

## **Intangible Value: body and self in new identity markets**

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### **Panel 3 Embodying Moral Economies**

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This paper examines some of the ways in which intangible aspects of subjectivity and community are re-created as marketable, albeit metaphysical, qualities. Drawing on fieldwork in southeast Mexico, I explore the contradictory effects that are produced, as people situate themselves in relation to the 'sale' of culture in a globalising region. This is a process which has implications for strategies of survival, the construction of selfhood and the significance of history. How applicable are classic economic and anthropological approaches to value transformation and circuits of exchange to an understanding of the re-valuation of embodied characteristics, such as 'identity', 'skill', and 'belonging'? In the context of the so-called 'Maya world' these existential attributes have been re-constituted as new kinds of commodities which can be bought by outsiders. This suggests that the term moral economy needs to be clarified and can be expanded. This in turn might lead back to new approaches to value. Taking the issue of dress as a multi-valent marker with many layers of meaning, the discussion explores the ways in which value, female value and moral worth are expressed and experienced.