

**EMOTIONS, BELONGING AND THE MICROSOCIOLOGY OF VENAL
 BORDER CROSSINGS: ENCOUNTERING THE MACEDONIAN STATE AS A
 FLEXIBLE QUEER CITIZEN-COWBOY**

Abstract

Blending microsociological, ethnographic, biographical and phenomenological methods for studying emotions, the author explores the situationally constructed emotional meanings and the links between issues of flexible citizenship, sexuality and belonging in the microworld of ordinary people – the world of everyday real face-to-face encounters between flexible citizens and petty state officials in real border crossings using ordinary discourse. Through a part/whole analysis, the author relates moment-by-moment elements of the speech, behaviour, feelings and implied meanings that he observed during his own border crossing at Skopje Airport in December 2007 to the larger institutional context of corruption in Macedonian Customs, Macedonian society and the Macedonian nation-state. The paper is a reportage, theoretical treatise, memoir, testimony, ethnographic report and a sociological analysis all rolled into one complicated story about Macedonia's deep ambivalence about its (queer) flexible citizens.

Keywords: emotions, belonging, flexible citizenship, corruption, Republic of Macedonia

Introduction

In the second half of 2007, the centre-right coalition government of the Republic of Macedonia¹, led by the VMRO-DPMNE/IMRO-DPMNU (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), embarked on an aggressive and expensive media campaign aimed at attracting badly needed foreign investment in the country under the slogan “Invest in Macedonia” (see www.investinmacedonia.ein-sof.com). Full page glossy advertisements published in major newspapers in all the major economies of the world, including Australia, extolled the virtues of the country as an excellent foreign direct investment destination (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007; for a critical view see Vaknin 2007: 3). Four prominent businessmen, who had made their fortunes abroad, were appointed to “key cabinet positions aiming to stimulate foreign direct investment” (van Selm 2007: 3) in the country, largely expected to come from the 350,000 strong Macedonian diaspora (conservative estimate, see van Selm 2007: 3) scattered through Australia, the US,

Canada and Western Europe. Under the coordination of the Agency for Foreign Investment of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, staff at Macedonia's diplomatic missions to developed countries with significant Macedonian communities were instructed to actively look for potential investors among people with cultural, family or citizenship ties to Macedonia.

Around the same time, deeply disillusioned and affected by the Howard government's savage cuts in research funding for Australian social sciences and humanities in the period between 1996 and 2007 (Australian Universities Review 2007), and being a dual Australian-Macedonian citizen, I started seriously exploring the possibility of working as a transdisciplinary social scientist in Macedonia. In October 2007, I was offered an academic job at a private research institute in Skopje, which I accepted. My Anglo-Australian partner, Mark, decided to move temporarily with me to Skopje to help me settle in, and also look, on invitation from the Macedonian Embassy in Canberra, for ways to expand our business, which involves deploying atm machines and related software to various retail locations, into Macedonia.

Seduced by the glossy rhetoric of the "Invest in Macedonia" media campaign, and intrigued by the opportunities for further professional and business development there, we packed our household and put it in storage in December 2007. We air freighted a few boxes of personal belongings and some important books for my work, and put ourselves and our dog on a flight from Sydney to Skopje on 9 December 2007, filled with hope, fear, worry, reticence and excitement.

What follows below is a microsociological ethnography of our border crossing, of our initial encounter with the Macedonian state at Skopje Airport. It focuses on a series of intensely uncomfortable and disorienting encounters my mother, my partner and I had with various petty Macedonian Customs officials in the process of collecting our dog from the airport on the 10 and 11 December. My intention here is to use these thickly described border crossing encounters as the base from which to interrogate the human experience of belonging, migration, and the practice of flexible citizenship in a globalised world from inside. In developing this project, I take methodological and theoretical cues from C. Wright Mills (1959: 11-20) who suggested that "the link between personal troubles and public issues, the intersection between biography and history, should be the core of the sociological imagination" (Scheff 1990: 191). To understand our emotionality, how we become emotional (and why this is politically important) in interactions with others when we travel, migrate or cross borders, "the key experience

we have access to is our own” (Denzin 1990: 109). It is for this reason I will work outward from my own issues of belonging as a flexible citizen into “those institutional sites [borders, the state line, the airport, customs]...where others, sharing [my or similar]...troubles, come together” (Denzin 1990: 109).

I intend to put emotions centre stage in an analytical and theoretical framework that situates the exploration of the links between issues of flexible citizenship and belonging in the microworld of ordinary people - the world of everyday real face-to-face encounters between citizens and state officials in real border crossings using ordinary discourse. Through a part/whole analysis (Scheff 1990), I will relate moment-by-moment elements of the speech, behaviour, feelings and implied meanings that I observed during my border crossing to the larger institutional context of Macedonian Customs, Macedonian society and the Macedonian nation-state, and issues of belonging, corruption and flexible citizenship. The reader, if she wishes so, may proceed to reading the thick description of this border crossing in the second third of the paper first before returning to this point, or follow me here in a more linear fashion. In order to make my own border crossing intelligible as a story of Macedonia’s ambivalence about its flexible citizens, I will need to engage in a few interlocking arguments that will act as intervening steps, connecting the micro and macro, theory and practice, through linking the relevant small parts in my own experience to the relevant theoretical and conceptual wholes of flexible citizenship, belonging and emotions within a context of an endemically corrupt Macedonian society and state (International Crisis Group/ICG 2002; Gallup 2009: 26-28; Transparency International/TI 2009). As Scheff notes, with

a sufficient number of intervening steps one can play both ends against the middle: working up from the micro level to the level of society and down again, and up and down in a way that the parts illuminate the whole, and the whole the parts, part/whole analysis (1990: 5).

Flexible citizenship

Citizenship - that set of heterogeneous legal, political, economic and cultural practices that “define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups” (Turner 1993: 2) – has been largely studied as a macro phenomenon mainly involving a fairly static relationship involving mutual obligations and rights between individuals, political communities (mostly nations) and nation-states (Balibar 1990; Avineri and de-Shalit (eds) 1992; Daly 1993; Oldfield 1990; Yuval-Davis 2006: 205; Lister and Pia 2008: 8-22).

More recently, many scholars have started arguing that in the era of globalisation the “concept of citizenship with its rights and obligations, including the allegiance owed, is too narrowly defined to exist only between individuals and [one nation-]state” (Frey 2003: 1), and have offered the concept of flexible citizenship as a concept that captures the present reality that both nation-states and individuals adopt flexible notions of citizenship, belonging and sovereignty as strategies in their global quest to accumulate capital, political power or social prestige (Frey 2003; Ong 2004: 6). For Ong, flexible citizenship “refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions” (2004: 6). Flexible citizenship marks the many nation-states’ abandoning of the classical nationalist project of perfectly aligning territory, social habits, culture, emotional attachment and political participation (Ong 2004: 2; also see Anderson 1991) to achieve strategic goals in a globalised world.

The flexible citizen *qua* multiple passport holder is an “apt contemporary figure [of globalisation], he or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets” (Ong 2004: 2). Ong argues, in a somewhat economically reductionist way, that “passports have become less and less attestations of citizenship, let alone of loyalty [or belonging] to a protective nation-state, than of claims to [resources from] participat[ing] in labor markets” (2004: 2). Flexible citizenship is a concept that marks the “complicated accommodations, alliances, [animosities] and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile capital, between diaspora and nationalism” (Ong 2004: 16), and between cosmopolitanism and parochialism.

Some economists and sociologists have extended the meaning of the concept of flexible citizenship to that of *multilayered citizenship* (Yuval-Davis 1999), which encompasses people identifying, being loyal to, and participating in, multiple communities, groups, states and organisations across sub-, supra-, state and cross-national levels (Yuval Davis 1999: 119-136; Frey 2003). European (EU) citizenship is an evolving concept that already comprises many characteristics of this multilayered or flexible citizenship (Lister and Pia 2008: 162-186). Swiss economist Frey argues that flexible citizenship inevitably leads to competition for citizens, and this in turn, he speculates, results in increased efficiency in the public activities of these communities, organisations and states, and better treatment of citizens in general (Frey 2003).

The Macedonian state, through its “Invest in Macedonia” strategy of attracting direct foreign investment and development expertise, is now actively competing for the financial and intellectual resources, skills, time, energy, ideas and emotional attachment of its affluent and well-educated flexible citizens scattered throughout the developed “western” world. The flow of resources from the Macedonian diaspora, which already contributes 18 percent of Macedonia’s GDP just through remittances to family members in the country (International Monetary Fund 2006), is seen as having a great potential to lift the country’s economy, which one former foreign economic advisor to the current government of Nikola Gruevski called shambolic (Viknin 2007: 2, for other economic data on the country see the Government of the Republic of Macedonia 2005; UNDP 2006; UNICEF 2009; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2009). Rather than receiving a good treatment by the Macedonian state, like Frey speculates above (2003), many of Macedonia’s flexible citizens returning to the country to live, work or do business there, find themselves dealing with a nation-state that, one observer colourfully but aptly described, as being “bent on breaking its own record of surrealism” (Viknin 2007: 1). I will relay my own “surreal” experience of dealing with the Macedonian state later in the paper. Here, I just want to use this interesting metaphor to say a few things about emotions.

Emotions

What this metaphor of a “surrealist” state hints at is a complex emotional state, a vertiginous sense of disorientation and non-belonging, where the flexible citizen’s embodiments and enactments of her “little routines and scenarios of everyday life [and citizenship]” (Ong, referring to Sherry Outner, 2004: 5) are split between, often conflicting and mutually exclusive, “norms, values, and conceptual schemes about time, space, and the social order” (Ong, referring to Outner, 2004: 5) of two, and in some cases, multiple societies. Emotions “involve a direction or orientation toward an object,” (Ahmed 2004: 7; see also Reddy 2001: 102), including the nation-state, “they involve a stance on the world, or a way of apprehending the world” (Ahmed 2004: 7: see also Hochschild 2003: 29).

