

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Socio-economic transformation in Bulgaria – Peculiarities and territorial differences**

Margarita Ilieva, Sofia: TerArt, 2012, 344 p.

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(in Bulgarian, summary in English 21 p.)

**Reviewed by** IRINA SAGHIN, University of Bucharest, Romania

The book represents the outcome of the research on transition processes in Bulgaria having been made by Prof. dr. hab. Margarita Ilieva during the past two decades. This is motivated by the need of a complex analysis of social-economic transformations in post-communist Bulgaria.

The objective of the study consists in the analysis of particularities of social-economic transformations in Bulgaria in the post-communist period as well as of their regional and local differences. The analysis has been done through illustrating the transformation effects in three different domains: national economy as a whole, one of the economic branches (agriculture), and one of the functional systems (labor market); special attention being paid on territorial differences. The book is largely based on the thesis prepared for obtaining the dr. hab. degree, and thus bears the imprint of the formal thesis' structure and language.

The theoretical part of the work discusses various topics of social-economic changes, with special focus on the analysis of the term 'transformation' and its various meanings in geographical (and not only) literature. One of the crucial methodological aspects discussed in the book deals with measuring the degree of transformation. There is plenty of literature dedicated to various aspects of (economical) geographical transformations (more than 600 publications by international scholars as well as by Bulgarian, Polish, Hungarian, and

Russian researchers are cited in the book). Professionals in economic and geographical research acknowledge that Eastern European countries are in transformation phase, a transition from centrally-planned to market economy. However, it is difficult to measure this transition, taking in consideration the great variety of 'market' economies. After the meaningful discussion of the issue, the work comes up with an integral indicator to measure the achieved level of transformation in the individual territorial unit.

According to the author, the transformation of agricultural sector plays critical role in post-communist evolution of the Bulgarian national economy thanks to the high share of this sector in socialist Bulgaria. Privatization in Bulgaria has been realized more slowly than in other transition countries. If considering employees in public vs. private sector, since 1999 even in the most disadvantaged regions private ownership of the means of production has become dominating. The author, based on the J. Kornai's (2008) criteria, concludes that the transformation of Bulgaria's economic system "has already been completed". However, it seems that the accomplishment of formal criteria has not led to the establishment of fully functional and competitive market economy. Reported issues refer to low attractiveness of Bulgaria for foreign investors, slow pace of the reforms and small share of processed goods in export trade as well as low labor productivity and obsolete production technologies.

The change in property structure was accompanied by the transformation of branch structure of the economy, from prevailing agriculture and industry at the beginning of transition period to services' increasing dominance at present. The author pays special attention on changes in agricultural sector. Its evolution in post-communist Bulgaria has not been very promising. In spite of long history and favorable natural conditions, agriculture has been declining. A long list of factors to hamper its development in the context of market economy is enumerated in the work. The author complains that land privatization, seen as one of the priorities of transition to market economy, has been realized in a "rather atypical for other countries ways", but has not accomplished its main goal: development of a competitive agriculture. Fragmented lands and small farms substantially undermine the efficiency of Bulgarian agriculture. Other directions of the land reform have not led to the expected results as well. In these circumstances the author underlines that the crisis in Bulgarian agriculture is much deeper than in other EU countries with socialist past.

Changes in the labor market are similar to the other Eastern-European transition countries. The author points out to the factors affecting regional labor markets: population decrease, aging, out-migration. Due to these factors, Bulgaria lost 22% of its labor force in the period 1988-2007. The author highlights the problem of discouraged people, not seeking any job, which forms a significant group on the national labor market. In the author's opinion, "delay" in the formation of the middle class in Bulgaria is one of the main consequences of labor crisis and of the high rates of unemployment.

The analysis of territorial differences shows a growing dispersion in the regions' economic development and increasing the gap between the leading region and the catching-up ones. At the same time, Bulgarian regions are among the poorest in EU27. Despite these pessimistic features, the author points out that economic hot-spots are present in all the

regions, and "engines of growth" are spread all over the country. This might represent an advantage in the application of specific regional development policies, based on growth poles and growth centers. The analysis of regional disparities, made by the author, points to the opposition north vs. south: the southern part of the country is more developed than the northern one. A more detailed territorial analysis reveals the fact that impact of transition varied across districts. Big agglomerations with their administrative units are the primary beneficiaries of the transition. However, in the broader context of European transition, Bulgarian agglomerations are among the poorest ones.

The author highlights that in comparison to other Eastern-European countries, the Bulgarian transition was much slower and harder to pass through because of various domestic and foreign contexts, which have formed the "Bulgarian mode" of the reforms. While other countries, such as Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Albania etc. reached the pre-transition level of GDP in the first ten years of post-communist transformations (1990-1999), Bulgaria achieves this target in 2007. Because of the "delayed" transition, the impact of the reforms was not the one expected. The author's conclusion about the transformation process is quite a pessimistic one: among the transition countries Bulgaria is rather a "loser".

We can conclude that the book represents quite a deep radiography of several main aspects of Bulgarian economic transition to the market economy. One would expect that such a work should end up providing practical recommendations to improve economic development policy. In such a case the work would have got lost among other policy recommendation papers and reports, which would have had limited impact on transition process in Bulgaria. The author, instead, chose the academic format in order to avoid transient effect of the study. Her concerns were to make a work that would contribute to the elaboration of a "transformation theory", which explains the chosen level of complexity.

