ended in September 2003, with Efes being in control of 63% of the shares, thus becoming the majority owner of the Pančevo brewery.

What changed after Efes took over Pančevo Brewery?

*Renovation of working premises,
creation of "proper working environment"*

When approaching the Pančevo Brewery, the first thing one sees are the big logos of Efes and Weifert, placed on the large empty walls of the production plants. When you come closer to the factory, huge billboards containing the same iconography greet you at the entrance. It is similar in the main building, the home of the top management. All over the main building, at its entrance and on many walls, there are various posters of the Efes group, representing their leading ideas and principles of business policy. In several places posters representing all the brands that are now produced under the umbrella of the Efes Group can be seen. It is noticeable that this building has

been renovated, with walls freshly painted and offices redecorated in a modest manner. As P.A., the General Manager reveals the renewal of the office premises was necessary for several reasons, probably the most important being the "change of spirit of the company". He particularly pointed that the aim of the renovation and reorganization of the working spaces was directed towards producing a new working environment. This also meant that new rules of behaviour were to be established in the working places, new standards and procedures set in the organization of work. Basically, all these activities were meant to lead to the normalization of the working environment ("we made it a normal working environment"). And when it came to the reactions of the workers to this kind of changes, he thought that:

"The perception of the workers is, like, those who left are a bit jealous, and those who stayed see the changes, and some of them can cope with these changes and some of them cannot. This is because they are not used to this. But gradually I hope they will. I'll give you an example from the working environment, which may be very stupid: change the toilets which are very dirty, make something new. Say, O.K. I respect your environment, but you have also to respect your environment, taking care of your premises. Because before, it was a spirit in the former socialist countries that everything belongs to everybody and nothing belonged to anybody. Now, take care of your working place."

*New technologies, technical equipment,
and working standards*

What the researcher is able to notice only at second glance, but which for the owners and the managers is surely the most important matter, relates to the quantity and quality of the investments into the factory. All the interviewees who had something to say on this issue, both those who had worked in the factory for a long time, and those who came after the Efes privatized, agreed that the capital investment of nearly 6 million Euros made further development possible. Even more, it launched the new "Efes Weifert" into the company of the four biggest players in the present beer industry of Serbia.

"The idea was to do some strong capital investments, to improve the quality of the beer, to – what we call – rejuvenate the brand, and especially the brand which was attached to this company (Weifert - it was the renowned name of Djordje Weifert), and it was to make this brand become alive again. In doing so we were betting on tradition, because this is the oldest brewery on the Balkans, founded in 1722. So, what we wanted to do was based on tradition, quality and new image. So that is what we have done. First on the technical side, quality, new packaging, we improved the liquid, so basically I think everybody has noticed that all of a sudden something happened in this company.

The second thing we did, and I am not going to speak about technical investments, because it is too long, I'll just say that we improved everything in order to improve the liquid. *And a formula for making beer?* It is a traditional formula, the recipe from the past...In making beer you have always to follow the tradition. What went wrong was that actually there was no quality control, so the quality fluctuated. Now we have stable quality. Different processes, different way of management of the process. Brewing always with top quality raw materials, good water, filtration, fermentation, everything is under control. And the whole process is closed. At every step of the production we have people from the Lab going to the brew house, going to the fermentation, checking the quality of the liquid, every part of the process until the bottle is under quality control." (P.A.)

Although the tendency to traditionalize the rejuvenated local "Weifert" brand is very clear and sound on the management and marketing levels, claiming that the formula for making beer is "as always has been", "the recipe from the past" (as the General Manager said), technologists who work in production revealed another dimension to the story. They informed me that the formulas of certain brands had been defined through a series of experiments regarding the taste of the liquid. In fact, a new taste should have been produced, which could simultaneously satisfy two demands: to be made from new ingredients that were Efes proofed and that matched the standards of the Efes company, and to please the taste of local (meaning regionally Serbian and Montenegrin) customers. This process of producing anew an "old" taste lasted several months after the takeover. The outcome was a rejuvenated local brand "Weifert", which was a bit lighter and a bit more bitter than the original Efes beers. While this illustration could lead to further arguments about the artificial nature of "tradition", showing that Weifert's "betting on tradition" represents not a simple continuation with the past, but its recreation, and reinvention, the story for me has another, even more important dimension. Namely, it could serve as an apt metaphor for various kinds of adjustments that had to be brought about in order to produce a new enterprise.

As for the new working standards, the managers who used to work in "old Weifert" and were now managers in "new Efes Weifert" vouched that the Efes takeover of Pančevo Brewery brought a whole set of new standards in all aspects of business. A person who was the general manager at the time of the privatization said that for him the most important aspect was the establishment of the IT Department, and a thorough computerization of the firm. Certain level of computerization had indeed previously existed, but today it enables the employees not only to be connected inside the firm, but to complete many of their business operations and transactions with various partners. M.I. confirmed the statements of her colleague, asserting the importance of the IT Department, which enables employees to communicate within the whole Efes Group. This fact makes a person feel connected, which

for her is a source of great satisfaction. The second point worth mentioning are a set of standards associated with production that resulted in investments into the quality of the final product. The final product always had to have the same quality, which was made possible by the automation of the production process. The third set of standards was connected with the quality of ingredients, which automatically regulated their relations with suppliers. Those who could not meet requirements set up by the standards of the Efes company could not work with the brewery. Finally, what had changed as the basic "rule of the game"? Instead of regulated markets and a controlled economy, competition and striving for excellence entered the business field.

