

EUI Working Paper SPS No. 96/9

In a Permanent State of Transition  
Theorising the East European Condition

ARPÁD SZAKOLCZAI

# EUI WORKING PAPERS



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE



3 0001 0026 6951 5

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**EUI Working Paper SPS No. 96/9**

**In a Permanent State of Transition:  
Theorising the East European Condition**

**ARPÁD SZAKOLCZAI**

WP  
320  
EUR



**BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)**

All rights reserved.  
No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form  
without permission of the author.

© Árpád Szakolczai  
Printed in Italy in May 1996  
European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50016 San Domenico (FI)  
Italy



The aim of this paper is to reflect theoretically on the current East-Central European "situation". Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to make two clarifying comments. First, it is evidently true that no generally valid theoretical framework can be applied to all countries of the region, due to their differences. Still, both a somewhat similar historical path before W.W.II and especially the common experience of communism warrants the search for a common interpretative framework, even though exceptions must be acknowledged. Second, the aim is not to provide an abstract theory, but to present theoretical reflections that take their point of departure in personal experiences. According to the methodological perspective to which this paper belongs to, and which can be marked by the names of Weber, Simmel, Goffman, Foucault, Elias and Voegelin, among others, though not that of Durkheim, Habermas and Marx, it is only in this manner that existentially relevant knowledge can be gained about social processes. This, however, implies that the trap of the irrelevance of scholastic theory has been traded for the danger of being dependent on an initial configuration.

### On the word "transition"

In the literature produced around the East European events of 1989, the word "transition" no doubt played a predominant role. It has been immediately taken up as the label and was endlessly used in the press, in conferences and in course titles. This can also be supported by its increased use in social science publications. According to the SSCI, the word occurred in about 340-350 titles in each year between 1986 and 1989. In 1990 and 1991, there was an immediate increase to about 400 titles per year, while from 1992 onward, a new equilibrium point was reached around 570 titles. The overall increase in use due to the 1989 events is therefore about 66%.

However, as all fads and fashions, "transitology" has also had its critics. They came from two major sources. In the West, criticism was especially strong among scholars associated with critical theory. But East European intellectuals also wondered whether the

mainstream paradigm had much use in describing the actual problems and their experiences. These concerns were paradigmatically voiced in a well-known paper by David Stark who developed the concept of path dependency and suggested to replace "transition" with "transformation". (1)

This paper argues that in spite of everything, the term "transition" has a particular relevance for the current East European situation. The word, however, must be first freed from present connotations. We must start this by a historical review of its past usage.

The first thing to notice is that, even though the prominence of the word only came after 1989, its career started earlier. Already since the late 1970s, "transition to democracy" was established as the dominant paradigm describing the events in South Europe and then Latin America. This framework was elaborated by such well-known political scientists as Philip Schmitter, Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz. However, to make things complicated, in the 1960s, there was another kind of literature in which "transition", "passage" and similar expressions were frequently used. This was Marxism, both in its classical and neo-Marxist version, though the context and aims were very different. This indicates that we have to go further back in history if we want to understand and go beyond the current use of the word "transition".

The thinking of historical events as transitions is connected to a particular philosophy of history. Without going into too much historical detail, (2) we can safely anchor this type of thinking in late Enlightenment thought, in its transition from philosophy to sociology. (3) There is a direct passage from Turgot and Condorcet, through Saint-Simon, to Comte and Spencer, in thinking in terms of the stages of history. The first major influence on contemporary teleological thinking in terms of transition was therefore Enlightenment thought.

The second follows directly from the previous. This was the manner in which Marx took up, among others, the work of Saint-Simon and developed his own version of the stages of history and



of the transitions between these stages. It was this idea that gave rise to one of the major lasting scholastic debates in Marxism, the exciting theoretical question whether the "transitory" stage of absolutism was the last stage of feudalism or already the first stage of capitalism. (4)

Finally, the third influence on recent theories of transition was the post-1945 situation of decolonialisation. At that time, the discourse was inserted in a liberal-democratic context, assuming that the economic and political development of the former colonies would simply follow the Western historical road. (5)

The discourse of transition currently in use is therefore deeply rooted in a deterministic, teleological philosophy of the stages of history that can be located at the point of intersection of Enlightenment, liberal, and socialist thought. It is this manner of thinking that we have to overcome in order to reflect seriously upon the current East European experience as a specific situation of transition.

