5th Annual CEENELS Conference
Re-thinking legal institutions in Central and Eastern Europe
University of Debrecen, Hungary
27-28 June 2020
Call for Papers: Re-thinking legal institutions in Central and Eastern Europe

The transformation across Central and Eastern Europe from state socialism to democratic capitalism inaugurated in 1989 and accomplished by the end of the 1990s was, to a large extent, a transformation from a Party-run state to a state under the rule of law. However, the speed of development did not allow for an organic development of legal institutions but rather required a fast-forward move to a mature system of checks and balances. At that time, it was a commonly shared assumption that transitional democracies in this region have to follow Western patterns in creating the legal framework of the new social system (Bugarič 2015). Today, many of these hastily copied institutions are under stress, leading to their hollowing out or even radical transformation.

Private law institutions that are based on good faith and honesty of parties have been abused by irresponsible and greedy entrepreneurs (Skąpska 2009:289). The liberal institutions of public law could not provide young democracies with the expected protection against the pressure stemming from populist movements (Mouffe 2018:1). Besides that, recent developments such as the increasing impact of social media, artificial intelligence and climate change on different regulatory fields also challenged the effectiveness of traditional legal institutions.

While it is probably not up to lawyers to change the trajectories of these developments, we can, nonetheless, elaborate on our local strategies of reacting to it. It requires the legal community to reflect upon the values it wishes to defend and priorities it wishes to set. During this work, the historical context of right-wing authoritarianism in the 1930s and state-socialist authoritarianism after World War II cannot be overlooked either, as they have jointly shaped not only the mentality of our societies, but also of our legal communities.

The aim of our conference will be to reflect on these changes and possible strategies of reacting to them from the perspective of legal scholarship. We invite papers from all fields of legal studies, including legal theorists, sociologists of law, philosophers of law, constitutionalists, legal historians and specialists in legal dogmatics of private and public law alike. The questions that could be addressed include the following:

- is there a “third way” for Central Europe between authoritarian regimes and Western-type democracies? is there a way to preserve democracy other than implementing Western legal and political institutions? are Western institutions of constitutional justice, rule of law and judicial independence merely foreign
imports, which have been rejected in Central Europe, or are they part of our legal heritage too?

- are the reasons behind the rule of law crisis attributable, at least partly, to their weak social legitimacy? have the Central European constitutional courts, at the time when they enjoyed immense law-making powers, use those powers to the benefit of vulnerable social groups (workers, pensioners, unemployed), or rather promoted the agenda of neoliberalism?

- are the perspectives of critical legal theory of a Marxist pedigree, such as represented by Stanisław Ehrlich or Jarosław Ładosz, or the idea of “green new deal” sources of inspiration for the changes in Central Europe?

- how can we re-shape our private and public law institutions in order to answer the current political technological and environmental challenges?

- is there a place for a left populism or green new deal movements in Central Europe? if so, should them side with liberals in defending the rule of law and other liberal institutions?

- can the political processes in Central Europe be explained from the post-colonial (after the collapse of the Soviet Union) and neo-colonial (concerning the EU requirements in the process of integration) perspectives?

Keynote Speakers

Professor Jiří Přibáň (University of Cardiff) and Professor Andreas Funke (University of Erlangen–Nuremberg).

Submissions

Please submit your abstracts of up to 500 words through the EasyChair facility: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=ceenels5

Deadline for submissions: 29 February 2020

Notification of acceptance: 15 March 2020

Conference Fee

The conference fee of EUR 50 covers conference materials, coffee breaks and lunches on both days of the Conference and the official conference dinner. The conference fee should be paid no later than 30 April 2020 by the bank transfer. Detailed instructions for the payment will be provided to the selected participants with the notification of acceptance. The informal pre-conference drinks are at the participants’ own expense. Please note that the organizers are unable to offer any scholarships to cover the costs of tickets and hotels.
Organising team

Mátyás Bencze and Krisztina Ficsor (University of Debrecen, conveners), Rafał Mańko (University of Amsterdam), Piotr Eckhardt (CLEST, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, secretary of CEENELS).

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions: ceenels@ceenels.org

About the University of Debrecen

The University of Debrecen was founded in 1538 as the Calvinist College of Debrecen, known since 1912 as the Royal University of Debrecen and since 1921 as István Tisza University. In 1949 the communist government split the University into smaller academies which were reunited in 2000. The traditions of the Faculty of Law date back more than 200 years, and the currently existing faculty was reopened in 1996 following a 50-year interval. Today, the faculty offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as a PhD programme. The Faculty of Law has has nearly 2000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. Its doctoral school place emphasis on interdisciplinary research and international cooperation in various fields of law.

About CEENELS

The CEENELS community meets yearly at its annual conferences which have been hosted by the Masaryk University (1st conference), the Jagiellonian University (2nd conference), the University of Latvia (3rd conference) and the Higher School of Economics (4th conference). Each year, the CEENELS community collectively decides where to organise its next Annual Conference, based on the official invitations made on behalf potential host universities during the closing session.

CEENELS conferences are also an occasion to meet leading scholars on Central and Eastern European law, legal culture and political culture. We have hosted, as keynote and plenary speakers inter alia: Professor Adam Bosiacki (Warsaw), Dr Cosmin Cercel (Nottingham), Professor Kathryn Hendley (University of Wisconsin), Professor Leszek Koczanowicz (Wrocław), Professor Zdeněk Kühn (Prague), Professor Tomasz Pietrzykowski (Katowice), Dr Janis Pleps (Riga), Dr Vladislav Starzhenetsky (Moscow), Professor Adam Sulikowski (Wrocław), and Professor Alan Uzelac (Zagreb).

The second important cyclical project of CEENELS are the annual Critico-Juridical Symposia – intensive workshops of 20-25 critical legal scholars discussing each year's lead theme and their own current research topics. The 1st Critico-Juridical Symposium was held at the University of Opole in 2018. The 2nd CJS was hosted by the Institute of European Studies, Jagiellonian University. This year's CJS will be organised at The West University in Timișoara. For call for papers and any other information on activities of our network visit our website: (http://www.ceenels.org).

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