CHAPTER 1

The Endless Innovations of the Semiperiphery and the Peculiar Power of Eastern Europe

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It is common to argue that eastern Europe has never been taken seriously by the West (Wolff 1994; Melegh 2006). Indeed, it is common to note how those east Europeans who embrace Western values often do not take their *own* societies seriously.[1] Most readers will be familiar with the dualisms that privilege West over East, and demonstrations of how the West marginalizes the East.

This chapter is about something else. Namely, it is about how eastern Europe[2] *is* taken seriously. Its ideas and discussions *do* have an impact. Indeed, eastern Europe has been a constant source of innovative ideas for the West—with the caveat that much gets lost in power-based translation. Discussions about east and west Europe all too frequently focus only on these relations alone, thus producing a harsh dualism of core and periphery. This essay assumes a world-systems perspective that distinguishes between core, periphery, and *semiperiphery*, and shows how eastern Europe has long occupied this intermediary position that means not only that it is marginalized by the core, but also that it retains privileges in relation to the core. It has a special relationship with the core, which not only *allows* its ideas and innovations to penetrate (unlike those from the periphery), but makes it certain that its ideas *will* penetrate, since reformers from the core need the semiperiphery in order to "discover" and thus promote ideas barred from the core mainstream. The semiperiphery is the place where those from the core come to study tendencies and gain ideas and insights, and bring back to the core what they think is important and what fits their interests. The power of semiperipheral ideas is thus that they are taken semiseriously by the core.

What then is the future of postsocialism? In eastern Europe, the future is likely to be much like its past: as a semiperipheral place on the margins of power—too distant and disregarded to make it a major player or model, yet near and relevant enough to serve as a continual source of innovation and experimentation. Eastern Europe remains a durable semiperiphery. From the perspective of the western core, though not the new Asian core, it has been a semiperiphery for well over 200 years, since the weakening of Poland in the mid-eighteenth century. Until the end of World War I the region stood at the edge of four great empires: the Russian, Prussian, Habsburg, and Ottoman, with France and Britain often offering moral support but not much more. Pockets central to global power and money remained, such as Budapest during the late Habsburg period and perpetually commercial Prague. The few exceptions only confirm the rule: these regions were places of interest for the great powers, but were not themselves centers of power.

Eastern Europe has been exploited but not colonized, subordinated in the world economy but not completely humiliated and degraded. In contrast to the periphery, it has retained a claim on Europeanness, Christianity, whiteness, and the privileges reserved for each. In art and literature, in intellectual as well as political projects, its achievements have always been recognized by the core, even if often as exotica.

The semiperiphery, as a region not fully incorporated into the core, by definition has something of an outlaw streak. It is better at maintaining its identity than weak members of the core hoping to move up, or countries more or less permanently ensconced in the periphery. Where the former need to hew to established rules (the tendency to institutional isomorphism, discussed below, is especially strong there), and the latter pushed to embrace core norms as the price for aid and support, the semiperiphery has sufficient resources to allow a certain dose of autonomy. The core can be constraining. Those who run and maintain the system have to follow the rules, under threat of sanction, ridicule, or exclusion. Those at the margins are freer from such constraints. Precisely because they matter less, they can tweak the dominant mores and introduce something new. Unable to plausibly threaten the status quo, they are more able to reject it. They have little to lose. If you are considered inferior to begin with, it is expected that you will not be able to play

as well as those at the top. Introducing new norms and styles can be denigrated as wrongheaded or dismissed as fun, but does not trigger additional sanction. If you fail, you were expected to. If you are in the semiperiphery, you are not quite in the game, so you don't have to play by the rules and are not punished for not doing so.

Eastern Europe today remains an exciting semiperiphery, though as a source of very different ideas than in the past. During the communist period (this chapter focuses only on the period since World War II), it was the source for innovations such as worker self-management and civil society. In the immediate post-communist period, it became a center for pioneering neoliberal practices. Today, it is mainly a source of ideas promoting illiberalism and the new radical right. In each case, it is the semiperipheral location that enables such creativity. While the region has always been a semiperiphery to the Western core, during the state socialist period it served also as a semiperiphery to the Soviet Union.

Of course, "Eastern Europe" is itself too large a concept. Attila Melegh has written of an "east-west slope," premised on "the idea of gradually diminishing civilization toward the 'East' " (Melegh 2006; Wolff 1994). Bakić-Hayden speaks of "nesting Orientalisms," perhaps better understood as "rolling Orientalism," noting that southern Europe, and particularly southeastern Europe, is typically considered by core knowledge producers as particularly backward and uncivilized (Bakić-Hayden 1995). The farther east and south you go, the further to the periphery. Indeed, it is Poland, Hungary, Czechia, and to a lesser extent the Baltic countries that constitute the "dominant" part of the European semiperiphery. In this sense, it is the semiperiphery of East Central Europe that is back. During the state socialist period, however, Yugoslavia played an outsized role as a semiperiphery to the Soviet-bloc core, and because of its independent position during the Cold War, became a semiperiphery to the West too. Its innovations, in other words, were influential in both East and West, though since its violent break-up in the 1990s, its allure has considerably waned.

This chapter highlights several key moments when eastern Europe has injected innovative ideas into core debates. We begin with a discussion of the dialectics of the semiperiphery, or the fact that while it is the source of so much creativity, it is mostly unable to institutionalize its own understanding of that creativity. The semiperiphery comes up with the ideas, but the core has the power

to standardize and theorize them, which it does by transforming the original meaning so that it suits core interests. We briefly consider the example of Yugoslav self-management, and then explore theoretical patterns of diffusion, using the concept of institutional isomorphism to understand both how the semiperiphery can influence the core, and why its innovations are transformed and degraded when embraced. From here the chapter explores the seminal role played by East Central Europe in the resurrection of the idea of "civil society," and the way the core's eventual neoliberal theorization of civil society facilitated a period when the region served as a testing ground for the core's most austere neoliberal policies. We then look at the different kind of innovation currently being exported by the east European semiperiphery: the model of electoral illiberalism, close to authoritarianism. We conclude with a return to the main theme—the endless innovations of eastern Europe, exciting enough for the core to always "discover," and important enough that those outside ignore only at their own loss.

DIALECTICS OF THE SEMIPERIPHERY

The tragic dilemma for the semiperiphery is that while it is the source of ideas of great originality, it is unable to put its own stamp on those ideas, to present them to the world in the way it would want. The semiperiphery can come up with new ideas and practices, but it cannot standardize its own understanding of those ideas. The semiperiphery is where core actors, slumming it, find practices that they themselves can try to standardize by theorizing them. The semiperiphery of course produces its own theory, but cannot ensure that its narrative holds. It lends its ideas to those in the core, but because of unequal resources and power relations—and because semiperipheral ideas are by definition worked out and worked through in languages not widely known (which is what it means to be part of the semiperiphery)—it is the core that gets to theorize and institutionalize the supposed meaning of those innovations. At this point, semiperipheral innovations often get reexported back into the semiperiphery as something that suits the core more than it suits its original context of emergence.