The emotional valence or the hedonic tone of emotions, the “pleasantness of unpleasantness of emotional reactions to things, events, or situations” (Reddy 2001: 22) is the “origin of all goals” (Reddy 2001: 22). Emotions also have intensity, which refers to

“how easy or difficult it is for a person to override them” (Reddy 2001: 21). Because of their hedonic valence and intensity, emotions strongly incline human behaviour (Barbalet 2002: 2). Precisely because of this, “emotions become politically relevant, because they are capable of guiding action long after explicit threats or explicit rules [laws and policies] have been forgotten” (Reddy 2001: 119).

Emotions, as goal oriented thoughts that lie outside language in visual, aural, visceral, musculoskeletal or gestural form (Reddy 2001: 88), and that exceed our capacity to translate into talk or bodily action within a very short-time span (Reddy 2001: 94), are there to help the flexible citizen deal with the signals, challenges and problems coming from the social (or natural) environment (Kring 2000: 212). As Hochschild notes, “what does and does not stand as a ‘signal’ [challenge, or problem] presupposes certain culturally taken-for-granted ways of seeing and holding expectations about the world” (2003: 28), and these, in some instances, can vary dramatically from one society to another (Gordon 1990; Turner and Stets 2005: 2-3). Emotions are interpretations or translations of the signs we receive from the world into physiological reactions, words and bodily action using the cultural stocks of knowledge, conceptual schemes, “theories” (Quine 1969) or “discourses” (Foucault 1980) of our societies. This process of translation is always, as both analytical philosophers and cognitive researchers show, filled with indeterminacy, “limitations, incompleteness, and imprecision” (Reddy 2001: 80; also see Brooks and Stein 1994: 10; Alcoff 1996). Emotions are like provisional hypotheses, using “theories” of our societies to filter out “evidence about the self-relevance of what we see, recall or fantasise” (Hochschild 2003: 28). Considering our emotions as clues, and then “correcting for them may be our best shot at objectivity” (Hochschild 2003: 31).

Belonging

Being a flexible citizen, a mobile member of multiple societies only further complicates the already herculean task of interpretation of ambivalent signs from the social environment (Reddy 2001-3 89), since she might see (and feel) things in one of the societies of which she is a now resident-citizen that she “does not how to translate into the terms” (Reddy 2001: 88) of a theory, discourse or a conceptual scheme peculiar to that society, and uses conceptual schemes of her other, more familiar or more recent, society of citizenship, of which she is no longer resident, to make sense of what she

sees. This often leads to misunderstanding, latent or blatant conflicts, and intense feelings of isolation, insecurity and alienation.

The sense of belonging, solidarity, bonding between people, effective social interaction and communication depend on our intuitive ability to engage within micro-seconds in “‘outer reach’ and read...the emotional cues expressed by others and then pursue...an ‘inner reach’ by sorting through experiences, memories, and stocks of cultural knowledge” in order to read and respond to expressions by others (Clark, quoted in Turner and Stets 2005: 60, also see Mead 1934; Scheff 1990), resulting in emotional attunement (Scheff 1990) or entrainment (Collins 2004) between people. Scheff, following Peirce (1896-1908), calls this intuitive thinking, this “rapid shuttling back and forth between observation [induction] and imagination [deduction]” *abduction* (Scheff 1990: 31), while Reddy calls this ongoing task of cognitive checking between observation and imagination, *translation* (Reddy 2001: 63-110). Abduction is there to check the flight of the imagination in relation to what we observe, and as such is, as Peirce argued (1896-1908, also see Scheff 1990), also fundamental to creative scientific thinking.

Belonging is a concept where the sociology of emotions meets the sociology of power, where identity and citizenship as a participatory act “collide” (Kannabiran, Vieten, Yuval-Davis 2006: 190). As Yuval-Davis points out, “belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling ‘at home’ and...about feeling ‘safe’” (2006: 197). Belonging, whether it is a practice of self-identification with a number of different objects of emotional attachment or ascription of identity by others, can be stable (trans-situational), contested, or transient (situational) (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199). Although the feeling of “stable and indisputable” trans-situational belonging across a number of situations and places within a national space is a crystallization and naturalisation of a particular set of hegemonic power relations, it is still not a reified fixity, but a dynamic process open to contestation from others which forms the basis of the *politics of belonging* (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199).

Belonging is a much “thicker” concept than that of citizenship (Kannabiran, Vieten and Yuval-Davis 2006: 189). In the era of globalisation, flexible citizenship, which encompasses the dimensions of multiple community, state, and organisational memberships across sub-, supra-, state and cross-national levels, “can be at most a partial analytical tool” (Kannabiran, Vieten and Yuval-Davis 2006: 189) for studying the complex relationships between: 1. social positionings or social locations like class,

ethnicity, gender or sexuality; 2. identities and emotional attachments; 3. institutional practices and cultural logics aimed at maintaining and contesting multiple and overlapping hierarchies of communities of belonging (this is one aspect of the politics of belonging); 4. political values used to judge *someone as belonging or not belonging* (another element of the politics of belonging), and 5. participation in the organised life of a number of political communities.

Belonging for me is, primarily, a high emotional energy (Collins 2004), a complex blend of positive emotions resulting from recursive experiences of successful, emotionally attuned and rewarding, participation in the organised social and political life of a community, organisation or nation. This emotional energy is stored in, or sticks to, the symbols – tokens of membership in the community or nation (Collins 2004; Ahmed 2004: 91). This energy, stored in the symbols of group membership, is then carried across a number of social situations in which a citizen engages in the practice of citizenship. It is this emotional energy that predisposes a citizen to act (to participate in elections, to publicly engage in political debates, to criticise her government, to go to war for one's country, etc). In other words, belonging as a form of high emotional energy comes from the successful acceptance of an individual as a valid and legitimate member (Collins 2004 87) - a full citizen – of a particular group, community, organisation or nation.

Microsociology of (flexible) citizenship and belonging

While not denying the usefulness of the concept of belonging for studying the complex relationships between political participation, identity, entitlement/duty and emotional attachment at a macro level, here I want to shift perceptual gears and argue about the need to provide microsociological translations not only of the concept of belonging, but of many other fundamental concepts in classical republican, liberal and communitarian theories of citizenship (Balibar 1990; Avineri and de-Shalit 1992; Daly 1993; Oldfield 1990; Rawls 2005; Lister and Pia 2008: 8-22), like “legitimacy,” “recognition,” “acknowledgement,” “values,” “ideals,” “loyalty,” and “allegiance” that deal with social life at a macro-level of such abstraction and aggregation that is very difficult to see how they relate and resonate with real people in ordinary situations (Scheff 1994: 179-190; Collins 2004: 103). The same goes with many of the fundamental macro-concepts in difference-centred - feminist, lesbian and gay, multicultural, or inclusive - citizenship theories

(Pateman 1988; Lister 1997; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Kymlicka 1995; Flores and Benmayor (eds) 1997; Kabir (ed) 2005; Weeks 1998; Richardson 2000; Stychin 2001; Plummer 2001 and 2003; Oleksy (ed) 2009) like “patriarchy,” “racism,” “late capitalism” or “heterosexism.” These concepts are largely used in a reified way, since generally “they are not related, point for point,” (Scheff 1990: 187) to the microworld of ordinary people, the world of everyday real face-to-face encounters, real social situations and ordinary discourse. In this way, “they serve to mystify rather than empower” (Scheff 1990: 187) people to confront disenfranchisement where they ordinarily experience it.

I think that if we pay special attention to the everyday practice of citizenship in ordinary social situations, as I am planning to do later in this paper, where citizens come in contact with each other, or with representatives of state institutions and community organisations, if we analyse closely the words, the gestures, and the implied meanings that take place between various actors (Scheff 1990) in the localised context of these social situations, if we observe the emotions resulting from the uneven distribution of power and status between the various players in these micro-dramas of citizenship, we can prepare the theoretical and analytical ground for an empowering and ongoing micropolitics of resistance by understanding the actual emotional dynamic underpinning the willing or unwilling collaboration between the dominated and the dominant (Scheff 1990: 186).

The microworld, “the small scale, the here-and-now of face-to-face interaction, is the scene of action and the site of social actors” (Collins 2004: 3). As Collins argues, if we are going to find agency anywhere in social life it will be here (Collins 2004: 3). “[T]he energy of movement and change, the glue of solidarity [and belonging] and the conservatism of stasis” (Collins 2004: 3), they all reside in the microworld. Like Weber, Goffman “understood that every concrete action manifests social structure, even in the most commonplace scene” (Scheff 1990: 36). “More than to any family or club, more than to any class or sex [or sexuality], more than to any nation [or ethnicity and religion], the individual belongs to [the microworld of] gatherings and [s]he had best show [s]he is a member in good standing” (Goffman 1963: 248).

For Goffman, “every sentence - its words, paralanguage, [the intonation, pitch of voice, pauses in speaking, turn taking in speaking, the loudness, rapidity or slowness of speaking, etc.] and gestures, implies an evaluation of the social and interpersonal states of the interactants” (Scheff 1990: 98). These are the linguistic and extralinguistic devices

that people use in the daily micropolitics of belonging, delineating group boundaries and stating implicitly or explicitly that someone is a “member in good standing” or not.

Emotions and the micropolitics of belonging at the airport

The airport as the *glocal* (Yuval-Davis 1999) stage for mass gatherings of human bodies belonging to various nationalities, ethnicities, religions, classes, genders, sexualities, ages, and professions is the perfect place for observing the different micropolitics of belonging, the obvious, and less than obvious ways, of separating those who do not “belong” from those who do (Aizura 2006: 289). In these mass gatherings of travelling humans “there is [always] a physical attunement: currents of feeling, a sense of wariness or interest, a palpable change in the atmosphere” (Collins 2004: 34), that is politically important. The micropolitics of belonging at the airport, as played out in the ritualised encounters between travellers and border police persons, security guards, airport ground crew or customs officials, like any politics of belonging, is about creating and maintaining hierarchies of communities of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006) based on situationally imaginative (Castoriadis 1987; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002: 315-34) readings of multiple and overlapping socially divisive discourses on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, religion, social power and class. It is about building solidarity, showing equality or “getting and keeping power, rank, standing, or...’social place” (Clark 1990: 305; Goffman 1951: 297) in the social interaction.

