SSOAR

Open Access Repository
www.ssoar.info

Seán Hanley: The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right-Wing Politics, 1989-2006

Ucen, Peter

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Rezension / review

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Ucen, P. (2008). Seán Hanley: The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right-Wing Politics, 1989-2006. *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, *44*(3), 604-607. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-59028

Nutzungsbedingungen:
Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.
Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:
This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.
By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

gesis Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Mykhnenko's concluding remarks observe, this agenda has been exogenous to the national state-oriented VOC perspective.

The real contribution of the chapter on CEE can be particularly appreciated if the contributions are read together. King's chapter show that Eastern European economies cannot be understood sui generis, through the lenses of a nation-state perspective. Instead, we need to analyse the institutional forms in CEE countries in relation to the nature of the international integration of these countries. Here, the strategies of major MNCs and foreign banks will be key elements linking domestic comparative institutional advantages and international competitiveness. Focusing solely on domestic institutions, Feldmann's contribution tells us much about the economic potentials that the two very different institutional configurations can offer. By identifying important differences, Feldmann invites us to unpack the LDPC model and investigate variations in the nature of dependent development in the region. Moreover, he provides important insights on micro-foundations of the two modes of coordination and on the importance of state strategy in constituting their regulatory underpinnings. This is particularly important in order to understand Slovenian exceptionalism. The Estonian case reads more as a story of destruction of 'the old' and reliance on a new generation of actors, most notably foreign investors, to take over. By bringing in the economic analysis, Mykhnenko starts were Feldmann (unfortunately) stops. This allows him to investigate actual economic effects the institutions may have and thus link domestic mechanisms of coordination with the nature of international integration. Here, he manages to make a number of important steps in what I see as a major post-transition research agenda.

Sociologists working on Eastern Europe should not be impressed by the propensity of the VOC approach for a mechanical classification of institutional forms. Yet, especially those employing the tools of 'soft economic sociology' (i.e. projecting the logic of other socio-cultural activities into the economic at the expense of the specificity of the latter) could benefit from the 'hard political economy' inputs of the VOC approach. These include the concern with comparative institutional advantage and competitiveness of the companies (infused by VOC's rational-choice institutionalist micro-foundations) in general and the implication of the dependent international integration of the Eastern European region in particular.

In sum, the book provides a 'state of the art' look at a very interesting and fruitful research paradigm. For this reason, it will be appreciated by researchers and advanced students alike. By addressing questions that are new to the industry, the Eastern European section probably comes closest to the promise of going *beyond* the VOC. Yet, when it comes to an analysis that would go beyond the mechanical application of the framework, the authors tend to stick to where they apparently feel strong: making sense of 'transition'. We are thus left with a number of crucial questions that emerged in the region about the nature of VOC that have yet to be answered. This is by no means a bad achievement.

Jan Drahokoupil
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne

Seán Hanley: *The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right-Wing Politics, 1989–2006*
BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies 2007: London, 274 pp.

Some time in 1990, a short article written by Václav Klaus appeared in the Czech daily *Lidové Noviny*, entitled 'The Concealed Assumptions in Our Political Controversies' ('Zamlčené předpoklady našich politických

soccas2008-3.indb 604 11.8.2008 8:58:24

sporů'). In it Klaus stated what could be considered his main political creed. Referring to Thomas Sowell, he classified existing worldviews as variants of the two basic 'different views of man and society', and claimed: 'The first of these worldviews is statist, the second one truly democratic, the first one is intellectual, the second one is populist (in the positive meaning of the world), the first one knows the truth, the second one seeks the way for the truth to be discovered and manifested… the first of these worldviews brought to life the French Revolution along with unlimited power, the second dominated the American Revolution, which led to limited constitutional government (and which dispensed with the guillotine and mass fury)'. Belittling the importance of contemporaneous political arguments – such as the Czech-Slovak 'hyphen conflict' or the controversy over whether 'dirty money' is a meaningful economic category or nor – Klaus called for these two visions to be politically articulated rather than concealed ('let them contest elections'). The story of the Czech right in the post-communist period can be viewed through the prism of Klaus's creed, as an attempt to make 'concealed assumptions' pronounced.

