

Social movements in Central and Eastern Europe

ISA-RC 47 regional conference University of Bucharest,

11-12 May 2015

The 2015 Conference on Social movements in Central and Eastern Europe is organized by the University of Bucharest and the ISA Research Committee 47 "Social classes and social movements" with the support of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania.

The conference will provide a platform to share and develop perspectives on, and analyses of, current and recent social movements and protests in Central and Eastern Europe – including the ones that attain mainstream media headlines as well as those that discreetly transform politics or daily life.

25 years ago, citizens successfully mobilised for freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and social movements played a key role in dismantling the iron curtain and in establishing democratic regimes in these countries. A quarter century later, both the context and social movements look very different. Most CEE countries have turned to market economies and political democracy and many have joined the European Union. Institutional democracy is well grounded in Central and Eastern Europe but low participation rates in elections suggests a sort of discontent with liberal democracy. Currently, with the exception of the 2011-2012 protests in Russia, the "EuroMaidan revolution" in Ukraine and recent Hungarian protests, Eastern European social movements have not made global news headlines and are rarely considered by worldwide social movement scholars. A closer look at protests and civil society in the region provides another panorama. On one side, mobilizations oriented towards deep social transformation have echoed global movements (e.g. the Occupy movement in Bulgaria). On the other, social movements are focused on the environment, cultural change, daily life, alternatives within local contexts or citizens' participation. Moreover, these social movements combine online and offline forms of participation, all major issues in democratic societies.

Protest, activism and a more active citizenship have often emerged from concerns in daily life. Some citizens have taken over the streets and occupied city squares or rural areas to oppose policies or infrastructure projects, often combining concrete claims with more general preoccupation for a more democratic society and a more transparent and less corrupt political arena. More recently, initiatives for critical consumption have emerged, connecting consumption choices with the support of local farmers as well as environmental, health and political concerns. Similarly, rural movements have found new impetus in various countries.

We also hope that this conference will advance theories of social movements by highlighting the micro-level mechanisms that drive recruitment, mobilization, decision-making, the construction of friends and foes, and other dimensions of strategies and meanings, in order to develop a more dynamic and contingent view of political processes. We hope to observe a variety of players engaging one another in various arenas (Jasper, 2014), as well as gathering analytical and empirical elements to bridge the gaps between micro and macro perspectives on social movements and social change.

Following ISA, RC47's mission to develop a sociology of social movements as a general sociology and the combination of fieldwork data with analytical perspective on social movements and major social challenges, this conference particularly welcomes contributions that show how the study of social movements contributes to a better understanding of both specific social actors and society as a whole.

ISA-47 aims at promoting teaching and research on social movement studies, as well as networking among social movement scholars both in Rumania and among the Central and Eastern European region. We insist on promoting research agenda, approaches and perspectives rooted in fieldwork in Rumanian and CEE and taking into account local, national and regional challenges faced by social scientists scholars and citizens of that region. Social scientists are called to identify the movements that will eventually shape the future of Central and Eastern Europe and of Europe as a whole. The conference will pay attention to both progressive and conservative movements, as the latter tend to become particularly vibrant and powerful in some CEE countries and raise some important challenges to democracy. Contributions may also underline commonalities and differences among movements and mobilizations in different CEE countries, in a specific sub-region and/or with their counterparts in Western Europe or the rest of the world. A specific panel will be dedicated to analytical overviews of civil society or social movements in a particular country, a set of countries or CEE as a whole. Finally, we also welcome panel and paper proposals on theoretical contributions, notably on cultural approaches of social movements and personal subjectivity; the outcomes of social movements (both political outcomes and cultural change) as well as theoretical contributions with original insights on social movement studies, Central and Eastern Europe studies or general sociology.

Our keynote speakers include James M. Jasper (City University of New York & ISA-47) & Michel Wieviorka (Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris & ISA-47)

The thematic sessions will be organized around 4 axes.

Axis 1: Democracy and Europe

What future for European democracy? Social movements, notably those arising in Central and Eastern Europe, have a fundamental role to play in coping with this challenge and finding ways to deepen democracy, to “democratize democracy”. This challenge includes: welfare reform discontent, disappointment with liberal democracy and the free market, low participation rates, but also young people who protest on the street claiming a deeper, more accountable and more participatory democracy, notably in Hungary, Romania and in Russia.

Stances towards the EU among citizens and activists in Central and Eastern Europe. Some movements and campaigns directly target European institutions, such as the ACTA campaign in which Polish activists had a clear impact on EU trade policies. Others target domestic governments that are inefficient and corrupt. The issue of corruption is particularly salient in CEE countries as different protest sites have recently proved.

Movements of the squares in C&EE. While protests in Moscow, Kiev or nearby Istanbul were echoed in international media, most city square occupations in the region were ignored, in spite of the fact that they featured large and passionate crowds in some cities and countries (such as Bulgaria and Hungary). We welcome contributions with analyses of these movements, including their main claims, internal organization, use of social media as well as papers focused on the outcomes and further development of city square movements. In Western cities many activists have joined four sectors of movements: local movements, resistance and solidarity groups; critical consumption initiatives or solidarity economy; expert activists’ networks and anti-austerity protests. To what extent are the city movements in Central and Eastern Europe similar to those in Western Europe? What is different when thinking about the environment, anti-fracking, anti-corruption and grassroots movements in CEE?

Social movements and social media. The massive use of social media in politics and social movement represents a considerable change. We particularly welcome empirical contributions with nuanced analysis that bridges the online/offline divide. Social movements and mainstream media. Mainstream media continue to play a major role in democratic societies. How do they cover social movements? When do they become the targets of social movements? As the Internet expands in Central and Eastern Europe, what role is there for Facebook in social activism and mobilization?

