

The hardcover version of the book was originally published in 2017, and it would be interesting to know how the author's thinking around socially engaged art in the region has evolved since then. For example, Galliera claims that artists in the region used socially engaged art to "reclaim public life from both the recent socialist past and current neoliberal ideologies in order to build inclusive public spheres as democratic forms within emerging civil societies" (2), however this is just one example of the many ways in which socially engaged art was employed by artists. In fact, as the author herself points out in Chapter 3, "Historical Antecedents: Participatory Art under Socialist 1956–89," the projects that form the case studies in her book emerged from a much wider context of participatory and socially engaged art that extends to the communist period, where artists also attempted to form their own parallel civil and artistic society in the second public sphere.

Given the rich critical framework that Galliera provides with regard to participatory and socially engaged art practices, it would have been interesting to hear some concluding remarks from the author as to how the study of these cases can advance our understanding of socially engaged art practices more generally. Can the findings of this research alter or enhance the critical theory that has developed around socially engaged art, by including the artists and art works from these lesser-studied and lesser-known artistic environments? This would enrich the already nuanced discussion about the different ways in which social capital has worked in the post-socialist environment for these artists as opposed to way it has functioned in the west.

The contributions of this book are many: a focused and thorough discussion of socially engaged art projects from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania; a thoughtful consideration of the context in which artists in the post-socialist period were operating, and an expansion of our understanding of the scope of socially engaged art projects in the context of neoliberalism.

AMY BRYZGEL  
*Northeastern University*

***Defining Latvia: Recent Explorations in History, Culture, and Politics.*** Ed. Michael Loader, Siobhan Hearne, and Mathew Kott. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022. 269 pp. Notes. Glossary. Index. \$85.00, hard bound.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.298

*Defining Latvia* is a collection of essays by an international group of experts on Latvia that grew out of a 2018 conference at Uppsala University in Sweden to mark the 100th anniversary of Latvian independence. It serves as a representative sample of the main topics of inquiry that are of concern to contemporary historians and political scientists who focus on Latvia. The strength of the book is the spotlight it places on the overlooked or underappreciated episodes in the modern era of Latvian history. Indeed, the collection is full of fresh insights and interpretations regarding the development of Latvian identity and statehood.

The first chapter by Catherine Gibson is the only one that deals directly with the formation of Latvian national identity in late nineteenth century Russia. In "Mapping *Latwija*," Gibson shows how an administratively divided Latvian region came to imagine itself as constituting a coherent geographic territory. She focuses on the life and work of Matiss Siliņš, a publisher of maps that were intended to instill a sense of Latvian national consciousness by including the place names in Latvian and by clearly demarcating the boundaries of the area inhabited by Latvian speakers.

Notably, Siliņš included the region of Latgale as part of Latvian territory. Moreover, these maps were affordable and accessible to a wide audience.

The next two chapters deal with minority issues in the first independent Latvian nation-state (1918–40). In “The Sokolowski Affair,” Christina Douglas and Per Bolin explore the effort by Baltic Germans to establish their own German language university in Riga. While the new Latvian nation-state offered cultural autonomy to minorities and the right to receive a basic education in their own languages, Latvia was reluctant to see the same level of cultural pluralism at the level of higher education. This led to attempts to block the elevation of the German *Herder-Institut* to the status of a university. Paul Sokolowski was the chairman of the institute and he was accused of expressing views that promoted the hegemony of Baltic German culture. This caused tensions between German and Latvian academics, but in the end, “the *Herder-Institut* received the right to be a privately funded establishment of higher education—an *augstskola*” (81).

Continuing the section on the interwar republic, Paula Opperman examines the threat to democracy posed by the fascist party *Pērkonkrusts* (Thundercross). This radical party espoused an ethnic definition of the Latvian nation and was openly opposed to the Latvian constitutional order that had established a civic model of nationhood. It was eventually banned by the government, but nonetheless, Opperman shows that antisemitic activities were a regular feature of civic life in Latvia during the 1930s.

Chapter 4 by Harry C. Merritt explores the national perspectives of Latvian citizens who served in both the Nazi organized Latvian Legion and the Soviet Latvian Rifle Division during World War II. As the Nazis and the Red Army waged war back and forth across eastern Europe, the smaller nations in between were unavoidably swept up in the maelstrom. Merritt relies on the personal memoirs of those who served to show that Latvians in *both* units “. . . spoke Latvian among one another, celebrated Latvian holidays, sang traditional Latvian songs, and often thought of themselves and their comrades-in-arms as serving the Latvian national cause” (106).