Social place is to everyday encounters what social status, derived from the intersectional play of hierarchical social positions or locations organised along the lines of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, age, profession, level of education, and ability (Yuval-Davis 2006), is to social structure (Clark 1990: 306). Social statuses or social locations affect one’s place in everyday encounters, but as microsociologists have pointed out the relationship is far from being simple and straightforward (Clark 1990: 306; Collins 2004).

Emotions serve as “‘place claims,’ messages about where one [stands or] wants to stand” (Clark 1990: 305) in any social encounter, and as such are a fundamental ingredient of any micropolitics of belonging. By using our emotions or attempting to elicit emotions in others, we can “assert, maintain, usurp, upset, or deny” (Clark 1990: 306) the social place given to us in any encounter. Micropolitics of belonging refer precisely to the strategic use of emotions to contest one’s own or others’ place in social encounters.

The study of the micropolitics of belonging as it occurs in the (natural) setting of the airport is not without perils. As Scheff notes, “the movements are too small and quick to be readily visible to the unaided eye” (1990: 27).

Microlinguistic or microdiscursive methods are required to observe and analyse the micropolitics of belonging. These methods require painstaking recording of instances of social interaction and forces the researcher to rely on the same “intuitive interpretation of the message stack that is used by the interactants” (Scheff 1990: 116). Video and audiotapes, verbatim texts, novels and ethnographic self-reports written in a novelistic style in which we find “extremely detailed renderings of episodes, which report both outer behavior and inner experience” (Scheff 1990: 119) provide the data for microsociological discursive analysis since this data can help us reconstruct the “lifeworld” (Scheff 1990: 116) of the interactants either by providing the extended context of a message or its “dense clouds of nonverbal cues” (Scheff 1990: 116). These microdiscursive methods represent “radical departure from those that have become standard in sociology” (Scheff 1990: 28), but “they are necessary if we are too understand bonds” (Scheff 1990: 28), or the (micro)politics of belonging, between people.

The types of discursive and textual analyses we ordinarily see usually concentrate on a very small part of the “message stack” (Scheff 1990: 111-115) of an utterance – the words. In order to make more precise interpretation of the meaning of expressions in context we need to look at the whole message stack which includes 1. the words; 2. the gestures; 3. the implicature (the unstated implications of words and gestures); 4. the feelings generated by these same words, gestures and their implications; and 5. the extended (cultural, social, political, historical and economic) context within which an expression takes place (Scheff 1990: 111-115). As I already indicated above, “using and understanding ordinary language requires [abduction-] lightning-quick intuitive understanding” (Scheff 1990:10) of the interplay between all these elements of the message stack.

Ethnography of an emotional border crossing

Now finally I come back to the promised story from the beginning of the paper. My intention with the theoretical and methodological detour above is to give the reader enough conceptual tools to engage in her own abduction when reading the extensive

ethnographic self-report which follows below. As I indicated at start of the paper, my ethnographic description focuses on a series of emotional encounters my partner, my mother and I had with various petty Macedonian Customs officials in the process of collecting our dog from Skopje Airport on the 10 and 11 December 2007. Given the extraordinary thickness of the data I recorded in this instance, here I focus only on the message stacks of a smaller selection of more relevant exchanges sequentially organised in a short story divided in two sections, following the sequence of events as they happened over two days. The report is written in a novelistic style and relies on this intuitive understanding of expressions in context, and it shuttles between recording actual verbal exchanges between these customs officials and ourselves; the gestures I observed during these exchanges, my feelings and imaginative inferences about what might have been going on through the minds of these officials my partner and my mother; and what the officials might have felt and thought about the three of us.

Paragraphs in the self-report are numbered sequentially for easier referencing in the concluding analysis that follows after the ethnographic story. Although, the story is mostly about my emotional experience and is told from my perspective, I checked it against the impressions and memories of my mother and my partner as fellow participant observers in most of the exchanges recorded below to see whether there were significant discrepancies in how I recorded these exchanges in my research diary, and how they remembered them. My partner, who does not speak Macedonian, was unable to comment on the accuracy of the mostly Macedonian spoken exchanges, and offered only comments on his general impressions of the incident, which to a fairly high degree match mine. My mother, a native Macedonian speaker, corrected me on a few minor details, while agreeing that the report is a fair representation of what we heard and saw during this episode.

I translated all Macedonian language exchanges into English in this report written for an international audience, fully aware that some important nuanced meanings, easily graspable by a fluent Macedonian speaker, cannot be adequately conveyed in English. With all these limitations and caveats, I offer this story of:

Queer cowboys crossing the border – Day 1

1. The exit out of the customs area led to an outdoor parking lot where my mother and a taxi driver she hired to help us with our luggage and dog greeted us. It was hardly four

thirty in the afternoon, and yet it was very dark. I had no time to explore how I felt about being back in the country after eleven years of absence. We had to rush to a special customs area to pick up our retriever, Marcel, before the close of office hours. We hopped in a big black Volkswagen van and drove for forty seconds or so to a long World War Two grey brick and mortar one storey building, which probably housed pilots and mechanics of the old Yugoslav Air Force in the pre-independence days. The building was crammed with offices of Macedonian Customs and various freight forwarding agents, and it was saturated with a musty smell of mould and tobacco.

2. There was an eerie silence and a palpable sense of wariness among the few people anxiously waiting to collect their imported parcels of various commercial goods. I felt a sense of resentment, perhaps even a deeply seething rage, behind the outwardly subservient and friendly demeanour in these people's dealings with the customs officials. There was a certain angry twitch in their speeches and manners.

3. The office to which we were directed to make our inquiries about picking up Marcel was filled with the iconography of the centre-right ruling party IMRO-DPMNU. Party flags, portraits of late nineteenth and early twentieth century founders of the original Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) whose ideological and political heritage was claimed by the modern IMRO-DPMNU, and a map of "greater" Macedonia vied for prominence with desktops, printers, and stacks of paperwork. On both sides of the small sliding glass partition, right on eye level were placed little stickers boldly proclaiming in red and black: "I Don't Receive Bribes. Call 197 to Report Corruption." A blue uniformed female customs official in her late forties sat imperiously right behind the glass partition. She was immaculately made up and her blond hair was pleated in an extremely neat bun a la Yulia Timoshenko. She seemed to be engaged in a happy banter with a much younger and handsome male customs officer.

4. We tried to get the attention of the blond female customs office for what seemed to be an eternity. The lady officer would have been probably happy to ignore us for much longer before my mother decisively opened the glass partition and asked as politely as she could, after obviously feeling very irritated by us being ignored for so long: "Excuse me. Can you help us? We have a dog to collect, which just arrived from Australia. Here is my import license." She tried to hand in the permit issued by the Ministry for

Agriculture and Forestry that allowed Marcel's entry into the country and all the other documents organised by our international pet travel agent in Canberra, but she was stopped dead in her tracks by the reaction from the female customs officer.

5. *"I don't know about any dogs. I haven't received any dostaven list (passenger or cargo manifest) for a dog," violently barked back the female customs officer as she slammed back the little glass partition. She briefly pierced us with her fiery blue eyes, shook her head as if to say she could not believe the audacity of my mother's request and yelled to the younger male customs officer: "Cowboys. They don't have a clue."*

6. *I froze in shock, deeply taken aback by the ferocity of the female customs officer's reaction to our inquiry. Completely confused about what was in us that might have provoked this reaction, I was raking my brain trying to figure out the implications of the "cowboy" reference. Its sarcastic and reproachful sting hit me forcefully in the gut, forcing me to frantically imagine what was behind the customs lady's disdainful gaze. I could feel the penetrating force of her gaze long after she stopped looking at us, sensing that something about the, obviously very unusual, scene of two middle-class men, one an expatriate and the other a complete foreigner, collecting their dog at a Macedonian airport deeply perturbed the customs lady. Suddenly, my designer winter jacket, my shoes, my voice, my gait, my comportment felt so tightly queer. It seemed that the very thought of two middle-aged men paying all that money to live with their dog in a foreign country was a sign of some horribly decadent way of living, too alien for her to even fully contemplate.*

7. *I felt the stifling grip of breathlessness. I felt terribly warm and uncomfortable in my clothes, wanted to run out for some fresh air, and get out of there and disappear into the dark fog as soon as possible. I looked at Mark's face writhing in anxiety and confusion and could not help thinking that I had made a terrible mistake bringing us here. I quickly glanced at my mother, too embarrassed by the thought of the pain I was causing her. Her face was filled with that blushing red, and yet she managed to grimace a knowing smile as if to say "I am used to this. We will get over it." I felt like I had descended in some nasty labyrinthine badlands, playing a treasure hunt game with rules no one bothered to explain to me, groping for air and light in the ever-shifting quick sand, and*

trying to find that magical map that held the miraculous key to my treasure and quick ascent into the warm safety of home.

8. I paced up and down on the cracked painted concrete floor, trying to quickly see whether there was a spread of the disdainful gaze of the customs lady on the other faces in the corridor just outside the customs office. The blank indifference inscribed on their faces calmed me down.

9. So, thinking about Marcel and the quickly approaching close of office hours, I collected myself and silently signalled to my mother for us to open the dreaded glass partition again. "Hmmm, chh, chh...please... madam, we have been travelling for thirty hours now and our dog has been locked in a small cage for close to forty hours," I somehow gurgled it out, pleading with the customs lady, and feeling embarrassed over my surreptitious finding of that same subservient tone bubbling with hardly suppressed anger that I observed in the other people's dealings with the customs lady. "We have all the valid documents our pet travel agent from Australia told we would need to bring our dog into Macedonia. I know the dog is here, since I saw his crate on the tarmac just twenty minutes ago," I continued a tad more confidently. "Could you please tell us what we need to do to collect the dog?" my mother interrupted, now obviously struggling to control her impatience with the imperious capriciousness of the customs lady. My mother was scarlet red in her face, and this peculiar vibrato was emanating from her throat as if she was readying for a screaming match with the customs lady.