The semiperiphery is always contested terrain. Its innovations continue to exist as models of possibility, as utopian ideals capable of being deployed in a wide

variety of fields. It remains a source of new ideas and practices, some of which are incorporated into the system and some of which are rejected but remain available for use at other times or by other actors. The semiperiphery is central to a system's vitality and long-term possibilities.

We can see this process at work in popular culture in the United States. Semiperipheries also exist within countries, and American cultural dynamism has always come from the margins. But as minorities have perpetually come up with innovations, those invariably become radically transformed upon incorporation. Hip-hop, for example, may have started with the activist lyricists of the Last Poets, and pushed forward by the politically savvy Public Enemy, but it gained dominance only as "gangsta rap," its meaning deradicalized and transformed to suit the interests of the core entrepreneurs who ushered it into the big time.

Proximity matters. To have any purchase on an organizational network, one must have a connection to it. That, of course, is the definition of the margins: a location abutting and adjacent to the center. Those located there can have some impact on the center because they are occasionally glimpsed by it, occasionally recognized. The center learns there is something new or something else because it comes in contact with the margins. For the core, the periphery is the outskirts, the outlier, the exception that proves no rule—one reason why those at the periphery sometimes turn to violence to get the notice of the core. Location in the semiperiphery delivers more. The core treats the semiperiphery not as a totally benighted place but merely as somewhat less civilized. It is on a lower order, yet is not seen as lacking credible and noteworthy individuals or even ideas. The semiperiphery is where bohemians and nonconformists from the core go to find new ideas. It is the halfway house. Things there are different, but not so completely different. The semiperiphery, after all, is not devoid of power. It sometimes exploits, polices, or supervises the periphery; note how postsocialist Poland has tried to assert itself as the proxy-core monitor of Ukraine. Elements of domination that define the core thus exist in the semiperiphery as well. Ideas and innovations from the semiperiphery can be accepted by those in the core because the gap between the two is not extreme. Because the semiperiphery is not in a position to enforce new mores on the core, its ideas can be embraced as enticing, but not feared as threatening. They can be indulged more freely, considered more seriously. They

can have a greater impact than radical ideas promoted from within the core, which are usually beaten back more easily because they threaten established interests in a way that semiperipheral objections do not. And so the core often nurtures critical, innovative ideas emerging in the semiperiphery, for even radical ideas tried there are not binding and can easily be disowned.

I use the term "semiperiphery" here in two ways: in the classic world-systems theory meaning of a region bridging the divide between economic core and periphery, and in a cultural way referring to a region, outside the center of attention, where cultural and political experiments are possible precisely because relative marginality lowers the cost of risky innovation and raises the potential rewards. It lowers costs because the innovating party is not responsible for the maintenance of core organizations, and so can do less damage; its innovations do not necessarily "matter." It increases potential rewards because the innovating party is not known (by those in the core) for much, and so success brings overabundant interest and attention. This contrasts with the core, where innovation is taken for granted, and with the periphery, where innovation remains unknown or is treated as quaint curiosity. Of course I must add here that such characterizations of the differential impact of innovation only assume, but categorically do not endorse, ongoing global inequalities. Power imbalances shape social receptions of things, even though they shouldn't.

THE DIFFUSION OF THE YUGOSLAV SELF-MANAGEMENT MODEL

Such power imbalance clearly shaped not only the reception of Yugoslav self-management, but even its origin.

The state socialist regimes that came to Eastern Europe after World War II were both made possible by the Soviet Union and long subordinated to the Soviet Union. But they were decidedly not the Soviet Union. Instead, they constituted a semiperiphery within the socialist bloc, of far more importance to the legitimacy and ideological coherence of the Soviet Union than developments in the soon-emerging Asian socialist periphery. While many communists in Eastern Europe hoped from the beginning that they could have some influence on the Soviet core, or at least be allowed by that core to embark on the innovations typical of

the semiperiphery, it took several years and a roundabout, unexpected way for this to happen. Initially, it was only the core that exerted power. Projects for a "national communism" different from that of the Soviet Union—which seemed to make good Marxist sense given the different starting points of Russia in 1917 and Eastern Europe in 1945, and which were central to the legitimizing aims of East European communists—found themselves rudely dismissed by Stalin. Instead of local innovations and sensitivity to national sentiments, Stalin insisted on a uniform model, based on that of the Soviet Union. This meant a push to economic independence through rapid industrialization, and to full state control through collectivization of the peasantry, with complete political domination of the Communist Party. Those who had hoped for a national road to socialism quickly found themselves disappointed.

But just as this conformist pressure intensified, one country was pushed away, and over time began to exert influence on the Soviet bloc from a place outside. Until 1948, Communist and Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito had run Yugoslavia much like any other "people's democracy" of the time—except much more hardline. Tito had in fact been the most consistent Stalinist of the region. Whereas communist parties in other East European countries had come to power on the backs of the Red Army, Tito's Partisans had won it on their own. This meant that while the other East European regimes initially followed Stalin's insistence on maintaining the illusion that the new states might really be open to all—Stalin saw this as necessary to maintain appearances and allow the West to politically accede to the division of Europe it had already acknowledged in Yalta—Tito in Yugoslavia imposed a tough socialist dictatorship from the very beginning. While other bloc countries initially maintained the façade of "people's democracies" with their assurances of free elections and protection of private property, Tito had nationalized most property, except land, already by August 1945, giving the country far higher percentages of state ownership than anywhere else in the region.

Tito had sung Stalin's praises and followed Stalin's policies out of a sense of solidarity and ideological agreement, not out of fealty. That proved to be the problem, because Stalin insisted on fealty. When not forthcoming, Stalin broke with Tito, and the latter, now alone as the leader of a socialist country bereft of

allies, needed to find a new legitimating principle. With the state socialist brand monopolized by Stalin, Tito and his close ally Edvard Kardelj turned to self-management as the new principle. Conceptualized as a move away from state control and toward the gradual withering away of the state, the new model abandoned the central economic planning of classic state socialism. Instead of state ownership and Communist Party control, there would be "social" ownership, with factories technically owned by local administrative units and governed by worker councils elected by the entire workforce. The Yugoslav self-management model went through several iterations during its forty-year history from 1950 to 1990. For the first several years, wages were still set by republic-level administrations; after 1957, worker councils were generally free to allocate post-taxation incomes. Marketization accelerated in the 1960s, with strong managers, elected by self-management boards, increasingly responsible for production profiles and benefiting together with workers from increased sales and profits. The 1974 Constitution expanded self-management by establishing subdivisional intra-enterprise councils, thus ensuring that the workers' voice was not diluted even in large enterprises.[3] Self-management was a complex project, going through various changes, all theorized by state officials and scholars. Actors elsewhere, however, soon mined the model for their own purposes, disregarding how it was understood by Yugoslavs themselves.

