New Forms of Normality and Identity: the Contested Cultural Logic of Hybridity

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This paper argues, that there is a complex and ambivalent link between commodification of cultural differences, national agency and the technologies of the self, which deserves more critical investigation. In my presentation I will discuss the effects of cultural hybridisation on the national as well as on the economic sphere. I suggest to discuss cultural hybridity and national identity not as conceptual oppositions, but as a functional relationship, which allows the nation to expand and modernise the symbolic field of national self-representation by creating a more colourful, joyful, and attractive image of itself. In the global competition of national economies and cultures it is even for the nation a task of growing importance to appear cosmopolitan and open for productive flows of migrating capital, creative subjects and powerful symbols. Meanwhile, the cultural industry have discovered hybridity to introduce the mainstream society with new mass markets by developing innovative transcultural products. It is nothing new, that cultural translation is very helpful to raise material profits, but from my point of view I would suggest, that cultural hybridity means much more. On the one hand, I would call it a new mode of symbolic and iconic production in a globalised economy that is increasingly obsessed with the consumption of cultural signs and meanings. On the other hand, hybridity is and will always also remain a contested site of uncontrolled translation, disturbing as well as unforeseeable transgression and potentially subversive cultural practices.