

**XXVI. Annual Political Science Conference
Szeged, 2020**

Call for Papers

**Democratic Transition 30
XXVI. Annual Conference of the Hungarian Political Science Association
28th and 29th of May 2020, SZEGED**

The last 30 years provide an adequate perspective for political science to evaluate the transition of 1989-1990. With three decades' hindsight we can reconsider all that seemed obvious during the transition and recognize what was unforeseen in the midst of the events. Re-evaluating the transition is not only about 1989 and 1990, the opposition movements, the roundtable discussions and the first free elections, but also about the system that was established by these events and processes. If the democratic transitions can be considered the basis of the new Central Eastern European democracies, then do they inevitably lead to the present or do we need to pay more attention to what happened after 1990.

Ten years ago, we have organized a conference in Szeged with the title "*Crisis – Election – Democracy*" based on the assumption that "Hungarian democracy have been facing previously unseen challenges, its stability is decreasing, political parties emerge out of the blue and achieve electoral success, while others decline and disappear. The balance of the bipolar party system that was previously considered highly stable is now being upset and new dimensions of conflicts appeared among the political parties. Apparently, many of our assumptions remain relevant in 2020 and the coordinate system we used is still valid. Thus, the goal of the conference is not just to evaluate of the democratic transition and the past 30 years, but also to examine how politics and political science changed during this time.

The transition opened the gates for the emerging political science in the region. What did the democratic transition contribute to political science? And what did political science contribute to the transition? Did Hungarian political science seize the opportunities provided to it and did it correctly assume its responsibilities? Where was the Hungarian political science proven right or wrong in the past three decades? What are the characteristics of Hungarian political science in an international context, what are its strengths and weaknesses?

Our conference is also open to the topics of democratic transition in other countries of the Central Eastern European region, and the political and ideological challenges of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Language of the conference: Hungarian and English

Venue: Szent-Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Kálvária sgt. 23.

Organizer:

University of Szeged

Faculty of Law and Political Sciences

Department of Political Science

Please direct any questions you may have to the organizers, available at mpttvandor2020@gmail.com

For further information, visit our Hungarian or English language website:

<http://www.juris.u-szeged.hu/english/conferences/political-science-conference-xxvi>

<http://www.juris.u-szeged.hu/kutatas-tudomany/kari-szervezesu/mptt-vandorgyules-xxvi>

Application deadline:

Presenters can apply directly at the panel chairs no later than the **20th of March 2020** with an abstract of 250 words maximum. Final decision on the selection of abstracts will be made by the panel chairs. Panels with more than 5 abstracts will be divided into two.

It is also possible to apply with a complete panel of 4 or 5 abstracts until the **20th of March 2020** at mpttvandongor2020@gmail.com

Panels:

1. The impact of leadership and plebiscitary techniques on governments

Chair: Attila Gyulai

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Personalization, political leadership, and plebiscitary techniques have been on the top of the agenda of political scientists for decades. Additionally, their role has become more and more apparent as political leadership seems not only to supplement the functioning of the established patterns of governments but contribute also to the restructuring of polities. Furthermore, this trend of strengthening political leadership occurs differently across various political systems. The panel aims at discussing how governments and political systems throughout Europe have changed due to the activity of political leaders. Specifically, the panel focuses on leadership and plebiscitary techniques that had a structural and lasting impact both on the institutional setting and the ways of governing. The panel welcomes submissions that address the impact of leadership and plebiscitary techniques on the political systems either from a theoretical or an empirical point of view.

2. Decline of democracy in East-Central Europe

Chair: Attila Ágh

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The panel deals with the main issues, first, the development of the East-Central European countries in the European Union, and second, with the democracy debates in the last years in the region. These two issues have closely been interwoven, still they need a separate treatment as the international and domestic dimension that have a common framework in the emergence of the New World Order and the reverse wave in the global democratization.

The focus of the first part of panel is on the current institutional change in the EU between the Juncker and Leyen Commissions with regards to the Conference on the Future of Europe starting on 9 May 2020. It offers an opportunity of the overcoming the Core-Periphery Divide in the twin process of Europeanization and Democratization.

The focus is in the second part of the panel is on the backsliding of democracy and the recent wave of the authoritarian system in ECE that has led to the eruption of debates around the character of the new political system. The recent studies have usually distinguished between democracies, hybrid systems and autocracies, this panel will discuss the characters of these political systems and their recently changing borderlines in ECE.

(See e.g. :EC, European Commission (2020) Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe, 22 January 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_89,

IDEA (2020) The Global State of Democracy 2019,

<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/global-state-of-democracy-2019>)

3. East Central Europe in the European Union

Chair: Krisztina Arató

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The European Union has been the Framework for co-operation for East Central European countries for the last 15 years. The panel explores how the European Union and the region developed in this period. Papers on the institutionalization of EU membership, EU policies in our region, developments in Europeanization and Eurocepticism are expected as well as studies on the nature and environment of the enlarged European Union.