The Soviet Union initially denounced the model as a betrayal of socialism. But after Stalin's death in 1953, and particularly after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, the Soviet bloc needed new legitimating ideas, and self-management themes from Yugoslavia began to percolate in. Innovative leftist ideas like self-management perforated the political barriers with relative ease precisely because they *were* leftist ideas, which the authorities could not convincingly deny. They were useful, too. As Zvi Gitelman notes, reformers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe latched onto ideas like self-management to promote reforms from within (Gitelman 1972). Conformists promoted watered-down versions of the same in order to pretend they were doing some innovation themselves. Yugoslavs had done the innovations, and "core" Soviet bloc theorists now competed with each other over how to standardize the model.

In the mid-1950s, so-called revisionist Marxists began to promote self-management as a genuine Marxist alternative to Stalinism. The Polish state incorporated it as window-dressing, as a ruse, both after the 1956 protests and again in the 1970s. Such official self-management reforms were an effort to use the Yugoslav model to burnish the reputation of state socialism, offering the illusion of greater participation while in fact only strengthening party control. The Solidarity movement helped usher in a more empowering self-management law in 1981, though it was undone first by the introduction of martial law in 1982 and then by the rise of neoliberalism after 1989.

Still, Yugoslavia mattered. And it was Yugoslavia's semiperipheral location that gave self-management its influence. African socialism also had its innovative ideas, such as the celebrated *ujamaa* socialism put forth by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. But while they were applauded by Marxists far and wide, such peripheral innovations had little purchase on the imagination of activists from the core. Soviet-bloc policymakers never took Third World innovations seriously, while the only ones to do so in the West were radical New Left activists, having soured on Soviet-type socialism and, for a decade or so starting in the mid-1960s, looking for inspiration among the world's "dispossessed." Because of China's size and significance, its Cultural Revolution had a much greater impact, in the East and West, but only as a symbol, not as concrete policy, none of which was ever enacted elsewhere.

When Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet bloc, it became a semiperiphery to the western core as well. NATO countries gave significant aid to the country, both economic and military. Academics studied the Yugoslav self-management initiative intensely, both those interested in participatory democracy and those interested in mainstream neoclassical economics, who saw the market aspect of the model as a test of the possibility of market socialism.[4] Together with Swedish social democracy, Yugoslav self-management was probably the most widely studied economic and political alternative to the Cold War dualism represented by the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, its influence lingers in initiatives such as the worker-owned factories in Mondragon, Spain, on the moderate end, to the worker takeover and resuscitation of bankrupt firms in post-2001 economic meltdown Argentina, as one of its more radical progeny (Ranis 2006).

ISOMORPHISM AND THE SEMIPERIPHERY

As we see, Yugoslavia was never able to insist on its own understanding of self-management. Core actors, East and West, gave it an interpretation that widely deviated from that of the innovators. The larger issue, therefore, concerns how the semiperiphery is used by the core. During the Cold War, Eastern Europe had two relevant cores: the Soviet Union and the West. East European ideas had clout in both places, but chiefly insofar as they were promoted by actors in the relevant core. The problem is that the semiperiphery, precisely because it is the semiperiphery, is strong enough to promote new ideas, but too weak to institutionalize their meaning. For that, they need core actors. The semiperiphery is an ideal source of ideas and practices for diffusion, promoted by actors in core countries, precisely because the semiperiphery is somewhat familiar. Still, it is culturally and intellectually distant enough to require translation by (core) experts. Because they occur in an area that is by definition a marginal player, innovations in the semiperiphery cannot easily become binding on others.

In more theoretical terms, the issue is that innovations in the semiperiphery cannot set into motion the kind of institutional isomorphism so common both within the core, and from core to semiperiphery. The semiperiphery can innovate, but cannot standardize and diffuse its understanding of that innovation. DiMaggio and Powell's descriptions of isomorphic pressures, or the tendency toward the diffusion of practices, theories, and models so that entire "organizational fields" come to look alike, all hinge on the power of the source (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). The authors specify three different ways for this isomorphic process to occur: coercive, mimetic, and normative. The first refers to dominant institutions enforcing certain practices on others, prescribing rules that others must follow under threat of sanction. The second, or "mimetic isomorphism," refers to the way organizations "model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful" (152). Finally, DiMaggio and Powell identify a "normative isomorphism," following norms of professionalism, where techniques become standardized because professionals have defined the rules.

The semiperiphery is subject to isomorphic pressure by the core, but has no power to enforce it, except on domestic institutions. During the Cold War,

Eastern Europe had a long record of being subject to coercive isomorphism. Despite internal tendencies after World War II for a national version of state socialism, all the countries soon adopted Stalinist forms of "people's democracy" and economic policies based on collectivization and economic autarky because such institutions mirrored those in the Soviet Union.[5] Nor did this tendency stop after the collapse of state socialism, as the region soon had to transform its domestic institutions to conform to the requirements of NATO and the European Union. One of the more insightful analyses of that process bore the apposite title "Priest and Penitent," capturing the coercive nature of the European enlargement process (Wade 1999).

For those semiperipheral institutions not forced to adapt, the rigors of competition make it senseless *not* to adapt. Thus we get the "mimetic isomorphism" of postcommunist east European firms or universities: the former adopting the labor hierarchies and imposing the differential class habituses of western multinationals, as classically depicted in Elizabeth Dunn's account of the transformation of a food-processing manufacturer in Poland (Dunn 2004), and the latter introducing the pervasive "point system" for funding of academic institutions and journals. As for "normative isomorphism," here too the directionality can only go one way. No professional standards adopted in the semiperiphery have a chance of being adopted by the core, and only a slim chance of being adopted in the periphery.

But if the semiperiphery cannot impose on the core, it can be the source of interesting and enticing ideas for the core. Indeed, it is often a *preferred* source, because an interpreter from the core can present the idea in a way that fits the agenda he or she wants to present, without having to worry that others will check. That is, ideas from the semiperiphery become prominent in the core not because the semiperiphery diffuses it—as noted, it possesses no such isomorphic agency—but because actors from the core use those ideas to push their own agenda. Core actors pushing new ideas often claim to be taking their kernel from the semiperiphery, and then adding the proper refinement. Ideas from the semiperiphery thus always get bastardized.