### Thinking transitions beyond teleology

In order to do so, one must go beyond the hidden assumptions of the standard thinking on transitions in two steps. First, any transitory situation has two limit-points, the starting configuration from which transition started and the end point to which it proceeds. Priority so far has been assigned to the second, while the former was only considered as the old, the discarded. However, in our view, the "old" is important not simply to the extent that it provides a "starting point" (path dependency), or that it survives in traces even in the new, but that emphasis should be placed on the manner in which a society enters a stage of transition, on the modality of the dislocation, the collapse, the dissolution of the previous order of things. In other words, the paper suggests a wholesale reversal of the teleological view: a transitory stage does not come about because a "new" stage of history appears on the horizon, superseding the old, heralded by a short, temporary transition period that may entail certain

"necessary" adjustment costs, but can only happen if, by some reason, the old order of things collapses. Once this happens, much of not only the transition period, but also the eventual outcome, will depend not only on the starting configuration, but on the exact circumstances of the collapse as well. This is the perspective of the Nietzschean genealogy, with its emphasis on the conditions of emergence (6). The teleological view about the progress of history in stages is to be replaced by a view of history as a series of dissolution of order. This is also close to the Weberian view of historical development as a series of charismatic innovations, followed by the complementary processes of routinisation and rationalisation. It is the dissolution of order that completes the circle, from routine back to charisma. (7)

The first suggestion to overcome the mainstream conceptualisation of transitions is therefore to conceive it as the result of a dissolution of order, and not a linear historical development with a desired end-point. The second point, connected to the first, will be that a situation of transition thus come about may not necessarily be short. The collapse of order is a difficult challenge, can lead to a serious crisis. The answer may only come after a long period of trials and errors, or even not at all, as the disappearance of many cultures and civilisations demonstrate it. If the answer to the crisis does not come quickly, the temporary transition period can become prolonged, and a society or a whole civilisation may remain stuck in a prolonged period of transition, where the temporary, the transitory, the extraordinary, the ephemeral, the emergency becomes standard, normal, regular, taken for granted. This is exactly what happened in the region of East-Central Europe. If so many intellectuals reacted so strongly against the description of the post-1989 events as a situation of transition, this was not simply because of the teleological implications of the term, but also because they did not notice a genuine break with respect the previous state of affairs, as they were already living in a period of transition; they have taken this experience as a normal state of affairs.



Such a claim about a state of permanent transition, instead of sounding strange, should rather be considered trivial. First of all, it is in line with the self-description of the former regimes. While they were called "Communist" from the outside, they always described themselves as "socialist", being on the way toward Communism, but not fully there. (8) Though this may be discarded as just part of the ideology of Communism, it helped much to make sense of unintelligible under these regimes. Second, the establishment of the socialist regime almost everywhere was preceded by a world war, a major period of transition and a collapse of order. One could even argue that the establishment of a communist system could only have happened in such a state of confusion; and that the power, the energy of Communism relied upon the artificial prolongation of such a post-war situation. (9) Finally, the transitory situation also applies to the Great Crisis of 1929-1933 that in the region was never really solved or stabilised, as it directly led to the building up of a military industry and W.W.II. Thus, using a not very controversial series of arguments, one can safely argue that at least since six or seven decades, the East European region is in a permanent state of transition, having left a regular state of affairs and never arriving to a point of safe repose that in the "West" in a certain sense happened, for e.g., with the New Deal, the Marshall plan, or the establishment of the EC. (10)

Living in a permanent state of transition is a peculiar experience. Its analysis requires first of all the realisation, the diagnosis, the recognition of the situation, that can only come on the basis of distancing experiences. It also calls for a theoretical framework in which it is possible to reflect upon it; that takes the state of transition seriously. Fortunately, some major steps have already been taken in this direction.

### Transition as liminality

In the literature on the East European transition process, this has been attempted by Zygmunt Bauman, who in an 1992 article called attention to the works of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. (11) Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) was an ethnologist with an unusually inter-cultural background, (12) one of the main contemporary opponents of Durkheim, whose works remained classics in folklor studies, but little known elsewhere. (13) In his main work, van Gennep studied the rituals by which individuals passed through the major events of their life (birth, youth to adulthood, marriage, birthing, death) in pre-historical societies, and also those by which the whole community went through its culturally defined seasons. (14) In order to analyse these events, he developed a dynamic sequence model of three phases, consisting of the rites of separation from the routines of mundane everyday life; the liminal position, the actual, suspended world of the transition rites, and the eventual reintegration into the regular, normal daily routine by the rites of incorporation. Among the three phases, van Gennep placed the emphasis on the middle one, as he also denoted the first and third phases as "preliminal" and "postliminal" rites. (15) This framework was developed in stark contrast with the Durkheimian (or neo-Kantian) reliance upon dichotomous categories.