Seán Hanley's book deals with the fortunes and travails of this creed put into political practice, enlightening the reader on the concrete ways of tacit assumptions being politically voiced or, after all, 'materialised'. But this monograph goes beyond that and can be considered a major contribution to the study of Czech and post-communist party politics. In spite of being relatively short, the book gives the kind of impression usually produced by 'definitive accounts', but it leaves enough room for additional thoughts and offers inspiration for further research. Hanley's book is strong in many respects: it is a nice example of the path-dependency approach and frequently it challenges (sometimes demolishes) the many conventional assumptions and clichés used to explain the development of post-communist party politics. Hanley's intelligent work on the Czech case has methodological implications for the entire field of study.

The first, theoretical, chapter deals with 'getting the right right' and summarises a welcome conceptual contribution from Hanley's previous writings. Hanley defines the post-communist centre-right in two instalments, and, importantly, author sticks to the logic of this definition throughout the text. He describes the post-communist centre-right 'in the absence of a strong class base' and without resorting to ad hoc solutions and generalisations from one individual case – vices that are often encountered in the study of, for example, post-communist populism. The sole exception occurs when he draws the fault lines between the centre-right and other groups of right-of-centre parties. A more subtle distinction between the radical and the extreme right – as, for example, recently suggested by Cas Mudde – would be of an enormous help to Hanley's argument. It could, for example, help him somehow to avoid the problematic ad hoc promotion of an empirical indicator ('larger and broader electorate') to the status of a defining factor separating the centre-right from the 'extreme' right.

According to Hanley, 'the centre-right in ECE must be understood as *essentially 'new' political forces, shaped by late communism and the subsequent politics of post-communist transformation*, rather than a simple throwback to the authoritarian conservatism and integral nationalism of the past'. Those new forces try '*to reconcile liberal-capitalist modernization with traditional and moral values and specific local and national identities*' (while 'the extreme right [seeks] alternatives to such modernization'). These statements are the most useful conceptualisation of the moderate centre-right around. But in the light of the criticism provided, the second statement on the extreme right could perhaps be reformulated. To be sure,

soccas2008-3.indb 605 11.8.2008 8:58:24

the whole definition holds perfectly without mentioning the extreme right at all. But when the category of the 'extreme' right enters the argument, aforementioned division between the radical and extreme right would add clarity to some of Hanley's statements regarding the 'extreme' right. Then, to stick to Hanley's terms, rather than seeking alternatives to liberal-capitalist modernisation, the radical right challenges the effects of its reconciliation with national identity. The extreme right, next, proposes alternatives to liberal democracy in general without bothering with reconciliation at all. This proposed distinction will be gaining still greater significance in the near future as the space of the right-of-the-moderate-right in Czech polity has become swiftly populated by a number of actors.

In the next chapter, on historical legacies, Hanley follows many foreign researchers and a few Czech ones in understanding the importance of the (rather unusual) Czech nationalism for explaining the country's politics. Hanley is consistent in framing the genetics of the new right in 'the Czech historical pathways' as 'a consequence of the way the "modernity" of Czech society was filtered through the politics of nationalism'. This discloses the weaknesses of deductive meta-approaches which tend to take from the history of the nations in question only what fits their broad ambition to explain the whole region within a single framework. Mainly, he offers the reader the notion of the Czech post-communist right as another successful articulation of the 'perennial' Czech 'National Question'. In this respect, parallels can indeed be drawn between the Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and Vladimír Mečiar's People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which succeeded in persuading public in achieving very much the same for Slovaks. The new Czech right – unlike the old one from the pre-war era – did not 'betray' the Czech national idea and statehood formulated in consensual and cross-class terms. On the contrary, by defining the new version of it, ODS managed to overcome what has traditionally been conceived as a condition unfavourable to right-of-centre politics. But the pillar of the new Czech right, the ODS, did not forge a new class-based right either. It transcended the old class politics and did away with necessity of prioritising the survival of the nation state over a clear ideological stance.

