THEORY FROM THE EAST?

DOUBLE POLARIZATIONS VERSUS DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

by **Don Kalb** illustration **Karin Sunvisson**

abstract

The escalation around Ukraine calls for a larger historical re-assessment of social change in Eastern Europe – and indeed of the European project at large. The current moment of historical re-assessment requires a full-fledged competitor to liberal theory. The article will explore how a theory of 'double polarizations' anchored in global anthropology and Marxism, and with a relational theory of culture and politics at its heart, can explain unexpected outcomes that must now appear as a shock to liberal audiences.

KEY WORDS: Neo-liberalism, globalization, nationalism.

This paper will be an exercise in global anthropology. More precisely: a global anthropology of Marxian inspiration. Such an exercise is called for because of the general acceleration of time and the accelerated compression of space in the last 25 years; and because of the crises and antagonisms that the process is producing in some places, including in Central and Eastern Europe. Such an analysis is enabled by the fact that we are not in denial anymore, as was often the case before 2008, that these ongoing accelerations are intimately associated with the shifting organization of capital accumulation, as David Harvey reminded us already in 1989.[1] Capitalism is back: As perceived fact, as crisis, and as analysis. We are beyond the "modernities at large" and "cultural hybridities" approaches of the 1990s. And far beyond "the end of history".

I emphasize once more the timing: these time-space accelerations emerged in the last 25 years. It is also 25 years ago that the Wall came down, socialism collapsed, and the unimaginable spectacle of the crumbling of the Soviet Union all by itself was beginning to play itself out. CEE and post-socialism are concepts of territory and periodization, in fact of path-dependent territorialized histories. But it is imperative to understand that our object itself is part and parcel of those very accelerations, rather than just a place. It is fully entangled, as conjuncture and as socio-territorial designation, indeed as a set of social relations, with the accelerated compression of time and space that emerged as purportedly national social economies were transformed into networked tiers and sub tiers of a globalizing capitalism unbound. Its properties are not just local but are specific and specifying local inflections of the key properties of the global process. While wrapped in local costume, much of their contents and substance are of global making. It is this complex dialectic that we need to grasp.

Anthropologists are interested by inclination and calling in how lives, biographies, social relationships and everyday orientations of common people change, and in how that change is experienced

The Neoliberal Circle of Life

and signified. In a sense, my discipline can be seen as a proud inheritor of the radical democratic tradition. Rather than privileging elite actors, leading institutions, highbrow rules, 'the West', and so on – and identifying with their concerns – anthropologists insist that if we want to understand real societies and actual histories, we need to talk to common people, to herders, housewives, poor elderly citizens, blue collar workers, secretaries, as well as to the great 'movers and doers' in history.

My anthropology of post socialist CEE is Marxian among other things because I am keen on developing a conception of how common lives have been transformed, not just by being local lives, but by being part, indeed a particular part, of this global universalization of capitalist accumulation over the last generation. I am convinced that the concepts class, labor, and social reproduction make crucial social relations visible in a way that concepts with other pedigrees often do not do so well. That is because in a proper Marxian approach, these are relational concepts, tools of vision that focus on ineluctable social relationships and interactions; relations and interactions that people have to enter into on an often daily basis in order to live, give life, and survive. A relational Marxian approach to common lives asks how the lived valuations of such lives in common are shaped by, and shape, the valorization requirements of capital; and how they are shaped by, and shape, their particular socio-territorial insertion into the globalizing value regime of capitalism.[2] I note therefore that capitalism, rather than merely being something up and out there – which it also is – is a common social relation too, although one where the benefits and the surpluses generated are appropriated privately and unequally (after which they may or may not be redistributed).

This Marxian exercise in global anthropology has a particular goal. I deploy it to make a set of crises, contradictions, and antagonisms visible that lead to a very different vision of 'liberal democratic transition' in Central and Eastern Europe than we commonly hear about. Democratic transition is depicted in the press and the academic consensus as a great success. This means two things: state communism has not come back – the liberal transformation of state and economy has been consolidated – and these countries have been or are being integrated into the EU.

WHAT THIS LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE with its sanitized focus on legal-institutional outcomes cannot see is what the anthropologist Jonathan Friedman has called 'double polarization'[3]: the combined social and cultural polarizations of societies in the context of the globalization of capital accumulation and the associated evaporation of 'popular sovereignty'. This double polarization works to pulverize the 'liberal center' and to generate 'ugly' identity politics. This is an *integral* part of current capitalist transformation. As societies become ever more unequal, and middle classes fragment into a large category of downwardly mobile people on the one hand and a smaller segment of the upwardly mobile on the other, the partisan politics of cultural identity tends to take over from the inclusive politics of (re)distribution. Even more, social inequality tends to generate identities among those who perceive themselves as downwardly mobile that reject key aspects of a liberal pragmatic outlook in favor of an ethno-religious, mostly right wing, neo-nationalist populism, driven by a re-embracing of imagined traditions, of a holist 'us' versus 'them'. The liberalism of increasingly secluded (imagined) elites, simultaneously, tends to transform into an embrace of natural hierarchy, with educated liberal governing classes legitimately looking down upon the 'folk rabble'. This is the cultural polarization that Friedman predicts. While this is a general process in Europe,[4] Central and Eastern European societies have been affected a *fortiori*. What does 'theory from the East' in a Marxian anthropological mode tell us about these processes? Which tendencies can we identify? And which explanatory gains can we achieve that are beyond the reach of the canon of 'democratic transition'? The answer is, we will not only start to understand actual lives, but also the systemic drift toward populist and often neo-nationalist politics that liberal audiences are so puzzled and scared about.[5]

Relational realism versus liberal realism

The local/global relational realism of my approach runs radically counter to the dead but dominant international relations doctrine called realism. This doctrine assumes that self-interested sovereign states are the key building blocks of the modern world – just like methodological individualism, its counterpart, assumes that sovereign individuals (citizens of those states) form the other key building bloc. The doctrine is a variety of what social researchers call methodological nationalism, and a favored axiom of conventional liberal thinking – which is another reason for the necessity of a Marxian global anthropology.

In early 2015, when this text was drafted, the EU was faced with three major crises: ISIS in Iraq/Syria, Greece, and Ukraine. In analyzing these crises the position taken, for instance by the press, has been that they had nothing to do with each other. Why? The correct liberal answer would be that they were happening in totally different and largely disconnected bounded spaces, indeed, different *cultural* spaces: Europe proper, Eurasian Europe, the Middle East – all with different ostensible burning issues. The argument would go like this: There is an Islamic militarized uprising in Iraq and Syria, associated with 'Islamic fundamentalism'; there is a sovereign debt crisis plus left-populist mobilization in Greece; and there is a covert Russian meddling in Ukraine after the creation of a more West-leaning democratic government. Greece is in the Eurozone; Ukraine is at best part of the European 'Eastern partnership'; ISIS is in the Middle East and an issue for NATO and for the policing of Islamic minorities in Western Europe. For liberal realism this suffices: These problems are different and unrelated.