Structural reorganization of the firm

The first thing to do after the takeover, in organizational terms, was structurally to reorganize the factory. Today, the firm is divided into eight departments: Human Resources Department (HRD), Financial Department, Supplies, Production, Logistics, Legal Issues, Marketing and Sales. Some of these departments (such as Marketing and Logistics) are newly established, while others were given additional/new functions. What has also changed is the relative value of particular departments according to new economic logistics. This meant that greater emphasis would be given to the Marketing and Sale departments, compared to the previous stress on production. Today, O. L., at the position of HRP, says that the importance of marketing and logistics have been equalized with production. The Sales Department is also differently organized. Earlier, it was performed "from inside the factory". Today, sales cannot be imagined without working on field and directly communicating with retailers and consumers. Although this is a logical consequence of the new positioning of the factory and its adjustment to the conditions and rules of the macro-economy, this fact was not welcome among the workers in the Production Department.

One of the workers felt that production was undervalued in the new organization of the firm, and he could not agree with that. He was also deeply dissatisfied with what he saw as the great disproportion between salaries in the Marketing and Sales Department and the salaries of those who are responsible for the production of the basic product.

New rules and procedures

One aspect of the restructuring was the introduction of some new procedures, which were to provide the new order for successful functioning. That is to say that some of these rules had existed for a long time, but were not respected, due to the rather relaxed atmosphere in the former company. That

particularly relates to rules that regulated/prohibited smoking in the work premises and drinking in the production plant. Among other new things, it appeared that the new regime of working hours indeed helped a lot of people to leave the factory voluntarily, as a part of lay-off programme. They simply couldn't adjust to the 8:00-17:00 working day, since that meant spending the whole day at work. For many who used to additionally work in the field after working hours, this did not seem a promising vision for the future, so they left.

While the new working hours represented a revolutionary change for many, the most important change concerned respecting the existing regulations about smoking and drinking in the work premises. Thus, the novelty consisted not in introducing new regulations, but in creating a persuasive environment that would assure the employees that this time the rules were for real and that breaking them would have consequences. In just a few months the new managers succeeded in what the old managers had not for many years – to make accountability a real, important living issue. According to one of the old managers, there were no big difference in the way business was conducted, since no-one could invent something that had been invented long before, they could just refine or improve it. Still, there are certain issues relating to applying the existing principles of work and management:

"It is a popular conception here, we can speak about that as a part of mentality of Serbian people, that when you have been presented a certain law, you are not going to obey it. On the contrary, you will put as much energy as needed, to find a way to escape it. We faced that problem in the management of the factory as well. The problem was that we have been making a lot of decisions and then those decisions were not respected, for a variety of reasons, it was always something more important than a business interest. Sometimes it was a so called 'subjective factor,' sometimes it was lack of time... Now we have strict rules that are public and known to everyone, everyone knows what his/her responsibilities are, what has to be done. It is true that the rules and procedures have existed before, but today you'd better know what the limits of the responsibilities are and you certainly know that the consequences of mistakes or disobedience would be punished. That is the difference." (Z.E.)

On the other hand, the new management tried to introduce novel forms of breaks, making them more flexible, but still oriented toward disturbing the working process as little as possible. Thus, as the General Manager stressed:

"Today, I think people more and more are getting used to this. And they feel much more comfortable coming to the office. It's clean, it's nice, you can have a nice cup of coffee from the vending machine, you have nice glasses, nice water, everything to create a good working atmosphere." (P.A.)

Nevertheless, these efforts were not met with equal enthusiasm among all the employees. Some of them missed the times when they had less work to do

and much more spare time to spend with working associates in the restaurant. One of them, L.K., complained that these days a person could not have a decent meal, because he does not have time to consume it properly. He sadly pointed to the lunch package in front of him, which, according to the new regulations, had to be consumed at the working place. He had very pleasant memories of collective breakfasts in their factory restaurant, which he described as moments of relief and companionship. "Today we are obliged to take a meal to our work place," says this worker bitterly, as if it is the most indecent thing to do. He was also noting that there was much more work to be done now. There is no more time to hang around at work, and the supervising procedure has become more frequent and effective. Therefore, L.K. came to experience the change as a "limitation of freedom," as he and many of his working companions are now forced to think about the consequences of the quality of their work. "We haven't bothered ourselves about anything at all before. Now, we feel as if our freedom has been restricted, taken from us."

One of the most profound changes for domestic employees, particularly the middle generation of old managers and workers, was the introduction of English as the working language of the company. That, together with a very poor level of communicational skills in the area of professional relations, represented perhaps the most important obstacle to the fuller exchange of ideas between the old and new managers. Although English classes were organized for all who wanted to attend, and were obligatory for members of high and middle management, for many of the older managers, already in their late 40s and 50s, it was rather hard to start learning elementary English. Still, they were perfectly aware of the fact that without language competencies they would not be able to hold their positions, let alone to make significant advancements in their careers. This is also connected with another important feature of the change, particularly relating to managers. It concerned the professional and intellectual development of employees, thus revealing a changed conception of the value of knowledge and permanent education in the business process.

In addition, what the general manager intended to introduce as a part of the change was a different mode of interpersonal communication, that is, the ways contacts and discussions are held between the top, middle and lower management, as well as the workers. As he stressed, this conception was mostly his and did not originate from the company which he was working for at the moment (Efes). Being able to work both in the "Western" and "Eastern" companies, he was able to compare different styles of conducting business, but also to find his own path, applicable to the culture and society in which he works.