Such a complex study, trying to cover the main aspects of the transition at the country level, is quite rare at present. Not all the transition countries enjoy it.

The author chose an ambitious task, which she successfully accomplished. Although she points to the geographical nature of her analysis, I would recommend the book not just for geographers, but for economists, policy analysts and for other scholars concerned

about transition processes and the Eastern European geographical space. Moreover, the book structure and methodology developed in it would be useful as a template in designing studies on other transition economies as well.

#### Reference

KORNAL, J. (2008) *What does "change of system" mean?*, Economic studies, 1, pp. 3-29 (in Bulgarian).

### **Post-Kyoto climate governance: Confronting the politics of scale, ideology, and knowledge**

Asim Zia, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, XX+204 p.  
ISBN 978-0-415-60125-2 (hbk)

**Reviewed by** IGOR SÎRODOEV, Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Republic of Moldova

Numerous changes in global and regional climates have been observed, documented and studied from the viewpoints of various sciences and at different scales (IPCC, 2007). On the one hand, changes in global, and, especially, regional, climate represent the triggering factor of alterations in ecosystems and in the environment of those regions, affecting people's welfare as well. On the other hand, changes of regional economic relationships, economic growth or decay, can diminish or accentuate negative impact on the environment and quality of life. Thus, it might be difficult to find the determinant factor for the changes at the regional level in certain economic contexts. Here, multidisciplinary and complex approaches would give better results.

At a first glance, the book by Asim Zia appears to be quite far from regional analysis: its title, "Post-Kyoto climate governance", suggests that in the book, some approaches for developing the climate governance regime after the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 will be presented. In addition to this obvious theme, the book "takes a trans-disciplinary perspective to identify the causes of failure in developing of

(current – I.S.) international climate policy regime". However, after a more careful examination of the book, an aspect catches attention of a regional analyst/planner. It is related to the theoretical framework of this policy-analysis study. The most characteristic climate governance issues were passed through a double sieve of the critical analysis: three theoretical perspectives ("rational", "constructivist", and "complexity") and three "critical policy analytical lenses" (scale, ideology, and knowledge). Thus, the scale "lens" is related to temporal and spatial discounting as well as to synergies and trade-offs in complex systems; the ideology "lens" focuses on the risk, its uncertainty and its perception in complex societies; the knowledge "lens" deals with market approaches to climate governance (greenhouse gases emission entitlements, accountability etc.). The "complexity" perspective, which suggests that not just the atmosphere must be taken into consideration in climate change governance, opens a new view on the trans-scale perspective of the climate change governance of territorial systems at various levels, from local to global.

In his discourse, the author adopts the position of those researchers (“constructivists, social psychologists and critical theorists/political ecologists”, in his terminology) who do not consider Kyoto Protocol's legacy “as very useful in terms of mitigating anthropogenic climate change”. Actually, the author argues that Bretton-Woods institutions (United Nations, the World Bank etc.) do not constitute a system that would be promoting harmonious and unidirectional environmental policy; that these institutions are not able to cope with current environmental challenges (global climate change, global food insecurity, and global biodiversity loss). These institutions, being designed with the specific purpose of stabilization of the post-WWII world, fail when trying to cope with current environmental challenges: “WTO is promoting deforestation, while UN-REDD and UNEP programs are promoting forest conservation; where the World Bank is promoting unfettered economic development, while the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is promoting biodiversity conservation” (p. 14). The book strongly criticizes their current policies, which seem to have totally opposite targets.

The author advocates the importance of complexity theorists, which “can bring new insights in informing this global policy discourse” (p. 15). The author argues that “a complex systems based adaptive, decentralized and democratically anchored governance of coupled human and natural systems could be used as guideposts to adequately cope with global environmental and social crises” (p. 162). According to the author's opinion, the out-dated Bretton-Woods institutions should be replaced by the new ones, based on the complex systems

approach. The latter would facilitate shifting “from expert-based international organizations to democratically-anchored governance networks” (p. 11). Within such networks regional entities would enjoy more power in climate governance debates and decision-making. Thus, instead of more or less directive approach, currently promoted by those Bretton Woods institutions, whose activity affects global challenges, the climate policy would result from the democratic dialog within the networks specifically designed for governing social ecological systems. In such a way, “human civilization is called upon... not to control, but to enable and adapt, and partially shape what will emerge” (p. 9). Unlike control, which implies certain robustness of its structures, adaptation and shaping are highly flexible. The latter allows regional systems “transition(ing) in and out of multiple stable states, or even exist(ing) far from equilibrium” (p. 9).

This approach is particularly attractive for regional analysts and urban planners. In such a way, they would have more meaningful contribution to climate governance, while climate policy would pay more attention to regional peculiarities. A critical mass of regional opinions would be able to significantly shape the global climate governance discourse. I believe this book would serve as excellent starting point for involving territorial systems approach into climate policy debates, and, ultimately, into climate governance architecture of the post-Kyoto era.

#### Reference

IPCC (2007), *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis report*, Geneva, IPCC, 104 p.