

tional change are sparse. While explaining the surprising finding that vocational graduates, in spite of technological change, adverse selection and lack of employer involvement, do not fare much worse than their peers with general education, the authors observe that 'in some countries sustained attempts to consolidate vocational education have been made and [the] demand for vocational graduates may have persisted' (p. 322). This is indeed an overly cautious assessment for a volume that claims to proceed in the tradition of institutional sociology, and does little justice to the diversity of these countries' attempts to salvage their vocational educational systems.

The main shortcoming of *Making the Transition* as an attempt to elucidate the interface between changing educational systems and changing labour markets is that institutions, much like transition itself, remain a black box. Based on the information provided it is impossible to conclude which educational reforms actually improved young people's employment chances. By refusing to relate the changing employment patterns back to the institutional set-up and, more broadly, the changes in demand and labour market regulation, the research presented in this volume remains exceedingly descriptive, which is definitely a pity given the amount of quality data and expertise it otherwise offers.

Vera Scepánovic
Central European University
vera.scepanovics@gmail.com

Gareth Dale (ed.): *First the Transition, Then the Crash. Eastern Europe in the 2000s*

London 2011: Pluto Press, 288 pp.

This edited volume is a timely contribution to multiple issues that grasp one's attention amidst the economic, political and social

crises that have rocked Eastern Europe since the EU enlargements in the 2000s. It is relevant to a plethora of streams of literature that have dealt with Eastern Europe since the beginning of the 1990s. While the volume offers a crucial contribution in particular to the political economy literature on Eastern Europe, it also relates itself to and successfully revives the transition literature that dealt with Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. The volume also contributes to the Europeanisation literature, especially in terms of its critical assessment of socio-economic transition in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Latvia during their course of convergence with the EU. The importance of the volume rests with its rich historical and theoretical elaboration on the roots of the recent economic crash in the 'success stories', underlined by the transition and Europeanisation literatures, critically assessing the crisis of the 1970s that shook Eastern Europe, later NATO and EU accession as part of a neo-liberal project, and uneven development and foreign (dis)investment. The authors make an effort to interpret the process of the economic crash in Eastern Europe by re-evaluating historical legacies and Marxist theories. Let us now debate more specifically how the contributors pursue these goals.

The volume starts with a general introduction to the topic of transition in Central and Eastern Europe. In a way, this introduction deals with why re-visiting transition in the region is timely. The elaboration of economic and political trends in the 1970s, especially with regard to the demise of various types of 'national economic' model, including, in the words of Gareth Dale, 'Soviet-style state capitalism, national planning in the West and import-substitution industrialisation in the South' (p. 5), is comprehensive. But the introductory chapter does not offer tremendously novel food for thought to experts of East European politics. Its efforts to situate the roots of

the transition in Eastern Europe within the realm of the global economic and political developments of the 1970s and 1980s is certainly appealing—even if it revives the earlier work of David Ost on the Eastern left and the Western left. The book also refers to EU and NATO enlargement to the region as extensions of the neo-liberal project. While, in retrospect, one can certainly elaborate on neo-liberalisation as part of Europeanisation, one should also mention democratisation appended to Europeanisation that became unsustainable as soon as the East European states earned EU membership.

As part of the introduction to the book, the left-wing Hungarian essayist Gáspár Miklós Tamás presents an essay entitled 'Marx on 1989'. As he puts it, Tamás 'would like to say a few words about what we should call—with necessary diffidence—the Marxian style of political analysis' (p. 21). Aligning himself with Marx's philosophy of history, Tamás calls Marx's writings as 'not instances to exemplify theory; they are steps in revolutionary strategy: this is strategic analysis to serve a cause, albeit a cause emerging from the analysis' (p. 21). The essay is largely in line with the genre that prevails around the oeuvre of Slavoj Žižek. Tamás' approach follows the line that the society which Lenin and Trotsky 'were creating had absolutely nothing to do with the communist ideal, *exclusively on the evidence that their party was exercising sovereign power!*' (author's italics) (p. 27). Tamás further states that:

The imaginary fusion of the state and civil society in the self-contradictory concept of socialist state property was supplanted (and contradicted) by the role of the party as the supreme and exclusively political authority and repository of true doctrine. ... The detachment of the party from the 'large masses' was also key to its temporary success. It was impervious to 'empirical tragedy' as it did not 'represent' experience but reason (p. 31).

Thereby, the promise of the party was not 'liberation but equality and respect for the working man (with stress on the gender)'. In this context, 'the workers' councils may have fought the party, but—coming after all from the same tradition, consciously or not—any power based on communities of procedures cannot be sustained under the dominance of the market' (p. 36). With all due respect to Tamás, these arguments very much resemble the critical Marxist literature that prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s. It is hard to miss the Milovan Djilas line of thought in these lines. Eventually, Tamás contends that 'in Eastern Europe, capitalism without a bourgeoisie was replaced by capitalism without a bourgeoisie' (p. 37) and his essay very much repeats the genre of Žižek: it is as complicated even stylistically.