The next three chapters deal with expressions of Latvian nationhood during the “thaw” that occurred under Khrushchev in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Diana Bleiere examines the efforts of the “national communists” led by Eduards Berkļavs to adopt an economic program that was more responsive to local needs. Bleiere wonders how cohesive the national communists were as a group and concludes that there was little organization among people who shared similar views. However, the claim that there was such a group served to justify reprisals during the eventual crackdown on the national communists. Michael Loader then focuses on the question of language politics in the context of the Soviet education reforms of 1958. Latvia became “the most prominent and rebellious republic in its hostility to the reform” because it opposed incentives allowing Russian-speakers in Latvia to avoid classes in Latvian (153). Although the thaw permitted a surprising level of genuine debate, the Latvian proposals were eventually rejected. “The limits of acceptable autonomous action by the republics had been reached” (169). In the last chapter on the Soviet period, Ekaterina Vikulina explores the burst of creativity and experimentation that Latvian photographers were able to express during the thaw.

The final two chapters deal with political developments in post-Soviet Latvia. Daunis Auers, a leading expert on Latvia’s party system, traces the development of *Nacionālā Apvienība* (the National Alliance), a radical right populist party that has played a role in successive coalition governments since 2013 and has thereby had a strong nativist impact on recent cultural policy. The National Alliance currently has thirteen seats in the *Saeima* that was elected in 2018, making it the fourth largest party in the legislature. Auers points out that a change has taken place since the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, when nationalists focused on the demographic

threat posed by Latvia's large Russian-speaking population. Today, such parties are more likely to "... concentrate their ire on visible minorities and refugees. . . as well as focus on conservative versus liberal values" (223), putting them more in line with similar parties across Europe.

Auers and Mathew Kott both show how radical right parties have merged into the mainstream of Latvia's party system. For Auers, pro-Russophone parties pose a greater threat to democracy in the eyes of most Latvians, while Kott examines the same topic in the context of "entryism," whereby a marginal group gains control over mainstream actors. While all of the chapters are informative and thoroughly researched, a more comprehensive view of Latvian national identity would require additional chapters on topics such as the Soviet takeover and communist oppression, the liberal dimension of Latvia's struggle for independence, and the emergence of pro-EU parties in the post-Soviet period.

MARK A. JUBULIS  
*Gannon University*

***The Slovak Question: A Transatlantic Perspective 1914–1948.*** By Michael R. Cude. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. x, 288 pp. Bibliography. Notes. Index. \$50.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.299

Sizeable émigré groups tend to have political leverage in both their adoptive state and their country of origin. Slovak immigrant communities in the United States were less fortunate. Although they succeeded in forging transatlantic ties with their compatriots in central Europe, they were outmaneuvered at home and abroad by the founders of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, in America the Slovaks failed to garner any official backing for their national cause.

By the early twentieth century "between a quarter and a third" of the Slovak nation—some 650,000 people—had settled in the United States, principally in "the northern industrial belt stretching from New York through Wisconsin" (9), forming large communities in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. The level of their "publications, organization, and lobbying" on each side of the Atlantic is judged by Michael R. Cude to be "astounding" (199). He makes a compelling case that "Slovak national identity formation was a transatlantic phenomenon," which is insufficiently appreciated in the "tenuous, and tedious," specialist works (3–4). Be that as it may, it is clear from this study that the marginalized Slovak American community held significantly less sway over US foreign policy than the historically more diminutive Czech migrant group. Czechoslovak publicists were highly effective at casting Slovak autonomists as "an irrelevant, cranky minority working for the Hungarians" (52). State Department officials dealing with central European affairs duly bought into the idea that the Slovaks "needed the Czechs for their survival" (27). Thus, the Slovak Americans "remained on the margins" (37), not only during the building of the Czechoslovak state, but up until the early Cold War.

Through their political league and cultural organizations, the Slovaks proved more adept at advocating American values to their European counterparts than at shaping American perceptions of the regime in Prague. Admittedly, in 1939 the US Ambassador in Paris, William Bullitt, described the exiled president of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš, as "an utterly selfish and small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country" (123). Nevertheless, most American