ON MORE SUSTAINED SCRUTINY, however, liberal realism swiftly collapses. On a deeper level all three cases are closely historically interconnected, which is also one reason why they are happening simultaneously. In this paper we cannot deal with ISIS and Greece at length. But do let me point out that, like Ukraine,

ISIS is a case of a civil war entangled with foreign informal military encroachments by uncomfortable 'allies' of 'the West'. Both these civil wars and encroachments are the outcomes of mass mobilizations and failed revolutions (I will explain this in the case of Ukraine below), which were absorbed by regional rivalries and intensely manipulated by covert elite networks. In both cases, these elite networks violently scheme to insert themselves favorably in global/local accumulation opportunities. Both spaces have also been deeply neoliberalized and indeed plundered. And in both cases 'the West' is heavily, though of course differentially, implicated in their varied processual unfolding. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the mass mobilizations that set it all in motion, the Maidan of 2013/14 and the Arab Spring of 2011/12, were co-occasioned by two global 'events': the financial crisis of the West and the shift of global production to China. Both 'events', which are in reality longer running social processes, put tremendous pressure on these territories and states over time, blocking their developmental opportunities, focusing social power within the respective 'corrupt' state-classes cum oligarchs, driving up the price of daily necessities while depressing wages, and pushing the politics of neoliberalization and austerity. Ergo: there are very significant deeper connections of global structuration plus a significant elective affinity of causes, processes, and forms. The actual translation of those processes into locally embedded 'events' of course differs, and needs to be seen as a case of 'structured contingency'.

"THE MAIDAN REBELLION EMERGED IN RESPONSE TO INDEBTEDNESS AND LOAN-OFFERS BY INTERNATIONAL BIG PLAYERS SUCH AS THE EU AND THE IMF."

GREECE AND UKRAINE offer an even more rewarding reflection on connections. On the surface they even seem less connected and comparable. In Greece there was no coup, no civil war, and no Russian informal military encroachment. However, both cases unfolded in an almost synchronized way around extraordinary mass mobilizations in highly oligarchic societies and 'captured states'. The Maidan rebellion emerged in response to indebtedness and loan-offers by international big players such as the EU and the IMF, just like the anti-austerity mass mobilizations in Greece. In both cases big, indeed revolutionary, shifts in governing parties were secured at the ballot box. Both their subsequent governmental missions were about attacking the oligarchic structure of social life ('corruption'), including the nexus between oligarchs and the state, the financial nexus of the state, and the renegotiation of their international alliances. Even more fundamentally, both countries had seen their GDP shrink in a short span of years – Ukraine since 1992, with double the reduction over a period five times longer than in Greece, which has been in a slow collapse since 2010. While Greece is now uniquely described as a 'humanitarian tragedy', unemployment and outmigration have been rampant in both, as is the extent of poverty and inequality. Finally, both societies have experienced this as a slowly unfolding social implosion driven to a considerable extent by conspiring world players acting against their sovereignty.

True, the political signification of mass mobilization has been on opposite sides, Ukraine on the neoliberal-Right, Greece on the socialist Left; and the perceived enemies of the nation are opposite ones. In addition, Ukraine is not in the EU let alone the Eurozone; and Russia plays a different role in (the imagination of) each. For policy-makers and commentators it is such differences that are paramount. But for an anthropologist who talks to peasants and industrial workers, the fundamental similarities – social entropy, poverty, aggravating inequalities – may be more significant. Crucially, while both countries had had a good few years of economic growth and social optimism from 2003 to 2008, they were hit hard by the global financial crises. Indeed, growth in Ukraine and Greece had been similarly dependent on inflows of Western finance, flows that stopped and were then reversed as creditors called in their loans and withdrew to defend their financial home bases after 2008. This was the direct prelude to crisis and mass mobilization.

METHODOLOGICAL nationalism and the liberal realism of 'no connections' are programmatically blind to these shared and basic global social relations. They also fail to picture the further local/global unfolding of crises within particular habitats rocked by externally imposed punctuations as anything other than local facts, interior to the territory, 'facts on the ground' rather than the grounded facts of world history. In the liberal narrative, such 'facts' become construed as a typical local failure, a flaw, a deficiency. To talk about such a deficiency, current affairs authors often resort to the concept of culture. Cultural difference from an imagined Western culture or from a supposedly homogeneous culture of modernity becomes the general background explanation for more empirically graspable inconvenient 'facts' or 'events. Among such facts and events, 'corruption' has been one of the top candidates for some 300 years since the liberal capitalist revolutions in North Western Europe 'against old corruption' began transforming the world. Significantly, 'corruption' is always by definition the property of 'others', of ancient regimes, of non-liberal political cultures, of traditional 'strong men' politics, and so on. This remains so even when 'corruption' in the speculative heart of the financial engine in Wall Street arguably served as a proximate cause for the present crises. Local upheavals were no mere local accident: casualties among the sovereign subprime borrowers, including both Greece and Ukraine, were always already scripted in case of a full *kladderadatsch* in the global financial system. I have no doubt that in September 2007 somewhere in the offices of Goldman Sachs a young analyst added Ukraine and Greece high on his list of coming sovereign casualties. What was that about 'no connections'?

I am interested in developing a global anthropological vision that helps to see and then explain at the same time both the liberal denials of connections as well as the liberal lack of understanding of global/local capitalist contradictions. I am interested in the so-called 'successful liberal transitions' of Central and Eastern Europe, where elite as well as popular willingness to integrate into the liberal capitalist world was in no doubt. And I would like to show that their supposed success is more of a conceit than the liberal vision is ready to acknowledge, precisely because of the denial of contradictions and connections, and the inability or unwillingness to understand the deep and dynamic anthropological connection between the polarization of classes and the deepening political polarizations of antagonistic and agonistic imagined identities.

Liberalism, as Hirschman[6] said, is a philosophy of all good institutional things going together: markets, rule of law, open society, civil society, democracy, individualism, individual freedom, prosperity. This is liberalism's well-known virtuous circle. It has no conception of possible internal contradictions within and among its own theory and practices. It must therefore always summon up *external cultural difference* to explain delay or divergence from its lofty expectations of collective uplift and popular enlightenment. To do this is one of the core political functions of the culture concept. It is also what makes the denial of connections essential for the trick of the culture argument to work, as Eric Wolf knew well.[7] For the discussion of *internal contradictions*, then, liberalism always needed the radical counter-tradition, in particular the Marxists. The Marxists would point at class and its spatial reconfigurations as the core internal dynamic contradiction of liberal capitalism. But the Marxists, albeit with very significant exceptions, were often too prone to get distracted by purely economic contradictions. This is the place where I want to pick up to develop some further thoughts. Can we use class, in an expanded and local/global sense[8], to help explain the processes and outcomes in political culture and social relations in Central and Eastern Europe – double polarizations – in ways that help to anticipate the hurdles and blockages better than liberal transition theory does? I will first approach this in more general macro-economic terms and then move deeper.

Transition success: the economic delusion

Many discussions about liberal economic transitions worldwide ignore the specificity of post-socialist transformations or recognize them in the wrong way. These specificities are not just about the centrally managed economy that must be transformed or the one-party state that must be pluralized and parliamentarized. For an anthropologist they are just as much about the fact that, of all the 'non-western' worlds, it was only Eurasian socialism that had developed a full urban modernity of its own. The rest of Asia remained rural and except for China 'traditional'. The same was true for Africa and, less so, for Latin America. Actually existing socialism was an illiberal modernity, for sure. But it was a modernity of cities, apartments, of education, of the modern family, modern work organization and habits, of industrial skills, of a modest consumption, of a certain female emancipation, of scientific questioning. We now often hear that it was a failed modernity. Maybe so, but it seems an easy and anachronistic rejection. Seen from the vantage point of a region that was mired in backwardness until the 1930s–1940s, indeed historically obsessed with its own backwardness in relation to the West, socialist modernity, certainly in its 1970s version, was a major historical accomplishment. It does not matter that the results were in certain respects – though not all – shallow as compared to post 1960s Western Europe or indeed to the US. In relation to its own regional history it was a major breakthrough, as well as in relation to other world regions at the time.

