The last ten years in Eastern Europe have witnessed changes of unprecedented magnitude. However, the way to democracy and the market economy is not paved with gold for every country and region of the former 'Eastern block'. Liberal democracy has not emerged simply as a result of dismantling the communist system in 1989. Furthermore, in addition to the many-sided conflicts that the political transition has created, the expected benefits of the market economy have not yet been realized. A cursory overview of the transformations in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War shows that a significant part of the region faces a new kind of crisis. This may equally well be considered a post-communist crisis or—and perhaps more exactly—a crisis of transition in the broad sense of the term. Apart from the Central European countries (mainly from the core, that is, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary), the transition as it has affected the other East European countries is still ambiguous: it has by no means been able to generate the promised results so far. In some countries, reforms have not led to social welfare, political stability, or the prospect of integration into Europe as envisaged in the early 1990s. Instead, they have consolidated economic backwardness, instability, disintegration, and even violence. Although there is no way back, the road ahead seems very long indeed.

With the integration of the Central European countries into NATO and, relatively soon, into the European Union, the first phase of the transformation process in the East would seem to be coming to an end. Now would appear to be a good time to assess what has gone well and what has gone wrong in the course of the transition process, with a view to correcting the reform process or even outlining a new one. Scholars, politicians, and the wider public should attempt to understand why particular countries in the former 'East' have succeeded in their attempts to reform, while others have yet to make much progress in this regard—it would also be important to consider what consequences might arise from such an uneven evolution.

We must attempt to redefine the transition in Eastern Europe. It seems clear that what has proved feasible for the Central European countries has not achieved similar results in, for instance, the former Soviet republics. The differences—less significant in the early 1990s—have increased in the course of the last decade. There is a widening gap in terms of economic growth, incomes, living standards, and social integration. The main issue in Eastern Europe is now the establishment of a more effective reform process, and the sooner the better.
Assessment of the social and political context and the economic reform strategy appropriate to each country should start immediately, but if further failures are to be avoided, the first step must be an accurate appraisal of the experiences of recent years, for individual countries and for the region as a whole.

Since an in-depth assessment of the kind envisaged here would produce a range of widely differing results, what we are really dealing with here is not one, but several transitions. A comparative analysis of the countries of Eastern Europe—of their reform policies and, especially, of the results achieved so far—would be the best way of investigating what has gone wrong with the transition. Recent work has begun to show signs of a reorientation. In Romania, one of the most recent examples of this is the book *Spațiul social al tranzitiei* [The social space of transition], the second book on the subject by Dumitru Sandu, a well-known sociologist of the transition and an adviser to the World Bank.

According to Sandu, "An accurate assessment of what has happened in terms of the relationship between intentions and facts leads us to the conclusion that, for the time being, the post-communist transition in Romania . . . is directed rather towards the mere survival of society". As a concept—that is, prior to one's experience of it as influencing our life course—the reform process is first and foremost a project to be sold to the masses. "Reforms—be they political, economic or religious, or intended to affect society as a whole or just one part of it—are determined within the framework of a project defined by the elite and adopted by the population at large as a result of persuasion, social contagion, or constraint" (p. 23). What is likely to be the result if people come to feel that the reforms are not generating the promised results? They have a voice only in elections, when they usually replace the elite that drafted the project. But how willing will the population respond if subsequent elites fail to provide the right government? The most probable consequence is disillusion, followed by a reduction in political activism, and even a withdrawal from the public sphere. Reforms in Eastern Europe have certainly generated disillusion. Well-balanced reforms presuppose as a minimum that the disappointed are at least balanced by the more or less satisfied, but situations may arise in which mere survival becomes a leading goal of society which then forces through changes on the basis of failed reform measures. In order to assess people's real feelings about the changes, Dumitru Sandu's analysis focuses on the micro-social level, that is, on daily life, the level at which the human aspects of the transition can be seen most clearly. What are people's reactions to the post-communist transition, and how are they adapting to the entirely new social context? Sandu tries to answer these questions in his book, and with a considerable measure of success.

Most tranzitologists, in their attempt to capture the East European reform process, have concentrated on the macro-social level. In most cases, analysis is based on the view that economic reform is the key to overall transformation. Sandu does not neglect the economy, but his hypothesis is that the social fabric is too complex to be studied in terms of economic machinery alone. The transition is also strongly affected by culture, institutions, mentalities, and social relations.