Due to the dominating influence of Durkheimian sociology, these ideas failed to play a major role until they were taken up again, in the early 1960s, by the British anthropologist Victor Turner. The conditions under which Turner rediscovered van Gennep are worth mentioning, given the theoretical-methodological perspective of the paper. In 1963, while Turner was transferring from Manchester to Cornell University and, already having given up his position and home, unexpectedly had to spend a rather lengthy period waiting for the arrival of his American visa, he happened to read van Gennep in a library, and immediately made the connection between his personal experience and the general theoretical relevance. From this moment, he elaborated the



concept of liminality in a series of theoretical papers and empirical investigations. (16)

According to Turner, "the essence of liminality is to be found in its release from normal constraints, making possible the deconstruction of the "uninteresting" constructions of common sense, the "meaningfulness of ordinary life", discussed by phenomenological sociologists, into cultural units which may then be reconstructed in a novel way, some of them bizarre to the point of monstrosity ... Liminality is the domain of the "interesting", or of "uncommon sense". (17) Furthermore, the liminal condition not only has an innovative potential, but it also creates a feeling of commonalty among participants that Turner called "communitas": "Communitas" or "social antistructure" is a "relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations and circumstances. It is a liminal phenomenon which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship. ... Communitas breaks into society through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority." (18)

Turner's work provides a theoretically and conceptually more sophisticated approach than van Gennep's. Yet, for the study of the East European transition process, his perspective must be modified. First, as an anthropologist, Turner assumed a stable, lasting traditional order as the background of a liminal "crisis" situation. For our purposes, however, the starting point is provided not simply by a partial and temporary suspension of the regular state of affairs, but the wholesale dissolution of the existing order of things. This has two consequences. First, the duration of the liminal phase is extended. Van Gennep and Turner placed the emphasis on a short liminal period, as they considered it particularly important for the renewal, the revitalisation, the spiritual regeneration of individuals or the whole community. In the case of East-Central Europe, however, the liminal phase becomes extended, and whole societies are captured in the long



run in a state of liminality. (19) Second, due to this, the evaluation of the regular - liminal couplet is inverted. The search for the innovative potential of liminality, the relief from the dull routines of the everyday, is replaced by a longing for stability, normality, regularity; for the rule of form and order. It is not accidental that the founding figures of the phenomenological approach which is Turner's chief theoretical adversary, Husserl and Schutz were both Central Europeans of Jewish origin, theorising and wanting to escape their at once liminal and marginal position. (20) The contrasting of Turner's work with that of the phenomenological sociologists, for the East European situation, by incorporating the conditions of emergence of ideas in a self-reflexive manner, therefore offers new potential for thought.

In spite of the innovative potential of the idea, Bauman's article failed to accomplish a breakthrough. This may have had several reasons. It came a bit too late, when the conventional use of the term has become consolidated already for the region. It also arrived just at the moment when the word transition was attacked from the perspective of "transformation". But a theoretically more pertinent reason may have been that Bauman combined liminality with the discourse of social classes. However, if a liminal situation can be characterised by the break-up of the existing, stable arrangements, then the language of "massification" (Mannheim), of the fluid, even simplistic (21) elite-mass distinction seems to be more applicable than the language of class structure that assumes long term stability.

### Transitions and elites

This holds true for both sides of the elite-mass dichotomy. First, masses as such normally do not exist in history. In regular, orderly situations, a society is divided into stable groups like classes, castes, or orders (Stände). Masses only come into existence in periods of dissolution of order. (22) Even more importantly, situations of transition enhance the role of the elite; in line with the previous considerations, one can even claim that such

situations create the elite, a kind of leadership that is not based on established, ascribed social positions, but that has been called forth by the special qualities of single individuals, the ability to solve new, extraordinary, emergency situations. (23)

In sum, a dissolution of order and the period of transition that follows alters fundamentally the stratification of a society going through such a specific situation. It breaks down a crucial part of the established order of things, the system of social differentiation, by levelling large groups of people into a more or less anonymous mass, and by lifting up a certain number of individuals into special, elected positions, who are called forth to provide relief and guidance for the population at large, made into a mass, under conditions of crisis and distress. (24)

In light of this fact, it is not surprising that the study of elites has become widespread after 1989. (25) This paper does not want to argue against the use of the term elite, rather points out an element of reality that has been overlooked so far. The problem is not that there is an excessive reliance on elite politics, but that the region suffers from the opposite sickness, a serious lack of elite. If a situation of transition, especially a state of permanent transition calls especially for the presence of an elite, then the region suffers from the fact that it does not possess genuine elites.

We can repeat the same claim that has been voiced before about the diagnosis of a permanent transition: though it may sound surprising, it is almost self-evident. The region cannot have an elite, as in the past 50-60 years, the existing elites were eliminated in series of waves, and everything was done to prevent the possibility of an elite formation.

The historical facts are well-known. The transition to modernity presented a difficult challenge to the ruling orders and classes in any country. The more we go toward the East, the less successful was the response, implying that starting from Germany, but especially in the Eastern part of Europe, foreign nationalities and ethnic groups played an increasing role, took up elite positions.



