

The concluding subsection of the comparative chapter features a section entitled 'promising strategies', which are really the authors' recommendations on how to improve the implementation of soft law in the four countries. These recommendations provoke some misgivings, as the ethical assumptions behind this policy advice are not clear. Do the authors believe, for instance, that the directives ought to be implemented at all costs, or can countries have legitimate reasons for non-compliance? Second, these recommendations are of a rather technical or technocratic character, as they focus very much on administrative capacity and enforcement/application procedures, but fail to note that they can probably only work under broader socio-cultural and political-economic contexts, which are abstracted away, such as weak civic society and the weak political legitimacy of the directives. Ralf Dahrendorf famously noted that the requisite cultural changes would take about fifty years to occur in the post-communist societies. On the other hand, cultural change may be facilitated by public policies: this is probably the implicit hope of this book.

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Paul Blokker and Bruno Dallago (eds.):
Regional Diversity and Local Development in the New Member States
Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2009: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 299

In this book Paul Blokker and Bruno Dallago assemble a number of experts on the region of East Central European (ECE), who together paint a complex picture of the dynamics of local development. This is indeed an important undertaking for, as the editors rightly point out, regional development problems in ECE have received

much less attention in the literature than have similar issues in other parts of Europe. Moreover, the volume is keen to avoid over-simplifications, which are often common in the discussion on development in Europe and either insist on uniform recommendations for development based on some generalised model or simply assume that convergence will follow from implementing a common EU regulatory framework. Instead, the focus of these studies is the context-dependent interplay between different levels of governance – firm, local and regional, national and supranational – which present the local actors with a different matrix of opportunities and are in turn shaped by them. In the introduction, the editors present a variety of elements which ought to be taken into consideration when analysing such a complex phenomenon, from the differences in the institutional set-up which facilitate or obstruct linkages to the global economy, to the nature of intra-community relations and the particular legacies of each locality.

The ten studies in this volume are grouped into two sections. The first six offer a more general theoretical or comparative view of regional development in ECE, and the remaining four tackle specific issues in single national contexts. In the first section, Grzegorz Gorzelak outlines the general pattern of uneven development of different regions within the ECE after the change of regime, offering a categorisation of regions by their development trajectories into forerunners (those that used to be highly developed and maintained high levels of growth), winners (those who managed to capitalise on certain previously unutilised assets to promote growth), losers (those whose previously valued assets lost their currency in the new environment), and laggards (those who failed to make use of the new opportunities). In the same section, Petr Pavlínek builds on some of these insights to show how foreign direct investments (FDI) intervened in these dy-

namics and how the uneven distribution of FDI in spatial and sectoral terms contributed to uneven growth in the ECE, but also presented the 'winners' with distinct challenges of maintaining their competitive potential. The focus of the studies and their level of generality vary substantially: while Grzegorz Kolodko focuses almost exclusively on the Polish experience in order to derive lessons for other countries undergoing similar transformation, Peter Huber offers a truly comparative overview of labour market aspects of regional development across the EU27.

The second section contains similarly diverse studies. While the chapters on Poland and Hungary focus on the reform of public administration and the devolution of development powers to the local governments, Sorin Ioniță's article on Romania presents a broader overview of developmental challenges from the standpoint of the country as a whole. The difference is not only in their choice of the subject. The unspoken premise of former two studies is that devolution of competencies to the local level is necessary to ensure balanced development of different regions in the face of growing inequality. By contrast, Ioniță puts forth a controversial claim favouring competitiveness over redistribution. He maintains that, given the overall state of underdevelopment in the new member states and relatively low levels of inequality compared to other parts of Europe, it is both desirable and politically feasible to focus the resources on those areas where such policies promise the highest rates of return in terms of growth. Moreover, the last chapter in this section contests even the assumption of growing inequality in ECE. Instead, Bičanić and Pribičević demonstrate that in Croatia, when measured in per capita terms, the differences in regional development have remained stable, but that repeated population movements contributed to an image of growing inequality as people flocked to the bet-

ter-performing regions – either of their own will or under the pressure of war.