4. Elections, electoral systems

Chair: Levente Nagy

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Modern (representative) democracy is in fact party democracy in which parties compete with one another for parliamentary seats. Elections and electoral systems exist to structure this competition by selecting the major political decision makers through free elections among candidates. The operation and the political consequences of elections (as well as the linkage between parties and elections) are in the focus of academic research on electoral studies, and among the key components of any democratic system. The aim of this section is to provide a platform for discussion for scholars, researchers, students and anyone in the domain of interest. The organizers of the conference under the theme of *Crisis, Elections and Democracy* would like to invite you to submit an abstract (250 – 300 words) on „Elections, electoral systems” presenting the results of your current research.

5. Elections and Voting Behavior

Chair: Gábor Tóka

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This panel will accommodate the presentation of four-five English language papers addressing the “Crisis – Choice – Democracy 2.0” theme as it arises in elections and the study of voting behavior. Our time is rich in dramatic elections attracting a great deal of international attention and a sense of crisis is palpable throughout the democratic world. Backwaters are no exception: by the end of 2020, Hungary and all her seven neighbors will have seen national elections with unusual drama within the last two years. However, we are not even close to a consensus on what if anything is in crisis: is it just some party types or ideologies that are going out of use? New lines of conflict are upsetting pre-existing equilibria? Massive shifts in trade, wealth and social structures are making their presence felt via undermining the political status quo? The nature of party-voter linkages is changing in ways that are hard to reconcile with the past century’s understanding of representative democracy? A system of political communication is crumbling to give way to a post-truth world? Democracy itself is in crisis? The panel invites empirically informed papers that look at voting behavior and the organization of campaigns and elections to explore such questions explicitly or indirectly with data from Hungary, the surrounding region, or the rest of the world.

6. Political communication in hybrid media system

Chair: Jelena Kleut

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The panel invites theoretically and empirically informed papers on the complexity, interdependence and transition emerging from the various blends of older and newer media logics in political communication. Using Chadwick's (2017) concept of hybrid media system as the initial thinking tool, not as the exclusive framework, the panel seeks to examine variety of genres, technologies, practices and actors. Which communication strategies emerge in these combinations? Which logics are they guided by? Who, or even what - knowing the presence of social bots, is shaping the content and distribution of political messages. What are the short and long term consequences of hybridity. Although in general open to different avenues of political communication, slight advantage will be given to papers focusing on elections, protests and different types of contentious action.

7. Political Thinking in Hungary: Thirty Years

Chair: Zoltan Balazs

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This panel aims at taking stock with the post-regime change decades in terms of the history of political ideas, ideologies, and debates. The history of Hungarian political thinking has been unevenly researched. 19. century liberalism and conservatism, Völkisch, radical conservative interwar thinking, and various leftist ideologies have been more or less thoroughly explored, and important methodological issues been discussed, including contextualism, discourse analysis, author-centrism. However, there is practically no systematic overview available on the past thirty years, despite the unprecedented freedom for the exchange of ideas, discussions and debates.

Hence, by organizing this panel, we invite scholars to begin with this work. How has post-1990 liberalism/conservatism/Völkish thinking evolved? To what extent have international tendencies influenced Hungarian political thinking (the impact of communitarianism, republicanism, Third Way ideologies, ecologism, feminism, altright movement and so on)? Have such conceptions and theories been successfully related to Hungarian political traditions? The panel is open to papers on methodology (how to write the most recent history of ideas), case studies (e.g. a certain ideology, a particular author, an interesting debate in the focus), and various other issues (what is political thinking in the first place, are there still 'ideologies' or broad political traditions, etc.).

8. Regime change interpretations

Chair: Andrius Švarplys

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When 1989 communist empire controlled by Soviet Union collapsed, many hopes were raised along with new paths of development the post-communist countries started to realize. One grand idea was guiding the majority of Central Eastern European countries above all – the return to Europe, which was perceived foremost as the moral and historical justice, as Milan Kundera expressed in his famous essay „The Tragedy of Central Europe“ (1984). The political-economical program for reforms of post-communist transition was written by global neoliberal agenda, known as Washington consensus. It included privatization of state enterprises, trade liberalization, to secure private property, enabling entrepreneurship. It was a belief that free

market, a limited power of the state in combination with democratically working political institutions would inevitably and naturally lead to successful integration into European/Western economic-political-security system. Entering the European Union in 2004 for majority of CEE countries seemed to be a culmination of successful transition.