This first created tensions, and then contributed to the fact that the sufferings and the consequences of W.W.II (the Holocaust, the repatriation of Germans, and the waves of emigration) hurt these countries especially deeply. But this was only the beginning. These losses were deepened and in a way made irreversible by the communist strategy that aimed at the systematic elimination of all the social elites, including, as a last step, the elite of the Communist party itself. Though in itself this could have remained a single blow, the Communist party consolidated and made all but irreversible the destruction of the elite, the regenerative capacity of a society by installing in the long run the process of counterselection by which it ensured that the leading positions in these countries would be filled by people who show not so much a particular ability, but loyalty to the party. This made the formation of an elite doubly, formally and substantively impossible. Formally, because those people had to accept an impossible mechanism of selection, the mechanism that selected them; and substantively, as it implied that a major criterion of the elite, its ethical composure and independence would not be guaranteed.

One could say that this represents a biased description of elite selection under Communism; that on the one hand, many able individuals were promoted to influential positions; and on the other, there were people who actively and even publicly resisted the regime, an "alternative elite". These two categories became the strongholds of the reform communists and the dissidents, the two groups that, indeed, have played an important role in 1989 and became central figures after. (21) However, these groups could not develop into a genuine elite. Something fundamental was missing in them - an absence whose tragic consequences we are only just now beginning to see.

A 1942 article of the perhaps best known 20th century non-Marxist Hungarian thinker, István Bibó can help us to see better concerning this point. (22) According to him, the "calm and creative" activity of the elite requires two things: the existence of a social consensus behind the elite selection mechanisms, and the



actual assignment of members of the elite to the proper places in the social structure. Bibó furthermore stated that the performance of his tasks requires that the elite be self-confident, self-conscious and impartial, without being conceited. In sum, the elite of a society can only perform its tasks if it is given stable and calm conditions for its activity, and if his values, his "chosenness" is generally recognised both by the others and by itself. (23)

It does not require much space to argue that none of this existed during the past 50-60 years in East Europe - it also follows from the previous considerations of the paper. The selection criteria for the actual leading strata were not recognised commonly, able people did not gain positions, therefore they did not have a proper security and self-confidence (they lacked it or had an excess), and their possible self-identification as a potential elite was not matched by a public recognition either. The long duration of such a situation without an elite, just like the condition of a permanent transition, does not simply disturb the hearts and minds of people and impairs the solution of current problems, but ultimately seriously endangers even the vitality of a given society, its ability to solve the problems it encounters. (24)

#### A last remark

A region in a state of a permanent transition without a proper elite that could guide it to safer waters does not give a very promising sight. The nature of the problem explains that it is not possible to come up with quick and easy suggestions for solution. The paper only hopes that it may contribute to the recognition of the problem and help to orient thinking toward the establishment of those conditions of stability that are necessary to end the permanent state of transition.

## Notes

(1) David Stark, 'Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe', *East European Politics and Societies* 6 (1992), 1:17-54. See also László Bruszt, 'Transformative Politics: Social Cost and Social Peace in East Central Europe', in the same issue, pp.55-72.

(2) The historical origins of this thinking can be located in the secularisation of Christian teleology. Pre-Christian secular concepts of history were dominated by the mythical, cyclical view of history, according to which history does not go ahead, but passes through a certain fixed set of patterns. An early version of this view, where the mythical impact is still visible, can be seen in Plato's *Republic*, Book 9. The same view is still present in Vico's *New Science*. It is important to emphasise that up to the Enlightenment, secular philosophies of history always remained cyclical, "pagan" (another example could be the thought of Machiavelli), while linear developmental teleology was always restricted to different, orthodox or heretic Christian currents. About this, see Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago, Chicago University Press; 1953), Reinhard Koselleck, "Neuzeit": Remarks on the Semantics of the Modern Concepts of Movement', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 1985), and Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, Chicago University Press; 1949). For an opposite viewpoint, see Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 1985).

(3) See Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Enlightenment and Despair: A History of Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

(4) See for e.g. the works of Perry Anderson and Maurice Dobb.

(5) For political science, see the recent revisitation of the concept of "political development" in Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington (eds) *Understanding Political Development* (Boston, Little, Brown & Co, 1987); for economics, see the classic work of Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge University Press, 1960).

(6) See the *Genealogy of Morals* (N.Y., Vintage, 1966 [1887]) Preface, No.6.



(7) This points to the tight connections between Nietzsche and Weber. After decades of neglect, the extent to which Nietzsche was a formative influence on Weber is by now well established in the literature; for the best accounts, see Wilhelm Hennis, 'The Traces of Nietzsche in the Work of Max Weber', in *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1988), and Lawrence Scaff, 'From Political Economy to Political Sociology: Max Weber's Early Writings', in Ronald M. Glassman and Vatro Murvar (eds.), *Max Weber's Political Sociology* (Westport, Ctc, Greenwood Press, 1984). However, the argument can even be made even stronger by demonstrating the tight links between the dynamics of Weber's life-works and his reading of Nietzsche. A detailed analysis could show that the posthumous publications of Nietzsche's works, especially the *Will to Power* and *Ecce Homo* were major instruments in Weber's recovery after his illness (1901), and his relapse (1908).