10. "I don't know what they told you in Australia. We don't collaborate with Australia on these matters," snarled back the customs lady in an irritated voice, implying that in due course, and after enough supplications, we might, if we were lucky, be imparted the wisdom of how these things were done around here. She closed the glass window with a lightning speed, refusing to look at any of us, and pretending to be busy with something on her computer.

11. "Oh, here it is," referring haughtily to the cargo manifest for Marcel exclaimed the customs lady ten minutes later. As if by some bureaucratic mana, the finding of the manifest triggered a subtle change in the way the customs lady treated us. She deigned to briefly look at us signalling that we were onto something she should finally help us

with, opened the glass partition and said in a voice that still bristled with something that felt like impatient resentment bordering on barely disguised disgust: "The dog will need to be validly imported through a freight forwarding agent."

12. I found this terribly odd, since none of this was mentioned to my mother in the process of her obtaining a permit from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry allowing the dog to reside in the country, nor there was a mention of this procedure by our pet travel agent in Canberra.

13. "I don't understand why we would need to import our own dog who was travelling on the same plane with us," I asked feeling completely disoriented not only by her manner but by the implication of Marcel's status as an ordinary, animal commercial cargo for which heavy extra import duties would have to be paid on top of the hefty three and a half thousand dollars we had to pay in Australia for his transport to here. I could understand that Marcel had to go through a veterinary check or even a quarantine, for which there was no mention at all, but the thought of having to "import" my own dog every time I travelled with him to a new country struck me as a bureaucratic absurdity designed to test the patience and valet of pet loving travellers.

14. "Well, that's the proper procedure. That's how it's done here," said the customs lady shrugging her shoulders indifferently. There was unmistakable triumphant little glee in her voice and demeanour, feeling that she had taught these "cowboys" a lesson or two about who the sheriff around here was. She quickly put her long and expensive looking fur coat and left the office for the day, thus still leaving us in the complete dark as to what this import procedure involved.

15. Her male colleague, who took pity on us, advised us to come tomorrow and sort things out then. We left the airport in a complete daze, not quite believing that where we had just landed was real.

Queer cowboys crossing the border – Day 2

16. We returned to the unsightly barrack the next morning at nine. It was a sunny and cold day. We were relieved to see that the Yulia Timoshenko lookalike was not at work

today. We, and a representative for a big chain of pharmacies, seemed to be the only clients at that hour. We hoped we would get some reasonable and helpful people with whom to deal. There were three male customs officers in the office, all in their late forties, or early fifties, and two of them sported big moustaches. One of them bore a remarkable semblance to Saddam Hussein. They were smoking and drinking their Turkish coffees and all looked knowingly at each other as soon as they saw us. The men in the office had these little disdainful smiles that could have erupted in full blown laughter at our expense at any time. They struggled for a second or two to put their poker professional faces on before my mother opened the dreaded glass partition and stated the reason for us being there.

17. "You would need to see one of the freight forwarding agents, and import the dog properly, and also our vet needs to inspect the dog and give you an ok. Once you have an invoice from an import agent and the vet's written permission, we will be able to release the dog," dryly explained the Saddam Hussein lookalike in a baritone muffled by years of smoking.

18. "Where can we find the vet and these agents?" my mother asked. "The vet won't be here till eleven and you can try any of the agents down the corridor," quickly thundered the Saddam Hussein lookalike pointing down the corridor and grimacing to get out of his sight, obviously irritated that his coffee was getting cold because of us.

19. We were very upset that we had to wait for another two hours for the vet to arrive, given the fact that Marcel was locked in a wooden crate at that stage for close to seventy two hours. We knocked on the door of one of the privately operated freight forwarding agents. We entered the dusty office which had an old timber floor that squeaked with every step and was peppered with IMRO-DPMNU paraphernalia. Two men, one in his late forties with a neat grey beard and the other much younger and clean shaven, were sitting on desks facing each other. My mother and I took patient turns in explaining why we were there. The men looked a bit perplexed. Seizing us up, the bearded guy said, "Hmmm...importing a dog is an expensive business. "

20. "How much?" I asked now fearing the answer. The bearded guy picked up a little book and kept looking at the various tables and tariffs in it for close to ten minutes,

seemingly enjoying keeping us in suspense. Surely it can't be that difficult to know the answer, I thought feeling a river of anger, frustration and impatience welling up in me as I glanced at my mother and Mark, who looked equally troubled by the bearded guy's attitude.

21. *"Around 1000 Euros," finally came out of the mouth of the bearded guy. "What? You must be kidding me! We didn't pay that much to buy the bloody dog," exploded Mark angrily in English as soon as I translated the bearded guy's words. Both agents jumped up in their seats, taken aback by Mark's clear declaration that he would not take part in what seemed like extortion.*

22. *There was a long pause filled with huffs, puffs, grunts, furrowed brows, little jittery movements of hands. After a bit of wrangling about "storage fees" and other "costs" the fee to import the dog came down to reasonable 100 Euros. We asked the bearded guy to prepare the "import documents."*

23. *We found the vet in a little old compressed timber, tin and glass kiosk, just outside the main barrack on its eastern side. He was a slightly pudgy man in his late forties speaking Macedonian with a Kumanovo accent. He asked us for our papers, while my mother launched imploringly into the whole saga collecting Marcel, hoping the vet would be sympathetic. He listened benignly while he was checking the papers. The vet told us that he owned two retrievers himself, and inspected Marcel affectionately and declared it fit to enter the country. He stamped the required document and we parted with 35 Euros for the service.*

24. *The vet promised to come and help us with the freight forwarding agents as soon as he finished a few little things in his office. As we walked back to the main customs building, I asked my mother, since she was so much more used to dealing with people here, to finalise the whole "import" procedure. Jet lagged, and sensing I was at the end of my tether, she lovingly relieved me from facing any of the agents again.*

25. *I was pacing up and down the broken concrete enveloping the customs building, trying to take some comfort in the cold sun. On the west side of the customs barrack there was another shack, very similar to the vet's. It looked like it was sometimes used*

as a guardhouse and information desk. As I was approaching the shack, I thought I heard some familiar voices. The closer I was getting to the shack the more clearly I could discern the conversation taking place in it.

26. "This merakliya (enjoyer) really loves his dog. He so dots on him," („Мераклијава епмен си го сака кучево, епмен му се помресуе“) I heard a familiar muffled baritone saying it in a sarcastic and bemused voice with hints of disgust, contempt and schadenfreude, obviously referring to me. I could hear three distinct laughs, which I could now clearly recognise as belonging to the Saddam Hussein lookalike and his other two mates from the main office inside the barrack. This word "merakliya," the searing power to shame and humiliate of which I first learned when I was taken to a Skopje police station in the communist mid-eighties just for trying to kiss another guy in a car parked in a dark and empty parking lot. The coppers who arrested me made sure they burned the memory of this word into my flesh by constantly beating and kicking me in the gut and my behind in such a "professional" way that did not lead to visible injuries. They threw this word repeatedly at me while trying to extract, after a night spent in solitary confinement interspersed with frequent slapping, the most humiliating interrogation about my sexual proclivities, and threats of outing me to my family, a confession that I engaged in the "unnatural act" of sodomy, so they could charge me under the provisions of the communist penal code. After being unsuccessful in extracting this confession from me, the police released me, but before they did they made me get on my knees, and mop the whole ground floor of the police station using a dirty rag and a bucket, listening to the jeers from various "respectable" citizens, criminals and coppers, as the copper on duty was triumphantly announcing to everyone entering the station: "Look at this merakliya, this faggot, this filth. Common, clean, clean!!!" I was hardly nineteen at the time.

27. Just hearing that not-so-forgotten word said again in that hateful voice, albeit now muted as a snigger behind my back intended to distance the clean from the dirty, made me feel branded with a hot iron rod pressed deeply against my skin. For a brief but incredibly intense moment, I felt naked, exposed, cold, claustrophobic, clamouring for light, air and warmth, very lonely, and wishing to disappear in thin air. Seeing Mark approaching calmed me down somewhat, reminding myself I was no longer in that police station.

28. Mark was visibly upset. He was almost hyperventilating as he was telling me just what happened in the office of the bearded guy. Not accustomed at all to the Byzantine and inscrutable ways of doing business here, he completely lost the plot when he realised that the bearded guy hadn't done anything on the import papers two and half hours after we asked him to prepare them. Was this the bearded guy's way to exact his revenge on us for refusing so adamantly to take part in what seemed like extortion? "For God's sake, how long does it take you to process one dog around here?" he yelled at the bearded guy, who demonstratively tore up the import declaration papers.

29. Still feeling the sting from the Saddam Hussein lookalike's utterance a moment ago, I started shaking with anger which I directed at Mark. I grabbed him by his upper arms, shook him as if to wake him up from a nightmare, and scolded him in a muted voice mixed with anger and frustration, "You can't behave like this here. You have to calm down. Don't expect customer satisfaction, or customer complaint procedures here. That's science fiction for these guys. This is not Australia. Here, they are god and you are nothing. Just leave the greasing of elbows to my mother. Go and have a walk now, and don't go near anyone."

30. The word had gone around quickly about what transpired in the bearded guy's office. "These cowboys really don't have a clue how things are done around here," yelled the Saddam Hussein lookalike in the most leisurely way, while smoking outside the kiosk, to another customs officer very much within our hearing range, obviously trying to reinforce what "idiots" we were.