How does this work? Why does this happen? In their study on the conditions for diffusion, Strang and Meyer call this process "theorization." "Theorization," they write, "helps innovation masquerade as diffusion. It is a common theoretical gambit to claim that the elements proposed for diffusion are

actually found somewhere" (Strang & Meyer 1993). Those who wish to innovate, in other words, say that their proposals are actually working well somewhere else. Saying they occur in the semiperiphery lends them an aura of respectability, but only an aura. To become a model, which is what "theorization" is for, they need to be interpreted more widely. Here we get to the problem of language. Yugoslavs wrote about self-management in a language then called Serbo-Croatian. But nothing written in a semiperipheral language can be standardized, theorized, and offered to others as "best practice." Yugoslav self-management only became a model through the translations and imaginations of core actors. Soviet reformers used it to promote minor marketization in order to legitimize continued party control. Western economists and New Leftists saw it either as an innovative way to build a socially accepted market society or as a radical path to participatory democracy.[6] Yugoslav understandings of self-management mostly got lost, for even when semiperipheral actors try to theorize what they've done, they do so in languages not widely enough understood to get diffused to others. Pascale Casanova is our best theorist here, showing how only certain languages have power (Casanove 2007). French and English have power, Serbo-Croatian and Polish do not. France can theorize. Britain and America can theorize. But the semiperiphery is not allowed or able to theorize. It is allowed and able to innovate, but theorization can be done only by core agents who observe and then convey those innovations.

It should be stressed that this does not mean the semiperiphery does not theorize. It promotes long-lasting debates and produces an extensive literature on all its innovative practices. But its conclusions and recommendations cannot be the basis for models introduced elsewhere, and certainly not in the core. Lacking coercive, mimetic, or normative isomorphic power, it cannot ensure that others accept its practices. Its organizations cannot be accepted as models of success and its norms cannot be followed by others, at least not until sanctioned by the core. It cannot theorize in a way that ensures diffusion of its ideas.

And yet the fact that the semiperiphery cannot theorize itself is what makes it so valuable as a source of innovative ideas, if not quite innovative practices. Core agents can go to the semiperiphery to bring ideas and practices back to the core. When presented in the core, those same ideas can become theorized, and then diffused through networks of interested actors. Sometimes semiperipheral agents

themselves bring their ideas to the core, and diffuse ideas that way. For recent eastern Europe, perhaps the radical philosopher Slavoj Žižek is the best example. But Žižek was not Žižek until he stopped writing only in Slovenian. He became Žižek once he brought his language, and thus his theories, to the core.

Ideas initiated in the semiperiphery often come back to it via the core, but with dramatic variations. We can perhaps best see this by the curious trajectory of the idea of civil society.

THE CONTESTED THEORIZATION TRAJECTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In the 1960s and 1970s, the East European semiperiphery became a source of innovative cultural ideas in art, film, and literature. "New Wave" cinema emerged from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Jerzy Grotowski from Poland and Vaclav Havel from Czechoslovakia helped transform theater. Yugoslavia's Marina Abramovic revolutionized performance art. Philip Roth edited a Penguin series of translations of the region's fiction, Writers from the Other Europe, which introduced Milan Kundera to a western public, who became the region's biggest booster and a kind of cultural conscience for its liberal intelligentsia, producing one of its most influential manifestos in "The Tragedy of Central Europe" (Kundera 1984).

But over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, an important political innovation emerged, with an impact still notable today: the promulgation of the idea of "civil society." The term was first used, in a relatively loose way, by Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Ferguson, in his 1767 *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. It was Hegel, however, who gave the concept its first systematic exposition, defining it as the sphere of social life lying between the state and the family. According to Hegel, this sphere consisted of three parts, or "moments"—the market, public administration, and the realm of associations and civic participation. The market was the key sphere of civil society for Hegel; more importantly, it was the key sphere for Marx, who did more than anyone else to popularize the idea of civil society, and to deflate it. The Hegelian notion of "moments" implied that all three realms intertwined with each other, inexorably seeking to resolve their contradictions in a unity that embraced, and simultaneously surpassed, each

on their own. For Marx, however, the promise of civil society fell flat due to the nature of the market. Instead of being a realm where diverse interests could freely interact and work their way to a higher synthesis, both government and society were subordinated to the market, and to the dominant social group it creates: the bourgeoisie. Civil society, for Marx, was nothing *but* bourgeois society, as both government and the public sphere necessarily served the interests of that bourgeoisie.

The political impact of this approach, for the Left tradition, was a denigration of the value of civic participation in the struggle against capitalism. If civil society was simply bourgeois society, the efforts of civic associations to bring about a better world were sheer illusion. For the Leninist Left, that led to the focus on seizing state power to topple the capitalist order. Ironically, in the aftermath of the suppression of the region's social movements of 1968, much of the dissident East European opposition also came to believe the state socialist system was rigged, impervious to any public expression of dissatisfaction. Instead of turning to Leninist solutions, however, they sought to theorize civil society in a new way. Here is where the great innovation took place.

How to emancipate society from the ruling Communist Party state, without going headlong into the market? This became the guiding question for 1970s theorists of the emerging civic opposition. The state was their main enemy, of course, but this being a post-1968 opposition, with the global influence of the New Left still quite strong, they also saw capitalism as unfriendly to democracy. Theorists such as Leszek Kołakowski, Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik, Vaclav Havel, and George Konrad all played a role in the emerging new critique.[7] The idea they came up with focused precisely on the realm of associations and civic participation. Civic values may be mocked by state socialist authorities, and minimized in practice in capitalist states. But that doesn't mean they are worthless in themselves. And so the way we will challenge the repressive state is not to overthrow it, but to revive, through everyday behavior and enactment, the basic practices of democratic citizenship. We will build associations and participate in public life any way we can, without seeking "permission" of the state, which, according to this new view, could not permit or prevent citizens from doing what citizens have the right to do on their own. Through the act of getting involved in public life (though not political life, now interpreted to mean state affairs alone), we can create a new world.

Here was the revolutionary idea, possible only because the region's semiperipheral location enabled its theorists to break with each of the dominant Cold War perspectives. For this view radically challenged Cold War dualisms, which pitted a state-centered East against a market-centered West. But the East European semiperiphery was a place where the market was taboo and the state was understood as a trap. In place of both of these, the budding East European opposition put forth the pioneering notion of civil society, best defined by the Hungarian writer George Konrad as the embrace of a "permanently open democracy" (1984: 35).

It took a while for these semiperipheral ideas to find support or be embraced by the core. It might be useful to recall how I myself learned about them, as an American graduate student in the late 1970s. Not much could be found then even in the elite press. Prior to the 1980s, the *New York Times* carried little news about opposition activities in Eastern Europe. In this peak period of détente, respectful relations between the superpowers were the dominant theme for the mainstream media. Musings of the dissatisfied, lacking impact on policy, scarcely seemed newsworthy. I first learned about these new types of opposition from small Trotskyist publications such as *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* and *Inprecor*. Mainstream Old Left organizations had not yet broken from the Soviet Union, and were largely uninterested in Soviet-bloc opposition movements. Western right-wing and conservative movements, meanwhile, were no fans of collective action pursued by radical activists, most of whom put forth left-wing notions of defending workers, and so they too did little to publicize East European developments. Western New Left organizations and anarchist circles were sympathetic to such developments, but most had no contact with Eastern Europe. Trotskyists, meanwhile, had had an entire tradition of championing political opposition in communist societies. For them, the toppling of the official Communist Party bureaucracy was the condition for turning "deformed workers' states" toward real socialism. Trotskyists did not thereby "theorize" the model of civil society that would soon become prominent. They interpreted East European opposition activities according to their own theory of an impending workers' revolution against a degenerated Soviet-type system. But they did provide some of the basic information around which others could build a new theory of civil society.

