

Reflections on the Case Studies

1. What do I want (and not necessarily expect) from case studies?

They should help us to become aware of complexity and even excess – where reality goes beyond the effects of over-determined structures, showing us, how a specified, singular society evolves under the impact of strategic interventions (of neo-liberal policies which follow a general pattern, while varying it). In these cases, the case studies should exhibit, how the singular societies of Eastern Europe have evolved under the impact, first, of the EU policies propagating and imposing neo-liberal „reforms“, and then, later on, under the impact of the crisis management of the EU (and the US). This should include perceptions of and reactions to such policies within these countries – among the elites, as well as in different categories of the people. The complementarity, convergence and competition between the EU and the US is of special interest here, acknowledging the fact that the threat of war and the actual waging of war has been forcefully acting as a unifier between these imperial forces.

2. Specific questions to be focused upon

Two questions seem to be of central importance in this context:

- How are the neo-liberal interventions structured and implemented, how were they intended to function (officially, as well as unofficially), and how have they effectively turned out to work?
- Can we make out a general pattern, a common denominator, in this respect?
- Which have been the specific effects and reactions within those societies? Who have been (and defined themselves) as the winners and the losers? Where (socially and locally) has there been spontaneous acceptance, and where have there been forms of resistance – and could this be mobilized as a resource for counter-strategies and for mobilizing solidarity?
- How can we articulate this political conjuncture in the specific, lastly singular political and cultural language of each country?

3. General findings

Considered as a whole, the case studies have brought us some important insights:

- The process of capitalist transformation under neo-liberal orientation in Eastern Europe did not start in the 1990s only – its specific pre-histories go back to the 1980s, i.e. to the beginning hegemony of the neo-liberal political model of capitalist politics in the West (→ Domagoj Mihaljević);
- the capacity of societies to perceive, to react, and to resist – or even to struggle for alternatives – is deeply rooted in their „national“ histories (tending to reach back into the 19th century) (→ Marica Frangakis);
- overarching global problems are being addressed by specific political strategies of intervention, as implemented in the CEE countries – financialization and MNC expansion as an occasion for land grabbing (→ Tina Schivatchev, Mirjam Büdenbender);
- the EU is pursuing a specific policy of subalternization which combines general neo-liberal „structural reforms“ with specific policies addressing global needs (→ Alexander Kravchuk).

4. More specific findings

a) Under the perspective of the transitions which have been brought about in the CEE

countries we clearly see that the net result of these interventions is, in fact, similar:

- a re-accentuation of hierarchies in the trans-national markets has occurred, markedly differentiating between EU single market access and global markets' impacts;
- a down-scaling in these hierarchies has been effected for all these countries;
- the polarization of the work-force pioneered in the CEE countries has been successfully „re-imported“ into all of the so-called core countries;
- in the populations subjected to these process the most general result seems to be a situation of „limbo“, i.e. of des-orientation and passive half-acceptance even of very difficult situations.

b) When looking for the potential for social and political mobilization created by these developments, two opposite trends become visible:

- there certainly are relevant potentials for an over-arching trade-union type of interest defense on the side of workers (as wage earners), as well as for an integrative political defense of human and citizens' rights (esp. on the side of women and migrant workers, ...);
- there is also a considerable potential for a sub-alternate mobilization, functioning on authoritarian and “identitarian” terms (and facilitating new types of authoritarian mass mobilization).

(The cases of Greece and the Ukraine seem to exemplify opposite uses which maybe made of this potential.)

5. Questions for further research

A good number of questions will require further research:

- to start with more closely looking to the gender dimension of these transition processes – remembering the strong gender dimension in the transition processes in Portugal, Spain and Greece since the mid-1970s,
- and the relations between the official (and unofficial) division of labour among participating countries and the kind of division of labour practiced within the respective countries;
- and continuing with the question of the structural difference between the former COMECON countries and the countries emerging out of former Yugoslavia (concerning the existing forms of a transnational division of labour between them (hierarchical vs. hyper-hierarchical?), finally reaching
- to the question how the internal division of labour between sectors etc. has linked up with the division of labour between countries.