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SOC 576
The "Ex-City"- Exception, Exports, and the Creation of a Global Urban Formation

Position Paper

- **Keller Easterling**(2008). 'Zone.' in *Urban Transformation.* A. Ruby & I. Ruby (eds). Berlin, Ruby Press: 30-45.
- **Ute Tellmannand Sven Opitz**(2009). "Sovereign Topologies: The Off-Shore and the Camp as Territories of Circulation" Working Paper, Goldsmiths College, ATACD Project (A Topological Approach to Cultural Dynamics).October 2009.
- **AihwaOng** (2000). "Graduated Sovereignty in South-East Asia" *Theory Culture Society*, 17; 55-75.
- **Tom Looser** (2011). "The Global University, Area Studies, and the World Citizen: Neoliberal Geography's Redistribution of the 'world.'" Cultural Anthropology, 27:1, pp. 97-117. See also the supplemental web materials at http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/476 .
- **Jonathan Bach** (2010), "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens: Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China" Cultural Anthropology, 25:3, 421-58. See also materials at http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/342

The impacts of the globalisation on the various aspects of everyday life are being lately highlighted in sociology as well as in other social sciences. The texts assigned for this workshop aimed to introduce these impacts regarding the nation states while focusing on "special zones" as the centers of the trade, neoliberal economy and cosmopolitanism. These zones, most often meant to provide more favorable trade conditions (but also universal new millennium education, e.g. see Looser) and thereby attract foreign investors, are reshaping the traditional relationship between the state and its citizens. The zones have created a phenomenon, often also called new urban paradigm, which is however not quite examined, yet. The most important feature of these spaces is the partial or complete loss of the state´s sovereignty over these areas. Instead of the state power, the main force, that the people are looking up to are investors, trade companies and free-trade system in general. The zones distinguish with exemptions from laws, relative cultural and religion neutrality and market orientation as the highest value. Several implications emanating from this situation are being discussed. The questions, on which most of the assigned authors elaborated, were "how is the nation state being transformed by the existence of the zones?", "how could the citizenship be acquired if the state had lost its sovereignty?" "What is the impact of these new power relations on governing the people?"

To start with the reshaping of the nation state- city- globalization relation, I would like to elaborate on Keller Easterling´ s argument that these processes don´t necessarily lead to dissolving of the nation state. As the author notes, the strict binaries between local-global, national-transnational, etc., don´t objectively exist and the contradicting forces could also join together in establishing a whole new identity. Such a notion connects also to a wider debate of nation state-versus post nationalism. My intention is not to find a solution to this ever going debate, but I would like to point out, that in my opinion the existence of the free trade zones doesn´t challenge national state nothing more than the other processes brought by globalization (e.g. federalization of EU), that also grant part of the sovereignty to a higher entity . The question therefore is what stance would the people and authorities living in free trade zones take, if they obey the neoliberal economy as the highest principle or if they stay true to other aspects of national identity as for

example culture. As Looser (2011: 113) illustrates on his example of "idea capitals" "the idea of a space of pure indifference, unmarked by history or culture, is probably impossible". In my opinion, the human need to identify with a nation state (or at least with the concrete region) would win over their commitment to production as the highest value and certain, even though modified, version of nation state belonging will perceive.

As from what I have read, my overall impression is that not enough attention was paid to the role of the culture and its reproduction in e.g. school systems inside the zone. This would be beneficial especially if we´d like to discuss more the presumed loss of the sovereignty of the state authorities as it is not to forget, that besides official channels of governing the population (e.g. laws) there are also unofficial ways of state power reproduction. A slight positive example could be found in Bach´s piece (2010) where he describes the maintaining of a specific identity and practices among the villagers in Schenzen which could be understood as a certain cultural contra revolution against the capitalizing else of the city. Although these practices connect to the specific notion of village belonging and therefore rather the identification with the rural space rather than with the nation state, this example shows what role could the local identity and culture play as opposition to the neoliberal universalism.

Questions:

Could we perceive the European Union as a zone?

What importance has the culture and customs in the daily lives of zone inhabitants? Could they be perceived as an opposition to the loss of state´s sovereignty?