Contemporary migration theory conceptualizes the nation-state as an ideological force that assimilates the particular symbols and practices of the nomadic ethnicity into dominant nation-state citizenship norms. We interrogate this classic governmentality argument and highlight the role of a prominent postmodern consumptionscape - the global city - in constructing migrant identities that actively promote the oppositional aspects of the nomadic ethnicity attenuated by the process of national mainstreaming. We focus on the nomadic Roma ethnicity. To demonstrate how Roma and local citizen identities are co-constituted through consuming the global city, we analyze the consumption practices of and social interactions among nomadic Roma consumers, national citizen consumers, and city officials in three global cities: Pisa, Toronto, and Berlin.

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migrate: waves, snow, wildlife, seasons, winds, aurora, tornados, solar eclipses, etc. In these cases, consumers are observed as orien-
tated towards environmental forces that sustain their actions and
cultures, yet move them through time and space in interesting and
unfamiliar manners.

What should we do then, in order to stay in touch with par-
ticipants for whom structures such as clock-time, urban geography
and roads become less meaningful than the course of a river, the
tide, seasons, or snow falls? Biosocial ethnography suggests that
the researcher should detect and delineate the natural influences that
order the motivations of such consumers. By orienting ourselves to
these influences, site selection and sampling become fluid, highly
mobile procedures. Further to this, we may enter into a process of
parallel interviewing of phenomena that are often regarded as on-
tologically different (Newton 2007). At the level of representation,
I wish to suggest that the biosocial ethnographer should consider
the boundaries of the “natural” and the “social” by uniting voices
from introspection, autobiography, thick transcription and thick
inscription (Arnould 1998; Holbrook 1995). Through these diverse
procedures, we can re-unite fragmented constructions of time,
nature, space, marketplace and subjectivity.

“Consuming the City: How Global Structures Facilitate
Resistance to Ethnic Co-optation”
Ela Veresiu, York University, Canada
Markus Giesler, York University, Canada

This presentation advances a growing research stream on
consumer acculturation by analyzing the formative relationships
between ethnic consumer identity construction and globalization.
In this presentation, we will first review the leading conceptualiza-
tions in classic and consumer theories on migration and highlight
their theoretical omission regarding the conditions of possibility
to reclaim co-opted ethnic symbols and practices. Next we explore
the importance of global cities and the citizenship discourse as a
structuring mechanism in migrant consumer identity construction.
The main goal of this presentation is to examine how previously
co-opted nomadic consumer identities, which actively reinforce
nomadic ideals while subverting ascribed national cultures, are
re-politicized and reclaimed through everyday consumption in
the global city.

The idea that the sociopolitical discourse of the nation-state
dominates contemporary society has become a staple notion in
sociology, migration and cultural studies (Beck 2000; Chernilo
2006; Wimmer and Schiller 2002). Contemporary migration theory
conceptualizes the nation-state as an ideological force that assimili-
ates the particular symbols and practices of nomadic ethnicities
into nation-state cultures and citizenship norms. This is an example
of ethnic co-optation, whereby the dominant form of sociopoliti-
cal organization (the nation-state) brings into its system opposing
movements (e.g., nomadic lifestyles) through extensive socialization
mechanisms (Lustick 1980; Pettai and Hallik 2002). This classic
governmentality argument has led researchers in consumer culture
type (e.g., Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Oswald
1999; Thompson and Tambah 1999; Peñaloza 1994) to approach
immigrant consumer identity as a dyadic, passport-driven construct
involving mainly national identifications and agents. However, mi-
gration and consumer culture theory ascribes little to no potential
for individuals with nomadic predilections to also use consumption
and the commercial marketplace in order to reclaim and re-politicize
their co-opted symbols and practices.

For this reason, both classic and consumer theories of migra-
tion would not have predicted the important role of a prominent
postmodern consumption scape—the global city (Sassen 2001)—in
helping construct migrant identities that actively promote the op-
positional aspects of the nomadic ethnicity attenuated by the process
of national mainstreaming. According to global sociologist Saskia
Sassen (2006, p.321), “through the thickness of daily life and local,
mostly informal politics, cities can accommodate and enable the
unbundling of the tight articulation of the citizen and the formal state
politics.” Consequently, today’s citizenship is moving away from the
classic definition comprised of strong national ties in exchange for
certain citizen rights, towards a revised definition containing new
structures of power relations and positions detached from national
sentiments (Sassen 2006). The struggle over the meaning of space
and citizenship has empowered certain migrant consumers to re-

Our results offer new insights into the process of global mi-
gration. Scholars in contemporary migration theory and consumer
research have proposed different mechanisms and modes through
which individuals acculturate, including marketplace forces and
political struggle. Which mechanisms and modes of acculturation
may or may not play a role in nomadically oriented consumer identi-
ties has remained unexplored. Our findings shed useful theoretical light on the construction of nomadic citizenship, a hybrid migrant identity, through the structures and resources provided in global consumption scapes.

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