(8) One of the best known jokes about Communism is a perfect illustration of the permanent state of liminality. The joke is told in endless varieties. According to one, the participants of a party reunion in a remote district were repeatedly told by the comrade from the Central Committee that Communism is already on the horizon. They did not understand the word, but were afraid to ask questions. At home, they immediately picked up the dictionary, only to discover the following definition: *horizon* - something the closer we get to it, the more it recedes.

(9) See Jan T. Gross, 'Social Consequences of Was: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe', *East European Politics and Societies* 3 (1989), 2: 198-214; and Agnes Horváth, 'Konfliktus nélküli terület' (Area without conflict), manuscript, 1993.

(10) One should emphasise that the difference between East and West Europe even in this respect is only a matter of degree, not of kind. In fact, the theory of a permanent state of transition, *mutatis mutandis*, could be extended even to the "West". Such an analysis could be performed by an explicit elaboration of some of the main underlying Weberian metaphores of modernity: the monastery, pilgrimage, and the Crusades Concerning the latter, especial attention is to be paid on the manner war communism, especially the fighting orders (those religious orders that took part actively in the Crusades), influenced Weber's thinking, especially the development of his concept of charisma. Concerning pilgrimage, it is to be noted that when Victor Turne extended his work to the West, he focused on the phenomenon of pilgrimage.



(11) Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Polish Predicament: A Model in Search of Class Interests', *Telos* 1992 (82): 113-30; for a more recent version, see 'After the Patronage State: A Model in Search of Class Interests', in G. A. Bryant and Edmund Mokrzycki (eds.), *The New Great Transformation? Change and Continuity in East-Central Europe* (London, Routledge, 1994).

(12) Van Gennep was born in Württemberg from a Dutch father and a French mother. Though educated in France, he never had a proper university career, combining work in French governmental and cultural organisations with academic positions elsewhere (he taught in Neuchâtel, Oxford and Cambridge) a bit resembling the more recent life trajectories of Michel Foucault and Philippe Ariès. See Arnold Van Gennep, *The Semi-Scholars* (London, Routledge, 1967), ix-xii.

(13) This seems to have been a common fate of the intellectual opponents of Durkheim and his circle. The other main figure, the sociologist Gabriel Tarde, has also fallen into an almost complete oblivion, even though his works had much affinity with the perspective of Simmel, and were indeed used by the Chicago school together with Simmel. For a recent resurgence of interest in Tarde, stimulated by the works of Deleuze and Girard, see the Introduction by Bruno Karsenti to the new edition of *Les Lois de l'imitation* (Paris, Kimé, 1993 [2nd ed. 1895]), and the Introduction by Dominique Reynié to the new edition of *L'Opinion et la foule* (Paris, P.U.F., 1989 [1901]). On the manner in which the Durkheim school managed to build up its own influence within French intellectual life and the way it dealt with its opponents, see Terry N. Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences* (Harvard University Press, 1973), especially the story of the promotion of Durkheim's protégé, Bouglé, on pp. 69-71 and 177-8.. This points out a peculiar similarity - not between Durkheim and Weber, but a main opponent of the latter, Gustav Schmoller, who has become a "university pope" by getting his students into influential position through his personal contacts in the Prussian ministry of education (about this see Paul Honigsheim, *On Max Weber* (N.Y., The Free Press, 1968), pp.5-6).

(14) Arnold Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, Picard, 1981 [1909]), English translation *The rites of passage* published by University of Chicago Press, 1960.

(15) Van Gennep, 1960, p. 11.

(16) See for e.g. Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*', in *The Forest of Symbols* (N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1987 [1967]; *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, Aldine, 1969); *On the Edge of the Bush* (Tucson, Arizona, The University of Arizona Press, 1985); and Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (N.Y., Columbia U.P., 1978). The story of the reading experience of van Gennep is told by his wife, Edith Turner in her 'Prologue' to Turner, 1985. For a critical assessment of Turner's work, see Kathleen M. Ashley (ed), *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990).

(17) Turner, 1985, p.160.

(18) Turner and Turner, 1978: 252-3.

(19) In his later works, Turner extended the concept of liminality to Western civilisation, talking about "liminoid" phenomena, focusing especially on theatre (see for e.g. 'Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, Ritual', in *From Ritual to Theatre* (N.Y., PAJ Publications, 1982), pp.20-60), and has also introduced the concept of "permanent transition" earlier (see *The Ritual Process*, pp. 107, 116). This paper argues that in the specific case of contemporary East-Central Europe, it is necessary to combine the two, by returning to the original concept of liminality in a modern setting and interpreting it a permanent state of liminality.