Already in the 1970s, the charisma of activists such as Michnik and Havel, with their great appeal to Western intellectuals, did garner some academic interest in the new civil society idea (Rupnik 1979). But it was Poland's Solidarity movement of 1980–1981 that conclusively pushed diffusion of their ideas. Millions of people around the world found themselves transfixed by this anomaly of workers fighting against a putative workers' state. Here was a nonviolent upheaval of workers, demanding a trade union and a voice in workplace policy and public affairs, against a state that insisted that it—and not the protesting workers—was the real representative of the working class. Mass movements against state socialism traditionally got feted in the West, but this one had special appeal for the sheer brazenness of the spectacle.

The highlight of the movement was the astonishing breadth of independent civic activism, in the factories, schools, institutes, and even in the countryside. Soon core theorists were appealing to Solidarity to rethink the idea of civil society, seeing its various possible uses back home. For those on the Left, interested in ideas and practices that might help open up avenues of participation in Western societies dominated by the market, developments in Poland seemed exceptionally exciting and worthy of replication. Andrew Arato, whose writings on Solidarity became quite influential in the academic world, began grappling with Solidarity's significance for a new theory and practice of democracy already in 1981.[8] For him, Solidarity served as an example of a "new social movement" aimed at creating a self-governing society without the repressive presence of the state or market. Arato was one of the first to theorize the Solidarity movement as an effort to revitalize civil society.[9] He conceived of Solidarity's democratic project as leading toward "a destatized economy composed of self-managing units horizontally related through a self-regulating market" (Arato 1981: 46). (The link with Yugoslav self-management is apparent.)

Such a vision of a "revitalized civil society"—an arena for the interaction of citizens, equal precisely on the grounds of being active participants in ongoing discussions—had considerable appeal to New Left critics from the core. Eastern European discussions seemed to theoretically address issues raised but never resolved during protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike the Old Left, this new one never did focus on "taking state power." It tended to conceptualize revolution culturally, as a world changed by people wary of the pitfalls of power. "Changed

people will change the world," is how much of the New Left understood its goals. In this view, the aim is not to topple the state, but to change the people who elect state representatives and staff the state institutions, to change people so that they trust themselves and govern themselves. Such a vision also fit in with emerging theorists of a "new working class" supposedly now capable, unlike its past counterpart, of genuine self-government, thanks to its higher education and technical expertise.[10]

That the East European experience revitalized the concept and even the term "civil society" in the West is acknowledged by almost everyone. Michael Walzer thanks "writers in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland" for reviving the idea of civil society and pushing those in the core to think about how civic activity could be "secured and invigorated" (1991: 138). For Christopher Beem, "'civil society' returned to the West via Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe" (1999: 131). My own book on the democratic theory and practices of Solidarity pushed the civil society focus, and did try to theorize it as a model (Ost 1990). Solidarity theorists, interestingly, did not originally use the term "civil society." Leszek Kołakowski spoke of "active resistance" as the only possibility to fight a system unwilling to share power, with the innovative focus on the adjective, "active," as the very essence of resistance. Kuroń and Michnik soon picked this up, with Kuroń defining anyone engaged in independent public activity, separate from the purview of the Party, as part of a vast political opposition, and Michnik talking about "social movements [creating] a Poland of civic concern and independent social activity" (quoted in Ost 1990: 69). Trying to theorize these claims, along with the practices that went with them, I wrote that Solidarity's "goal was a political system centered on neither the state nor the market, but on . . . a strong, pluralist, and independent civil society" (133).

As semiperipheral theorists and activists provided the basic ideas and the activism, theorists in the West began constructing the civil society theory. Or at least we tried. We put forth the Central European opposition program and the practices of Solidarity as a model of a participatory civil society that could be followed elsewhere. Our "theoretical gambit" was just as Strang and Meyer described, as we claimed "that the [participatory] elements proposed for diffusion are actually found somewhere" (Strang & Meyer 1993: 500)—in this case in Poland. While we had some success in this effort, we ultimately failed, and "civil society" has instead become theorized and standardized in a neoliberal way, as described below.[11]

Initially, our more radical theorization looked like it might have a chance at standardization, in part because it was available for use in the immediate context of the historic fall of state socialism. Arato published his first pieces on the topic in the early 1980s. I wrote many newspaper articles on Solidarity throughout the 1980s,[12] and my book on Solidarity and civil society was published in 1990, just months after the fall of the communist regime. "Civil society" was still an almost unknown term, so much so that I could still write then about it being an "odd-sounding category" that has only just begun "creeping into discussions of contemporary politics" (Ost 1990: 19). Ten years later, no one could have written of civil society that way. Over the course of the decade, books and articles appeared using the concept more widely. And as the concept became more popular, it also became more differentiated. In 1992, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato published *Civil Society and Political Theory*, presenting the concept as a new way of thinking about and enacting democracy, where public interaction among equals would be privileged over the hierarchies of state or market (Cohen & Arato 1992).

This probably represented the culmination of the radical idea of civil society. Soon, after all, with the return to capitalism in eastern Europe, even former radical adherents there toned down and even abandoned their criticisms of the market, leading them to reframe their understanding of civil society more in line with the new neoliberal meanings this term started signifying in the core.[13]

How did a neoliberal understanding emerge and become hegemonic? Robert Putnam is the intervening variable between the original radical and the future neoliberal core understanding of civil society. A series of publications between 1993 and 1995 introduced a new way of thinking about "civic community," as Putnam called it: no longer as a bold challenge to the hierarchies of state and market, but as a sphere of mutual interaction and cooperation that allowed both state and market to function even better (Putnam et al. 1993; Putnam 1995). Far from being an challenge to capitalist accumulation, civil society itself constituted capital—"social capital," Putnam called it, and in this way he provided a way for this previously obscure academic concept to be used as a weapon against Central European radicals.

