

Introduction

The current issue of *Palimpsest* presents texts based on the presentations and discussions which took place on 4-5 March 2011 in Krakow during the 10th International Postgraduate Conference on Central and Eastern Europe – “Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe: before, after, in the process?”. International Postgraduate Conferences on Central and Eastern Europe take place periodically in different European cities. Their initiator, inspiration and patron is University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies. The 10th Conference was organised by two student academic unions of the Jagiellonian University: those of students of sociology and of European studies.

Almost 100 researchers from different European countries discussed intra-regional commonalities and differences and regional peculiarities. The term “transformation” was chosen as the key concept for these discussions. Two decades after the fall of communism in the region, we decided to ask the question, whether the so-called transformation has been fulfilled, and whether it can ever be fulfilled. It may be that the effects of the transformation to date made only more obvious the need for another, deeper transformation, as has been expressed around the world by such contemporary movements as the Indignados, the Occupy Movement and other alter-globalist movements.

We intended to compare different aspects of regional transformation. Thus, the main topics of the 10th Conference were the following:

- Civil society in the face of transformation
- Transformation in the context of the structural and institutional aspects
- Gender – transformation
- Culture in the face of transformation
- The effects of transformation on the economy.

The presented texts focus on the persistence of the elements of the past in a changing context and on the peculiarities which result from this

dynamic. The mainstream ideology can be treated as a common theme of almost all these texts. Anna Tretiak addresses the issue of ideological socialisation in examining the “post-Soviet transformation of the Ukrainian children’s book”. Marta Brzezińska and Manuela Marin analyse the place occupied by the communist past in the contemporary ideological and cultural landscape. Brzezińska searches for commonalities in presenting the communist past in Czech, German and Polish cinema. Marin reconstructs the image of the communist past in Romania with the case of a popular newspaper. Tretiak diagnoses deep ideological changes, while Marin and Brzezińska analyse the phenomenon of nostalgia for the elements of the past, the desire to preserve rather than to reject the past. Olena Synytska presents the surprising persistence of elements of the past with the case of literary criticism in Ukraine in the 1990s.

Marko Kovačić and Antonie Doležalová focus on civil society. Despite this common issue, their perspectives can be contrasted. While Kovačić examine the role of civil society in fulfilling the transformation in Croatia and Serbia, Doležalová asks how the communist past still influences civil society in the Czech Republic. In the context of the question asked in the title of the conference, her thesis is particularly interesting. She claims that the (poor) condition of civil society in the Czech Republic cannot be explained with references to the communist past, instead perceiving such “historical” explanations as a rationalisation of “why the current development of civil society is so unsatisfactory in so many ways”. As a consequence, this inspires us to ask if we should still use the notion of transformation and what the ideology of transformation means today.

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Co-coordinator of the conference