Massive scientific attempts were introduced to interpret the various aspects of post-communist transformation. They reflected different historical, economic, political, geographical, structural aspects of experiences from successful „shock therapy“ cases (Estonia, the Baltic States), or „shock without therapy“ (Poland) to no less successful incremental reforms cases (Slovenia, Hungary), or political oligarchy regime formation (Russia, Azerbaijan) or even sultanism (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). The scientific literature have enumerated many key-factors to explain and evaluate these reforms in transition: the level of modernization within the states before they were subjected to communist dictatorship; the type of political regime that evolved in the particular state during the late communism period (Kitschelt 1995, Kitschelt et al. 1999); the type of economic reforms: radical shock therapy of neoliberal kind (Sachs 1994, Aslund 2002, 2007) or gradualist reforms with social concerns over market liberalization (Stiglitz 1999); the role of the political elites in the process of democratization (Przeworski 1991) etc. Regime change depended on diverse conditions and decisions made by political elites - to reflect those is the main goal of the panel.

Bearing in mind all the variety of different paths the post-communist states have chosen providing multiple combinations of economic and political reforms that scientific literature reflects, the panel focuses on the following issues:

- Theoretical interpretations on various factors, reasons and outcomes of political transition in CEE countries that might explain the regime change;
- Overview of economic reforms to compare and explain the results different states achieved so far;
- Evolving the post-communist political party systems: patterns and problems;
- The problems of democracy consolidation during three decades of transition;
- Studies in political culture: value change in post-communist societies and its political consequences;
- Communist legacy and politics of history: remembering the past to construct the future.

9. Rethinking the Conditions of Local and Territorial Governance in the Era of State Modernisation Reforms

Chair: Edith Somlyódy Pfiel

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Since the 1990s there was a shift away from “classical” territory-based hierarchical structure (government) and towards more fluid, de-territorialised, network-based, multi-actor structures (governance) (Rhodes 1996; Pierre, 2000; Osborn 2010) in all over the World. Additionally, as impact of the global financial crisis territorial and structural reforms have been on the Agenda in the recent past. The objectives of the reforms are mainly improving efficiency, enhancing transparency and accountability, reducing problems associated with the local and self-national governments as well (Callanan et al. 2014). With similar aims in some European countries recentralisation and the negligence of local and subnational self-governments can be seen. All these reforms have firmly affected the self-governmental sector in scale, autonomy and financial position, which manifests itself in re-municipalisation and in the appearance of state-centred approach. Notwithstanding the last feature is considered progressive and society

oriented, which favour the participative democracy (Post-NPM). Considering the mentioned different trends, the key question of the Panel is how local and sub-national levels could be governed effectively and democratically concerning public policy making process and strategical development decisions in our days. On this basis the Panel seeks to understand what conditions might encourage the emergence of cooperation horizontally and coordination vertically in different institutional and legal framework. It attempts to identify factors which contribute or hinder voluntary collaboration. Presentations are likewise welcomed in the field of best practices in local and territorial governance in different public policy fields; functional space construction (de-territorialisation) via cooperation, theory of multi-level governance; new technics and coordination mechanisms working among central, sub-national and local governmental tiers.

10. Social Movements and Civil Society. Risk and challenge in Europe

Chair: László Kákai

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The purpose of the panel is to better understand the role of NGOs in governance in the Europe. We are also interested in a wide range of social movement activity, from traditional or creative forms of protest to service provision and legislative work.

Our definition of NGOs is broad and involves informal organisations, cooperatives, non-profits, civil society organisations, and so forth. Our focus is particularly on those NGOs whose mission is strongly related to the public interest and that work in the areas of governance, social and health services, public policy, citizen participation, human rights, and/or humanitarian aid.

The panel aims to take a closer look at these phenomena and to offer different empirical perspectives (based on narrative interviews, protest surveys, protest event analysis etc.), not only beyond progressive and formalized movements but also to uncover little explored lines of development.

The panel will focus mainly on the specificity of social movements and civil societies in post-communist Europe and address, among others, the following questions:

- What is the role of NGOs in delivering services at the national and local level in CEE countries?
- What are examples of existing cooperation between NGOs and national and/or local government in the region to deliver services in various policy arenas?
- How and why does civic activism differ in CEE from that in Western Europe?
- What role do social movements play for the quality of democracy in Europe?
- How do social movements mobilize people for their aims?
- What methodological challenges do we encounter in CEE?
- Social movements in the European Union; the role is enabled by the multi-level/polycentric structure of the EU; possible emergence of a European civil society;
- Civil society organisation can be effective, within limits, by seeking to improve the quality of the electoral and policy process without intruding into the substance of politics and policy

Our panel is open to papers related to our theme regarding the role of NGO's in shaping governance and on multi-sector strategies for meeting the public interest. The papers include a focus on the ways NGO's have sought greater transparency in the public sector, have sought to refine democratic processes, and have mobilised for advocacy across the European Union as a whole.