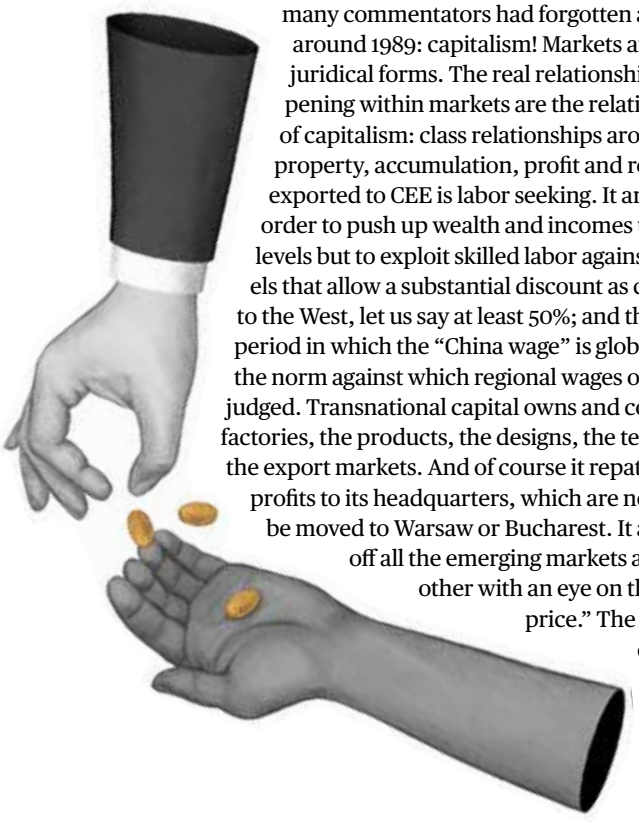
IT WAS THEREFORE UNDERSTANDABLE that academics, politicians and the wider population in CEE in the 1980s would imagine that a swift catch-up with the West was feasible after the obstacles of the centrally led economy were removed. Other world regions threw up a lot of 'social and cultural obstacles', associated with 'tradition', with the absence of a modern infrastructure, illiteracy and innumeracy, with the persistence of small peasant livelihoods among majority populations rather than urban ones, including all the dependencies and superstitions associated with that. Compared with the rest of the world, modern post-socialist societies seemed therefore well endowed for a quick take-off, in fact a follow-up on that short but significant interlude in the 1970s when Western credits, a certain market access to the West, and collaboration with Western multinationals had created a semblance of renewed growth – interrupted by the debt crisis. The debate in the late eighties and early nineties was whether it would take five or rather ten years to catch up after market mechanisms and integration with the global economy would begin to provide the necessary 'incentives', liberate the 'animal spirits', and generate an efficiency push. In these debates, the political scientist Adam Przeworski[9] was a notorious pessimist. In a broadly comparative book about democracies and markets, widely read by specialists at the time, he warned that catch-up with the West might take much longer than people in Central and Eastern Europe, including many experts, expected. He argued it could well be 25 to 30 years. He never became a folk hero like Jeffrey Sachs, who was selling illusions on the cheap in those days.

In the light of such discussions and expectations about timing and prosperity, it seems cruelly duplicitous that economists these days in a common-sense way judge 'economic transition' a success. It certainly is not, in their own terms of 25 years ago! Amnesia seems to make them happy. So where are we then after the 25 years of Przeworski? The most 'advanced' locations, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, are now merely approaching average EU GDP. That is 60% of West European GDP. These are

locations that belonged to the heartlands of the continental (Habsburg) economy and they have reclaimed their historical place. But they have certainly not moved into the core. True, Poland and Slovakia are relatively richer now than they have ever been in the past and have reached the level of Hungary, well below average EU GDP and below 50% of the core. All other CEE countries too have basically retained the position vis-à-vis the West that they occupied around the first world war, which seems fixed at some 30% of the GDP of the core. Rather than a pessimist, Przeworski seems more like a naïve dreamer, in spite of all his sophistication and moderation in comparison to shock therapy economists like Sachs who were earning great money and reputations by selling manna from heaven.

MANY OF THE CEE COUNTRIES have done exactly what the economics handbooks prescribe: open the economy, liberalize it, privatize state enterprises, attract Foreign Direct Investment, export your way out of poverty, keep a lid on the money supply and the finances of the state. If one world region has been utterly successful in this regard, apart from China, it is CEE. There is also no world region (apart from China, which still had a numerous peasantry to be dispossessed and urbanized and walked out of socialism on a very different path) that received such quantities of inward investment per head as CEE. The Visegrád countries and Slovenia have been powerfully reindustrialized since 2000, and now even Southeastern Europe appears to be on the same path. They have larger percentages of their labor force in industry than Western Europe and are more dependent on international trade than even the Netherlands or Belgium. That is what economists mean when they talk about success.

The answer as to why then, despite that huge success, there is still no catch up with the wealth of the West whatsoever is simple – and it remains both puzzling and telling that so many commentators had forgotten about this around 1989: capitalism! Markets are merely juridical forms. The real relationships happening within markets are the relationships of capitalism: class relationships around labor, property, accumulation, profit and rent. Capital exported to CEE is labor seeking. It arrives not in order to push up wealth and incomes to Western levels but to exploit skilled labor against wage levels that allow a substantial discount as compared to the West, let us say at least 50%; and that in a period in which the "China wage" is globally seen as the norm against which regional wages ought to be judged. Transnational capital owns and controls the factories, the products, the designs, the technology, the export markets. And of course it repatriates its profits to its headquarters, which are not going to be moved to Warsaw or Bucharest. It also plays off all the emerging markets against each other with an eye on the "China price." The EU's fundamental neoliberal rule of 'policy competition' constitutionalizes that dynamic and magnifies the power of capital over the power of the collectivity of states and citizens. Western integration has therefore produced, simultaneously with the transfer of capital, a systematic downward pressure on taxes, wages, and standards (even as the EU became more influential on formal labor rights in CEE).[10] Indeed transnational capital has consistently and everywhere in CEE lobbied for keeping the lid on wages, taxes, and rights, and it has in fact done more so than local capital, which is dependent on local purchasing power.[11]



But, while in denial about the modest level of gains for the region as compared to its own expectations, the macroeconomic vision cannot even begin to grasp the real dislocations in space and time. We need to step outside of the language of GDP and growth and look at the actual results for labor. This is where a Marxian anthropology should focus. The transition, for many working class households, has meant nothing more than stagnation for two generations: Not just one famous lost decade as in Latin America, but rather three. Transition immediately translated into a massive reduction in the number of formal jobs. After 1989, on average there was a decline from 70% of the laboring population holding formal jobs to less than 50%. In Hungary one of the politically most dangerous questions one can still ask is: what happened to these 1.5 million jobs that disappeared over three years in the early 1990s (in a labor market of some 5 million)? Those jobs never returned. CEE GDP immediately decreased by some 20%–50%, a decrease that was only gradually redressed by the early 2000s, but not in all cases. On top of that, formal unemployment in places like Poland amounted to 20% until the mid-2000s, and was significantly higher and more durable than that in the post-Yugoslav countries.

A PROLIFERATION OF INFORMAL survival strategies developed, interwoven with migration.[12] The myth of success hides from view the fact that outside the big cities, the Baltic countries, the Balkans, Poland and Ukraine have become producers of cheap skilled labor for the West (or Russia) rather than anything else. One could ask whether the real reason why countries have remained relatively politically stable was not first of all the possibility since the early 2000s for younger citizens to vote with their feet.[13] Meanwhile, older citizens were bought off with early pensions and severance pay.[14] Younger families with children that remained in CEE were subsidized with family benefits. These two sorts of social transfers, put in place immediately in the early 1990s, were essential for buying social peace. They meant that state budgets would subsequently be under consistent pressure. Almost each and every government would seek welfare cuts to balance the books, with or without World Bank pressure. This would rashly de-legitimize most of these governments in the eyes of their constituencies. Few incumbent governments have survived the next elections. And elections rarely mobilized much more than 50% of the voting population. These crude facts describe the basic regional political equations.