(20) There is a great deal of similarity between "liminality" and "marginality". The "liminal" can be conceived of as a dynamisation of the "static" term marginality. About this, see Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1974), p.233.

(21) According to Turner, the simplification of social-structural relationships is one of the fundamental characteristics of a liminal position. See Turner, 1985, p.293.

(22) There is a analogy in the way Turner's concept of liminality has an affinity with crowds (carnevals, theaters and pilgrimages were the main crowd events of the Middle Ages), and our application of the concept to a transition following a dissolution of order in linked to the emergence of massification.

(23) This emphasis on the individual qualities of the elite has been singled out by Pareto in his classic writings. This point has



also played a central role for Max Weber. As the notes made by Tönnies during the famous 1917 Lauenstein meetings show, in the first time Weber talked with students in a public meeting after a break of almost two decades, during the last period of the war, the central concern for Weber, concerning the reconstruction of Germany, was exactly the quality of leadership. (see *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg*, Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I/15 (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1984), p.707. Though often interpreted in the opposite sense, the later developments only proved how well Weber's point was taken.

(24) Such a situation recalls again Turner's characterisation of liminality. According to him, in a liminal situation, "there exists a set of relations that compose a social structure of a very simple kind: between instructors and neophytes there is often complete authority and complete submission; among neophytes there is often complete equality". (p.99). It is not accidental that the members of the communist party apparatus were called "instructors". About this, see Agnes Horvath And Árpád Szokolczai, *The Dissolution of Communist Power* (London, Routledge, 1992). This perspective also helps to shed new light on the period of totalitarian terror as a special kind of "initiation rite".

(25) While the word "elites" was central to classical sovietology, focussing on the activity of CP leaders and cadres, and was criticised much by the neglect of the social dimension, recently, mainstream political science has abandoned elite theory for the "transition to democracy" framework, while elite theory was picked up by sociologists.

(26) The current Hungarian ruling coalition of the Socialists and the Free Democrats epitomises well this configuration.

(27) István Bibó, 'Elit és szociális érzék' (Elite and social sensibility), in *Válogatott tanulmányok, I* (Selected works, vol I) (Budapest, Magvető, 1986), pp. 223-41.

(28) These points are close to the views of the other major classic of elite theory, Gaetano Mosca. See his *Elementi di scienza politica*, especially the two-volume second edition, published first in 1923, after the experience of W.W.I (Bari Laterza, 1953). For the English version, see *The Ruling Class* (N.Y., MacGraw-Hill, 1939).

(29) This is exactly the sense in which Nietzsche used the expression "hostility to life" in *The Genealogy of Morals*. In fact, the peculiar twist of vital statistics in almost all countries of the



region, the sharp decreases in fertility and increases in mortality rates, confirming and not reversing the previous, unique mortality trends in the region, may be a reflections of this phenomenon. See Nicholas Eberstadt, 'Health and Mortality in Eastern Europe, 1965-85', *Communist Economies* 2 (1990), 3:347-71; James C. Riley, 'The Prevalence of Chronic Diseases during Mortality Increase: Hungary in the 1980s', *Population Studies* 45 (1991), 3:489-96; Juris Krúmins and Peteris Zvidrins, 'Recent Mortality Trends in the Three Baltic Republics', *Population Studies* 46 (1992), 2:259-73; Nicholas Eberstadt, 'Demographic Shocks in Eastern Germany', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46 (1994), 3:519-33; "Central and Eastern Europe in Transition: Public Policy and Social Conditions." Regional Monitoring Report No.1, November 1993. UNICEF, Florence.





# EUI WORKING PAPERS

EUI Working Papers are published and distributed by the  
European University Institute, Florence

Copies can be obtained free of charge  
– depending on the availability of stocks – from:

The Publications Officer  
European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

**Please use order form overleaf**



# Publications of the European University Institute

To                    The Publications Officer  
                      European University Institute  
                      Badia Fiesolana  
                      I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) – Italy  
                      Telefax No: +39/55/4685 636  
                      E-mail: [publish@datacomm.iue.it](mailto:publish@datacomm.iue.it)

From                Name .....  
                      Address.....  
                      .....  
                      .....  
                      .....  
                      .....

- ☐ Please send me a complete list of EUI Working Papers  
☐ Please send me a complete list of EUI book publications  
☐ Please send me the EUI brochure Academic Year 1996/97

Please send me the following EUI Working Paper(s):

No, Author        .....  
Title:                .....  
No, Author        .....  
Title:                .....  
No, Author        .....  
Title:                .....  
No, Author        .....  
Title:                .....

Date                .....

Signature         .....