31. Even the friendly vet gave me a reproachful glance as he pulled me aside to tell me that there must be another way of doing this, although he was not sure exactly what that was. He took me into the little kiosk where the Saddam Hussein lookalike and his two stooges were standing with their backs facing the vet and me. They refused to turn around and face us for what seemed like eternity to me while the vet was asking for their help. "It has nothing to do with us," muttered unconvincingly the Saddam Hussein lookalike. I felt like a freak who wanted to evaporate in thin air at that right moment. Angry, dejected and humiliated all at once, I stepped into a muddy patch just outside the kiosk, wondering when all this torture would be over.

32. *Mark and I kept circling the barrack in opposite directions, occasionally stopping to say, "Do you think she will be finished any time soon?" One and a half hour later, around two thirty in the afternoon, five and half hours after we initially arrived at the customs office, my mother emerged with all the "sacred" papers and stamps, "I have everything. Let's go," she said feeling relieved that this extremely unpleasant episode was coming to an end, not knowing half of what I was going through inside of me.*

33. *We showed the papers to the warehouse foreman who signalled it was ok to collect Marcel and his crate. We loaded the dog and his crate in the black van my mother hired the day before and left the airport feeling shell shocked and battle weary.*

Translating the emotional experience of this border crossing

To the extent that emotions are forms of expression of something going on "that talk cannot grasp" (Katz 1999: 5), it is impossible to write about emotional experience without resorting to metaphorical language to describe the ongoing, difficult and extremely complex task of translating into words or action our loosely connected thoughts about the signals we receive from others, that include memory traces, perception skills, goal hierarchies and physiological reactions "in various stages of activation [or 'cognitive processing']" (Reddy 2001: 95), some more dormant than others. As Katz notes, "at the most fundamental level of emotional experience and conduct, there is no nonmetaphoric, nonfigurative, 'literal' level of reality to address" (Katz 1999: 10).

I think I can describe more truthfully the sense of intense discomfort and shock I felt in my encounter with the customs lady and the three male customs officers (see paragraphs 4 to 8, and paragraphs 26 to 28, in the self-report above) with rich metaphors about confusing complex emotions, rather than making claims to clear and simple emotional states like "shame," "anger," or "humiliation", using emotives (Reddy 2001: 104-122), - "translations into words about, into 'descriptions' of" (Reddy 2001: 104) the signals I received from my interactants. Although I use emotives, simple emotion labels, throughout my report to describe how I felt, these to a large extent oversimplify the immensity of my struggle, using my interactants and my emotions as clues, to correctly interpret the motivations implied by the custom officers' behaviour and repeated use of the signifier "cowboys." As Scheff notes, "participants in interaction are often likely

to understand the entire meaning of utterances in terms of motives” (Scheff 1990: 30). At the time, I simply did not have enough conceptual schemas, especially about the institutional culture and history of Macedonian Customs, and the extent of corruption throughout the whole Macedonian politico-economic system, to possibly understand some of customs officers’ motivations and the implicature – the fuller meaning of their words and deeds.

Using my and the customs officers’ emotions directed at us as clues, I repeatedly treat the officers’ implied and explicitly expressed homophobia in my report as the main provisional theory to understand their motivations. However, on deeper reflection, I can now more clearly discern a much richer spring-well of motivations, which I could only vaguely sense at the time of the incident. Motives are products of tangled webs of social (personal, family, neighbourhood, and work relationships) in which an individual finds herself embedded, and these in turn are embedded in larger cultural formations, economic processes and socio-political structures. Here, through an analysis of nested contexts (Goffman 1967; Scheff 1990), I want to embed my analysis of my experience with the customs officers within a larger macrosocial macroeconomic and macropolitical frame that gives shape to the motivations of Macedonian public servants and citizens alike.

Corruption and *practical citizenship* in a “sultanic” state

The political system that has evolved since the fall of communism in Macedonia in 1989 has been characterised by some local political scientists and commentators as “sultanism,” (Ivanov quoted in Trajanoski 2009) or “pharaohism” (Trajanoski 2009), a form of personal and authoritarian government where the rule of law is effectively suspended, and where “your economic, political [or other] successes are an outcome of your personal relationship with the ruler/s” (Ivanov quoted in Trajanoski 2009; also see ICG 2002). The oligarchic concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few individuals and families system also further encourages the flourishing of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al, 1950) on all levels of government and society, where basically hierarchical, gender-asymmetric, authoritarian, exploitative family and work relationships are carried into a

power-oriented, exploitatively dependent attitude toward one’s sex partner, [one’s ethnic group] and one’s God...which culminate[s] in a [practical] political philosophy and social

outlook which has no room for anything but a desperate clinging to what appears to be strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom [of the hierarchy of belonging] (Adorno et al. 1950: 971).

As Skopje law professor Marjanović noted in an interview with the International Crisis Group, “people in power [in Macedonia] are untouchable, by definition, if you can be ‘touched’ [made accountable]; then you are not a credible power” (ICG 2002: 14). This system coexists comfortably with a politicised judiciary and an incompetent and inefficient public administration (ICG 2002: i), which is recruited solely on the basis of political party affiliation and personal connections to powerful political figures rather than on any merit or skills (ICG 2002: 5; Transparency Zero Corruption/TZC 2009: 18). Promotion in the public administration and judiciary on all levels again is fundamentally dependent on one being supported by a political party in power (TZC 2009: 18) which, in turn, requires that one demonstrates unquestioning loyalty to the party leader. This leads to a de-motivated and de-skilled public administration, since there is no incentive for public servants to professionally develop in order to compete with each other for promotions, or be accountable to the citizens, the taxpayers who pay their salaries, and whom they are supposed to serve.

After each election, the most lucrative ministerial portfolios in charge of state agencies like Macedonian Customs, Macedonian Airports or the Health Insurance Fund, are divided respectively between the parties with the largest amounts of votes in the ethnic Macedonian and Albanian electorates (ICG 2001: 9-24). Scandals involving high level corruption “erupt daily in an atmosphere often bordering on a frenzied, media saturated witch-hunt” (Vaknin 2007: 1) mostly aimed at former ministers, business people and high public officials now belonging, or with ties, to the political opposition. This is often used by the government of the day to prove its “anti-corruption credentials” to the electorate and the international community. When new parties are elected to form a government, there is a wholesale sacking of public servants employed by the previous government, thus producing an intense feeling of insecurity among public servants, and an incentive and pressure for them to keep the incumbent government in power (*Kapital* 2007).

In one of the most exhaustive research reports on corruption in the country to date, the International Crisis Group (ICG) stated that

corruption in Macedonia is...endemic [also see Gallup 2009: 26-7]. It has evolved from passive exploitation to active coercion and acquired the capacity not only to retard economic progress but also to feed organised crime and, in turn, political and economic

instability. In effect, the state has come to function in important respects as a “racket,” while the racketeers thrive in a culture of impunity (2002: i).

In a regional survey examining corrupt practices, perceptions of, and attitudes to corruption in Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia, 66.3 percent of the 1007 citizens surveyed in Macedonia ranked customs officers as the most corrupt professional group (Vitosha Research *et al* 2000, table 3) in the country, while on a scale from 0 to 10 the same respondents ranked Macedonian Customs with an average rating of 8.14 as the country’s institution where corruption is most widespread (Vitosha Research *et al* 2000, table 4). In a more recent survey conducted by Gallup International on behalf of Transparency International (TI), 1139 Macedonian respondents, on a scale from 0 (not corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt), ranked the Macedonian judiciary as the most corrupt institution in Macedonian society with an average rating of 4.12, immediately followed by public officials and civil servants with an average rating of 4.0 (TI 2009: 29). In another recent poll conducted by Gallup on a representative sample of the adult population in the country, twenty percent of the respondents admitted to offering “a bribe or present in order to solve a problem” (Gallup 2009: 27), and around the same percentage stated that the practice of using personal contacts and offering bribes and gifts to public officials, business people and other professionals to resolve personal problems is more “useful than harmful” (Gallup 2009: 27-8). Given my experience of living and working in Macedonia, I believe that the number of citizens coerced, subtly and not so subtly, into doing business with the government or with each other in this way is much higher than they would be willing to admit. Nonetheless, even this, still relatively high percentage of respondents admitting that they engage in these practices, and that they see them as ethically acceptable, hints to what I will call, following Hage’s definition of *practical nationality* (Hage 1998: 52), which he sees as the sum of dominant national values, cultural styles and characteristics (Aizura 2006: 292), *practical citizenship*.

Twisting Turner’s definition of citizenship paper (Turner 1993: 2) from the beginning of the paper a little, I will define *practical citizenship* as that set of informal, often illegal and to many still morally reprehensible, political, economic and cultural practices that define persons as competent members of society - true go-getters that are able in this way to solve their personal and family troubles or ambitions - and that also shape the flow of state and citizens’ resources to people in positions of power or authority or to the social, economic and political groups to which they belong. There are three main sets of corrupt practices of practical citizenship in Macedonia: 1. “state capture,” which refers to

“the ability of powerful individuals or [business] firms to influence the formulation of laws or government policies to their own advantage” (ICG 2002: 7); 2. “administrative corruption,” which means “implementation of laws and rules [that are] influenced by bribes to public officials (eg to gain licences, remove customs obstructions, or win public procurement contracts)” (ICG 2002: 7); and 3. “administrative coercion” which refers to the “systematic abuse of regulatory procedure to coerce usage of a favoured firm” (ICG 2002: 8).

