

all those who wish to familiarize themselves with what is going on in applied time series research. As such it would be an excellent complement to a standard econometric textbook in graduate or advanced undergraduate courses, and it would serve as a useful reference for empirical research workers. It is certainly comprehensive, well organized and remarkably well written.

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The New Political Economy of Emerging Europe, L. Csaba. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest (2007). 395 pp., €40, ISBN 9789630584593

H. Gabrisch, J. Hölscher, The Successes and Failures of Economic Transformation: The European Experience, Palgrave Macmillan, London/Basingstoke (2006)., xiv+187 pp., £55, ISBN: 1-4039-3493-2

T. Mickiewicz, Economic Transition in Central Europa and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Palgrave Macmillan, London/Basingstoke (2005)., xviii+214 pp., £55, ISBN: 1-4039-4162-9

While the academic interest in transition economics has somewhat declined, the publication of textbook-style monographs on post-communist economic transformation goes on. The three books under review add to the older ones by Åslund (2002), Gros and Steinherr (1995, 2004), Lavigne (1995, 1999), Pomfret (2002) and Roland (2000). They differ in length and coverage and provide different perspectives on the transformation process and its analysis.

The book by Tomasz Mickiewicz combines an overview of the main themes in the economics of transition with fresh quantitative analyses. It consists of two parts of roughly the same size. The first, which is largely based on secondary analysis, discusses the functioning of the command economy and the situation at the outset of transition, the relationship between the different elements of economic transition, the main issues in macroeconomic stabilization, the key trade-offs involved in privatization and the most important labour market trends. The second part of the book presents new empirical results on the sources of the output decline after the start of transition, the fiscal effects of economic reform, the determinants of financial sector performance, the nexus between democracy and economic reform and the determinants of economic growth in the transition countries.

Most of Mickiewicz's empirical analyses converge in suggesting that mainstream economic and political reforms have paid off. Among other things, he finds that the delay of macroeconomic stabilization had a negative impact on the lengths of the transformational recession, that inflation has had a negative effect on economic growth and that economic reform has resulted in financial repression and higher fiscal deficits in the short run, but in an expansion of credit and improved fiscal performance in the medium run. Mickiewicz also presents strong quantitative evidence that democracy is good for economic reform and economic growth. Distinguishing between different elements of economic reform, he shows that democracy is most important for external liberalization.

Another interesting empirical finding is that the returns to democracy are diminishing, i.e. that the effect of democratisation on economic reform weakens once a certain threshold of political freedoms is reached.

Mickiewicz's book is well structured and clearly written and covers the key issues of post-communist economic transition in a concise and balanced manner. It also stands out by its strong and consistent use of figures and EBRD indicators for all the transition countries covered by the EBRD throughout most of the book. The empirical analyses are convincingly embedded in a discussion of the state of research. They provide interesting new findings and give a good impression of the technical problems of quantitative research on the issues under analysis.

As Mickiewicz himself concedes, the book suffers from some minor gaps in coverage, especially from the lack of chapters on corporate governance and EU accession. However, the main limitation of Mickiewicz's book is a different one. Given his knowledge of the field and the wealth of his findings, it is a pity that Mickiewicz is rather brief on some of the broader issues raised by his analysis, such as the factors underlying the different reform trajectories, the policy consequences for different groups of transition countries or the future of transition economics. A closer examination of these issues would have helped to put the findings of the book into a broader perspective.

The volume by Hubert Gabrisch and Jens Hölscher has roughly the same size as Mickiewicz's and has been published in the same series. Intended as a graduate textbook, it features chapters on the meaning and measurement of transition, the 'Washington Consensus' vs. the evolutionary-institutionalist approach, financial sector reform, privatization and competition, labour market trends, external liberalization, income inequality and EU accession, as well as a chapter with case studies on East Germany, Hungary, Russia and China.

Gabrisch and Hölscher thus address most of the standard stuff in transition economics as well as some often neglected issues, such as income inequality, the relationship between economic growth and unemployment or the nexus between trade liberalization and exchange rate policy. Like Mickiewicz, they do so in a clear and accessible manner. Compared to Mickiewicz's book, however, the book by Gabrisch and Hölscher features much less original research and results. It is also less balanced on a number of counts. First, the country coverage is uneven and differs strongly among chapters. While most chapters focus on the European transition countries, including Russia, others include China and the Central Asian successor states of the Soviet Union as well. A second reason why the book looks unbalanced is the two final chapters. The chapter on EU accession largely consists of an analysis of competition policy in the light of EU accession and a case study on fiscal transparency in Poland and does not add up to an overview of accession process and the role of the EU. Similarly, the case studies in the concluding chapter are interesting in themselves, but are only loosely related to the rest of the analysis. This leads to a final weakness of the book—the lack of a guiding narrative linking the different chapters and providing some kind of overall message. It testifies to this weakness that the book does not have a concluding chapter and remains rather vague with regard to 'the successes and failures of economic transition' to which the title refers.

László Csaba's book differs from those by Mickiewicz and Gabrisch/Hölscher in that it takes a broader perspective and ultimately bids farewell to transitology. According to Csaba, in the countries of the former Soviet bloc the transition 'from plan to market' has given way to new challenges such as globalization, europeanization, institution-building or economic development. Moreover, he argues that these new challenges differ strongly among the former transition countries, so that it no longer makes sense to lump these cases together and to regard them as a natural country sample for analysis. In line with these arguments, Csaba's book starts with a long empirical overview on the different reform trajectories of the post-communist countries. This overview is followed by chapters on the developmental dimension of post-communist change, on globalization (or 'transnationalization', as the author prefers to say), on europeanization and the 'post-enlargement' EU, on privatization and regulation and on institutions and economic growth. In addition, the book features two country chapters on Russia and China, respectively, which contrast those countries' experience with that of the East-Central European mainstream. All chapters are held together by Csaba's consistent commitment to, and use of, a neo-institutionalist approach, dubbed the 'new political economy', that complements standard economic analysis by insights from various strands of institutionalism inside and outside economics.

The three books under analysis thus provide different takes on post-communist economic transformation. They complement one another and the other available textbooks nicely and raise interesting issues for further analysis.

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