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Review of: Transnational Actors in Central and East European Transitions by Mitchell A. Orenstein, Stephen Bloom, and Nicole Lindstrom

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Transnational Actors in Central and East European Transitions by Mitchell A. Orenstein;
Stephen Bloom; Nicole Lindstrom
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seen simply as a reaction to extending the flawed republic practice of separate social plans and even foreign relations to the autonomous Serbian provinces Vojvodina and Kosovo. While Tito slapped down Serbian criticism as “bureaucratic etatism,” Kardelj supported its right to reach across provincial borders without higher authority but as a prelude to the further decentralization of all authority.

Only after Tito and Kardelj both died in 1979 did the issue of ethnic contention in Kosovo come forward. The 1981 unrest there and its Serbian suppression would help to discredit any argument for recentralizing the economy and, more immediately, to defeat a Serbian candidate for the presidency in 1982. Until 1988, however, it was the surviving Kardelist core, led by Serb, Croat, and Slovene “defenders of the Constitution” (197–212) that held the balance of power. Jović’s last two chapters treat the 1980s as a political stalemate created by the existing leadership’s ideological commitment beyond any ethnic or republic allegiance to further decentralization, albeit in the name of Yugoslavia. Their weakening “institutionalist” case opened the way for “revolutionist” republic nationalism to capture the republic communist parties. Instead of the empty slogan “After Tito. Tito,” we are left to trace Yugoslavia’s fatal flaw to “After Kardelj, Kardelj.”

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Transnational Actors in Central and East European Transitions. Ed. Mitchell A. Orenstein, Stephen Bloom, and Nicole Lindstrom. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. x, 260 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$27.95, paper.

As the title indicates, this edited volume expands our understanding of the role that transnational actors have played in institutional change in central and eastern Europe. The editors begin with the argument that our understanding of institutional change in the region has been incomplete. Earlier work on the transition from state socialism spoke only about the dual problems of building capitalism and democracy at the same time. From there, subsequent scholars suggested a third important variable in how these countries grappled with nation building and the reconciliation of competing national and ethnic identities. All this literature, the editors argue, was overly pessimistic, suggesting that this “triple transition” would be exceedingly difficult to achieve. Twenty years on, however, it is clear that, in spite of various problems, most of these transitions have been more successful than expected. Herein lies the puzzle: what explains this relative success, at least in comparison to our gloomier past prognostications?

The authors suggest that the answer to this question lies in what they call “the quadruple transition.” In short, they suggest that the literature failed to understand the role of transnational actors in facilitating and institutionalizing reform and stability. Indeed, they argue that not simply are transnational actors an overlooked variable but that they are deeply connected to all of the processes within political, economic, and nation-state change. This may strike some scholars of transition in central and east Europe as a bit of a straw man. While it is certainly true that some of the early literature was notably focused on the internal dynamics of these countries, it is hard to accept the suggestion from this work that actors such as the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, or various foreign foundations have not received due attention from scholars. This does not undermine the value of the book but reflects instead a seeming need within academia to exaggerate gaps in our scholarship in order to justify our own work.

From here, a number of interesting contributions take up the issue of transnational actors and their impact on the region. The European Union is the most logical place to begin. Milada Anna Vachudova’s opening piece recaps the work from her larger study *Europe Undivided* (2005) and speaks about the ways in which debates over European Union enlargement provided active and passive leverage among the candidate states. This work is somewhat general since it reprises a much larger study, but it provides a useful overview of the role that the European Union has played in the region over the past twenty years.

The subsequent contributions are more focused. Nicole Lindstrom's piece on human trafficking in the Balkans looks at differences among transnational actors and how they have approached this problem. She asserts that the relative power of those organizations has determined which kinds of policies have been adopted—not an earthshaking conclusion, but one that reminds us that there are competing agendas among transnational actors and that the states of central and eastern Europe have to balance domestic preferences with the competing demands and resources of international actors. One is reminded repeatedly of the ongoing debates within political science of the ways sovereignty can be compromised or “outsourced,” willingly or unwillingly, by weak states. In contrast, Jacoby's chapter on institutional change provides a succinct yet detailed discussion of the role of particular actors as partners with international governmental organizations in pursuing reform, concluding with five concrete observations about how such partnerships can be successful. Additional chapters address the role of banking reform and monetary union, as well as the ongoing role of long-standing transnational actors like the Catholic Church.

As with most edited volumes, the material here does not easily fit together or conform to a single theme. A great deal of richness can, of course, emerge from such a wide array of scholarship, but the material feels somewhat cobbled together and unconnected at points. Readers interested in these topics are certain to find a great deal of information here, and the work is valuable as a starting point for anyone wishing to gain a better sense of this field to date. That said, had the editors directed their contributors toward the practical or policy-based implications of their research, akin to what Wade Jacoby has done, the volume could have reached a much wider audience and helped influence discussions outside academia.

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Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities: Representation of Powers and Needs. By Mariusz Czepczyński. Re-materialising Cultural Geography. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2008. ix, 209 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$99.95, hard bound.

With this new book, Mariusz Czepczyński offers interested readers a sophisticated account of the transformations experienced in urban environments across central, east, and south-east Europe. With conceptual richness and clarity, Czepczyński skillfully integrates both theoretical and empirical material and guards against exaggeration, simplification, or stereotyping.

The stimulus for the book came from seminars held at Queen Mary University of London and Hull University in 2003. The material, though, is the product of years of devoted research in libraries and fieldwork in the former East Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The book is organized into six chapters: the first two providing the theoretical and methodological background of the study of cultural landscapes; the third introducing the socialist legacy; the fourth and fifth observing the transformation—the former focused on cleansing, the latter on new landscape symbols; and the final chapter summarizing the key points and lessons. Although the final chapter is the shortest, it is intense and is filled with the author's insight. Czepczyński exposes the dialectic, interconnected, and sometimes cyclical or circular nature of our observed and perceived reality. Layered with new meanings, a multitude of opposing forces and ideologies are in the works—Christianity, Marxism, nationalism, modernity and post-modernity, re-iconography; proclaimed humanism versus oppression, familiarity versus autocracy, universalism versus localism, cosmopolitanism versus isolationism, communism versus capitalism, civic discourse versus market and consumption, scars versus emancipation! The dimensions and dichotomies are endless—almost dizzying—but necessary and enlightening at the same time.

The two theoretical chapters are bursting with references used to define the term *landscape* and present the various disciplinary and historical approaches, for example, as art, territory, and meaning (i.e., as a system of communications). The author reviews the