This last form of corruption is a hybrid of the first two and involves a “*full* state capture...the fusion of private or [political] party-owned or associated firms with elements of the state structure” (ICG 2002: 8). Macedonian Customs seems to be a particularly fertile ground in which administrative coercion flourishes. One of the clearest alleged examples of this was the case of the former Macedonian Customs Director, Dragan Daravelski, appointed to the position by another IMRO-DPMNU led government around 2000, headed by Ljubčo Georgievski. According to many sources, Daravelski maintained “a racket to coerce businessmen to use a favoured freight forwarding firm that [was] under his control” (ICG 2002: 7). According to sources cited by ICG (2002: 7-10), Daravelski, using strong-arm tactics, “eliminated or minimised the transport businesses that [did] not go along” (ICG 2002: 8), and his firm was rumored to had earned around 5000 Euros a day in this way. In May 2003, another coalition government led by the (ethnically Macedonian) SDSM (Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia) and the (ethnically Albanian) DUI (Democratic Union for Integration) with an equally dismal record on (fighting) corruption (ICG 2002: 8), indicted Daravelski “on charges of embezzling 2.2 million Euros and abuse of office” (Tintor 2004: 1). “He fled to Belgrade and remained in hiding until 27 May 2004, when he was detained on the basis of an Interpol arrest warrant” (Tintor 2004: 1).

Daravelski as a Customs director is long gone, but the culture of administrative coercion continues to thrive in the organization. It mostly involves withholding the release of goods until a firm or individual agrees to pay “customs duties” or “import taxes,” not envisaged in Macedonian legislation (ICG 2002: 8, footnote 41). In this way, goods often could be waiting at border crossings for months, or never be released if a firm or individual refuses to pay these charges. These “taxes” and “duties” are processed by favoured freight forwarding agencies, usually owned by well-connected and high-ranking members of one of the ruling parties or their relatives, as was allegedly the case

with Daravelski. Fictitious and legally invalid receipts of release are then issued by these agencies to screen the scam.

My experience of trying to clear with Customs air express mailed parcels of personal belongings and books I needed for my work seem to confirm the widespread existence of administrative coercion within the organisation. Although article 194 of the Customs Law of the Republic of Macedonia clearly states that personal belongings are free of import taxes (*Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija*, no. 39/05), Customs officials demanded I pay punitive “import taxes” on the insured value of the parcels, which amounted to thousands of Euros. I refused to pay these exorbitant charges, and our express mailed personal belongings and books remained held up in a Customs hangar for weeks, while Mark and I, practicing true flexible citizenship, searched for assistance from the relevant Macedonian and Australian authorities. I called the Customs anti-corruption number just to be told by a public servant blatantly ignorant about the relevant Macedonian legislation she was entrusted to enforce that the requested charges were “probably ok if the Customs officers say so.” My correspondence to the Director and Deputy Director of Macedonian Customs, as well as the Macedonian Ambassador in Canberra, remained unanswered, while the Australian Embassy in Belgrade promptly intervened in the matter². Only with their intervention, the “import taxes” became “administrative charges for preparing applications for customs clearance” that I wrote myself. The charges suddenly dropped to reasonable, but still legally dubious, thirty Euros for four 20 kg boxes. I fully share the experiences of representatives of the International Crisis Group in Macedonia and the former US Ambassador to Macedonia Lawrence Butler (ICG 2002: 8), who in an interview with a Macedonian magazine characterized his own experience of dealing with Macedonian Customs with the following words: “I had never before in my life experienced daylight robbery by government officials” (*Lobi*, 4 March 2005).

“Welcome” to the surreal – power-status rituals of a venal state (institution)

As Scheff notes, “secure social bonds are the force that holds a society together” (Scheff 1990: 4). The yearning for belonging and the maintenance of secure social bonds are crucial human motives (Scheff 1990: 4) as demonstrated by attention these topics have received in countless works in “classical psychology and sociology” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 198), ranging from Rank ([1929]/1973), Durkheim ([1893]/1997), and Marx ([1844]/1975)

to Toennies (1940), and Goffman (1967). The search for positive emotions of belonging (pride, trust, confidence, etc.) and the avoidance of negative emotions of non-belonging (shame, guilt, embarrassment) motivate human behaviour in everyday interactions. Secure social bonds, or the sense of belonging, develop out of what Goffman calls “legitimacy”: a “reciprocal ratifications of each other’s participation [in the organised social and political life of community through ritualised forms of social interaction, which] involves both feelings and actions of legitimation” (Scheff 1990: 7). As Scheff points out, “legitimacy serves to bridge...communication and...emotions: ritually correct forms of communication develop mutual understanding and also serve to award deference” (1990: 7). As Goffman makes it clear, “ratification of the other’s legitimacy must be not only felt but also expressed” (Scheff 1990: 7), otherwise one or both parties might feel excluded or rejected, thus severely threatening one’s sense of belonging which always leads to, as I will show below, intense emotions.

Awarding minimal deference to the other party in interaction, making sure that the other person’s feelings will not be hurt due to her gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class or other social locations, is a prerequisite for ritually correct form of communication in a democratic society as long as the democratic ideal of equality of all persons has been internalised by the interactants. However, persons in low social status categories – women, people of colour, Romas, gays, children, aged people, homeless people, disabled persons – “lack a status shield against poorer treatment of their feelings” (Hochschild 2003: 174). When a public servant in her face-to-face interaction with a citizen expresses contempt due to the citizen’s ethnic, class, gender, or like in my case, sexual background, which means refusing to legitimate, acknowledge or ratify the citizen as an equal and valid interactant, the latter is “more likely to experience shame[-anger] than self-contempt insofar as the democratic ideal has been internalised” (Tomkins 1995: 139) by the shamed citizen (see paragraphs 4-8, and paragraph 31 in the report above). Shame is a particularly intense negative emotion that results when one feels that one has not lived up to an ideal, standard, or norm of others (Cooley 1922; Lewis 1971; Scheff 1990). This constant monitoring of ourselves from the position of others ensures social conformity. These standards and norms can vary wildly from one society to another, or even from one segment of a society to another, thus I will treat shame here as a purely situational, a result of evaluating oneself from the position of the one who has the resources (power and status) to dominate a particular social situation. In my

case, these are the customs officers who are deeply entrenched and secure in the power vested in them by the Macedonian state.

In the Macedonian culture of practical citizenship, which I define, following Sahlins' general definition of culture (1985, quoted in Reddy 2001: 98), as the sum of recipes for the "happy" carrying out of interaction rituals that transform the social status of citizens and public servants vis-à-vis each other (Reddy 2001: 98), which includes the more or less willing acceptance of corruption and administrative coercion as the normal way of doing business with public servants, then it is easy to see how a citizen can feel like a fool (a less acknowledged form of shame) (Scheff 1990: 19) for insisting or expecting to deal with public servants according to norms and standards of integrity, transparency and accountability alien to many Macedonian state institutions, particularly to Macedonian Customs.

As I already indicated above, emotions never come in neat simple packages, but are bundled together due to the complexity of translating the signals from the environment. Shame usually goes together with anger (Lewis 1978; Tomkins 1995: 197-201), which involves an evaluation of the rightness of the contempt or other emotions that others use to elicit shame in us, and multiple "theories" or "discourses" might be used to perform this evaluation at the same time, often with very unpredictable and indeterminate outcomes. Anger occurs when there is a frustrating obstacle to reaching a goal (Collins 2004: 41), and being denied a place of belonging could provoke anger, since as I just mentioned above yearning to belong, or the desire for secure social bonds, is a crucial human motive. Since shame is so toxic (Tomkins 1995: 67), anger is often used as a counter "place claim," a micropolitical tactic in an emotional strategy to minimise the intensity of shame by placing the person who shamed us into a shameful position herself or seeking some sort of reparation from the person who inflicted shame on us (Tomkins 1995: 197-201). Often, this micropolitical dynamic of shame and anger takes the form of personal and interpersonal feeling traps, shame-anger spirals, where "one becomes ashamed that one is ashamed, an inner loop which feeds on itself" (Scheff 1990: 76; Lewis 1971) and which one tries to minimise by directing anger at the other who then, in return, becomes shamed and angry at one, an intersubjective loop that could lead to interminable "character contests" (Goffman 1967), not only between individuals, but also between social groups and nations (Scheff 1989; Scheff 1990: 77-8). The brief interaction between the freight forwarding agents and my partner (see paragraphs 19-22, and paragraph 28 in the report above) was one such character contest.

I want to use my own experience of dealing with Macedonian Customs here as an example of the micropolitical use of shame and anger as “place claims” in an impersonal ritual of citizenship that could serve as a model, a case study, of the microsocial production of insecure social bonds in interactions between (particular types of) Macedonian (flexible) citizens, foreigners and the Macedonian state. Following Collins, I define interaction ritual as a “mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby” (2004: 7) generates either feelings of alienation or solidarity, and symbols of the social bond, or social exclusion. Interaction rituals are symbolic performances that are socially standardised and recursive (Kertzer 1988; Berezin 2002: 44), and as such are important means to channel emotions, guide cognition and organise social groups (Kertzer 1988: 9; Berezin 2002: 44).

The standardised interactions between citizens (or non-citizens, for that matter) and state institutions over matters under the exclusive and sovereign jurisdiction of the state like border protection, migration, customs, and policing are examples of asymmetrical forced power (and status) rituals, less or more formalised and stratified interactions (Collins 2004: 112) “designed to obtain compliance with [the state’s] wishes, desires, and interests over the resistance of” (Kemper 2002: 54) a citizen, and in which she has no choice but to engage. In the case of the Macedonian public administration, we have a significant fusion of state, party and private economic interests, which the former Macedonian president, Branko Crvenkovski, memorably called the “octopus” of corruption (ICG 2002: 8). It is important to bear this in mind when I talk about the (Macedonian) state below. Compliance with the state wishes is ensured either by physical coercion; “noxious verbal assaults, including screaming, denigrating, insulting” (Kemper 2002: 54) – power behaviours designed to coerce the citizen into submission and compliance; and “threatened or actual deprivation of another’s wanted or legitimately expected benefits and considerations” (Kemper 2002: 54-5).

In power citizenship rituals, representatives of the state become order-givers, while citizens become order-takers. Since they sustain or even enhance their emotional energy from dominating power rituals, order-givers are usually very determined that order-takers show “respect for the order-giving process itself” (Collins 2004: 112), not matter how absurd, ineffectual, unfair, excessive, illegal or illegitimate the order-giving process might be, or appear to be, to the order takers. There is a “coerced focus of attention: the order-takers [like my mother, partner and I in the report above] have to try

hard to anticipate what the order-giver wants” (Collins 2004: 113), while the “order-giver[s] use...coercion precisely to feel this mastery over the subordinates’ minds, to ‘break their will” (Collins 2004: 113).

