

Clark and Priestley might be actually successful in attracting the attention of readers previously discouraged by complicated EU jargon. The experience of Clark, who is currently dealing with communications for Parliament, was of special value in building up the central message of the book. The variety of anecdotes of life inside Parliament and other tools that were used to attract the reader, such as ranking the top 10 speeches (pp. 180–190) and the glossary of budgetary jargon (pp. 289–291), enhanced this goal.

*Agata Gostyńska*

**LÁSZLÓ CSABA, JÓZSEF FOGARASI, GÁBOR HUNYA:**  
**European Integration: First Experiences and Future Challenges.**  
 Oradea/Nagyvárad: Partium Press, 2011, 271 pp.

The systemic transitions that took place after 1989 followed various trajectories across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), yet a number of similarities exist among the countries that successfully switched to democracy and free market economies. Among these are a unique group of states, the Visegrad countries, which accomplished these goals in their own specific ways. The institutionalisation of their external relations, opening of their economies and the prospect of EU membership were fundamental in this regard.<sup>8</sup> The apparent success of transition and transformation in the Visegrad countries triggered questions about whether there is an optimal pace and sequence of reform,<sup>9</sup> how to ensure the long-term efficacy of the reform process, which mistakes to avoid<sup>10</sup> as well as which factors are conducive to a smooth progression to democracy and a market economy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A. Visvizi, “A Country Is Never on Its Own, Others Can Be Helpful. External Linkages: Institutionalization and Support of Individual States,” in: K. Żukrowska (ed.), *Transformation in Poland and in the Southern Mediterranean. Sharing Experiences*, Warsaw School of Economics/Poltext, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 60–80.

<sup>9</sup> L. Csaba, *The New Political Economy of Emerging Europe*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> P. Mihályi, *Miért beteg a magyar gazdaság?*, HVG Publishing House, Budapest, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> J. Sachs, C. Zinnes, Y. Eilat, “Patterns and Determinants of Economic Reform in Transition Economies: 1990–1998,” *CAER II Discussion Paper*, 61, Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID), February 2000.

A very relevant issue—particularly in view of the Arab Spring—that has been addressed recently is whether, to what extent, and under which conditions the experience gained by the Visegrad countries can be emulated elsewhere, for instance in the Southern Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup> It has been also argued in the literature—albeit often only implicitly—that history and culture played a significant role in defining the trajectory of the transformations in the CEE.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, research suggests the more recent communist past pre-determined the specific model of capitalism that the Visegrad countries would follow today.<sup>14</sup> Overall, the emerging scholarship on transition and transformation attests to the long-standing arguments and debates on the complexity, diversity and uniqueness of the CEE.<sup>15</sup>

The rich body of literature on the variability of systemic transition and transformation in the CEE notwithstanding, several facets of these multifaceted and nuanced processes invite further analysis, whereby a broader theoretical framing of these processes is required. The volume edited by professors László Csaba,<sup>16</sup> József Fogarasi<sup>17</sup> and Gábor Hunya<sup>18</sup> constitutes a timely and revealing contribution in this context. The volume makes an explicit effort to examine the patterns of transition and transformation in Hungary and Romania against the background of their integration with the European Union (EU). The objective of the volume is to elucidate the diverse facets of structural change in both countries that has been triggered by the forces inherent in systemic transition (Hungary) and by the prospect of EU membership (Romania). By focusing on a variety of case studies, the volume seeks to add to the still nascent theory and practice of the (political) economy of transition, and deals with questions about the historical, cultural and social aspects of the transitions.

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<sup>12</sup> See: K. Żukrowska (ed.), *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> M. Lavigne, *The Economics of Transition: From Socialist Economy to Market Economy*, Macmillan Press, London, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> B. Farkas, “The Central and Eastern European Model of Capitalism,” *Post-Communist Economies*, vol. 23, no. 1, March 2011, pp. 15–34.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance: M. Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” *New York Review of Books*, vol. 31, no. 7, 26 April 1984; and T.G. Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*, Vintage Books, New York, 1990.

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*European Integration* consists of five major parts, each containing three to five essays. Part One offers a comprehensive view of the process of European integration and current developments in the EU as seen from and experienced by Hungary and Romania. Parts Two to Five engage with more specific issues pertinent to transition and transformation in both countries with a significant amount of weight given to agriculture, regional development and organisational change at the corporate level as well as to knowledge-production. The strength of the volume consists of its comprehensive, unbiased and methodologically differentiated approach to the subject. Another important observation is that the majority of the authors succeed at employing a valid comparative perspective in their research, thus making their argument, on the one hand, relevant and, on the other hand, interesting to readers unfamiliar with the broader socio-economic contexts of Hungary and Romania.

