

become “tabloidized.” In other words, not only have the reformers’ hopes for transition to a “public service” broadcasting model been dashed, but the comforting syllogism “free market + plural owners = plurality of opinions” is in tatters. (The “public service” model signifies broadcasting according to the model of the British, Canadian, Australian, Nordic nations’, and Japanese.)

Indeed Karol Jakubowicz argues, citing long-time Slovene media researcher Slavko Splichal, that the pattern that has emerged is one of “Mediterraneanization,” that is, similar to southern European models, where television is still rather slowly extricating itself from the embrace of political parties once in government.

Jakubowicz’s essay on the checkered history of attempts to achieve a public service broadcasting model in the region is worth particular attention, given his long experience in Polish broadcasting research since before 1989, and his intermittent involvement in running the Polish system in the intervening years. For U.S. scholars unfamiliar with the public service model, which steers a course between the Scylla of the state and the Charybdis of commercialism, his analysis of its troubled trajectories in the region will likely bring a host of fresh insights to their thinking about media and governance.

Epp Lauk’s study of journalism culture, focusing especially on Estonia, clearly reveals the absurdity of the premise on which the tidal wave of western missionaries for democratic media were financed by western nongovernmental organizations and governments after 1989, sent in to run short courses to convert the region’s media institutions into happy little mirrors of western news practices—or of their hypothesized practices, at least.

Colin Sparks’s contribution vigorously asserts the “elite continuity” thesis in the media sphere against the “democratic transition” thesis, though it could be argued he overly melds the arguments of Guillermo O’Donnell and his colleagues, who were seeking to grasp how Latin American publics could avoid relapse into dictatorship, with the triumphalist prognoses of the western commentocracy following the events of 1989.

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Governing the Post-Communist City: Institutions and Democratic Development in Prague. By Martin Horak. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. xii, 270 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$55.00, hard bound.

This book presents a nuanced and thoughtful account of the evolutionary change in city politics that followed the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The empirical study of urban politics in postcommunist Prague provides original insights into theoretical debates about the nature of transition from communism to capitalism. Although Prague has one of the strongest and best-organized local governmental structures in the postcommunist countries, with major local autonomy in decision making, it has been characterized by relatively poor government performance in terms of the lack of openness to the wider public.

Martin Horak investigates transformational trajectories in two specific fields. In the area of preservation and development in Prague’s historic core, city politicians resisted the formulation of any systematic policy that could guide decision making. Property development offered an opportunity for immediate material gain, and many councilors began acting as intermediaries on behalf of developers. This gave them a vested interest in maintaining closed, ad hoc decision-making procedures that gave them maximum discretion. In the field of freeway development, city politicians in the early 1990s endorsed a modified version of the city’s communist-era plans and refused to allow citizen groups to be involved in decision making. To oppose the environmentally oriented civic activists, politicians formed a coalition with technically oriented transport engineers. The resulting situation of mutual delegitimization among opposing groups prevented the further development of open policy processes. This early decision to exclude civic groups from decision making meant that the fragmented, protest-oriented character of civic organizations and town hall’s closed-door policy were locked in over the longer term.

Horak acknowledges that postcommunist changes have been shaped by the interplay between the legacies of the past and postcommunist institutional transformations. Yet his main attention is devoted to mechanisms through which new institutions and practices were established. Institutional elements of the new political system could not change at once. Postcommunist transformations are necessarily multistage processes; and the sequence of reforms matters. Most important, the substance of early reforms influences transformation trajectories and longer-term political outcomes. Horak argues that local government performance during the 1990s was significantly shaped by decisions that local political leaders made during the first years after the fall of communism.

In the early 1990s, political leaders faced a myriad of critical decision points. They had an unprecedented opportunity to shape future outcomes by pursuing strategic reforms. At the same time, the complexity of social change, the difficulty of assessing long-term outcomes, and the incoherence and fluidity of the institutional context made the pursuit of strategic reforms based on long-term views difficult and unattractive. Furthermore, opportunities for immediate material gains emerged as an alternative to defending broader and longer-term public interests. These conditions discouraged political leaders from pursuing strategic reforms and encouraged the privileging of simple short-term solutions. Thus at the very moment that political leaders could have had maximum influence over future outcomes, they were discouraged from making the necessary strategic long-term choices.

The initial period of rapid and radical reform was decisive for further developments. Early decisions limited the scope of choice for later decisions. Institutional forms and political practices introduced early on tended to resist the considerable forces of inertia. Although the role of communist legacies is generally acknowledged, Horak emphasizes the new postcommunist legacies and the path dependencies formed in the initial phase of transition. The question is whether suboptimal outcomes of postcommunist transformation processes could have been avoided. Horak argues that even shock therapy could not change the social and political system at once. There are limits to how fast things can proceed during complex societal transformations.

This book presents a very precise analysis driven by the desire to understand all the peculiarities of postcommunist transformations. At the same time, it is highly conceptually innovative, pointing to the new path dependencies formed during the first years of transition and to the structural limits they pose on the development of former communist societies. Unfortunately, the analysis ends in 2000 and cannot thus reflect the major institutional and political changes associated with the accession to the European Union. Nevertheless, the book is essential reading for anyone concerned with the transition from communism to capitalism.

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Buying and Selling the Istrian Goat: Istrian Regionalism, Croatian Nationalism, and EU Enlargement. By John Ashbrook. *Regionalism and Federalism*, no. 13. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008. 157 pp. Notes. \$49.95, paper.

This is a gem of a little book. For scholars of nationalisms, John Ashbrook's work provides a fresh example of the complex process of politicization of identities in the Balkans. For conflict analysts, it adds a layer of complexity, regionalism, to our understanding of the most recent Balkan wars. And for comparativists or area studies experts, this wonderfully readable book provides insight into one of the less-researched areas of the former Yugoslavia, the tourist-filled beaches of Istria. This beautiful peninsula, now parceled off to Slovenia and Croatia, is a microcosm of the importance of Balkan regionalism.

The influence of the nationalism scholar Maria Todorova (*Imagining the Balkans*, 1997), Ashbrook's mentor, is strong, as is the work of Milica Bakić-Hayden ("Nesting Orientalisms," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 [Winter 1995]: 917–31), Todorova's frequent sparring partner in the world of Balkan nationalisms. To be sure, the work of Edward Said, Robert