Polarizing labor and society, fueling culture talk

Why were there no massive and sustained protests? Why no strong left? Was labor then so weak? The latter question has often been answered affirmatively.[15] Scholars have pointed to subdued labor unions under socialism, unions that were mere parts of the administrative apparatus. Or they have pointed to the bad ideological reputation of class politics after socialism. I have come to doubt the validity of these answers, in particular the first but in some ways also the second. My own answer has increasingly emphasized that labor was sometimes quite strong on the shop floor, often stronger than in the West; but not on the national level nor on the level of ideas.[16] 'Transition', Europe, democracy, and national sovereignty were overwhelming public signifiers in nations that had craved sovereignty from Eurasian land-empires for centuries and had always looked jealously at the wealth and the ways of the urbanized capitalist West.

Such hegemonic signifiers were then turned against any labor assertion in the public sphere. The state, capital, the press, and the intelligentsia waged a permanent campaign aimed at silencing workers and peasants, and make any collective claims on the state and society morally suspect.[17] However, in the country with the most radical shock therapy, Poland, even by 2000 many of the large and important factories had not been privatized at all. The reason: the actual strength of labor, in particular also in Poland.

So if the account of labor's weakness is both problematic and more complex than is usually assumed, what is the explanation for the fast breakdown of solidarity labor politics in the context of this permanent elite campaign against the politics of the commons and the commoners? The core of a realistic relational answer, it seems to me, focuses on accelerating social cleavages, in particular also among labor, cleavages that served to disable collective action by workers as workers: a logic of de-solidarization that transformed the collectivist politics of class into the myriad identity politics of culture, 'civilization', and hierarchy. In other words it was the crumbling of the category of labor itself, the fragmentation of class, and its consequent fascination with hierarchy, which explains labor's sudden weakness.

Jan Breman, writing about the global context, has recently called this the return of 'social Darwinism'.[18] The return of social Darwinism was not entirely unlike the same process in the West itself. But in CEE it came in a pressure cooker version, rolled out in a dependent and semi-peripheral capitalism that in the 1990s was going down the road of de-industrialization much faster and much more radically than anything the West had experienced. Nor was there the compensation of fast growth in professional and consumer services, except in the capital cities. The singular reality of CEE has been the virtual collapse of a full-scale urban industrial modernity. There is no comparison for this elsewhere in the world.

The whole higher stratum of intellectuals and professionals in Eastern Europe, including trade union experts and political representatives, stood to gain significantly from capitalist state-making and they sensed it swiftly. Much of the leading intelligentsia and many dissidents turned themselves into the new state classes immediately, occupying the proliferating jobs and consultancies within the new central bureaucracies – which in fact grew in numbers everywhere after socialism.[19] The second echelon of apparatchiks and managers transformed themselves either into owners or into their lieutenants, or into the court-members of the new political and administrative leaderships.[20]

THESE SOCIO-POLITICAL divisions became openly expressed in a new public vocabulary of cultural hierarchy – albeit one assembled from the bits of an apparently egalitarian liberal mythology. Intellectuals and professionals began to identify themselves loudly as 'middle class' and 'civil'.[21] Those just below that level were desperately aspiring to become part of that same enlightened circle. And both categories were impatiently awaiting the advent of a magical 'Europe'. Occidentalism took such a flight that, inevitably, the 'East' became now often openly associated with an unsophisticated red-brown populist despotism of an imagined Asiatic type. While the imaginary new urban middle classes were claiming their presumed rightful place in the advanced civilization of the West, uneducated workers and peasants in the provinces were loudly relegated to the Orient. 'West' and 'East' became a language not of proper geography but primarily of social hierarchy. Dumb and rude Asiatic despotisms might be just okay for uneducated workers and peasants 'who could not take care of themselves and were used to following orders': *homo-sovieticus* type of persons. And indeed their politics were seen as reflecting this eastern origin: unruly peasant and worker demonstrations were ferociously denounced as a form of primitive 'claiming behavior' characteristic of people who could not take care of themselves. And of course it had to be rooted out. Michal Buchowski called this syndrome "internal orientalism."[22] This civilizational 'othering' around the imagined West-East hierarchy reflected and expressed the strong desire for upward mobility for the elect, and undisguised disrespect for whoever and whatever was going to be left behind. Imaginary hierarchical 'othering' often played out even more ruthlessly in the spaces that were not yet integrated into the EU (it just exploded again in Ukraine; I will come back to this).

> "THOSE WHO FAILED TO LIVE UP TO THE CAPITALIST VALUE REGIME, LITERALLY 'THE LOSERS OF TRANSITION' IN THE LOCAL JARGONS, WERE IMAGINED TO ALSO DRESS, TALK AND SMELL DIFFERENTLY."

Such discourses and practices of hierarchy saw productivity and efficiency, and the money flows to those who performed them, as key indexes of acquired and rightful personal status. Those who failed to live up to the capitalist value regime, literally 'the losers of transition' in the local jargons, were imagined to also dress, talk and smell differently. And they were seen as only

Some claim that the emergence of a precarity is a calculated outcome of neoliberalism.

having themselves to blame. They were felt as a dead-weight on national productivity and dignity, a fifth column against rightful national success: Traitors, embezzlers, hooligans, and drunkards. And it was felt that those who were now going to be surplus populations had always already been inappropriately protected by 'actually existing socialism'. The socialist patience with the unskilled was even seen as a key cause of national stagnation in the first place. Socialist rulers had sought, it was imagined, the alliance with the unruly against the 'productive and deserving middle classes', [23] a theme that is still deployed today in Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine in order to denounce the politics of the poor and the social democratic parties which try to champion it.

What may well have been crucial for the 'defeat of solidarity'[24] was how the local labor aristocracies felt about the less skilled. Labor aristocracies were essential for the running of socialist economies.[25] These were rather tightly knit local working class groups that were sometimes, as in Poland and Yugoslavia, de facto running the factories, including the associated social funds and labor unions. By 1989 in Poland they sometimes even nominated their own preferred directors on the managing boards, as had been commonplace in 'worker managed' Yugoslavia. In Hungary or Romania too, directors used to be men of the people, since they could not rule without the people and often not so easily against them. But these core groups of workers were increasingly exposed to drastic economic pressure and the threat of total social failure. In this life or death economic context, they were not against turning the 'slackers' among the unskilled workers into a relative surplus population. My interviews with workers in Wrocław in the late nineties were full of such conversations.[26] Capitalist pressures, even before the fall of socialism, thus helped to unravel the solidarities among working class segments upon which socialism as a form of rule had rested; solidarities that had always already been hard to sustain even in the heyday of socialism.

"WHAT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL FOR THE 'DEFEAT OF SOLIDARITY' WAS HOW THE LOCAL LABOR ARISTOCRACIES FELT ABOUT THE LESS SKILLED."

THE LONGER HISTORICAL perspective is once more essential here: Socialism had installed itself in the first half of the twentieth century in a backward, rural, and feudal region. The consequences of historical backwardness vis-à-vis 'the West' had shaped the whole of the region's modern history. Socialism after 1923, in the absence of a 'world revolution' and pushed into political isolation, was swallowed by this backwardness; and 'socialism in one country' would never be able to fully escape from its logic. The scarcity and sparseness of cities, large undifferentiated and underdeveloped rural spaces, feudal latifundia, serfdom, illiteracy: these were ominous starting points for a socialist revolution on behalf of 'workers and peasants'. After the violent dispossession of the peasantry and the centrally planned industrialization and urbanization since the early 1930s, the consequences of prior backwardness combined with the present contradictions of socialist accumulation itself presented Trotsky and Preobrazhensky with their intense post-revolutionary dilemmas. The results were still tangibly present in the 'actually existing socialism' of the 1970s and 1980s, when the system began its long and slow implosion.