In view of this introduction, one should reflect on why the economic crash in Eastern Europe revived the tendency to look back and perhaps repeat what we—as experts of Central and Eastern European politics—all studied. Thereby, a frank and just question is why is there a need for a revivalist argumentation all of a sudden to elaborate the socio-economic and socio-political developments in the region? I believe that the true value of this book rests in its commitment to refute the Europeanisation, economic transition and democratisation literatures that have studied Eastern European transitions as merely success stories without fully conceptualising the historical background of transformation and very much registering 1989 as a new beginning. Dale et al. simply show that 1989 was not a new beginning, but it was the culmination of a plethora of developments, both politically and theoretically, that instigated the transition and transformation. Thereby, in order to understand the recent economic crash, we should once again look back to reflect on how economic, political, and international events culminated in the 2000s. That is why, even if in its introduction the

book does not offer much new food for thought, it offers a new methodology and aspires to attract the attention of the researchers on socio-political and socio-economic developments in the region to study Eastern Europe not 1989 onwards, but in the 1990s and later 2000s as repercussions of an organic development of events. Dale offers a comprehensive analysis of such events, both domestic and international, in the introduction of his volume. This is a laudable effort and hopefully will remind aspirants to regional expertise of the importance of knowing the political and social history of the region.

The rest of the book proceeds in two parts: first, on Russia with respect to class and power in the age of Putin, and second, on the region from the Baltic to the Balkans, taking into account market reform and economic crisis. The second part hosts studies not only on the new EU member states but also on Ukraine and Serbia. This selection enfeebles the criticism that the book purports to pose of EU and NATO, as neither Ukraine nor Serbia are—so far—part of the Europeanisation process. This criticism does not suggest that the EU and NATO enlargements to their neighbours did not affect these states, but reminds the reader that there is a stark difference between being in and outside these clubs.

The part on Russia presents how the stability propaganda that the political establishment behind Putin promoted is nothing but a paper tiger. Haynes has a remarkable piece on the position of workers in modern Russia. Using Russian statistics, Haynes studies basic economic indicators such as workforce by sector, distribution of employment by formal ownership, distribution of income and Russia's super-rich. Haynes' findings present a picture of Russia as a semi-peripheral capitalist state where social polarisation is expected to be rife. In this political environment, Haynes expects instability in the form of workers'

unrest (p. 64) rather than stability. However, rather than considering this as a Russian puzzle, we should know why the lower classes would shun instability. Academic studies on other semi-peripheral states, such as those in Latin America, demonstrate that in fact the lower classes have the most to lose from instability, as that would affect their livelihood, which rests on rather delicate circumstances. One issue that Haynes fails to report on is the decreasing level of poverty in Russia (at 10.4% in 2008). Yet, this may be tentative given that the impact of the economic crisis was largely felt after 2009.

The rest of the section on Russia offers a chapter on Russia's Caesarist journey into the global political economy as well as a study on Russia's foreign policy from Putin to Medvedev. As foreign policy review is not an aim of this edited volume and it does not directly refer to the foreign policy of any other state under its attention, this chapter reduces the coherence of the book—even if Worth offers an immaculate piece of research. On the other hand, Worth's chapter on Caesarism becoming evident as Putin consolidated his rule in Russia certainly grabs the reader's attention. In order to place this development in historical terms, Worth refers to the *zapadniki* roots of Yeltsin and *derzhavniki* roots of Putin. Yet, he fails to mention the Georgian opposition to Russia's World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership as he debates why it has taken too long for Russia to join the club. To finish this section, as a more general comment, it is hard not to recognise that none of these chapters refers to the transition from Medvedev's Russia back to Putin's rule again. It would also be pertinent to examine how Putin acted in his capacity as Prime Minister for years.

The second part of the book has the rather fancy title that promises to elaborate on market reform and economic crisis from the Baltics to the Balkans. As I noted above

this is a rather inconsistent choice. Yet, this part starts with the best chapter of the book by Jeffrey Sommers and Jānis Bērziņš. Their depiction of the roots of the economic crisis in Latvia is so accurate that one wonders how come the (neo-)liberals in the Baltics, who claimed to represent the rationalist voice of economic and political transformation, failed to realise (and later acknowledge) the irrationality of their economic policies and goals. Sommers and Bērziņš demonstrate the background of underdevelopment in Latvia and how the (neo-)liberal elite promoted a debt-led prosperity as the realisation of the European dream. Pumping up private credits for consumption to households while cutting public spending and deregulating the real estate market to facilitate building houses at a frenzy appealed to the (neo-)liberal elite as a simple solution to fundamental problems of underdevelopment in the country. This dream of prosperity and Europeanisation, however, hit the rocks as the economic crisis broke out and people ended up with huge debts to Western banks. In the end, all that has remained of 'reaching' Europe is the availability of a cheap Ryanair ticket to the West and visa-free travel for those Latvians who can satisfy the conditions for a Latvian passport. The pace of population decrease (or demise?) in Latvia illustrates the scale of emigration.

