

Editorial

The transformation of East-Central Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union is often identified with serious changes in property relations and corresponding restructuring of societies, an increase in intra-societal inequality and an adaptation to the institutional structure of the West. The field of culture appears as a derived sector in which, on the one hand, the penetration of Western practices and norms is also stated, but on the other hand, the processing of subjective perceptions and the emotional reworking of the perceived injuries is localized. This also seems compatible with ideas in which culture, and especially its nationalized and nationalizing form, serves as the remaining bracket for socio-economically drifting apart societies. Such framings of culture seem to help explaining the conspicuous nationalism in East-Central Europe.

With its focus on cultural policy in East-Central Europe, this issue takes a different perspective, asking how the transformation of the cultural scene took place, how the understanding of culture and cultural policy changed, who initiated these changes and gained interpretive sovereignty over them, and how this kind of transformation in turn had an effect on the West, offering it a new kind of engagement with experiences of globalization, which were more or less accepted and used.

In doing so, the authors must confront an evident contradiction in the research literature, in which some assume a diffusion of Western patterns, while others claim that, in contrast to the economy, the transformation in the cultural sphere followed entirely national traditions (with the interesting exception of the GDR, which was incorporated into the Federal Republic and had therefore no autonomous tradition to be followed). These astonishingly contradictory interpretations indicate that empirical evidence cannot be that far off, but rather that examples have so far been sought to illustrate preconceived interpretations. This is not surprising when one considers the enormous political charge that accompanies the interpretation of transformation, for each of these interpretations legitimizes a different policy in the present, for which the narrative shaping of the past forms the basis.

The same is true for the thematic field of cultural policy: an approach that not only connects the phenomena under investigation with a spatial format, very often the nation-state, but also takes into account the multi-scalar and interwoven situation under the

global condition, is the main way out of this trap. Transformation cannot be understood solely as a transnational process or even as a global convergence, nor is it sufficient to move to the micro-level of the local and regional or to observe solely the regulation by national legislation and institutions. Cultural policy (like many other social dimensions, for that matter) is much more complexly spatialized and each of these dimensions follows a different geography and different traditions and temporalities. As Thomas Höpel shows with the help of Polish and East German examples, this has completely opposite consequences for larger metropolises and for the countryside and smaller cities, the latter being much more dependent on subsidies from higher-level entities such as the state or the European Union or from landscapes of culture organized to sustain cultural infrastructures.

The course of the transformation is understood incompletely when taking its beginning as a zero hour in which everything starts anew as if on a tabula rasa and nothing remains as it was. On the contrary, many practices and institutional settings continued, were adapted to new social contexts or even became places of resistance against certain dimensions of the transformation - such as the Berlin Volksbühne, which Antje Dietze presents in her article.

The studies on Poland and Hungary provided by Przemysław Czapliński and Kristóf Nagy/Márton Szarvas again reveal a caesura at the nation-state level, which, after the state's withdrawal from regulating the cultural sector since the mid-2010s, led to a new kind of interference in culture and even the intention to control it with instruments of censorship and positive discrimination against national conservative tendencies. However, these efforts are by no means easy to impose, but come up against the cultural preferences of the public and the orientation of a significant part of cultural actors towards international trends, which are reinforced by their integration into patterns of European cultural policy and, above all, by the presence of new media.

Thus, the example of cultural policy in Eastern Europe since 1989 proves to be a lesson in new approaches to transnational history that is not satisfied with stating cross-border interconnections (or observing nationalization as their opposite), but instead focuses attention on the diversity of new spatializations that can offer a key to understanding global processes.

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