It is at this moment that neoliberals jumped into the fray. By neoliberalism, I refer to the movement that sought to revive classical liberalism's emphasis on the market, but understood that popular decommodifying movements like the New Deal and social democracy could not simply be overturned. Rather, their

overturning had to be finessed. In 1975, neoliberal forerunners in the Trilateral Commission issued their famous critique of Western democracy as unsustainable, on grounds that too many citizens were feeling empowered (Crozier et al. 1975). But such a critique was too blunt. More nostalgia for a lost past of docile citizens than a strategy by which to curb mushrooming participatory aspirations, its report generated much negative publicity. Neoliberals who wished to jettison the institutions guaranteeing widespread economic security, and conservatives who sought to turn the clock back on the hedonism and identity politics that they believed such security made possible, now had common cause, but no mechanism by which to bring this about. They needed a more appealing way to topple welfare-state communitarianism, one that could be framed as an effort to maintain democracy, not dismantle it. Putnam's reinterpretation of the East European idea of civil society as social capital seemed to provide a way.

Margaret Somers describes what happened next. "Conservatives, strategically, after first capturing the civil society concept, then tamed it, reframed it, and renamed it. In a truly Pygmalion-like achievement, civil society—the once unruly and unpredictable nurturing ground for the goals, practices, and normative ideas of democratic citizenship—reappeared throughout the 1990s in public and academic discourse as social capital" (Somers 2005: 38). The difference is that where Eastern Europe's civil society vigorously promoted the idea and practice of equality in public life, social capital, via Putnam and others, promoted voluntary activity in the private sphere as a way to improve the untouched hierarchies of state and market.

It matters, in other words, where and how the state is rejected. In semiperipheral Eastern Europe, social activists rejected the state because it was the source of unfreedom. Neoliberals in the Western core, however, sought to shrink the state to strengthen the market. So they pushed the idea of civil society as the voluntary sector, charged with taking care of activities the state used to take care of but now intended to neglect.

Those who had revived the idea of civil society in the East were themselves wary of the market, especially at the beginning. They knew that the market too was a sphere of unfreedom. But since they did not have any market to rebel against, they could comfortably rebel against the state *without this implying* that they were comfortable with the market. But the Western Right took the East European opposition's civil society to mean only antistatism. The Western Left that supported

Solidarity knew otherwise, but since the East's idea of a participatory civil society was so radical, few in the West seemed to understand. Even when the Left sung the praises of the East European opposition, it couldn't get across its point that the East was pointing to something new. Conservatives and neoliberals were thus able to use civil society—now reframed as social capital—as a battering ram against social demands on the state.

Of course, it is not just the power of ideas that secures diffusion of an innovation, but just plain power, too. Mitchell Orenstein demonstrates this in his account of the transnational campaign to promote pension privatization. "Good ideas" are far from enough to assure diffusion. An "epistemic community," or group of like-minded thinkers trying to promote a common theory and a similar goal, can help promote diffusion only when it collects the resources enabling it to do so. Knowledge is diffused through networks, not through countries or individuals. As Orenstein recounts, a "neoliberal epistemic community" of anti-Keynesian American economists and their Chilean pupils began working to undo socialist legacies and promote the wisdom of privatizing Social Security already in the early 1980s. But it was not until people in this network "took positions of power in leading state and transnational organizations" that they began to be able to diffuse their innovation throughout the semiperipheries of Latin America and eastern Europe (Orenstein 2008: 72). When they secured World Bank dollars and government contacts and contracts, they got such access to the media, and to semiperipheral policymakers, that the anti-privatization efforts of other groups, such as the International Labor Organization, quickly foundered. For almost two decades, pension privatization turned into a juggernaut.

No wonder, then, that the radical participatory idea of civil society quickly lost out. Frankly, I'm often surprised that the interpretations of Arato and myself attained the influence they did, published as they were in relatively obscure, underfunded publications in a pre-Internet age. This was probably because we wrote theoretically about Solidarity on the basis of firsthand knowledge and in a core language at a time when, aside from the journalistic essays of writers such as Timothy Garton Ash and Neil Ascherson, few others were able to do so. In the end, though, we, like the Solidarity activists themselves, possessed no resource-rich epistemic community, nor any policy proposals promising quick fixes to urgent problems.

The semiperipheral innovation of civil society thus eventually got theorized and standardized by neoliberal actors and networks from the core, which was soon able to use it to apply such isomorphic pressure that postcommunist eastern Europe itself came into line, abandoning its own innovation. The irony and tragedy is that a revised understanding of civil society came to be used to stifle civic activism, and thus satisfy the aims of the Trilateral Commission, while the original version got stranded. Not everyone abandoned the original terrain. Christopher Beem, for example, in his 1999 study on how to revitalize democracy in the United States, takes Solidarity's radical notion of civil society as a foundation on which a new type of participatory society could be built from the ground up (Beem 1999: 112). But more and more, civil society came to be theorized as entailing less and less, as the voluntary sector of a market economy and little else.

That Solidarity could not theorize its understanding of the concept is due not only to the difficulties facing semiperipheral actors. There was also its lack of preparation for engagement with the state, and the growing appeal of the market. By not preparing for the more explicitly political phase that would come later, Solidarity and the other Left-liberal and participatory options stripped themselves of the ability to shape that future, ultimately contributing to the success of the Right. And when the return of political democracy appeared as part of a package with the introduction of capitalism, most former civic activists in the East became ardent liberals, at least for a while.

This allowed the neoliberal, revisionist standardization of civil society to take off in the Western core. This was the moment of mainstream theorization. Instead of the radical participatory and self-management ethos of the East European concept, where civil society is an alternative to state and market, what wins out is the vision of civil society as social capital and the "volunteer sector," freeing the neoliberal state from previous responsibilities. Thus, Erzsébet Fazekas (2009) could begin her study on the topic with the sentences: "Civil society has become a sizeable industry since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. As part of this project, building nonprofit sectors has burgeoned into a transnational initiative to cement the transition away from state socialism to market democracy."

In this neoliberal version, civil society helps out the capitalist state by taking over some of its social functions, better enabling the state to focus on pleasing market

elites. Instead of resolving the problems of citizens who thought they were excluded by the state and cut off from full civic participation in a world dominated by elites, civil society starts serving the interests of those very elites who were looking for a way to *limit* the desire for civic participation, just as the Trilateral Commission had wished. For neoliberalism, then, "civil society" becomes a godsend. Let nonstate organizations take care of social policy, and let the state focus on security and promoting the market. Civic community can now be used to deflect attention away from politics. And as state socialism fell in Eastern Europe, so did the earlier idea of civil society, which now became the "volunteer sector" or the world of NGOs, subject to the isomorphic pressures of foreign donors and the "international community," all seeking to wash away the participatory promises of the original idea.