"My first thing was, like I said, I'm not *gospodin* (said in Serbian, I.E.), it's my first name. Everybody calls me by my first name, not Sir me. In the Turkish system

which is in a way respectful, you call your colleagues and superiors the honourable, *the bei*. In the Belgian system, you call everybody by their first name." (P.A.)

As some of the older managers said, the openness and accessibility of the general manager made the flow of the business ideas easier and contributed to the loosening of potential tensions between the old and the new management.

Re-launching the local Weifert brand

It seems that it was a strategic decision of the Efes Group, which is rather quickly spreading across Eurasia, to support local brands instead of introducing its world known brands, such as Efes Pilsener. In the case of Pančevo Brewery, this strategy was additionally important, as this brewery counts as "the oldest in the Balkans" and represents a source of pride for the citizens of the town and surroundings. P.A., the general manager after the takeover, argued in favour of local brands.

"Well, for me, it was a local brand, from Banat, we made it a national brand. So, we are going to explore the market, which we are currently doing in Macedonia. We are slowly expanding our area. Now, beer is something... and people sometimes have a wrong perception of what we call local...domestic...I remember this from the past... I said, we are a local brand, and they say this brand is international, and we are one of the world famous brands. Now, beer is a domestic product. If the beer is of good quality, people are proud of their local beers. And the local beers mean Serbian beers. The Serbs will go for Serbian beers. And 95% of consumers will drink local beers. And it is always 3-5% of the beers that are imported, because of different type of occasions. You drink a foreign beer in a café, in a nice café, but the real beer drinkers, they go for the local beers. I don't drink foreign beers, I drink local beers. It is because today local beers are of very good quality. So, why would I pay three times more for just an image? And it is perception, image, it is marketing. For in terms of quality today, local beers have reached the really good quality." (P.A.)

I have already mentioned the tendency to "traditionalize", even "archive" the Weifert brand, because of its historical connections with the family of great beer makers. Moreover, managers and marketing specialists even want to stretch the origin of the rejuvenated brand as early as 1722, which is the year the first company for producing beer had been mentioned in historical records. Nevertheless, claiming this continuity on behalf of the present managers has sound reasons. To appear as, if not legal then customary, successor and inheritor of the so called "oldest brewery in the Balkans", surely contributes in adding value to the rejuvenated brand, itself named after the founder family 'Weifert'."

As general manager of the Brewery said in the opening interview, competing for their share of public attention on an emerging beer market, new

managers were "betting on tradition". Thus, tradition, together with high quality of the liquid and excellence in all aspects of conducting business, became the critical element of the "winning" formula, the one that guaranteed success. This is also to add that by employing the notion of "tradition", consciously or not, managers made a connection not only with the long-lasting tradition of beer making, but also invoked a whole symbolic complex associated with the local history and culture of beer consumption, which is still today a source of local pride. That includes elaborated urban stories, even legends, about the crowds of metropolitan people who at the turn of the centuries (19th to 20th) and during the 1920s were flowing by boat from Belgrade to Pančevo, to window-shop and enjoy draft beer and pastries in the famous garden of the Weifert brewery. The whole complex of meanings associated with producing and consuming Weifert beer represents an important part of the process of building and reproducing the local identity, encompassing notions such as local pride, industriousness, cultivated citizenship and a well-ordered life. This was seen as a legacy of long Austrian rule, and for a long time (until now) has served as a clear indicator of regional (Vojvodina) identity, conceptualized in sharp opposition to the features of neighbouring Serbian (understood in geographical terms, originally "srbijanski") identity. In short, what urban stories connected to Weifert beer reveal is that citizens of Pančevo represent themselves as inheritors of the traditions of the West, while ascribing to the neighbouring Serbians an Eastern Oriental identity, due to the centuries-long Ottoman rule.

This particular historical context, and this persistent social imagination, indeed affected the way the majority of the employees reacted to the fact that a Turkish company was going to privatize what was perceived as a genuinely European brand. A strong perception of themselves as truly Western and European gave them additional vigour in developing an antipathetic stance towards the privatization process. Thus the key paradox that provoked misunderstandings and questions about the privatizing partner lay in the fact that supposed "Westernization" of business practices should have been brought about by a company originating from the country that was locally recognized as a paradigm of "Orient" – Turkey.⁵

⁵ It seems that the creators of the advertising campaign for the rejuvenated "Weifert" local brand played exactly on this card, emphasizing the notion of existing (at least) duality (in this case "European"/"German" vs. "Serbian" identity) relating to the cultural identity of the people in the region. New "Weifert" entered the market with the unusual slogan, saying: "Weifert" – The Right Serbian Name for Good Beer. Although the choice of the slogan, and its explicit meaning may sound and seem rather puzzling (even confusing for some), consumers found it acceptable, quickly remembered the slogan, and even started to colloquially adapt it. Thus I attended a local party, where one

*New managerial strata:
Energy, working culture and dedication*

The third important intended change was connected with bringing new people into the firm, those who would be able to introduce the desired change. For P.A. that meant bringing successful people, who knew what success was, and were able to (re)produce it. He said that he wanted to work with young people who had been working in different environments, in already western working environments, or from highly successive and productive companies. He did this with the following rationale:

"We also brought a lot of new managers, young people for, like, human resources, marketing, people from successful companies. So I took people from Coca-Cola, from fast food and consumer goods, young people who have been working in different environments, in already – you can call it western environment, or from highly successive and productive companies. If you want to show, especially to workers, that something can happen, you have to bring successful people. If you bring success, if you bring good coaches, the football player is going to play well. If the coach is good, if your playground is good, if you invest, there is a new spirit. And that's what we have done." (P.A.)