For one thing, socialism, however much it was enchanted by modernity, kept featuring a significant under-urbanization: it brought semi-skilled jobs to widely spread out settlements of provincial people rather than urbanizing those people in the few dynamic cores.[27] Sharply uneven development within the region, mostly going from West to East, was also never really redressed: Eastern regions remained markedly poorer and less developed. But even in the most advanced socialist urban districts in the West, such as around Wrocław or Győr – former German or Habsburg industrial cities – a majority of workers in the local light engineering industries still only had a primary school education even in the 1980s.[28] Many urban households would share kitchens, toilets and bathrooms. During the famous and funny "kitchen debate" between Nikita Krushchev and Richard Nixon in the early 1960s, Krushchev had boasted that in ten years' time Soviet workers would enjoy the same comforts as their American counterparts. Instead, after one more round of urbanization and industrialization in the early sixties, East European Socialism ran up against its limitations and would struggle for another twenty years, amid growing international and domestic pressures, not to undo them but to bury itself instead. It had produced an illiberal provincial modern industrialism of a 1930s–1950s type, but was unable to switch to an intensified education and consumption-driven capitalism that would export its blue-collar jobs overseas such as was emerging in the West in the 1970s–1980s.

In this context of decline, not always hidden under the orchestrated expressions of labor solidarity, educated labor had often expressed its dismay with the compromises the party-state had been willing to make with plebeian practices such as drinking, slacking, absenteeism, and urban unruliness. The emergent informal capitalism of the 1980s and then the fast accelerating formal capitalism of the 1990s at once cracked open this can of 'cultural' worms of cultural hierarchy and social inequality that state socialism had tried to compress and keep together against the odds.

So in the context of the accelerating imposition of a harsh capitalist value regime, the cultural and 'civilizational' discourses of personal value, deservingness and un-deservingness spread among common workers too. This was the historical cocktail of forces, geostrategic, political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological, that served to silence, delegitimize, disorganize, and divide the East European working classes – despite their

potentially strong position on the local shop floor, *despite* high union membership, and despite sometimes very capable local union leaders.

The rubble of socialism was not imagined, it was real. East European labor did not defend the workers' state in 1989 because there was little left to defend, as Eszter Bartha concluded.[29] Communist parties had either stagnated into a Stalinist police regime à la GDR, Czechoslovakia or Romania; or had already been engaged in an incremental economic neoliberalization from the early 1980s or even earlier, as in Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary; or had turned to massive repression in an effort to squeeze the working class further in order to pay off national debts to the IMF and the West – Romania was the only nation ever to pay off its IMF debt in full. The Soviet Union meanwhile was charging ever-higher prices for oil and gas, forsaking the socialist friendship once offered to its vassals, and willingly undoing its own empire. By 1985 the bloc as a whole was desperately indebted to Western finance, with a total of some 90 billion dollars (Russia and Czechoslovakia much less so), not unlike the Global South. Instead of IMF intervention plus austerity as in the Global South, it was locked out of the financial markets in the context of a new cold war in the early eighties. And the top apparatchiks, not willing to declare bankruptcy or annul the debt to the West, as Lenin and Trotsky had had the temerity to do in 1921, were scrambling to find ways to squeeze the socialist working classes further, and to divide them further internally along the way. Those working classes however were nominally still ruling, and their cooperation was still essential for productivity in socialist industry, and they could therefore not be sidelined so easily as in the Global South or the neoliberalizing West. We know how it ended: they got parliamentary democracy plus formal sovereignty in exchange for the acceptance of local-global capitalist property relationships – privatization and liberalization – and a capitalist state organized around private property, the rule of law, and periodic electoral consultations.

KEEP IN MIND that in the context of international competition and indebtedness, socialist accumulation in CEE (though perhaps not yet in the Soviet Union) had already been transmogrifying into capitalist accumulation well before 1989. Nomenclatures had begun to act, however cautiously in the beginning, as IMF debt-collectors, neoliberal optimizers, and 'spontaneous privatizers'. And they did so ever more frantically even while Gorbachev was still pondering about a coming market socialism energized by a mythical reawakening of proletarian commitment as in the 1930s.

In 1989 key indebted states such as Poland and Hungary at once became vassals of the IMF, just like Yugoslavia had been since the early 1980s, thrown into the rat-race of global capitalism with little to defend themselves. Those who had more reserves to defend their newly won sovereignty, such as Czechoslovakia and Romania, would use them up in the defense of existing structures and on behalf of insider classes in a few years' time and succumb to global capitalist discipline in the second half of the 1990s. In the context of massive geopolitical upheaval, accelerating chaos, and concrete threats to social reproduction as formal work was disappearing, the region's cohesion and solidarities gave way to a bonfire of culture talk, of which the Roma were only the most visible and categorical victims.[30] It was this process that split labor into political paralysis and left very considerable anger and distrust in its wake. "Flexibilization results in growing stress and decreasing trust among fellow workers..... Loss of jobs flows over into acute disenfranchisement from citizenship," write Breman and Van der Linden.[31] "More and less have once again come to mean 'better' and 'worse', 'higher' and 'lower'".[32] The post-socialist experience has been one long shock, an example of exactly that logic of dispossession and disenfranchisement.[33] And alongside that came social polarization, the cultural polarizations, driven by the pressures, the humiliations, and the joys of hierarchy, as capitalist necessity was translated into cultural value and virtue.

The politics of class without class

In the context of the global defeat of Europe's labor-based modernity, Göran Therborn has posed the pertinent question about possible 'class-compasses' for the global 21st century.[34] 'Theory from the East' suggests two directions in which such class compasses in the post-socialist semi-periphery may point, both qua actual class driven politico-cultural alliances and qua politico-social cosmologies. The first of such compasses is neoliberal-Darwinism as suggested above. Another, emerging in response, might be national-socialist *strictu sensu*.[35] The first compass has an elective affinity with middle-class imageries and politics, as in Poland in the 1990s/early 2000s. It deploys, paradoxically, liberal notions to construct cultural hierarchies, and targets them against the interests and dignity of poorer and weaker classes while seeking to turn those classes into undeserving or merely conditionally deserving 'relative surplus populations'.

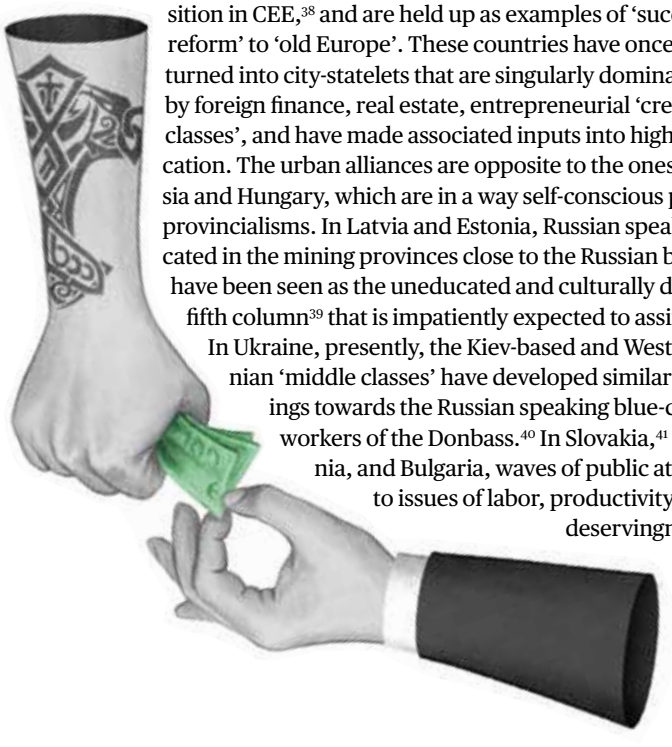
The second class-compass may well in the end be middle class driven too – contemporary Hungary springs to mind – but reaches at least rhetorically towards the 'deserving national working classes'. It needs them as a constituency, and should perhaps be seen as being made possible, and necessary, by their mobilization. It projects a protection of deserving working members of ethno-nations versus a disloyal cosmopolitan capitalism on the one hand, and the 'criminal' *classes dangereuses* of the surplus population on the other.