Everyday interactions, including the ones I described in my report, have also a status dimension. Status (Collins 2004: 115), status-accord (Kemper 2002: 55), or social place (Clark 1990: 305-315) are other-targeted expressed emotions, speech and gestures that “support, enhance, benefit, or otherwise gratify the other” (Kemper 2002: 55). Love is the highest status or social place accorded in social interaction, but in lesser degrees, when we speak of status or social place we speak of bestowing “affection, liking, regard, respect, esteem, politeness and so forth” (Kemper 2002: 55) on others. Status or social place, at the micro level of the social encounter, “is the dimension of inclusion or exclusion...sense of belonging or not belonging” (Collins 2004: 115).

Let me now examine more closely the power and status dimensions of the encounters described in my report. The customs lady in my story is an example of a perfect Goffmanian authoritarian “frontstage personality” (Collins 2004: 112), someone who ensures with her frontstage performance that citizens are coerced into accepting the practice of administrative coercion of her organisation, as I described it above, without too much fuss, thus upholding not only the organisational chain of command, but also her organisational culture. Her gestures, her pitch of voice, her words and the rhythm of her speech (see paragraphs 4-15 in the report above) were all designed to impress on my mother, my partner and I who the boss was in this situation, and what the “right procedure” (coded word for the practice of administrative coercion) was to be followed. Her refusal to initially engage with us at all, to keep us waiting, and to talk to us in derogatory and cryptic officialese were typical power behaviours signifying her refusal to acknowledge us as legitimate, equal and valid interactants deserving even minimal consideration, which my mother, my partner and I experienced as shockingly rude and humiliating.

The same goes for the scene where I overheard the three male customs officers making off the cuff disparaging remarks about my sexuality and then keeping their backs turned to me as I was trying to address them were again displays of both power and status behaviours intended to put us, and particularly me, completely “out of place” (Clark 1990: 314), a dirty pariah to whom they did not even want to talk even over a purely professional customs matter. I agree with Clark that being “out of place,” not belonging at all, is even “more [surreally] painful...than having an inferior place.” At this

point, my body felt incredibly awkward, unsettled, and I was acutely aware of the surface of my body, which appeared as surface, since I did not inhabit the social skin shaped by normative, heterosexual, bodies (Ahmed 2004: 148). The pleasant giggle that the three male customs officers got at my expense was a “nice” emotional energy payoff for them, building ritual, situational, moral solidarity between these three “normal” men and reinforcing their attachment to traditional Macedonian symbols of “normal manhood” of their work group.

As Kemper notes, a “very large class of emotions results from real, imagined, or recollected outcomes of social interaction” (2002: 54). Given my history of contact (Ahmed 2004), as a gay citizen, with a homophobic Macedonian state (see paragraphs 26-7 in the report above), and given that gays are almost universally imagined as irredeemably bad and shameful objects of scorn and disgust in the Macedonian social imagination (*Dnevnik*, 10 November 2009) and affective economy (Ahmed 2004), the implied knowing disgust of the customs lady about my “lifestyle” (paragraphs 6-8) and the explicit ridiculing of my sexuality by the three male customs officers (paragraph 26), triggered an avalanche of painful thought material, ranging from fears of embarrassing my mother on her “home turf,” who has never had the experience of dealing Macedonian public servants together with her gay son and his partner (paragraphs 6-8), to memories of intense shame, loneliness and powerlessness resulting from a particularly traumatic and humiliating encounter I had with the communist Macedonian police in 1986 or 1987 (see paragraph 26). The memories were so intense and so painful, that I was prepared to give the customs officers and their freight forwarding buddies whatever they wanted, so I could get out of this coercive environment that I started to confuse it for a communist police station cell from twenty two years ago.

Domination as a joint effort and resistance

Despite the welling anger and frustration in us, my mother and I, throughout our interaction with the customs officers, were committed to courtesy, to not “making a scene” by expressing loudly our displeasure at the treatment we received, to not embarrassing the customs officers, thus embarrassing ourselves (Goffman 1967). Our conversation with the customs officers and the freight forwarding agents remained solely focused on the topic of the amount of money to be paid for the “import of our dog,” rather than on the legality and legitimacy of the “import” procedure, or the manner in which we

felt pushed into it. By not commenting on (the quality) of the relationship with them, we were deceiving ourselves and them that we were fine with what they were doing. Although, there was a strong element of coercion of dealing with the customs officers and the freight forwarding agents, because failure to comply with their wishes could have potentially meant the loss of our dog, still we were not in the military or the police where the power (and status) differential between superiors and subordinates is so extreme, we could have expressed clearly our dissatisfaction with how they treated us.

As citizens dealing with the state over customs matters, we were not in a legally codified, hierarchical relationship with these petty public servants. They could have not legally and legitimately used physical force to coerce us. Their finely calibrated use of noxious verbal assaults, ranging from the repeated use of the word “cowboys” (paragraphs 5 and 30) as an insult and the dismissive way they communicated with us, was enough to force us into wondering about our own “inadequacies,” rather than question the inadequacies of the customs officers and freight forwarding agents. I was so committed to “keeping up appearances,” to not embarrassing the customs officers and the freight forwarding agents despite my growing suspicions about their real motivations, that I felt strongly to “bring Mark in line” when I heard about his incident with the freight forwarding agent (paragraphs 28-29 in the report), which I found very embarrassing. As Goffman (1967) and Scheff (1990) point out, the status quo in the microworld is “based on the avoidance of the risk of embarrassment, a shame dynamic” (Scheff 1990: 187).

The emotional dynamic in this microepisode reveals how the structural relationship between Macedonian state officials-racketeers as order givers and their clients, fixed or flexible Macedonian (or foreign citizens), as order takers is manifested and maintained in everyday social interaction, “but this manifestation is usually hidden from the participants” (Scheff 1990: 185), since participants discuss topics (how much money to be paid in my case), rather than discuss the relationship – the (rightness of the) treatment of the order takers by the order givers. By avoiding to “make fools” of ourselves, my mother and I unwillingly engaged in a joint conspiracy with the customs officers and the freight forwarding agents to cover up for their practice of administrative coercion. By avoiding embarrassing the dominant in everyday social interaction, the dominated acquiesce to being dominated. We proved that we “belong” here, even at the price of accepting an inferior and insulting place of “belonging.”

Here, I come to a very important point about the microsocial foundations of resistance to domination as manifested in everyday social interaction. Abstract understanding of some of the concepts I used above to explain Macedonian macrosocial structure, like authoritarian personality, "sultanism," oligarchic transitional capitalism, corruption, practical citizenship, heterosexism (homophobia) or patriarchy, could help me understand my and my mother's inability to get even minimal respect/deference from many of our interactants in our customs saga. This knowledge, depending on our turn of mind, might comfort us knowing we are not alone in this (Scheff 1990: 187). However, this abstract understanding, would not, and did not, get us what we wanted, which was a fair, accountable, polite, transparent, and efficient processing of our dog by Customs.

My partner's micropolitical tactics in his interaction with the freight forwarding agents (paragraphs 21 and 28), on the other hand, had some immediate practical effects. Unlike my mother and I, he responded angrily both to the initial exorbitant and arbitrary "import" fees (paragraph 21) and the freight forwarding agent's incredible slowness in preparing the "import" documents, thus signalling his clear denial to accept the social place of a "cowboy," a "gullible foreign fool" given to him in our interaction with the customs officers and freight forwarding agents. By responding with anger to the contempt displayed in the power behaviours of the freight forwarding agents (frustrating us by taking inordinately long time to respond to our inquiries and to prepare the "import" documents), he signalled that he intended to increase the emotional cost/effort (Reddy 2001: 130) for the freight forwarding agents in their goal of extracting as much money out of us as possible. While the relationship with the first freight forwarding agent ended in a dramatic show of frustration on the part of the freight forwarding agent (tearing up our "import" documents) and my partner seething with rage (also a sign of an incredible frustration) (paragraph 28), my mother, based on the obvious rumours about my partner's reaction that circulated among the customs officers, these and other freight forwarding agents, extracted significant "concessions" from another freight forwarding agent who finalised the "import" documents in a professional and efficient manner, charging us less than 100 Euros for the "import." Rather than trying to elicit sympathy (or sympathetic help) and pity, like my mother did in our interaction with the vet (paragraphs 24-5), the expression of moral outrage (righteous anger) seems in this context to be a far more effective micropolitical way to demanding that one is not treated like a "fool" (Barbalet 2001: 148). It seems a crash course in micropolitical discourse tactics for citizens – consumers

(Scheff 1990: 188), of the sort employed by my partner, may help ease the grip of administrative coercion in Macedonian Customs.

Resentment and flexible citizens as cowboys

As I already indicated at the beginning of the paper, “every utterance, every expressive act can be viewed as the outcome of convergent translation tasks. Sensory, linguistic, relational, and status codes are all in play in the articulation of the expression” (Reddy 2001: 86). Here, I want to translate more clearly the relational and status codes of the reference “cowboys” (paragraphs 5 and 30 in the report), which in the informal, everyday discourse of both ordinary fixed Macedonian citizens and petty civil servants becomes a metaphor for Macedonia’s flexible citizens and foreigners alike. It is a derogatory term used to mark one’s fear of the other’s unfamiliar “norms, values, and conceptual schemes about time, space and the social order” (Ong, referring to Outner, 2004: 5). The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary defines one of the colloquial meanings of the word to be: “an unscrupulous or reckless person in business, esp. an unqualified one” (1992: 257). This colloquial meaning has found its way into the Macedonian language, and in the context of Macedonian Customs, it designates flexible citizens (and foreigners alike) as incompetent citizens who fail the test of practical citizenship, as I defined it above, and who need to be disciplined and thought, sometimes forcefully, “how things are done around here” (paragraph 4-11 and 30 in the report).

