

## **'Mobile Caviar': The Geopolitics of 'Non-Human' Migration and Mobility**

### **Abstract:**

The mobility of commodities is an on-going focus of work in Geography that seeks to '*Follow-the-Thing*' (Cook, 2004; Cook & Harrison, 2007; Lepawsky & Mather, 2011; Hulme, 2017), by tracing and revealing the hidden 'social lives' embedded at each stage of the commodities' circulatory journeys'.

Although this body of work has paved the way for Geographical considerations of how commodities move and interact with humans in a globalized world, '*Follow-the-Thing*' scholars pay little attention to how commodities are enrolled as both objects and subjects of Geopolitics.

Geopolitical scholarship extensively engages with questions of migration and mobility (Hyndman, 1997, 2000, 2012; Mountz, 2010; Squire, 2010), but does so in a human-centric manner. To this extent, Geopolitical scholarship exhibits a relative lack of attention to the Geopolitics of 'non-human' migration and mobility.

This paper seeks to bridge the identified gaps by revealing the hidden 'Geopolitical lives' of mobile commodities. Specifically, the paper outlines and develops the idea of a Geopolitics of '*commodity migration*'. This is done via the lens of caviar: a luxury commodity derived from critically endangered sturgeon, and traded both legally and illegally on a global scale.

Concurrent efforts to conserve wild sturgeon stocks whilst at the same time enabling an expanding global caviar trade, have had considerable implications for the transforming mobility of sturgeon. Wild sturgeon have become increasingly immobile in their ecological ranges; farmed sturgeon have experienced trans-continental migratory journeys as the aquaculture industry explodes in unlikely locations; and, once rendered into caviar, sturgeon take on new liveliness as a highly mobile commodity.

The paper makes the case that engaging with sturgeon and caviar as Geopolitical subjects and objects, can aid in the understanding of their transforming (im)mobility.

**Key Words: Caviar, Geopolitics, Mobility, Commodities, Non-Human**

### **References:**

- Cook, I. (2004) "'Follow the Thing" 'Papaya': *Antipode*. 36 (4): 642-664
- Cook, I. & Harrison, M. (2007) 'Follow the Thing: "West Indian Hot Pepper Sauce." *Space and Culture*. 10 (1):40-63
- Hulme, A. (2017) 'Following the (unfollowable) thing: methodological considerations in the era of high globalisation.' *Cultural Geographies*. 24 (1): 157-160
- Hyndman, J. (1997) 'Border Crossings', *Antipode*. 29 (2): 149-176
- Hyndman, J. (2000) *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota
- Hyndman, J. (2012) 'The Geopolitics of Migration and Mobility.' *Geopolitics*. 17: 243-255.

RGS-IBG Postgraduate Forum Mid-Term Conference  
Hannah Dickinson  
Department of Politics, University of Sheffield  
h.g.dickinson@sheffield.ac.uk

Lepawsky, J. & Mather, C. (2011) 'From beginnings and endings to boundaries and edges: rethinking circulation and exchange through electronic waste.' *Area*. 43: 242-249

Mountz, A. (2010) *Seeking Asylum: Human Smuggling and Bureaucracy at the Border*.  
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Squire, V. (2010) *Contested Zones of Mobility*. London: Routledge