What new managers brought into the Brewery was a new working ethic, a fuller dedication to work, and a firm emphasis on their professional identity, all based on their previous working experience in international or domestic private companies. The majority of employees from different departments who decided to stay in the firm after it was privatized were younger people, for whom it was easier to accept the change and accommodate it.

Since the entire top management of the company had had substantial international working experience and since they came to a working

of the guests was given as a present a T-shirt with an inscription: "Živković (that is a family name) – The Right Serbian Name for a Good Male", which happened shortly after the campaign was launched. There were voices, coming also from professionals inside the Brewery that the slogan was slightly nationalistic in tone, playing on the national identity of consumers, and some of them found that it was an inappropriate way to market beer. The local brand manager, with whom I conducted an interview, told me that it was not his decision to go for that kind of slogan and that he preferred more universal cultural themes to play with. Maybe as a result of his marketing orientation as well, the new advertising campaign for "Weifert" launched in the spring of 2006, was much more universal, non-controversial, even stereotypical. The main theme of the campaign was related to the notion of maleness. Under the title "Club of Irresistible Males", and with the slogan *How to Resist*, different advertising images represent variants of the two supposedly leading obsessions of "real" adult males: women and football.

environment that was just starting to develop a "Western" type of business culture, it was not strange that the younger of them experienced quite a "cultural shock" when faced with an old-fashioned way of conducting business. The words of N.I, the Local Brand Manager, have particular strength in that respect. He explained that it was hard for him to compare the ways business was done in *domestic* (state or socially owned companies) and *foreign* (privately owned companies) because he hadn't had experience with the former. Still, he admitted that he could not understand the working culture of some of his friends, who actively worked about 3 out of 8 hours, and spent the rest of the time in various social activities. He stressed that those represented a handful who still worked for state-owned firms, while the majority worked for firms that operated in the "Western style" and demanded "full commitment". N.I. describes his adaptation to the new working environment in the Pančevo brewery as a "hard experience", explaining:

"I am still in the process of adaptation. When I started to work for Nikšić Brewery it had already been privatized for four years, and for another four – as long as I stayed there – the privatization process had been further developing and strengthening. Now I have come to the firm where that process is just at the beginning, the part I skipped in Nikšić. The problem is that in last four years I have learnt to think completely in 'western,' 'business,' 'systemic' way. And since I do want to pursue that way of thinking and to implement it here too, I realize that it is not an easy thing to do and that there are a lot of obstacles." (N.I.)

Exemplifying what would constitute the cultural shock he admitted that he was going through, N.I. said that he was most surprised how strongly people refused to change. He was shocked when he encountered people who were irresponsible, who were not used to appreciating a strict time agenda. "They were, if I may say, exactly like they were described in our old-fashioned textbooks from the socialist period: all doing everything, without functional specialization, equally sharing responsibility, equally sharing incomes etc."

What he recognized as missing from the local working culture was dedication to work. It was as if proper motivation was absent and people acted as if their work was unimportant to them. Put simply, they had too loose a relation towards work, still expecting – as a reflex from socialism maybe - that a working identity should be a source of not only professional but also – if not dominantly – social fulfilment.

Conceptualizations of culture within the "business game"

During the second interview with HRP, we discussed different meanings and usages of the concept of culture mentioned during our first meeting. We

also talked about the "Efes" company culture, about the process of producing the company culture of the "Efes Weifert" company and about the role of culture in contemporary economy and business development. At the end, we touched upon the appointment of the new general manager of the brewery, Dinc Alkin who came to Pančevo from Istanbul.

Asked to give her first association to the term "culture", O.L. was a bit confused, but offered a definition of culture as *"a way of behaviour"*. She made it even more precise, referring quickly to the company culture, which she identifies with "a way of regulating relations and behaviour of the employees in their working place." In the course of further conversation, she said that at the beginning of the next year a broad survey would be conducted through the companies of the Efes Group, with the final aim of establishing a shared corporate culture. They would try to find out what values were shared by the majority of their employees, and what they would like to have as orienting values in the company they worked for. O.L. also noted that in this process "Efes Weifert" would also try to set the values of its own corporate culture. Asked what would constitute the unique qualities of "Efes Weifert" corporate culture, in comparison with the other "operations", she said that "Serbia and Montenegro represents the most Western operation of Efes". Therefore, in respect to values and norms concerned, they are the most Westernized operation in comparative perspective. She expected that the fact that there are a lot of women in managerial positions in Serbia and Montenegro should be respected and recognized while producing local corporate culture. This is certainly to be connected with different conceptualizations and organization of family life, the role of the women in the family, cultural conceptions of femininity, marriage, divorce, etc. She stressed the very favourable position of Serbia and Montenegro, as being in between two quite different worlds - Eastern and Western, which in the case of Pančevo business operation meant that the shock resulting from the encounter with each of these worlds is less than it would have been in the case of their direct encounter. This is to say that this "Both East and West", or "Neither East or West" position, enables the business man and woman to freely flow between the two worlds, having no substantial difficulty in easily adapting to either. HRP stresses that this refers primarily to cultural encounters in the business sphere, while she thought that in the area of business proper there were no misunderstandings, for everyone was familiar with the procedures and norms to be respected.

Speaking of the "Efes" company culture, HRP indicated that it represents a combination of the culture of the Efes Group and the unique qualities of the local contexts in which they were establishing their operations (Weifert being one of those operations).