Michael Edwards (2009: viii) has written of the "tension between radical and neo-liberal interpretations of civil society, the former seeing it as the ground from which to challenge the status quo and build new alternatives, and the latter as the service-providing not-for-profit sector necessitated by 'market failure.' " That the latter is now dominant is clear from Katarzyna Jezierska's study of how Polish think tanks think about civil society today. Having interviewed a wide array of activists working in the independent public sphere, she concludes that "one specific understanding of civil society—civil society as service-providing non-governmental organizations—has gained a hegemonic position, marginalizing [all] other conceptions." With "its radical promise blunted," civil society morphed from a "source of alternatives to the current socio-economic system . . . into the role of auxiliary infrastructure legitimizing the neoliberal system" (Jezierska 2015: 831). It has gotten to the point that Polish left-wing activists themselves now often reject the term, calling it a "buzzword" aimed at pushing a neoliberal privatization agenda (842). The irony, as we shall see, is that Poland's political Right objects to the term as well, seeing it as a dangerous reminder of a civic alternative to the "nation" community that they propose.

EASTERN EUROPE AS NEOLIBERAL TESTING GROUND

The transformation of the understanding of civil society is one of the reasons why eastern Europe's post-1989 embrace of neoliberalism could be presented by many as continuity with the aims of the opposition rather than the break that it clearly

was. As for the embrace, that became apparent in a number of different domains. Eastern Europe served here as a useful semiperiphery, allowing core actors to try out economic policies they did not yet dare to impose at home. Some have interpreted this in terms of the inequalities of knowledge production. As the foreign, old system was toppled, only those who adopted newly hegemonic neoliberal ideas got the funding, as well as the possibilities for advance (Lampland 2000: 216–17). Eastern Europe after 1989 became a neoliberal testing ground for the core in numerous ways. In labor relations, for example, the region specialized in the marginalization of trade unions under the guise of formal inclusion. New governments there stripped unions of their influence and pushed through a radical reshuffling of economic power relations while simultaneously bringing unions onto tripartite boards in a process known as "illusory corporatism" that has since become increasingly pervasive.[14]

While the regressive flat tax has been a favorite proposal for Western neoliberals, the latter have been quite unsuccessful introducing it in core capitalist countries. Here the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were pioneers, enacting the flat tax already in the early 1990s. Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia and Ukraine soon followed.

Perhaps the major area where the east European semiperiphery has been a neoliberal testing ground has been pension privatization reform. This has been the policy of moving away from a pension with defined benefits, guaranteed by the state, to a reliance on the income accumulated by defined contributions to retirement funds managed by private firms. Begun in 1981 under the military dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile, these reforms made slow inroads until after the collapse of state socialism, when a few countries in Latin America, but almost all the countries in eastern Europe, soon made pension privatization a key part of their economic reform program. This came about through a combination of strong pressure from transnational actors such as the USAID program and the World Bank, and home-grown support for neoliberal solutions.[15]

The impact of the global financial crisis of 2008 constituted a turning point. On the one hand, draconian budget cuts and wage cuts were instituted, for example in the Baltic republics, on a scale unattempted in the West, until being introduced in Greece soon afterward. On the other hand, that period has also been a clear

caesura for the region. Eastern Europe has now become a source of a different type of innovation, in politics.

EASTERN EUROPE AND THE REINVENTION OF THE RIGHT

In recent years we've seen another political area in which the east European semiperiphery leads the way—this time, to the Right. First in Hungary in 2010, five years later in Poland, and with intimations of further imminent examples elsewhere, right-wing governments that openly degrade liberal democratic institutions, fight the free press, ride roughshod over courts, enforce party control on the civil service and public media, promote past fascists and tolerate new ones, manipulate electoral rules, and threaten opponents (often treated as traitors) with sanctions have not only come to power, but are doing quite well, making their assault on democratic institutions a model for other countries to follow.

It is hard to overstate the significance of this new innovation coming from the Central European semiperiphery. Particularly since the 2008 financial crisis, even the Western core has been experiencing a wrenching and politically destabilizing political crisis. When both moderate Right and moderate Left political options oscillate in power but prove equally incapable of addressing questions such as the loss of jobs, lower wages, and the disappearing sense of community that plague so many citizens, it is not surprising that some push for radical solutions. And because the moderate Left has played an important part in the entire post–World War II era, thereby weakening the radical Left, the radical Right has reemerged as the "fresh" radical answer. Indeed, it is the only force that can correctly say that it has played no role in mainstream politics since World War II. So far the core has no model for how a radical Right can govern while maintaining the consensus on formal democratic rules and no outward repression of political opponents. With his ideological incoherence and ham-fisted mismanagement, Donald Trump shows that occupying the executive branch is not enough. In Hungary and Poland, however, Viktor Orban and Jarosław Kaczyński are developing precisely such a model. Erdogan is doing something similar in Turkey. The core is watching closely.

This is not the place for a full account of the ways of Orban's Fidesz and Kaczyński's Law and Justice (PiS) parties.[16] Several aspects, however, seem particularly important. First, the model begins with the elimination or neutering of the courts. Since their aim is to overturn the liberal constitution, with its separation of powers and limits on executive power, Fidesz and PiS both struck against the constitutional court as their first significant move. With its two-thirds majority, Fidesz simply rewrote the constitution, allowing the new government to unilaterally appoint judges and forbidding the court from considering certain matters. Without the two-thirds majority, but still committed to violating the existing constitution, PiS simply declared that it would not abide by court decisions that went against it, and then rewrote the laws and waited till it could appoint its own judges so that it could then appear to retreat and maintain formal court oversight.

Against traditional civil service laws requiring political independence and professionalism, each government has pushed through new rules allowing novices and party hacks to head governmental agencies, while dismantling tenure rules protecting civil servants from political attacks. Without delegalizing opposition media, each government has taken complete control of public television and radio channels, while exerting financial and sometimes legal pressure against independent private media, often under the guise of fighting foreign influence.

As far as passing new laws, each government has bypassed parliamentary rules requiring public debate over legislation by presenting many key bills as "individual" bills of particular deputies. This clause not only allows the avoidance of public debate, but drastically limits even parliamentary debate, enabling system-changing laws to be proposed in the morning and passed the same night.

Along with other measures, such as increasing secret powers of prosecutors, revising electoral laws while gerrymandering districts, and using control of the treasury to direct resources to civic and academic allies and against associations or scholars concerned with "unfriendly" topics, these governments are putting in place the building blocks of a radical Right model that could be installed elsewhere. Unlike military dictatorships, these governments maintain formal rules rather than impose states of emergency. Refraining from imprisoning opponents and

continuing to allow elections, they present themselves simply as "normal" governments, a key element of the effort to legitimize their radicalism.

Finally, each government has also legislated a number of "populist" economic measures, demonstrating at least symbolic rejection of neoliberal policies. New taxes have been imposed on large foreign-owned banks and corporations, utility rates have been cut in Hungary, new child payments have been offered in Poland, and both countries have ordered drastic retreats from the neoliberal pension privatization imposed in the 1990s. In large part because of these measures, as well as the nationalist rhetoric useful at times of European disarray, Fidesz has already won reelection twice, while prospects for PiS to do the same in 2019 currently look quite good.