The “cowboy” circulates in the informal structure of meanings and the affective economy of civil servants in Macedonian state institutions, particularly Macedonian Customs, as a sticky sign (Ahmed 2004), a fluctuating ensemble of largely negative affects that carry certain general ideas and stereotypes of the Macedonian fixed middle-class about Macedonia’s flexible citizens (and “western” foreigners too) (Gibbs 2001: 5), predisposing many of them to treat flexible citizens with an ambivalent attitude that mixes opportunism, greed, resentment, and outright hostility. This ambivalence is rooted in the (perceptions of) economic inequalities between Macedonia’s fixed and flexible citizens that feed the former’s resentment toward the latter on multiple levels.

Firstly, while Macedonia’s flexible citizens’ expertise and money are desperately needed in a country characterised as economically “mostly unfree” (The Heritage Foundation, quoted in Vaknin 2007: 2), their relative economic freedom and mobility between Macedonia and their other prosperous countries of citizenship, is quietly, but

deeply, resented by those fixed Macedonian citizens who feel pessimistic about their economic opportunities and are “stuck” in the country (Gallup 2009: 29-30). While most of Macedonia’s middle-class flexible citizens live unremarkable middle-class lives in terms of their patterns of consumption and wealth compared to their other middle-class Canadian, Australian or US compatriots, their regular consumption of goods and services, seen by many ordinary Macedonians as “luxury items,” and their (potential) transfer of economic wealth to Macedonia easily places them, on the Macedonian socio-economic ladder, well above the fixed Macedonian middle-class, decimated by twenty years of extremely badly managed transition from a socialist economy to a market economy (UNDP 2006).

This again breeds resentment among ordinary middle-class fixed Macedonian citizens, since it is seen as undeserved advantage (Barbalet 2001: 64), given that most of these fixed citizens feel that they have dedicated their life projects to continuously living and working in a country that is now denying them “opportunities or valued resources (including status) which would otherwise be available to them” (Barbalet 2001: 68). Many of these middle-class fixed citizens, in order to regain the economic and social status they enjoyed under the previous regime, are forced into renting their homes or apartments to a growing legion of foreign and flexible Macedonian business people, academics, activists, diplomats, staff in international governmental and non-governmental organisations, etc, often at very inflated prices, in order to supplement their incomes. They again resent that they have to live in crowded conditions with their older parents or relatives. This resentment is often translated in an aggressively greedy and opportunistic attitude towards foreigners and Macedonia’s flexible citizens, who in turn resent being treated as “cowboys” – “deserving” preys for endless fleecing.

Secondly, the reference “cowboys” connotes the fear of the fixed and insecure Macedonian middle-class, which fills the ranks of the Macedonian public administration, about the unmanageability of Macedonia’s flexible citizens’ “nomadism,” particularly of those who are citizens of advanced democracies, since they are seen as dangerous and motivated facilitators of the global flow of new ideas, information, expectations of good governance, knowledge, capital, habits, politics and social identities, including new sexual politics and identities, that could pose serious challenge to the entrenched economic, power and social structure of the country as I described it above. This fear also feeds into the often hostile and impatient reception flexible citizens, like the one witnessed in my report and on many other occasions, receive from petty public servants.

From situational to trans-situational meanings of flexible citizenship

For travellers, migrants and flexible citizens, *crossing the border* or *clearing customs* at the airport, due to its very transitive nature, always has a “series of other temporal and spatial implications” (Katz 1999: 36) that reach well beyond the moment of *passing* or *crossing* and lend deep emotional significance to encounters with the airport staff, or customs, police and immigration officers. Encounters at the airport derive their emotional meanings from the juxtaposition between the actual local situation of passing through or crossing the border, “one to which the participants collaboratively respond as they construct its sense and boundaries in the ‘here and now,’ and the privately known destinations for which the local situation is for each but a way station” (Katz 1999: 37). Customs officers and immigration officers are “limited situational power-wielders, who have...[the] capacity to impede and delay people” (Collins 2004: 292) for a myriad of legitimate or illegitimate reasons. Punitive import charges and procedures not envisaged in legislation, extremely slow and inefficient “processing” of our belongings (dog) by customs, being treated in an exceedingly rude and humiliating way, as I showed in my report and the analysis that followed, are triggers for intense emotional outbursts, where our angry selves, and our interacting partners on the other side of the power-status fence, did spectacularly sensational things, like hyperventilating and shaking with anger or theatrically tearing up documents in paragraphs 28-30 in the report.

Becoming angry when or crossing the border at the airport “brings previously tacit, transcendent dimensions of [the flow of one’s] action into vivid corporeal awareness” (Katz 1999: 34). Since flying, and travelling by other means, is a “means for transcending space, of getting from here [*Australia*] to there [*Macedonia*]” (Katz 1999: 34), being unreasonably and unfairly impeded and delayed in resuming one’s expected flow of one’s life (*moving on, settling in a new apartment in an unfamiliar area of the city, starting work, exploring investment opportunities, meeting new colleagues, greeting and meeting relatives and friends, etc.*) by customs officials, like my partner and I were, causes intense situational emotions that have “transcendent implications in the form of sensed relevancies for other encounters [with other people, including public servants] in some other time and place [or the same place]” (Katz 1999: 39) (*Will my interaction with other customs or government officials be like this? Will I be made to feel like this when I deal with other government departments or agencies? Will I be able to do business with*

them like this? If I can not trust the government to protect me from government officials robbing me off over a few boxes of personal belongings or getting my dog in the country, how can I then be sure that my investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars in a business or property will be safe? Will I be treated as a “cowboy” wherever I go in this country?)

As Ahmed points out, “emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetitions of actions over time, as well as through [emotionally energising or depressing] orientations towards and away from others...what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others” (Ahmed 2004: 4). The intense emotions and situationally constructed meanings in the described encounter with the customs officials and freight forwarding agents, stored as fresh and painful memories, tokens of my non-belonging, shaped my orientation towards other Macedonian customs officials in other encounters, who through their orientation towards me only reiterated my status, and the feelings that go with it, as a flexible citizen-cowboy. As I already mentioned above, in my subsequent encounters with Macedonian customs officials and freight forwarding agents I sought, as a Macedonian citizen, protection from the practice of administrative coercion from many of the relevant local authorities within Macedonian Customs and elsewhere, only to find a complete wall of silence, thus clearly signalling to me that I could not have confidence in, or trust, the Macedonian state to protect me from arbitrary abuse of power by its agencies and (petty or senior) officials.

Confidence, as Barbalet defines it, is “an emotion of assured expectation which is not only the basis of but a positive encouragement to action. Confidence is the feeling which encourages one to go one’s own way: confidence is the feeling state of self-projection” (2001: 86). Trust is “the confident expectation of the intentions of others” (Barbalet 2001: 96) that they will not hurt, demean, humiliate, exploit, violate or discriminate against us, and loyalty is “the confidence that trust between [us and] others can be maintained over the long term” (Barbalet 2001: 96). Trust is one of the fundamental emotions of transient (both situational and short-term) and trans-situational (long-term) belonging. Flexible citizenship and foreign investment *qua* flow of people, expertise and wealth from one country to another are primarily, as I already indicated at the beginning of the paper, economic activities that could only take place if some basic social, economic and political conditions for building confidence, trust and loyalty between the nation-state and its flexible citizens and foreign investors are fulfilled. The customs service of any country plays a fundamental role in regulating the global flow of goods, services, people and

money into the national space and as such offers a very important first glimpse into the economic “soul” of any country. My partner’s and my experience of recurring administrative coercion in our dealings with Macedonian Customs was a sufficient reason for us to decide not to currently invest in Macedonia.

Our experience of dealing with Macedonian Customs in its totality is perhaps unique in terms of the situationally imaginative deployment (Castoriadis 1987; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002) of multiple socially divisive discourses on power, sexuality, foreigners and flexible citizenship by the customs officers in order to position us as *queer cowboys*, and our (emotional and cognitive) processing and reaction to this situational positioning. Although these customs officers drew from the wider socio-cultural and linguistic milieu of Macedonia to identify us as *queer cowboys*, in the last instance, this signification is a product of their creative freedom and autonomy which they chose, in this instance, to exercise in the way they did, triggering the particular internal events (memories) and eliciting the emotions described in my report, thus producing the total emotional experience, which in turn it was translated in our decision/action not to invest in the country.

While our experience of administrative coercion may be not be entirely representative of the experience many Macedonian flexible citizens and foreigners have or have had with Macedonian Customs, many of the ritual dimensions of this practice, according to many conversations I have had with other Macedonian flexible citizens and publicly available reports (ICG 2002; *Lobi* 2005), occur fairly routinely, leading many of Macedonia’s flexible citizens and foreigners to come to the same *abductions* (Scheff 1990) or *translations* (Reddy 2001: 63-101) about Macedonia as an unattractive country in which to currently invest, live and work. As the former economic advisor to the current Macedonian government, Sam Vaknin, perceptively noted, multinationals, foreigners and Macedonia’s flexible citizens are less worried about low taxation, and more about functioning institutions that inspire confidence, trust and loyalty – emotional commodities Macedonia ‘is irreparably short of’ (Vaknin 2007: 3).

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¹ I use the term "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" to refer to the territory, people and language of the largest ethnic group in the sovereign state officially recognised by 127 countries in the world as the "Republic of Macedonia," but also referred to by the United Nations, the EU and many other countries by that necrophilic reference "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." I fully acknowledge that the references "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" "also cover...many [other] places, identities, and ideas attached to people from different political, ethnic, and religious groups over many centuries" (van Selm 2007: 1, also on this see Cowan, ed. 2000).

² Staff from the Australian Embassy in Belgrade told us that they regularly received requests for assistance from many dual Australian and Macedonian citizens experiencing similar problems in Macedonia.