"For example, Efes has operations in Kazakhstan and in Serbia, and these two cultures are very different. In a way, they could be said to resemble East and West. Then we have to start from basic things, like dress code. If, for example, women cover their heads, you can't push a norm which goes against it, for it would be treated as an insult to their culture. Or, in other respects, you cannot order women in Serbia to cover their heads. Therefore, you have to think about those issues, as well as about issues such as the way of greeting, organization of meetings, ways of socializing, etc. It is the main reason why HR managers are local people. All the other managers could be foreigners, but HR manager ought to be local, in order to be able to communicate with all, and to function as a bridge between two or more cultures." (O.L.)

O.L. also pointed to the less favourable cultural features of the local culture, to be eliminated, thus making the process of adaptation to the new business culture much easier. One of these features concerns the idea of a proper business meeting:

"People here are used to organizing business meetings in restaurants or bars, it is habitual that business arrangements are done while eating and drinking, which is absolutely unacceptable in the Western business culture, at least as frequently as is the case here. If the meetings were held at the company premises, people would come prepared, with all the documents needed, and able to speak concisely and briefly. With implementation of the Western business model, things started to change but it is still a very slow change." (O.L.)

Another interviewee, the Local Brand Manager, pointed to a more profound meaning of culture, when he indicated that the refusal to change – whether referring to change of lifestyles or changing relations to work – constituted an important part of the local culture. By this he revealed a conceptualization of culture that does not consist of a list of various features, be that material, behavioural or immaterial, but defines it instead in relation to basic time orientation.

In addition, N.I. pointed to the ways he pragmatically used the concept of culture as a means to resolve situations of potential misunderstandings in the business environment. He consciously played with different concepts of culture, manipulating them to overcome what he experienced as the most important cultural conflict – that between two business cultures. Namely, he described how, after coming to Pančevo, he started to play on his Montenegrin identity (which, as for my judgment, is a strong part of his personal identity anyway), as a way to soften potential hostilities that might have been provoked by his direct way of communication. While his former working associates and partners in Nikšić Brewery were used to this style of communication, based on quickness and efficacy, it provoked resentment in his new working environment in Pančevo. N.I. soon realized that in Pančevo people were accustomed to having longer conversations, aimed to fulfil both

professional and social functions. Since he accepted the rule which says that "time is money" he was absolutely determined to retain his manner of communication, but found out that playing on stereotypical features of Montenegrin national character, such as awkwardness, or lack of subtleness, produced results. His new working associates were willing to tolerate what they at first saw as rudeness and impoliteness when he offered them a cultural explanation of his behaviour, putting it within a context of the "theories of mentality" which are widely shared in the popular context. Thus he played on an "essentialist" notion of culture, in order to support, and build an unmistakably artificial, and self-recognized as artificial, concept of culture. This represents a kind of consciously played double game.

Advantages and obstacles to desired change

The fact that was probably very, if not most, important in fostering organizational change after the takeover was the working experience the general manager of the brewery after privatization in the region. Indeed, P.A. had been working in Serbia and Montenegro for several years as a general manager in Nikšić Brewery, privatized by Belgian "Interbrew" in 1996. Thus, coming to Serbia represented to him a kind of geographical movement, but no cultural surprise. In fact, as he said, it was not a surprise at all. It was because for him the shock had come much earlier, and, as he said "There was no cultural shock, I was in MN before, it was easier for me to understand than it was for them to understand what we were bringing. We were bringing 'long term', they expected 'short term', and that was somehow where we missed each other's expectations."

The other thing that helped was the decision of Efes to rely on local managers, both those who had already worked in the factory (old managers) and those who were brought in from successful international companies (new managers). In both cases, they were people who know the domestic market, and already had good connections with different actors in the business network of the brewery. The business decision to keep to local employees as much as possible certainly enabled the top management to avoid possible going astray that could have happened if they were experimenting with expatriate staff. Thus the most important group in maintaining the communication between the investors (and the top management) and the old staff, were exactly the old managers with a longer working experience in the brewery. The old staff, consisting of workers in production and administration, had less social distance towards them than towards the new managers, while the old managers themselves were able to accommodate both "worlds". They belonged to the "old" world according to their previous

biography and working experience, they felt the factory as a kind of "home", and were, as Arjun Appadurai put it, *genealogically* connected with it, while, on the other hand, they were able to understand the directions of the change, and to adjust to it. Moreover, they succeeded in profiting from it, maintaining positions in middle management and being able to advance professionally. That is to say (again applying Appadurai), that they managed to catch up with the *historical* dimension of the change, understanding its wider aspects, and thus being able to actively participate in its implementation.⁶ It was more probably their stay in the factory would have been more lasting, while it was almost certain that the new managers, mainly younger people, would go after other working challenges in the process of career development.⁷

Conclusions

The main aim of this paper was to note, describe, analyze and interpret the various ways in which economy and culture inter-reacted, and were been mutually constitutive in the process of organizational and business transformation within the particular case of a small, local brewery being privatized by a big international company. I have traced cultural encounters taking place in the business sphere, and registered their various outcomes. The question remains at the end: what kinds of cultures have been recorded and which kinds of cultural encounters have appeared to be the most significant in the change that was observed. Starting from the assumption that two basic coordinates of any types of culture are their spatial and chronological horizons, it could be said that basic misunderstandings circled around these issues. The change that was projected and introduced by the new General Manager and the upper echelons of new management was directed exactly towards creating what was described as a "normal working environment" and standardization and

⁶ For the notions of "genealogy" and "history" in Appadurai's conception of "producing locality", see: Appadurai 1996, 73-74.