Both compasses are rooted in characteristic modern European heritages. The first draws on the ascendant liberal social Darwinism of the late 19th century; the second emerged from defeats of labor in the varied contexts of, for instance, post 1848 Bonapartism in Second Empire France, or of financialized globalization and deflation in interbellum Central Europe – both contexts that potentially resemble aspects of global capitalism in the 2010s,

depending on how and from where one looks and on what one expects is going to happen next.

Hungary serves as an avant-garde for the national socialist form, with a Right-wing super majority that is driven forward by a radical faction organized around the Jobbik party – a faction that has its origin in a democratic initiative within the elitism of Viktor Orban's Fidesz party, the Civic Circles.[36] It flirts openly with illiberal impulses such as paramilitary exercises in Roma settlements, the harassment of NGOs, and a pro-Putin, even pro-Iran, foreign policy that emphasizes sovereignty, all combined with a rhetorical attack on foreign finance, foreign capitalists and the EU. The Polish Right does not march far behind, and features a stronger labor-contingent. It is similarly disposed against Roma, gays, Jews, transnational capitalists and the EU (though it is ready to arm itself against Putin's Russia). Putin himself has mobilized the Russian workers of the provinces in an illiberal alliance against the big cities, the gays, the NGOs and the West. He marshaled them openly against 'the creative classes' of Moscow when they rallied against his power usurpation in late 2011/12, as he switched at will to the presidency again. The elevation to dominance in Russia of a clerical orthodox nationalism, so well depicted in Andrey Zvyagintsev's film *Leviathan* (2014), is very much made out of the popular experience of the sudden collapse of provincial societies in the 1990s/early 2000s, during Russia's dramatically kleptocratic liberal-cosmopolitan interlude. The potential for such a right-wing 'Russian orthodox national-socialism' – at least in rhetoric: in practice it is perfectly capitalist and largely neoliberal at that, as it is of course in Hungary – had always been there since the late nineties but it needed Putin's explicit construction efforts from the Kremlin in 2011/12 to get it into place.[37]

THE BALTIC STATES, in contrast, have produced strong, vernacular, and apparently durable neoliberal social Darwinist nationalisms. They have indeed become the models of neoliberal transition in CEE,[38] and are held up as examples of 'successful reform' to 'old Europe'. These countries have once more turned into city-statelets that are singularly dominated by foreign finance, real estate, entrepreneurial 'creative classes', and have made associated inputs into higher education. The urban alliances are opposite to the ones in Russia and Hungary, which are in a way self-conscious political provincialisms. In Latvia and Estonia, Russian speakers, located in the mining provinces close to the Russian border, have been seen as the uneducated and culturally deficient fifth column[39] that is impatiently expected to assimilate. In Ukraine, presently, the Kiev-based and West Ukrainian 'middle classes' have developed similar feelings towards the Russian speaking blue-collar workers of the Donbass.[40] In Slovakia,[41] Romania, and Bulgaria, waves of public attention to issues of labor, productivity and deservingness/undeserving-



ness have focalized on majority/minority relations, often mobilizing ethno-majority populations in nationalist neoliberal ways against poor Roma if and where they have been 'available' for such purposes.

What theory from the East teaches us is that the actual presence of large numbers of immigrants, as in Western Europe, is not a necessary condition for such 'othering'.[42] It is the other way around: such cultural 'others' will be found and created, either as part of a desire for Darwinian national competitiveness and/or as the populist consequence of the defeat of labor in a context of dispossession and disenfranchisement, or an uneasy alignment of the two. This is a useful lesson for 'the West'. Indeed, Wilders' Freedom Party in the Netherlands and the Front National in France have lately moved toward national welfare state protectionism and anti EU rhetoric, while reducing their anti-foreigner theatrics, as underlined by the marginalization of Jean-Marie Le Pen by his daughter Marine in April 2015. Wilders is one of the best examples of a shift from xenophobic neoliberal Darwinism to social protection, reflecting creeping Dutch popular doubts about neoliberalism in the aftermath of crisis. The populist politics of the new Right is a politics of class without class. The actual alignments are uneasy and may shift from a (imagined) middle class embrace of the global value regime against slackers and benefit -profiteers – Cameron's Britain – combined with an obsession with national and individual competitiveness as the ultimate measurement of 'moral value', to the at least rhetorical protection of deserving working people against global markets and local *classes dangereuses*.

The Bulgarian experience of 2013 demonstrates how fickle the class bases and orientations of these populisms can be. During a cold February, a widespread and angry nationalist-protectionist uprising in the provinces driven by 'common Bulgarian people and workers', protesting against poverty and the high costs of basic utilities – privatized to transnational capitalists – led to the immediate abdication of a neoliberal Right wing government. The post-socialist social democrats consequently won the election but then made silly errors with personnel choices. They were immediately confronted with a months-long Sofia based 'Bulgarian middle class' mobilization, kept up day after day, that sought to keep the nation out of the hands of the 'red oligarchs and their alliance with the uneducated poor'. It claimed that Bulgaria should be run on behalf of 'the productive Bulgarian bourgeoisie' and not for 'the parasites on welfare'. Protestors in Sofia literally demanded "quality versus quantity."[43] For a taste of context it might be added that it was calculated that in Bulgaria – the EU's poorest nation – on average 85% of people's income was spent on 'basic necessities' including utilities, while a local journalist remarked dryly that the Bulgarian 'productive middle classes' who were protesting in Sofia, and who were evidently imagining or desiring themselves to be beyond such dire straits, earned around 400 euros a month on average, far below any poverty line in the West of the continent (with roughly similar consumer-price levels).[44] The Romanian elections of fall 2014 produced comparable antagonistic alliances and discourses.[45]

Ukrainian apotheosis

Processes of 'double polarization' in the context of capitalist transformations are producing social and political crises in CEE. Liberal theories of democratic transition do not get very far in anticipating, identifying and explaining these crises. Democratic consolidation, economic growth, the assumptions of trickle down, the expectation of pragmatically self-interested voters and consumers responding 'liberally' to that growth, its nation state based policy horizon: All of this prepares us insufficiently to even see those crises as the systematic regional outcomes of capitalist transformation that they are. Liberal theory therefore needs, as I explained above, 'exceptionalist theories' to explain its disappointments. Culture and local history, combined with 'corruption', are the panacea. The predictable reaction to the rise of Jobbik, for instance, is an explanation in terms of the unfortunate traits of Hungarian culture and history. The same happens with Russian state-driven clerical-nationalism, explained by long-term local history (even in Anderson).[46] The trouble is, such deep historical theories cannot explain why at some point in time such slumbering notions turn into tools for popular rebellion. They treat 'culture' and history as a template, not as a potential 'engram' from a varied 'archive'. At best, the East European angry Right is interpreted as a half-understandable but sadly misconceived reaction against 'corruption' (which is indeed the emic understanding of the actors themselves, often fed by NGO circles oriented toward sponsoring by international donors). Intellectually this is by now a tired and repetitive exercise: possibly still dominant, but dead.