It is no doubt because these illiberal innovations have started in the semiperiphery that they have been able to pass the introductory phase more easily than had they been introduced in the core. We can compare the European Union's stern rebuke and threat of sanctions against Austria in 2000, when Jorg Haider's Freedom Party was poised to take power, to the relatively mild challenges directed at Hungary and Poland. Most of the criticism has been strictly legalistic, demanding governments adhere to their own constitutions. (When Hungary simply rewrote its constitution, such attacks ceased.) All in all, the core has acted hesitantly, in order to not appear overbearing to the former eastern bloc. In other words, it is the sense that developments there do not "matter" as much as elsewhere, as well as the relative obscurity of the languages which makes it difficult for outsiders to know what is really going on, that have allowed these innovations to thrive.

Theorization of the model is developing apace, but slowly. Had Le Pen won the French presidency in 2017, core theorists might have become more intimately involved. As her candidacy and the election of Trump demonstrated, however, there is clear interest on the part of many voters that some radical transformation might be necessary. Might some formally democratic right-wing extremism be a way to consolidate a stable, postneoliberal capitalism? Can some "democratic fascism" underpin a new "social structure of accumulation" (to use the term David Kotz, a contributor to this volume, has used elsewhere to describe the various political models of capitalism), now that neoliberalism appears both economically and politically unsustainable (Kotz 2015)?

At the moment, the model is certainly being diffused. Already PiS ideologue Ryszard Legutko (2016) has published an important volume, in English, defending populist authoritarianism, securing some mainstream legitimation via the recommendation of *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat (2016). Core activists in Europe, meanwhile, get much of their information straight from the innovators, thanks to EU institutions. Fidesz and PiS representatives wander the corridors of the major EU offices in Brussels along with everybody else. Deputies of all ideologies see each other in the European Parliament, while civic actors meet in European business, trade union, and media networks. The Tower of Babel has crashed down in favor of a universal English, and for those still left out, translators are abundant. In short, there are plenty of opportunities for direct diffusion of knowledge.

It is certainly possible that these innovations will become the basis for a core radical Right paradigm to emerge in the future. No doubt it would look different. Democratic rules have a different history in the core. Central Europe's largely ethnically homogenous populations are not the rule in the West. Western big business, globally oriented, opposes economic nationalism. Core proponents would propose something somewhat different. Nevertheless, the influence of the Central European Right has already been stunning. Orban's intransigent position on refugees is now presented by the core Right as the kind of bold leadership their countries need. Illiberalism will eventually look different than it does in the semiperipheral East. But if it gains strength and takes hold in the core, it will be in large part thanks to the work of the semiperiphery.

That the dominant creativity from this semiperiphery now comes from the Right does not mean it will stay that way. Both Hungary and Poland boast interesting left-wing political and cultural alternatives that might become significant in the future, particularly if and when the New Right falters. In the end, though, we would do well to recall that eastern Europe does not and never has come up with ideas for the benefit of the core. Semiperipheral location may allow the ideas to be more cutting-edge, while imperialist rules of knowledge production keep their originators from theorizing those creations to make them ready for diffusion. But this region of Europe has served and continues to serve as the fount of exciting, stimulating, game-changing myriad ideas, regardless of how or whether these are used by others. Thus do the innovations of the semiperiphery live on.

NOTES

1. Note the frequent embrace by east European liberals of the "*Homo sovieticus*" accusation against their own people, or the arguments about alleged ingrained eastern deficiencies, for example, Sztompka 1993.

2. A word about capitalization: I write "Eastern Europe" when reference is to the period of the Cold War, when East and West referred to two different political and economic systems. It is written as "eastern Europe" when referring to the postcommunist period, when the region becomes simply the eastern part of Europe, without representing an alternative regime.

3. A good description of the changes over time can be found in the "Socialism and Democracy Online" website "Workers' Councils in Yugoslavia: Successes and Failures," at http://sdonline.org/57/workers-councils-in-yugoslavia-successes-and-failures/. See also Comisso 1980.

4. On the latter, see Bockman 2011, chapter 3.

5. Autarky should be understood relatively, not as complete withdrawal from the capitalist world economy but an effort to use the latter for its own advantage (see Sanchez-Sibony 2014).

6. See the discussion in: Bockman 2011 (chapter 4).

7. For a fuller discussion, see my book *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Reform and Opposition in Poland Since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), chapter 2.

8. His two key articles were "Civil Society Against the State: Poland 1980–1981," *Telos* 47, 1981; and "Empire vs. Civil Society: Poland 1981–82," *Telos* 50, 1981. (The second piece actually came out in 1982, but to retain their discount bulk mail rate, which required that journals stick to regular publication intervals, *Telos*'s editors kept the date as 1981.)

9. For an earlier important but less developed intervention, see Pelczynski 1988. Jacques Rupnik began thinking about a "rebirth" of civil society even before Solidarity, for example, in his 1979 text "Dissent in Poland, 1968–1978: The End of Revisionism and the Rebirth of Civil Society" (Rupnik 1979).

10. This group is perhaps best described by Andre Gorz, who in *Farewell to the Working Class* calls them "a new historical subject: the non-class of post-industrial

proletarians." Jacek Kurczewski (1993) calls this same group a "new middle class" and attributes the rise of Solidarity to them, as do world-systems theorists Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein (1992), in "1989: The Continuation of 1968."

11. I like to think that our theorization of the civil society innovation faithfully echoed the intentions of the actors to whom we appealed. Indeed, the current rejection of the idea of civil society by the New Right in power in Poland and Hungary (they treat it as a suspect concept, a conduit for the penetration of alien ideas, a category to be rejected in favor of "the nation"), and the tenacity with which left-liberal and social democratic actors, including those original proponents of the civic initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s, seek to hold onto "civil society" with its participatory and democratic connotations, suggests our version of the concept may indeed match many of the founders' expectations. This does not change the fact that ours was also a core-attempted theorization of a semiperipheral innovation.

12. These were mostly published in the weekly political magazine *In These Times*, with some also in *The Nation*.

13. Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal (2002) have argued persuasively about the connection between reform economists in the former Soviet bloc and the emergence of neoliberalism. Bockman (2011) explicitly speaks of "the left-wing origins of neoliberalism." As true as this may be for economists, it is not so for the political activists, the original promoters of civil society. Many of them indeed eventually gravitated toward neoliberalism, in part under the influence of economists, but their left-wing sensibilities initially pushed them toward general civic participation, not a cult of markets. On their turn from participation to markets, see Ost 2005, especially chapter 2.

14. On its origin, see Ost 2000. On its spread, see Ost 2011.

15. On transnational pressure, see Orenstein 2008. On domestic pressure for neoliberal reforms, see Bockman 2000.

16. For some basics, see Scheppele 2014, Ost 2018, and Harper 2018.

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