# Working Papers in Political and Social Sciences

Published since 1992

## **SPS No. 92/15**

Jerry A. JACOBS

Consumer, Social and Business  
Services Industries in the United  
States: Trends Between 1969 and  
1987

## **SPS No. 92/16**

Hans-Peter BLOSSFELD/

Yossi SHAVIT

Persisting Barriers: Changes in  
Educational Opportunities in  
Thirteen Countries

## **SPS No. 92/17**

Hans-Peter BLOSSFELD/

Jan HOEM/Alessandra

DE ROSE/Götz ROHWER

Education, Modernization and  
Divorce. Differences in the Effect  
of Women's Educational  
Attainment in Sweden, the Federal  
Republic of Germany  
and Italy

## **SPS No. 92/18**

Zina ASSIMAKOPOULOU/

Gøsta ESPING-ANDERSEN/

Kees VAN KERSBERGEN

Post-Industrial Class Structures:  
Classifications of Occupations and  
Industries (United States,  
Germany, Sweden and Canada)

## **SPS No. 92/19**

Götz ROHWER

RZoo: Efficient Storage and  
Retrieval of Social Science Data

## **SPS No. 92/20**

Stefano GUZZINI

The Continuing Story of a Death  
Foretold. Realism in International  
Relations/International Political  
Economy

## **SPS No. 92/21**

Giandomenico MAJONE

Ideas, Interests and Policy  
Change \*

## **SPS No. 92/22**

Arpád SZAKOLCZAI

On the Exercise of Power in  
Modern Societies, East and West \*

## **SPS No. 92/23**

Stefan ROSSBACH

The Autopoiesis of the Cold War:  
An Evolutionary Approach to  
International Relations?

## **SPS No. 92/24**

Steven LUKES

On Trade-Offs Between Values

## **SPS No. 92/25**

Stephan RUSS-MOHL

Regulating Self-Regulation: The  
Neglected Case of Journalism  
Policies. Securing Quality in  
Journalism and Building Media  
Infrastructures on a European  
Scale

## **SPS No. 92/26**

Véronique MUNOZ DARDÉ

The Idea of Feminism from a  
Kantian Perspective. An Exercise  
in Practical Reasoning

\* out of print

**SPS No. 92/27**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
The European Community  
between Social Policy and Social  
Regulation

**SPS No. 92/28**

Volker EICHENER  
Social Dumping or Innovative  
Regulation?

Processes and Outcomes of European  
Decision-Making in the Sector of  
Health and Safety at Work  
Harmonization \*

\* \* \*

**SPS No. 93/1**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
Mutual Recognition in  
Federal Type Systems \*

**SPS No. 93/2**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
Deregulation or Re-Regulation?  
Policymaking in the European  
Community Since the Single Act\*

**SPS No. 93/3**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
Controlling Regulatory  
Bureaucracies: Lessons from the  
American Experience

**SPS No. 93/4**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI  
From Governmentality to the  
Genealogy of Subjectivity:  
On Foucault's Path in the 1980's

**SPS No. 93/5**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI  
Types of Mayors, Types of  
Subjectivity: Continuities and  
Discontinuities in the East-Central  
European Transitions I

**SPS No. 93/6**

Louis CHARPENTIER  
Le dilemme de l'action positive  
Analyse du concept à travers les débats  
parlementaires relatifs à la loi sur l'éga-  
lité professionnelle entre les femmes et  
les hommes

**SPS No. 93/7**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI  
Nietzsche's Genealogical Method:  
Presentation and Application

**SPS No. 93/8**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI  
Re-Building the Polity: A Com-  
parative Study of Mayors in the  
Hungarian, Czech and Slovakian  
Republics

**SPS No. 93/9**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
The European Community:  
An "Independent Fourth Branch of  
Government"? \*

**SPS No. 93/10**

Stefan ROSSBACH  
The Author's Care of Himself  
On Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel  
Foucault, and Niklas Luhmann

**SPS No. 93/11**

Anna TRIANDAFYLLIDOU  
From Qualitative to Quantitative  
Analysis in Political Discourse:  
A Computer-Assisted Application

**SPS No. 93/12**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
When Does Policy Deliberation  
Matter?

\* \* \*

\* out of print



**SPS No. 94/1**

Richard ARUM/Yossi SHAVIT  
Another Look at Tracking,  
Vocational Education and Social  
Reproduction

**SPS No. 94/2**

Arpád SZAKOLCZAI  
Thinking Beyond the East-West  
Divide: Patocka, Foucault,  
Hamvas, Elias, and the Care of the  
Self

**SPS No. 94/3**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
Independence vs. Accountability?  
Non-Majoritarian Institutions and  
Democratic Government in  
Europe

**SPS No. 94/4**

Martin J. BULL  
The European Community and  
'Regime Parties': A Case Study of  
Italian Christian Democracy

**SPS No. 94/5**

László FÜSTÖS/Arpád  
SZAKOLCZAI  
Value Changes in Hungary, 1978-  
1993: Continuity and  
Discontinuity in the East-Central  
European Transitions II

**SPS No. 94/6**

Anna LEANDER  
Bertrand Badie: Cultural Diversity  
Changing International Relations?