Part One opens with an essay by Gábor Hunya on the economic situation in Romania before and after the global financial crisis. The developments in Romania are discussed as part and parcel of the developments in the other CEE countries. László Csaba next poses several questions about the nature of the global financial crisis and its implications for the CEE region. These apparently simple, yet highly critical questions, form the thread of a compact discussion on what Europe is about, what the limits to solidarity are, and how to conceive of the “new normalcy” in Europe following the global financial crisis. From a similar perspective, Daniel Dăianu, examines the root causes of the financial and economic crisis. In the discussion that unfolds, Dăianu dwells on questions of ethics, vested interests and the distribution of economic power and their role in fuelling the crisis. The rather broad spectrum in Part One becomes more focused in its concluding contribution devoted to Romanian rural areas and their development in the context of European integration and the global crisis. Specifically, the author, Maria Vincze, addresses the multifaceted and correlated dilemmas of employment, territoriality and infrastructure in rural development in Romania.

Part Two raises the question of the challenges that Hungary and Romania face today as members of the EU. The background of this discussion is formed by a hypothesis of the EU as a “continental state” (Gusztáv Molnár). The historical approach adopted by the author allows him to highlight the contradictions inherent in the process of European integration. It is in this context that István L. Szakáli explains the historically-determined mechanisms behind cross-border cooperation in the CEE. The variability and paradoxes of

European integration in the CEE become particularly striking in a paper on Szekelyland by Árpád Szabó. This anthropological study of the socio-economic specificities of a Hungarian ethnic minority inhabiting the centre of Romania reminds the reader that the CEE has a distinctive history and culture, and that regional differences play a substantial role in defining the paths of growth across the region.

The connection between exchange rate movements and the volume of agricultural exports has been largely neglected in the scholarship on systemic transition in the CEE, irrespective of the fact that agricultural transition forms a significant part of the transformation in the CEE. In order to address this shortcoming in the literature, in the next part of the volume, József Fogarasi develops a gravity model to estimate the impact of exchange rate volatility on Romanian agri-food exports over the period 1999–2008. Subsequently, policy-recommendations are drawn up. The question of agricultural transition is also approached from the perspective of the digital divide and its ramifications for the prospects of rural development in Romania (Zoltán Zakota). The discussion concludes with a comprehensive argument on the process of adjusting the Romanian agricultural sector to the EU structures during the Romanian accession to the EU (Sándor Elek and József Fogarasi).

A thematically different approach to the notion of challenges and prospects of systemic transition and transformation in view of EU integration is offered in Part Four of the volume. Here, the authors, including Hajnalka Fekete, Hajnalka Kánya, Dan Câdea and Jolán A. Gáspár, focus explicitly on the performance of business organisations, and specifically on the question of enhancing a company's performance and improving its competitiveness by drawing on a number of case studies specific to the Romanian business environment. In a similar fashion, Part Five raises the interconnected issues of knowledge production (László Fekete), the role of experts and non-experts (Erzsébet Szász) and the prospects of young graduates on the Romanian labour market (András Györgybiró and Tünde Kinter). Overall, the reader acquires an informative insight into the specificities of the Romanian landscape in times of ongoing systemic transition.

Undeniably, this volume represents a collection of essays and papers that in a methodologically diversified way address a variety of questions pertinent to systemic transition and transformation in Hungary and Romania. The volume succeeds in highlighting the versatility of the issues, challenges and prospects these countries face. Simultaneously, the volume offers comparative insight into

the rest of the CEE region. The style of narration varies throughout the book, though the authors maintain an unbiased stance to issues and topics discussed. Overall, the publication grants the reader the opportunity to understand the variability of the unfinished processes of transition and transformation in Hungary and Romania. Due to the application of a comparative perspective to the majority of the contributions included in the volume, several papers will constitute useful research material for further and more detailed study on the changeable patterns of the political economy of transition and transformation in the CEE. In this sense, the volume will be of interest to researchers, academics and students who focus in their work on the mechanisms, processes, and contingencies of the transition to democracy and a free market economy in CEE and elsewhere.

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