



EVROPAEVM



INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE CONFERENCE REPORT

Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe

Jagiellonian University, Krakow

4th– 5th March 2011

Our initial impressions were that the setting was most apt for the theme of discussion: we found that discussing transition periods in a country that is still undergoing its own metamorphosis was inspirational and enriching as an experience. Furthermore, we both agreed that the organisation and administration of the event was conducted in a professional and respectful manner. We were, though, disappointed by those speakers who had cancelled at the last minute.

The academic atmosphere aimed to be stimulating for all participants, with a wide range of topics covered, through a variety of panels and presentations focusing on five thematic units: *society (civil) in the face of transformation; Transformation in the context of the structural and institutional; Gender transformation; Culture in the face of transformation; and Effects of transformation on the economy.*

We both felt that the variety of perspectives and approaches on offer gave us new ways of viewing issues, and our own areas of research. This exposure to a diverse range of views was particularly helpful for the preparation of our own research work. It was a great benefit to acquire insights from cross-disciplinary positions about topics related to our own fields of interest.

The absence of representation from former Yugoslavia, the Baltic states, and even countries further east in central Asia and the Caucasus, might have been one potential shortcoming, though we realise that distance may have been a tangible obstacle to achieve this.

At a more inter-personal level, as participants, we acknowledged that the event was a prime opportunity to establish contacts, meet new people and exchange perspectives. Working on Polish-Slovak-Baltic 'space', we especially appreciated being able to meet experts on (and from) other 'spaces' around the region, from Hungary to Belarus and Romania. We valued the access to cross-national research, from which parallels could be drawn for our own projects. One of us found the contributions on Romanian party politics, 'black swans' of transformations, Hungarian minorities in Romania, and the *Jobbik* phenomenon, to have been especially useful.

Away from the conference hall, we both enjoyed visiting the town of Krakow, and valued the opportunity to take a guided night tour around the city, which really enhanced our understanding of the Polish historical context. The interaction between participants was also encouraged to the full by the conference organisers, with the array of dinners and coffee breaks were much appreciated as a way of mixing with people from different backgrounds but with similar interests.

In sum, the conference was highly enjoyable, intellectually stimulating, and hugely beneficial for us as scholars. We are extremely grateful to the Europaeum for supporting us so that could take full advantage of this opportunity.

This report was based on contributions by:

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