"LIBERAL THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION DO NOT GET VERY FAR IN ANTICIPATING, IDENTIFYING AND EXPLAINING THESE CRISES."

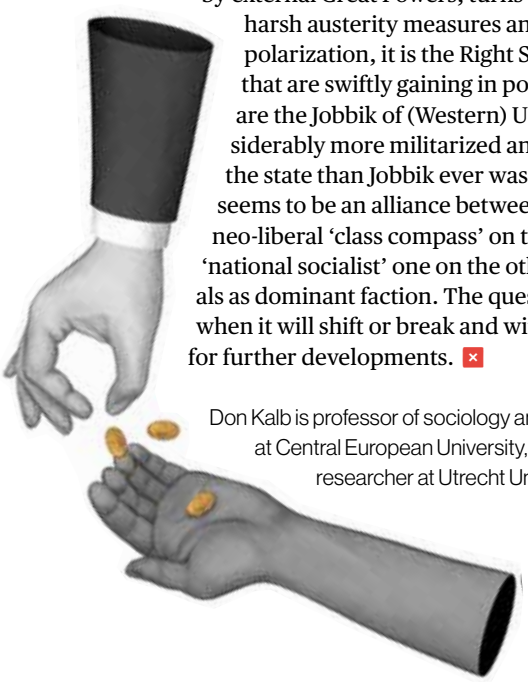
Liberal democratic theorists have made a massive effort to represent the Ukrainian Maidan revolution and its outcomes as a West-leaning, multicultural, democratic festival against corruption and oligarchy. In other words: everything 'the West' dreams of. Some of them have therefore concluded that the Ukrainian Maidan is exactly what Europe needs in order to keep its own dream alive, and therefore 'deserves full support', a handsome way to occlude one's own wishful projections and come full circle. Timothy Schneider, the historian of 'The Blood Lands'[47] – sponsored by the proceeds of Austrian banking capital through the *Erste Foundation* and by the Viennese *IWM* institute for advanced studies, a prime intellectual mover in democratic transition theory for CEE – has gone around Europe and the US to sell precisely this vision. All the while he has been trying to arm his publics intellectually against Putin's evil Russia, which predictably is being made to stand in for the authoritarian-socialist enemy of old (and favor arming the Ukrainian post-Maidan government). Indeed, Putin does little to help reject the argument.

Ukraine, however, is an extreme case of double polarization. Oligarchization of society, economy and politics is probably driven further there than anywhere else in Europe, except, possibly, Greece. 100 families control 80% of national wealth while average incomes have stagnated for years around $200 a month, unemployment is around 10% and some 10 million people have emigrated since 1991.[48] Ukraine is also outside the boundaries of the EU, which, as I said, tends to magnify the vectors of politico-cultural polarization, as in the Balkans, among other things by creating further instability and by allowing the neoliberal social-Darwinists to deploy the symbol of Europe and the West against their own working class and relative surplus populations. In Ukraine in the course of the Maidan, such populations have been imagined to be the uneducated proletariats of the Donbas, ideal 'Easterners' and homo-sovieticus.

DEMOCRATIC THEORY represents the Maidan rising as a repeat of the Orange Revolution of 2004, a playful civic movement rejecting corruption and asking for 'democracy' and 'reform': The fulfillment of the promise of a liberal 'color revolution' such as in Serbia 2000 and Georgia 2004. But it was not that, or at best only partly so.[49] The difference was the role played by the populist nationalist Right; first by Svoboda, the "social nationalist" (its own definition, subtext: "for the fight against Yids, Russkies and other filth"[50]) right wing movement with roots in some of the provinces of Western Ukraine, and then by Right Sector, a right wing revolutionary alliance that emerged during the Maidan. Right wing fighting groups saved the rebellion when the students were beaten off the square by police forces in late November/early December 2013. And from then on, the differences between on the one hand the democratic festival of 2004, and on the other the spreading urban occupation movement plus regional rebellion of 2014, orchestrated crucially by right wing nationalist revolutionaries, became increasingly clear to see for everyone not in deliberate denial – especially as the state pulled off a series of fierce but far from determined police repressions. Popular assemblies, *the* tool of the current global urban democratic protest wave, were immediately ruled out; the student Left was silenced, sometimes assaulted, and pushed out; a tight organization emerged around the production of largely nationalist public rituals which were led from a central stage, and were suffused by a rhetoric of national heroism, images of a nation under alien (Russian) assault, of collective suffering, indeed of the readiness to die on behalf of national liberation.[51] Next to the central stage a giant picture of Stepan Bandera, the historical leader and symbol of Ukrainian nationalism in its bloody 1940s instantiation, was projected. Crucially, a flanking full-scale rebellion in the Western provinces was underway where administrations and police stations were taken over by sometimes armed groups. This then fed into the Maidan in Kiev through a steady stream of fresh radical personnel, material support, and, indeed arms. Sergei Loznitsa's prize-winning *Maidan*

documentary does not dwell much on the organizational work behind the Maidan, but it leaves no doubt about the public centrality and the ethos of what was happening on the central stage, also well before the final days of February.[52]

THIS IS NOT TO DENY that it was also a people's rising. But that people's rising was in decisive measure enabled and signified by a radical nationalist Right of the kind that had become incubated in Western Ukraine over the 1990s/2000s.[53] But it is of key theoretical importance to underline that this national socialist Right was not at all unique to Ukraine in some of its crucial social and political properties. Before the general elections of 2012, that Right had never been electorally impressive in the Ukrainian circumstances, except for some Western Ukrainian oblasts, such as Lviv and Rivne. This changed when the financial crisis began to hit Ukraine. In the general elections of 2012 it won more than 10% of the countrywide vote for the first time. But by first rescuing, and then enabling, the rising, it put itself in a powerful position to articulate its 'social nationalist' public significations, generating a strong claim for hegemony over the mass rising, indeed over 'the birth of a nation' in Western Ukraine. And it began now claiming hegemony over the country at large. The Kiev middle classes and intelligentsia were ostensibly willing to align themselves with this, despite some misgivings, and refused to speak out against the Right wing leadership of intense revolutionary cultural and experiential production. The resulting new government was an alliance between established neoliberal governmentalistic actors within Kiev, Western-Ukrainian oligarchs and their entourages, and the populist-militarist Right. The first two factions immediately snatched the victory over Yanukovich away from the fighters on the Maidan (with US help[54]), but Right wing groups gained an important influence over security issues and security personnel, and pointed their fists immediately in the direction of the Russian speakers and of Russia – with the killings in Odessa in May as a result.[55] Predictably, at the time of writing, now that 'reform' in a context of regionalist civil war magnified by external Great Powers, turns out to mainly mean harsh austerity measures and accelerated social polarization, it is the Right Sector and Svoboda that are swiftly gaining in popular support. They are the Jobbik of (Western) Ukraine – and now considerably more militarized and embedded within the state than Jobbik ever was. For now, there still seems to be an alliance between the neo-Darwinist/neo-liberal 'class compass' on the one hand, and the 'national socialist' one on the other, with the neoliberals as dominant faction. The question is whether and when it will shift or break and with what consequences for further developments.



Don Kalb is professor of sociology and social anthropology at Central European University, Budapest, and senior researcher at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.

Note: This text is based on Kalb's Distinguished Lecture of May 5, 2015 at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies(CBEES) at Södertörn University, which in its turn was based on a thoroughly reworked version of a paper presented at the Global Labor workshop at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam in November 2014.