The chapters on Poland and the Czech Republic keep up well with the main aim of the book, that is, how neo-liberalisation, as Shields (p. 170) calls it, affected the course of political events in these two new EU member states. Shields offers an analysis of populism and party politics in Poland. The chapter is noticeable as it draws the reader's attention to various Polish sources such as *Krytyka Polityczna*, but otherwise does not provide too much food for thought to experts of Polish politics. It would have been a crucial contribution if Shields had reviewed the left-wing dis-

course that *Krytyka* embodied in Poland, especially during the economic crisis. The chapter on the Czech Republic, however, provides an up-to-date study of socio-economic developments in the aftermath of the global economic crisis. Švihlíková examines the politics and populism of not only Vacláv Klaus but also Topolánek. This makes her discussion one of the rare elaborations in the literature on second-generation post-communist leaders using primary literature in Czech.

Finally, Fabry presents the economic predicament of Hungary from 2007 up until recently, followed by narratives on Hungary's vulnerability to the crisis. There are four distinct narratives that Fabry reviews in view of the left liberal government's failures and they all contribute to how Fidesz later generated a populist response. While Fabry promises to deliver these narratives to portray the mainstream discourse in Hungary, his review of the Hungarian literature is limited and, unlike Švihlíková's chapter, in need of references to major Hungarian primary sources which are rich in content and widely available both in print and electronically. While the narratives that he points to (e.g. 'macroeconomic imbalances are to blame' and 'western-style capitalism is to blame') are relevant, we need to see, first, how these narratives came about in the Hungarian public sphere and, second, how come these narratives gained strength and consistency. This would have required a convincing presentation of elite formations and domestic elite discourses in Hungary rather than reviewing the American literature in the field (including Szelényi's work) (pp. 212–213). The next section, where Fabry searches for a 'satisfactory account of how Hungary's recent economic malaise is interlinked with the dynamics of the global economy' (pp. 215–216), brings history back in and keeps up with the main theme of the book. One minor issue is that the chapter drops the names of Marx and Trotsky, and later

Gramsci (more relevantly), but does not review the contribution of the Budapest School to this debate. A review of Ágnes Heller's and Ferenc Fehér's work in relation to the capitalist development in Hungary under socialism could have been useful.

Overall, this volume promises to deliver an elaboration of the roots of the Eastern European picture in the 2000s and engages with the most recent socio-political and socio-economic turmoil in the region in view of both its history and international developments thereafter. It does not consistently achieve its goal, but it certainly opens new routes of inquiry for students of East European politics. The book could be a useful tool for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on East European politics.

Umut Korkut
Glasgow Caledonian University
umut.korkut@gcu.ac.uk

**Jochen Clasen and Daniel Clegg (eds.):
*Regulating the Risk of Unemployment:
National Adaptations to Postindustrial
Labor Markets in Europe***

Oxford 2011: Oxford University Press,
404 pp.

Jochen Clasen and Daniel Clegg offer—once more—an interesting new take on institutional adjustments in European labour markets, thus continuing a series of earlier joint publications. Following an introduction in which the two editors present their analytical framework that 'sets the scene for the chapters that follow' (p. 2), the edited volume is divided into two parts. Part I includes twelve country chapters, in which the developments in the regulation of the risk of unemployment are outlined, focusing mainly on reforms in national unemployment protection systems from the early 1990s to about 2010. The country cases include nine of the fifteen 'old' European

Union (EU) member states (excluding Austria, Ireland, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal), two 'new' members (Hungary and the Czech Republic) as well as Switzerland, a non-EU state. Part II is comprised of three chapters that take a cross-national perspective, and a forth, concluding chapter by the editors that summarises the findings.

In the Introduction, Clasen and Clegg first argue that the shift from industrial to service industries has generated a functional mismatch between the labour market institutions created during the Golden Age of industrial growth and welfare expansion and the needs of contemporary, post-industrial production regimes. Accordingly, they argue that with the decline in life-long, mostly male, full-time employment patterns, and the subsequent rise in flexible working careers of both men and women, unemployment protections systems are in need of adaptation. This adaptation is then captured in their proposed analytic framework, which relies on three (inter-related) processes of integration: (1) *unemployment benefit homogenisation* (ranging from a diminishing of differences between benefit tiers, to a reduction of the number of tiers, to the emergence of a single, dominant tier); (2) *risk re-categorisation* (ranging from a diminishing of differences in entitlement and conditionality between unemployment and other benefits schemes to the creation of a single benefit for working-age people that also entails—perhaps as intermediary steps—the transfer of claimants from other benefits to unemployment benefits and the merger of programmes); and (3) *activation* (which the authors understand as the tightening of job-search requirements, supporting all job-seekers regardless of benefit status with job-search and counselling services in so-called one-stop shops, and the merger of administrative units into single gateways) (cf. p. 10).

The subsequent country chapters offer a comprehensive and detailed account of