While this particular trajectory might be unique to Croatia, it reveals some of the major difficulties the reader encounters in trying to understand the connections between different contributions in this volume. In their effort to avoid over-simplification, the editors err on the side of complexity, at the expense of coherence. *Regional Diversity and Local Development* is thus much more about diversity than about development, to the point that the various contributors do not even try to formulate a common definition of what development should mean or what 'local' ought to represent. This is nowhere more obvious than in the two chapters on local governance by Éva Ruttkay and Anna Gašior-Niemiec, who offer us a glimpse of the tortuous search of the Polish and Hungarian governments for the adequate 'unit' of local development and express doubts about the possibility of reconciling the decentralisation of authority and the empowerment of local stakeholders with the current distribution of expertise and ability to foster development in broader terms, beyond 'decorative works on local schools' (p. 215).

If the understanding of 'local' is ambiguous, the meaning of 'development' is subject to extensive negotiation throughout this volume. This debate over the meaning of these terms takes place throughout the volume. While this is an important discussion in its own right, it rarely takes centre stage, and the chapter contributors never address each other directly. Is balanced local development an aim in itself, or should it be the function of overall development? Chiara Guglielmetti insists that both redistribution and competitiveness ought to remain part of the EU regional policy, but warns that there is not necessarily any complementarity between the two. By contrast, Gorzelak and Ioniță are quite emphatic in favouring efficiency over 'equality' for the sake of overall devel-

opment. Nor is the participants' position on how to achieve this very clear. Aleksander Surdej, in the first chapter to the volume, maintains that we now live in a post-industrial era, which has 'brought an end to development policy ideas according to which successful local development depends upon region's capacity to attract large-scale public or private investments' (p. 38). He recommends focusing on the development of internal networks and less tangible assets such as trust, loyalty, and identity. The empirical reality of the ECE, however, seems to suggest the opposite: data by Gorzelak show that the 'winner' regions, i.e. those that succeeded in utilising their assets for development, are the re-industrialised ones, or, as Pavlínek clearly shows, those that did succeed in attracting large-scale private and public investment – of the right kind.

Part of the reason that these important debates are marginalised in the volume is that, in spite of its title, the main level of analysis remains the nation. We get to learn very little about the strategies of particular localities, and the ways in which they compare across national boundaries, or, for that matter, to what extent the concerns outlined above – equality and growth, administrative reform and migration – are commonly shared across the region or are just Romanian, Hungarian or Croatian idiosyncrasies. Indeed, it is never made clear why – apart from the general dearth of literature on this area – the issues of regional development in the new member states are of particular importance. What is most striking is that on the few occasions that the authors do make explicit comparisons with the 'old' Europe, we find out that the differences are in fact not that relevant or, where there are important distinctions to be made, that, as Huber notes, they do not always run along the East-West divide (p. 149).

Overall, while there is much to be said of the merits of the individual contributions, the volume as a whole could have

profited from a more disciplined focus on particular themes. The controversy of growth and competitiveness versus balance and redistribution is only one possibility. Some of the contributions in this volume pose truly poignant questions that could shake up many of the assumptions in our current understanding of local development. Is local development really best served on the local level? What is the value of manufacturing investments in our 'post-industrial society'? Is investment in general skills and education always valuable in its own right, or, as Ioniță and Pavlínek has suggested, can it also be misdirected or even a waste of resources? In this volume, these centrally important issues figure as marginal discussions or afterthoughts, but they are still what leaves the most lasting impression on the reader. We can only hope that at least some of the authors will choose to pursue them further in the future.

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**Hana Hašková and Zuzana Uhde (eds.):
*Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society: Continuity and Change.***

Prague 2009: Institute of Sociology,
Academy of Sciences of the Czech
Republic, 245 pp.

This book represents a comprehensive analysis of women's status within Czech society, spanning from the late 1940s to the present. The categories for analysis are viewed through the lens of 'citizenship', defined in the Preface by Hana Hašková and Zuzana Uhde as, 'rights and responsibilities, as a route to political and economic participation, social security, and cultural integration' (p. 9). It is important to recognise this analysis of women is constructed mainly in regards to social citizenship. This