⁷ This prediction came true while the research was still going on in 2006. When I tried to reach the HP person, to give her the first draft of the paper to comment on, I realized that she has already left the company, and soon after, the General Manager moved to a top managing position in the recently privatized mineral water plant "Knjaz Miloš". His choice of career direction shed new light on the interview he gave me, for it was clearer at that moment that his claim that "he's coming from the family of many generation beer-brewers", apart from being a historical fact, also served to firmly culturally legitimate his presence in Pančevo Brewery. Although in this way he tried to represent his professional choice as somehow "natural" and "inevitable", written into his family history, he easily changed the company when a new and more tempting opportunity arose.

precise management of time schedules, ranging from the change in working hours and system of regular breaks, to promotion of a new sense of time, exemplified in the saying that "time is money" to be calculated and "saved".

Cultural conflict does not arise as a simple divide between "Western" and "Eastern" (business) cultures, for these do not exist in pure, essential forms. We could rather speak about already hybrid forms, which are a combination of not only one, but several variables (geographical, ethnical, national, professional, and demographical), building the dynamics of encounters and, consequent changes. This means that the conflicts could not be simply understood as stemming from, generating and reproducing sets of dichotomies such as eastern: western, domestic: foreign, old-fashioned: modern, old generation: young generation, uneducated: educated, etc. The fact is that in the Pančevo Brewery, young managers of domestic origin with international experience were perceived equally as foreign as Westerners, since they belonged to the same, western oriented business culture. On the other hand, even the domestic middle management was perceived, and also nurtured similar self-perception, as already "partly Westernized", due to the long history of Western influences and knowledge transfers that had been occurring during the decades before the takeover. Therefore, although it could have been expected that the most exposed cultural misunderstandings and conflicts would arise from encounters of "Western" and "Eastern" cultural traditions, it appeared that the most salient conflicts actually came out from different positions in organizational hierarchy, irrespective of the nationality, ethnic or cultural background of the people involved.

The general manager with substantial regional experience in Montenegro and the energetic team of senior and middle managers were able to accomplish the most important change of all – change of corporate culture and its dominating narrative. Or, as P.A., general manager of the Brewery put it in more colloquial terms, "to change the spirit of the company". It could be seen from the research that this process was only at its beginning, and what its obstacles and propellants were. It could also be seen how the senior management tried to constitute the new set of meanings of the key aspects of organizational structures, processes and actors, in an effort to "define the new reality for others" (Salaman 1997, 237). They were in that way acting as the "cultural intermediaries", playing an active part in attaching particular meanings to the world of work, thus managing not only business, but culture as well. Salaman claims that "senior managers have the central position of 'transformative leaders', as the manipulation of cultures and the symbols of which they consist becomes, according to cultural consultants, the primary task for managers" (Salaman 1997, 263). Of course, he rightly concludes that "as with all such efforts to define reality for others, those at whom these efforts are aimed interpret and react to them in the light of their existing views and

experiences, often 'consuming' these representations in ways which differ significantly from senior managements' intentions" (Salaman 1997, 237). Therefore, in the Brewery, mostly among the workers, there existed interpretations of the change that picture it not as an improvement in efficacy and excellence, but as a "restriction of freedom" and a basically unjust process whose "successes" would not be equally distributed among all of them.

Since the presence of foreign managers in the factory was at an extremely low level, it was hard to evaluate in broader scope the dynamics of inter-ethnic and inter-national encounters and their effects. Many of the new managers that came to the factory were co-nationals, but were "socialized" in Western working environment (whether working abroad or in the domestic branches of international companies), therefore trying to introduce and impose on the lower employees what they saw as "Western business conduct". Though many of them in fact shared the cultural context with their co-workers, understood their traditions and cultural affiliations, they sharply differed in the ease with which they accepted and stood for the new business culture, rendered in Efes company rules and regulations of business conduct. As HRP aptly put it, as far as the strata of top and middle managers and their business culture is concerned, "there are no misunderstandings, for everyone is familiar with the procedures and norms that are to be respected".

Speaking of more conventional or colloquial understanding of culture, seen as "a different way of life", which comprises traditional areas of appearance, tastes and behaviour, just a few examples of cultural encounters of this type were recorded. The case of General Manager, P.A. was frequently quoted as an example of how important it is for the Westerners to gain significant "local knowledge" and to master important issues of local culture, in order to achieve success in business. People who were present longer in the region (5-10 years), managed to gain more cultural capital. That enabled them to take on the role of cultural brokers who mediate between organizational and business cultures with more understanding and knowledge. P.A. came to Pančevo Brewery from Nikšić, where he had worked for Belgian Interbrew; privatizing the only Montenegrin brewery, he became familiar with various aspects of the local culture, including local customs of conducting business. Thus he came to Pančevo a good deal prepared for what was going to happen when privatization started. His colleagues, particularly those who had worked in the "old" brewery, declared that his acculturation in Montenegro significantly contributed to his successful management of change in the Pančevo factory. Here knowledge of the "domestic" culture is given prominence.

Another type of intercultural encounter dynamic could be seen between the domestic staff and managers from Turkey, who came on business, and whose different food choices as well as religious practice requirements (places and

times for prayers) were accounted and provided for. In this case, the emphasis was on the learning of the "foreign" culture by the local staff. Still, as one of the domestic managers said, even the members of domestic middle management were under the strong influence of the mythology of Oriental culture, and they had expected more "differences" than they actually experienced. "I would reckon that we are almost the same", she concluded, not without surprise.