Acknowledgements: I thank Rebecka Letteval, CBEES director, and Mats Lindqvist, Chair of Historical Studies, for the honorable invitation to Södertörn University. I also thank Marcel van der Linden and Jan Breman for their invitation to their workshop on global labor and for excellent discussion. Thanks also to Göran Therborn and other participants to that seminar for thought-provoking comments. Volodymyr Ischenko has been a welcome interlocutor on developments in Ukraine over the years, as well as during and after the *Maidan*. I would also like to thank Natalia Buier, CEU, for her research assistance.

references

1 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,1989).

2 Don Kalb, *Expanding Class: Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities*, The Netherlands 1850–1950 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Don Kalb, "Mavericks: Harvey, Graeber, and the Re-unification of Anarchism and Marxism in World Anthropology," *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 69: 113–34 (2014a) Don Kalb, "The 'Empty Sign of the Middle Class: Class and the Urban Commons in the 21st Century" in *The Blackwell Companion in Urban Anthropology*); Don Nonini, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell. 2014b) 157–77; Don Kalb, "'Worthless Poles' and other Post-socialist Dispossessions" in August Carbonella and Sharryn Kashmir eds., *Blood and Fire: Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, in print 2014c); Don Kalb "Introduction: Class and the new anthropological holism" In James Carrier and Don Kalb eds., *Anthropologies of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

3 Jonathan Friedman, *Globalization, The State, and Violence* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2003); Don Kalb, "Introduction: Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe". In Don Kalb and Gabor Halmai, eds., *Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2011) 1–63.

4 Kalb, 2011.

5 Mike Davis, "Marx's Lost Theory" *New Left Review*, no. 93 (2015) 45–68. Mike Davis has recently rightly drawn attention to Marx' political writings as an example of a more 'economic' and processual analysis of nationalism (vis à vis the work of Rogers Brubaker, Anthony Smith a.o.). Although he does not cite my work (2009, 2011), it echoes some of his major claims, and shares in its perspective. To Davis I would say that these are 'relational processes' rather than just 'economic' ones. I agree though that economic aspects of such relations are of key importance. Marxists are still too often inclined to think that class analysis must be 'economic'. I propose a relational language of analysis rather than reproducing the old polarities of economics versus culture, etc. Kalb 1997; Kalb 2015.

6 Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Ukraine's Fractures", *New Left Review*, no. 87 (2014) 7–34.

7 Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

8 Kalb 1997; Kalb 2015.

9 Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

10 Mats Lindqvist's work on purportedly collaborative arrangements supported by the EU among Baltic ports shows in vivid detail how social dumping works and is legitimized by social democratic and corporatist language/institutions. Mats Lindqvist, "Northern European space making in the era of neoliberal Europeanization and the emerging solidarity among Baltic Sea workers". *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 70 (2014) 81–95.

11 D. Bohle and B. Greskovits, "Capitalism without compromise: strong business and weak labor in Eastern Europe's new transnational industries", *Studies in Comparative International Development* no 41:1 (2006) 3–25.

12 Alison Stenning et. al., *Domesticating Neo-Liberalism: Spaces of Economic Practice and Social Reproduction in Post-Socialist Cities* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

13 Guglielmo Meardi, *Social Failures of EU Enlargement: A Case of Workers Voting with their Feet* (London: Routledge, 2011).

14 A. Cerami A and Vanhuysse A, eds., *Post-communist welfare pathways: theorizing social policy transformations in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

15 D. Ost, *The defeat of Solidarity: anger and politics in postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005); MA. Orenstein, "Postcommunist Welfare States," Journal of Democracy 19:4 (2008): 80–94.

16 Kalb 2009; Kalb 2014c.

17 Michal Buchowski, "The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother," *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 79:3 (2006) 463–482; Kalb, 2009; Kalb, 2014c; Florin Poenaru, *The illusion of anticommunism*, PhD dissertation (Budapest: Central European University, 2013).

18 Jan Breman and Marcek Van der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level", *Development and Change*, vol. 45, no 5 (2014) 895–919.

19 Don Kalb, "Conversations with a Polish populist: Tracing hidden histories of globalization, class, and dispossession in post socialism (and beyond)," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 36 no. 2 (2009) 207–223; Kalb 2014c.

20 Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi and Eleanor Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe* (London: Verso, 2001); J. Staniszkis, *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe: The Polish Experience* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991).

21 Buchowski, 2006; Kalb 2009 ; 2011; 2014c.

22 Buchowski, 2006.

23 Kalb 2009; 2014c.

24 Ost, 2005.

25 Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985); K. Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996); Kalb, 2014c.

26 Kalb 2009; 2014c.

27 Ivan Szelenyi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

28 Eszter Bartha, *Alienating Labor: Workers on the Road from Socialism to Capitalism in East Germany and Hungary* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013); Kalb, 2014c.

29 Bartha, 2013.

30 Kalb, 2011.

31 Breman and Van Der Linden, 2014: 933.

32 Breman and Van Der Linden, 2014: 922.

33 Kalb 2009; 2011; 2014c.

34 Göran Therborn, "New Masses? Social Bases of Resistance", *New Left Review no 85* (2014) 7–16.

35 Kalb, 2011.

36 Gabor Halmai, "(Dis)possessed by the Specter of Socialism: Nationalist Mobilization in 'Transitional' Hungary." In: Kalb and Halmai (eds.), *Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class: Working-Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011) 113–141.

37 Perry, Anderson, "Incommensurate Russia", *New Left Review no 94* (2015) 5–44.

38 D. Bohle and B. Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

39 Eeva Keskula, "Reverse, restore, repeat! Class, ethnicity, and the Russian-speaking miners of Estonia," *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 72 (2015) 95–108.

40 Keith Gessen, "Why not kill them all?", *London Review of Books*, vol. 36, no. 17 (2014) 18–22.

41 Nicolette Makovicky, "'Work pays': Slovak Neoliberalism as 'authoritarian populism'", *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 67 (2013) 77–90.

42 Kalb 2011; Kalb and Halmai 2011.

43 Georgi Medarov, "Is Liberal Populism Possible?" Paper presented at "The Sources of Populism in the Balkans" conference, Marija Bistrica, October 2014.

44 Medarov, 2014.

45 Vintila Mihailescu, "Santa Klaus: Presidential elections and moral revolt in Romania." Accessed January 1, 2015, http://www.focaalblog.com/2015/01/09/vintila-mihailescu-santa-klaus-presidential-elections-and-moral-revolt-in-romania/.

46 Perry Anderson, "Incommensurate Russia," *New Left Review* 94 (2015) 5–44; Mihailescu, 2015.

47 Timothy Schneider, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

48 See for instance Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015).

49 See also Ischenko 2014; Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Mythologies of Maidan" *New Left Review*, no. 93 (2015) 151–159; Sakwa 2015.

50 Sakwa 2015: 22.

51 Some 70 people died in the Maidan, plus some 40 police officers, though much higher numbers are cited for the whole rebellious episode as such. There is still no report available from official investigations into the killings of 19/20 February 2014. There are informed suggestions that all snipers operated from places controlled by Right Sector and that police and demonstrators were both killed by fire coming from those locations (see Sakwa, 2015 for an informed critical discussion).

52 See also Sakwa, 2015.

53 Sakwa, 2015.

54 Sakwa, 2015.

55 The Odessa massacre was certainly exacerbated too by anger about Russia's annexation of Crimea. There have been many reports about the indiscriminate savagery of Ukrainian artillery attacks on cities and settlements in the Donbass which probably also reflects the power of Right wing neo-nationalism over security decisions (Gessen, 2014 is just one of the relevant reports). This article limits its purview to the Maidan rebellion itself and cannot dwell on post-Maidan developments in the civil war and international dynamics, though I concede that they cannot be separated from each other.