



Book Reviews

*Towards Open Regionalism in South East Europe*¹ Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz (eds.)

This book is written by a group of scientists and experts that analyze the possibilities for and problems in new emergent forms of regional cooperation in South East Europe. They view South East Europe through the lens of “new regionalism,” covering diverse themes from economic relations to organized crime, border practices, cultural production and civil society.

Christophe Solioz and Paul Stubbs situate South East Europe in the context of open regionalism that is described through variable geometries of multi-scalar networks and flows which produce and reproduce social constructions of place. Questioning geographical notions of space, the authors address the tensions of nation-state-region-building practices in the context of multiple histories of antagonism and co-operation. They address theoretical and conceptual approaches to new regionalism and region-making, the implications of moving from nation-building to region-building in South East Europe and the complexities of so-called “regional ownership” as a response to the imposed agendas of those outside.

In the chapter on (post)Yugoslav anti-war activism Bojan Bilić shows us that (post)Yugoslav anti-war initiatives did not appear immediately prior to the armed conflicts in a state of social and political vacuum, rather that these undertakings, whose proponents invariably appreciated the cultural and linguistic affinities that characterize the Yugoslav space, appropriated the already existing activist networks developed throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Dimitar Bechev focuses on the dynamics of and obstacles to regional co-operation in South East Europe in an analysis of three crucially important sectors that have been the centre of the regional cooperation agenda since the mid-1990s: trade, energy and justice. Progress made in key functional sectors portrays cooperation in South East Europe as a by-

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product of the region's integration into the EU. It is not coincidental that the most progress was made in terms of institutionalization and in the areas where the Union has a strong political mandate and an extensive normative framework, such as trade policy and electricity markets. By contrast, in domains where member states retain power South East European cooperation has proceeded at a slower pace.

Claudia Rose focuses both on theoretical and empirical dimensions of the problems and possibilities of regional economic integration between the emerging market economies of South East Europe, and makes a clear distinction between macro-level trade and micro-level enterprises.

Nada Švob-Đokić addresses cultural collaborations in South East Europe in terms of challenging global cultural flows and local identifications in a variety of creative programs, projects and schemes. She demonstrates through interlinked case studies the importance of networks in the context of the rise of social media and computer-mediated communication and highlights that the sustainability of cultural communication and cooperation in the SEE region has radically influenced the restructuring of exiting cultural space. Networking has been tightly intertwined with transnational processes and the overall social and economic restructuring of the region.

Eric Gordy addresses the clash between soft borders, multiple identities and traditional mixing which constitute everyday life in borderlands and the hard, exclusivist and ethnicised conceptions and practices of dominant political elites through two case studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo.

Francesco Strazzari and Fabrizio Coticchia demonstrate the ways in which both organized crime and the fight against it have been crucial in shaping the region, particularly in the last ten years in which the externalisation of European security concerns had to be confronted with the realities of the consolidation of organised criminal groups within mainstream economic and political processes in the region.

Giorgio Andrian focuses on a new form of transboundary cooperation in South East Europe which is grounded in the eco-regional approach.

Dinaric Arc Initiative is a transboundary initiative within that framework. Dinaric Arc Initiative created a unique platform of cooperation both in terms of inter-institutional architecture that has been developed among its members, ranging from small NGOs to large UN agencies, and in terms of the territorial dimension of its joint actions, focussed on specific sites of common interest. The evolution of trust, over time, between partners on the ground, appeared in stark contrast to mandate-driven, bureaucratic imperatives of respective head offices. The mix of spontaneity and reflexivity, crucial to the habitus of networked cooperation suggested that “small n” schemes can achieve real change.

Ana Dević explores the evaluations of the Yugoslav crises of socialism and state disintegration and the ensuing nationalist violence and post-war transitions through the cinema of Yugoslavia and its successor states. She shows us the complex relation of film production to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives. Her argument traces the practices of counter-hegemonic filmmakers in the context of dominant structures of funding and political patronage.

This book is a great example of a multidisciplinary approach. Deliberately blurring the borders between historical and contemporary analysis, between political science, economics and sociology, the authors address the meanings, potentials and pitfalls of diverse forms of regional practices and discourses and encourage others to build on their work addressing the tensions and possibilities in the spaces between global, regional, national and local processes, and between dominant politics and everyday realities.

Marina Funduk