For the lower management and workers the nationality of the privatizing company was differently refracted through their experiences and hierarchical position. They were more suspicious about the incoming change in its various aspects. For them, "Efes" was perceived as a double foreigner, whose presence and engagement in Serbia would undoubtedly lead to the decline of the factory. As a foreign company, "Efes" was a representative of a different business culture and ownership type, mostly associated with the West and Western type of modernity. On the other hand, even more significant is the fact that "Efes" was at the same time perceived as in a way "a false Westerner", since the founders and the majority owners of the firm are Turkish citizens, and the registered office of the company is in Istanbul, which in the symbolic geography of the Balkans (seen from the Balkans, including Serbia) epitomizes Orient. This distrust towards "the Turkish" both grew from and perpetuated the existing stereotypes in Serbia that they, like all people from the Orient, are "unreliable, sweet talking, opportunistic" and that they are not to be trusted even when they "bring gifts".

Hierarchical differences had affected ways of thinking about the organizational changes that were taking place and their understanding. The basic economic categories of ownership and labour were differently interpreted by the managers and the workers. Workers tended to mystify the economic change more than the managers, probably due to the lack of proper information both in general and in the particular context of the factory. On the other hand, their suspicion sometimes unexpectedly pinpointed potential hidden agendas and lack of transparency of the contemporary economic schemes. Strong suspicion was recorded among some of the workers that Efes was not "the real" owner of the factory e.g. "Who knows who owns it? I saw and have talked with a person; he is European, coming from the Netherlands. It is probably Interbrew who actually bought us." (L.C.)

The same applied to the perceptions of private ownership and the abstractions of capital holding. Dealing with shares and the relation between owning shares and partaking in decision-making processes is not a comprehensible process for most employees. It seemed that it was hard to understand, usually for workers, that they could not take part in decision-making process once they had sold their shares. They strongly associated the decision-making process with being part of the working collective, which is, I

suppose, a legacy of socialism and its particular Yugoslav slant (self management), which derived authority and managing capability from the status of the worker.

Maybe the most important contested issue along the same lines is the conception of work itself. Analyzing different conceptions of work (one held by the managers who designed and introduced it, and a different one that was tightly embraced by the workers) the researcher could point to some of the underlying economic processes that might be the source of this alternative knowledge. It could be simply put that two simultaneous processes are involved in the dynamics of particular economic change: at the level of macro-economy/global economy, the ruling logic is the old Marxian anxiety that "all that is solid melts into air". This means that an old meaning of concreteness and solidity increasingly diminishes, leaving behind indeterminate, fluid, changing realities. One of the "realities" that is going through this kind of change is work itself, and also the field of production that once relied on the conception of hard and concrete work. Losing its substantiality it also loses its relative value within organizations, and sectors like marketing and sales now came to be even more important than production proper, in the process of adding value to the product. For the workers, it is a hard fact to be reconciled to, because in the time past, and particularly within the social and ideological frame of socialism, work was considered to be the utmost source of value, and the workers as its protagonists were put at the top of the hierarchy of the social imagery. With the current devaluation of work both in Serbian society as a whole and within their respective companies, the most important source of identity was put into question, and they were thus stripped of the area which had legitimized their authority. Therefore, this new position de-empowers the workers who cannot yet understand the new circumstances under which they have to operate, and who still seek legitimacy from a now dramatically changed position of productive worker.

"As far as I can understand, a lot of disappointment of workers is because for them privatization was money coming from the West, giving to them and going back directly to the former standard, or better. And I think that is, that is... As for my expectations, I knew when I was coming here that I will face the same issues I was facing in MN when I was there. You have asked for the workers, and there were misconceptions, misunderstanding with the workers about salaries. Salaries were in line with university degrees, everybody was roughly the same, between the base and the top there were no big difference. The workers, and especially workers cannot understand, that some younger people can earn much more than them. This is one. Two, the gap between the top management and workers is much higher. The second thing that they cannot grab or understand is that, they think that if someone got a car, like a salesman, that his life is much easier." (P.A.)

On the other, micro-economic side, on the level of establishing a new economic order in the company, the workers were faced with a process that followed the opposite logic: that of solidifying the rules and norms under which the company operates. This again represents a completely different way of managing the company, with particular stress on clarity of the rules, and the consequences of not obeying them. A new experience of work and demands related to it, such as full commitment, dedication, ability to focus on the work assignment and to put aside everything as long as needed to accomplish the goals set, priority of the work over family issues etc. is sharply contrasted with the elusiveness of the working norms and demands that were set before. As the majority of the interviewees stressed, norms and demands have always existed, but there has always been a safe space for breaking them without consequences. During socialism, there was even a phrase that was habitually used and which captured the reasons for various failures in business efforts: "objective circumstances and subjective weaknesses" (*objektivne okolnosti i subjektivne slabosti*). Put in another words, the social aspect of work was in most cases put forward, while its professional and economic aspects were put aside, whenever possible. The change brought by privatization contributed to the strengthening and solidifying of the working environment, which was, like other areas of social experience during socialism, suffering from the same malaise – as Kundera aptly phrased – "the unbearable lightness of being".

This order of things put managers into a doubly favourable position, while workers were doubly discouraged. The reason why those economic and organizational changes worked in favour of the managerial strata is that their working skills and capabilities are valued within new working philosophy. Further, managers could easily identify with the dominant discourse of entrepreneurship, while the workers, particularly middle and older generation, were not used to being of great initiative. Therefore workers find themselves "lost in transition" both on the macroeconomic and microeconomic level, due to lack of information or due to their unwillingness to accept the rules of the new (now dominant) game in the town.