**SPS No. 94/7**

Stefano GUZZINI  
Robert Gilpin. The Realist Quest  
for the Dynamics of Power

**SPS No. 94/8**

Roumen DASKALOV  
Images of Europe: A Glance from  
the Periphery

**SPS No. 94/9**

Anna LEANDER  
"Robin Hood" Politics? Turkey  
Probing a New Model in the 1990s

**SPS No. 94/10**

Alan CAFRUNY  
Class, State, and Global Structure:  
The Transformation of  
International Maritime Relations

**SPS No. 94/11**

Roumen DASKALOV  
Building up a National Identity:  
The Case of Bulgaria

**SPS No. 94/12**

Stefano GUZZINI  
The Implosion of Clientelistic  
Italy in the 1990s: A Study of  
"Peaceful Change" in  
Comparative Political Economy \*

**SPS No. 94/13**

Johan Jeroen DE DEKEN  
Social Policy in Postwar  
Czechoslovakia.  
The Development of Old-Age  
Pensions and Housing Policies  
During the Period 1945-1989

**SPS No. 94/14**

Paolo DONATI  
Media Strength and Infrastructural  
Weakness: Recent Trends in the  
Italian Environmentalist  
Movement

\* out of print

**SPS No. 94/15**

Frank R. PFETSCH  
Die Außenpolitik der  
Bundesrepublik Deutschland.  
Kontinuität oder Wandel nach der  
Vereinigung?

**SPS No. 94/16**

Martin J. BULL  
Another Revolution *Manqué*? The  
PDS in Italy's Transition 1989-  
1994

**SPS No. 94/17**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
Understanding Regulatory Growth  
in the European Community

**SPS No. 94/18**

Johan Jeroen DE DEKEN  
Social Policy in Post-War  
Belgium. The Development of Old  
Age Pensions and Housing  
Policies from 1945 to 1989 as  
Two Case Studies of the  
Formation of a Christian  
Democratic Welfare State

\* \* \*

**SPS No. 95/1**

Christian JOPPKE  
Multiculturalism and Immigration:  
A Comparison of the United  
States, Germany, and Britain

**SPS No. 95/2**

Giandomenico MAJONE  
The Development of Social  
Regulation in the European  
Community: Policy Externalities,  
Transaction Costs, Motivational  
Factors

**SPS No. 95/3**

Thomas CHRISTIANSEN  
Plaid Cymru in the 1990s:  
Dilemmas and Ambiguities of  
Welsh Regional Nationalism

**SPS No. 95/4**

Claude S. FISCHER  
Historical Sociology and  
Sociological History: Theory and  
Practice

**SPS No. 95/5**

Roberta SASSATELLI  
Power Balance in the  
Consumption Sphere:  
Reconsidering Consumer  
Protection Organizations

**SPS No. 95/6**

Stefano BARTOLINI  
Electoral Competition: Analytical  
Dimensions and Empirical  
Problems

**SPS No. 95/7**

Stefano BARTOLINI/Roberto  
D'ALIMONTE  
Plurality Competition and Party  
Realignment in Italy: The 1994  
Parliamentary Elections

\* \* \*

**SPS No. 96/1**

Yossi SHAVIT/  
Karin WESTERBEEK  
Stratification in Italy: An  
Investigation of Failed Reforms

**SPS No. 96/2**

Adrienne HÉRITIER  
The Accommodation of Diversity  
in European Policy Making and its  
Outcomes: Regulatory Policy as a  
Patchwork

\* out of print

**SPS No. 96/3**

Daniel VERDIER

Gerschenkron on his Head:  
Banking Structures in 19th-  
Century Europe, North America,  
and Australasia

**SPS No. 96/4**

Daniel VERDIER

Democratization and Trade  
Liberalization in Industrial  
Capitalist Countries

**SPS No. 96/5**

Daniel VERDIER

Democratic Convergence and Free  
Trade

**SPS No. 96/6**

Christian JOPPKE

Nation-Building after World War  
Two: Postcolonialism,  
Postcommunism, and Postfascism  
Compared

**SPS No. 96/7**

Takis S. PAPPAS

Grand Design, Narrow Choices:  
Conservatives and Democracy in  
Southern Europe

**SPS No. 96/8**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI/László  
FÜSTÖS

Value Systems in Axial Moments:  
A Comparative Analysis of 24  
European Countries

**SPS No. 96/9**

Árpád SZAKOLCZAI

In a Permanent State of Transition:  
Theorising the East European  
Condition

\* out of print







