

Tamas Kozma

The Niche: The symbolic history of the 'new-born universities' in Central and Eastern Europe

Three cycles of the Central European political changes of 1989/90 are separated on the basis of 32 case studies. The first cycles are called 'the transition' (at the turn of the decades 1980/90). The political actions of the first cycle were led by politicians and intellectuals trained in politics by the former regimes. Their ideas and visions can be named as 'third-way' philosophies, with a stress on bottom-up activities, community self-governance and seeking third ways between socialism and capitalism. The first cycle usually started with a symbol: a Niche in the iron curtains between Eastern and Western Europe – as well as a Niche on the walls of the distatorial regimes. (One result of that Niche are the chain of new-born universities that were organised bottom-up and fight for their survival in the era of the 'Bologna-process'.) The second cycle are usually identified with the 'transformation period' (during the 1990s and the turn of the decades 1990/2000). New nations and states have been emerged (independent Slovakia, Ukraina, Slovenia, Croatia). They were fighting for their new national identities by whic they could separate themselves from their former masters (present neighbours). Applying the national ideologies, government bureaucracies that have lost their legitimacies during the transition (since they served the one-party system) were getting to gain back their influence upon local societies and civil movements. The third cycle of the transformation is the integration to the European Union (the first decade of the 2000s). Instead of fighting for national identities, the new bureaucracies can be legitimized by the European organisations while the civil movements of the transitions become more or less a memory.