Finally, the issue that profoundly marked the change in the Pančevo brewery was ambiguity brought by the legacy of socialism. In that respect, the historical uniqueness of Yugoslav socialism can be seen as both an advantage and an obstacle to the projected economic and social change. The position of Yugoslavia as "between the East and the West" and its earlier economic liberalization compared with other countries from the communist block, have helped the "Western" economic culture to be more easily acknowledged, and, partly introduced. On the other hand, the particular economic order of "self-management" that fostered the illusion that workers are "the owners" of the enterprises functioned as an important obstacle. The second important legacy of socialism, overvaluation of production and productive work as a dominant

source of social value and a basis for social relations, appeared to be the main cultural divide between those who designed and brought in the business and organizational change, and those who were to be changed. Thus, the main cultural divide is between "culture of production" and "culture of consumption", along with the value systems and worldviews that they contain. The most important "cultural turn" was brought about by the new general manager with the switch from the "logic of production" to the "logic of consumption". That has, according to my research, provoked most resistance and misunderstandings between the employees, particularly the workers. This is also the area in which the importance of cultural, and not only economic aspects of the change, is most clearly seen, as it became critical for the managers to be able to "manage the meanings" of several key concepts, among which the concept of work was one of the most important. Connected with it were the questions of evaluating skills of the employees and the new distribution of authority and power based on this evaluation. While in the former communist period, the hard work of the workers was both ideologically and socially emphasized, it is understandable that under the new economic order, based on the consumer satisfaction, they were most deprived. That process has also its functional logic: what once was part of the worker's skill has become today de-skilled, automated; what was under the worker's authority, now fell under managers' competence. The work itself, and its connection with the final product, were redefined. It was realized by many (although, not well understood by all) that what was most valued was not the work of the production, but the work of sales and advertising, the reality of which was constantly challenged and questioned by the workers and even by some members of the lower management.

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Илдико Ердеи

Шта је у пиву?

Културе које се прожимају у приватизацији пиваре

Рад је настао као резултат скоро двогодишњег интензивног истраживања социјалних и културних аспеката приватизације локалне пиваре у Јужном Банату, чији је већински власник 2003. године постала турска компанија Ефес. Приватизована пивара тада је постала њихова "најзападнија" пословна "операција" и локалитет за имплементацију њихове технологије, али и организационих модела и пословних култура. Иако је уобичајено да се о приватизацији говори као о економски битном питању, приватизација мале, домаће, локалне компаније, коју је извео велики, страни, интернационални произвођач пива, отворила је могућност за посматрање, уочавање, бележење, анализу и интерпретацију различитих начина на који се економски и културни аспекти процеса сусрећу и прожимају, и на који постају узajамно конститутивни унутар посматраног случаја. На тај начин, поље економске трансформације је посматрано и као поље културне трансформације, у коме су се пословне, организационе и радне културе "социјализма" и "капитализма" среле, што је произвело различите реакције и исходе, како на институционалном плану, тако и на индивидуалном нивоу. Издвојено је неколико различитих концептуализација културе, које су биле "у оптицају" код различитих актера, и констатована је нарастајућа "културализација" економије, карактеристична за савремену економију. Посебна пажња посвећена је наслеђу социјализма, забележеном и на нивоу наратива и у остацима претходних пракси, за које је показано да функционишу истовремено и као препрека жељеној и пројектованој промени, али и као средство за одржавање осећаја личне вредности већине запослених у суочавању са свеprisутним и јачајућим хегемонијским наративом о "тријумфалном капитализму".

Кључне речи: приватизација, пиво, културе, социјализам, капитализам, Србија

Ildiko Erdei

Qu'y a-t-il dans la bière ? Des cultures qui interagissent
dans la privatisation de la brasserie

Cet article est l'aboutissement des recherches intensives effectuées au cours de deux années et portant sur les aspects sociaux et culturels de la privatisation d'une brasserie locale dans le Banat du sud, dont la compagnie turque "Efes" s'est faite en 2003 le propriétaire majoritaire. La brasserie privatisée est devenue alors l'opération la plus "occidentale" dans le processus de déploiement de ce groupe sur le marché européen, un site où sa technologie, ses modèles organisationnels et sa culture d'entreprise ont pu être mis en pratique. Bien qu'il soit habituel de considérer la privatisation comme une question essentiellement économique, la privatisation d'une compagnie locale effectuée par un grand producteur de bière international nous a donné l'occasion d'observer, de noter, d'analyser et d'interpréter les différentes manières dont les aspects économiques et culturels se rencontrent et interagissent pour devenir des éléments constitutifs d'une unité. Par conséquent, le champ de transformation économique a été observé à la fois comme un espace de transformation culturelle, où les cultures organisationnelles, puis celles d'entreprise et du travail du "socialisme" et du "capitalisme" se sont rencontrées pour produire différents résultats et réactions, aussi bien sur le plan institutionnel que sur le plan individuel. Les différentes notions de la "culture" qui ont "circulé" chez les différents acteurs ont été distinguées, qui illustrent la "culturalisation" croissante de l'économie contemporaine au tournant du siècle. Une attention particulière a été accordée à l'héritage du socialisme, remarqué aussi bien dans les récits que dans les vestiges de pratiques préalables; cet héritage est ressenti comme un obstacle au changement désiré et projeté mais également comme un moyen de maintenir le sentiment de valeur personnelle chez la plupart des salariés confrontés au récit sur le "capitalisme triomphant", récit omniprésent et tendant à devenir tout-puissant.

Mots clés: privatisation, bière, cultures, socialisme, capitalisme

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