After putting historical legacies in context, Hanley proceeds with identifying the factors shaping the post-1989 right in the era of late communism. He contends that 'it is in the failed reform communist project of 1960s and reactions to that failure that the roots of the new Czech right of 1990s are to be found'. In his fascinating account Hanley identifies the persons and ideas that later came to shape the right within the counter-elite produced during the normalisation era. His conclusion about the weakness, fragmentation and elite-driven intellectual character of the Czech 'proto-right', and its impact on the post-1989 formation of right-wing party political alternatives is fundamental, yet perhaps underestimated by other research.

The next three chapters describe the fortunes of the new right within Czech polity. It is relatively brief, yet very informative, without omitting anything important. The success of ODS as (party) organisational strategy, policy programme, and the source of the vision for Czech society is convincingly accounted for. Passages pertaining to the 'other' right – the Christian Democratic KDU-ČSL and the 'anti-establishment right' around the Quad-Coalition – are, by all means, a vital and original contribution to the English-language literature. While those 'narrative' chapters are very good, the chapter on 'building the new ideology of the right' is probably the most important part of the book. The text is captivating and novel. Hanley employs a (post)Gramscian discourse-theoretical approach to ideology

soccas2008-3.indb 606 11.8.2008 8:58:24

as his methodological frame. Even though Freeden's 'liberal' conceptualisation of ideology remains very useful, there is no question Hanley has largely achieved his goal of illustrating the logic and emergence of the 'ideological compound' that ODS produced. Indeed, this post-Marxist approach appears very suitable for reconstructing the ideology of the party's 'revolutionary conservatism'. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of the entire monograph lies in the ways in which it disentangles the notion of the 'civic' politics of the Czech right and identifies the political concepts it contains and 'de-contests'. Hanley is perfectly aware how another post-communist right-wing party, Hungary's Fidesz, managed to offer a strong political identity to a noteworthy segment of the electorate built upon the party's own definition of 'civic' politics. Finally, the author provides a smart though not always fully convincing explanation of why and under which circumstances ODS radically – by the standards of the moderate right – redressed its 'civic' version of transition politics to one based on defending the national interest. This chapter will certainly be fascinating for those who are not Czech nationals and are not familiar in detail with the topic, but it may be surprising and elucidating for most domestic readers, too. In spite of the many claim to the contrary, it shows that ideologies have played an important role in post-communist transitions.

All in all, Seán Hanley's treatment of the political ideology of the Czech right constitutes this book's greatest achievement. Ideology and its changes are presented here as a factor enabling us to understand the interconnection between the pragmatism of party-political competition and the more or less sincere effort to politically articulate the 'concealed assumptions in our political controversies' – in the Czech way.

Peter Učeň
Comenius University, Bratislava

Julia Lynch: ***Age in the Welfare State: The Origins of Social Spending on Pensioners, Workers and Children***
New York, NY, 2006: Cambridge University Press, 223 pp.

Welfare states, in allocating resources, to different age groups, affect various aspects of the citizens' wellbeing and life chances, from educational opportunities to labour and financial markets, family formation and family structure, fertility, and so forth. Moreover, different welfare states affect younger and older populations differently. While some countries focus on potential risks during childhood and working life, education, child care, the family, housing and active labour market policy, other countries highlight the needs of the elderly, by means of generous pension benefits and medical care. Prioritised social spending may thus generate inequalities among age groups. Julia Lynch's *Age in the Welfare State* sheds much-needed light on this phenomenon, dubbed the age orientation of welfare states. Lynch examines how social policies in prosperous OECD democracies deal with the risks facing the elderly, the young, and working adults; what is done in different countries towards different age groups in the populations; the reasons why policies vary from country to country and over time, and the political consequences of different strategies for redistributing resources across different age groups in society.

Lynch examines direct expenditures, tax expenditures and housing policy in twenty OECD countries, on average, between 1985 and 2000, and thus draws conclusions on the age orientation of social policy. Direct expenditures include 'income supports and services for the elderly; unemployment and active labor market policies; public spending on occupational injury and sickness programs; public spending on cash benefits and services for family per person under 15; public

soccas2008-3.indb 607 11.8.2008 8:58:24