Axis 2: Conservative, populist, far right and racist movements

Populist and nationalist movements. Among the trends that are European and democracy oriented, there are collective actions that represent a fundamental shift of preferences. The Conference tries to evaluate the influence of radical movements that contest the achievements of liberal democracy and promote extreme attitudes towards immigrants and ethnic or sexual minorities. Over the last few years the so-called Nationalist Autonomists have adopted anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist stands mixed with xenophobic, homophobic and racist rhetoric. These groups often are also becoming the base for newly emerging political parties (such as Ruch Narodowy in Poland and before MIEP in Hungary) and also seem to be influencing popular culture (via patriotic rap music or murals). Recently they have also appropriated some of the claims and repertoires of leftist groups. Moreover, parties such as the Golden Dawn in Greece, Ataka in Bulgaria and Jobbik in Hungary won between 10% and 25% of the vote in various elections.

According to media reports: *anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism and extreme nationalism* are often associated with such movements. The Conference assumes that they represent a serious challenge to a united and free Europe. It will therefore be important to reveal the inner fabric of extremist movements and the potential they have for political and social disturbances. Religious movements. Some Central and Eastern European countries have experienced an increased religious participation after the fall of communist regimes. The conditions to translate religion into politics have increased in countries such as Russia and Hungary. The Conference encourages social scientists to evaluate the extent to which religious participation could turn into social or political activism.

Axis 3: A renewal of green movements

Green as a lifestyle, Green as resistance. As in other regions of the world, many CEE countries are experiencing a revival of green movements that take shape in a wide array of concrete actions, protests and practices in daily life. Green movements include resistance and protests against infrastructure projects or extractivist industries; critical consumption, the questioning of mass consumption, local food, and campaigns to change consumer habits; rural movements; NGOs strategies to bring environmental concerns to the national policy agenda or international negotiations. In countries such as Poland and Romania, antifracking movements suggest a mobilization of the middle class which is a novel development. In Romania, the “Uniti Salvam” movement has attracted considerable attention as it has mobilized people for various protests. However, what is the future of green movements in Central and Eastern Europe today?

INGOs and the grassroots. Transnational organizations such as the Greenpeace will, in due course, enlarge their social base in Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, national branches are already operating in most CEE countries. Other European-based movements or forums are looking for local branches and it is therefore relevant to examine the impact transnationalization has in CEE countries. More broadly, we will analyze how NGOs and local or national movements in Central and Eastern Europe address the challenges of the global age, shaped by the increasingly salient finitude of the planet and its resources. And conversely, we explore whether the experiences of development or post-development perspectives in other areas of the world (South East Asia, South America) are relevant for Central and Eastern Europe?

Axis 4: New and old challenges

Youth: Youth are not “citizens of tomorrow in formation”, they are major actors of our democracy. In CEE, young people who protest today have grown up after the fall of the iron curtain, in market oriented and democratic societies. What are the main features, commonalities and challenges of this post-1989 generation? Many young activists get involved through more subjective, personal and cultural forms of activism. What are their cultures of activism? How do they connect daily life with politics? Inheritance of the 1989 revolutions: What happened to the actors of the 1989 revolutions? How have these actors shaped today's societies and civil society? How do they connect with emerging movements and how do the later relate with them, both as concrete actors and as an emancipation project?

Trade unions and workers movements: How do workers movements and struggle develop in CEE? Are workers' movements still central actors of CEE civil societies? What are the roles and significance of trade unions and workers movements in CEE democracies? How do different generations of workers collaborate in trade unions? How do they deal with challenges such as precarious nature of work? How do they connect with other movements? What are their contributions to the European Trade Union Confederation and the European project?

Urban movements: This includes: alternative experiments, revolts in the suburbs, intersectionalities, relations between housing and infrastructure in urban areas versus depopulation and demobilization in the rural regions. Do large cities in CEE experience suburban movements? To what extent is development an issue in East Central Europe? If the transformation of urban space is accelerating, what role then for the rural regions?

ORGANIZATION

The practical organization of the conference is oriented by three main aims:

- to foster scholarly exchange between researchers from Romania, Central and Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. (leading scholars as keynote speakers; leading social movement scholars from a wide range of CEE countries, including Romania, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Armenia, Greece, Ukraine, R. of Moldova, Hungary, Czech Rep., Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Turkey);
- to ensure high quality contributions, panels and discussions (strict selection of papers, based on quality; publication of selected papers; a discussant assigned to every panel; RC 47 support for the publication of journal special issues and books);
- a supportive atmosphere and material conditions that favor insightful exchanges (affordable housing will be provided, convivial lunches and dinners).

In addition, the ISA-RC 47 will support the international diffusion of the conference and its outcomes, notably through the recording and life-streaming of various sessions.

The organizers cover accommodation for all participants. The international travel is provided on a case-by-case basis, especially for researchers from non-EU countries. The participants that need travel support are asked to submit a written request.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Geoffrey Pleyers, FNRS-University of Louvain, President of ISA-RC 47 Ionel N. Sava, University of Bucharest, Romania

LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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PAPER SUBMISSION

We welcome both full panel (4 speakers and a discussant) and individual paper proposals. Paper proposals are limited to 1,000 words, with a 5-10 line author(s) bio-note.

A panel proposal should include a short description of the scope of the panel (2 paragraphs), 4 papers proposals (1.000 words each) and the bio notes of the speakers. It should also mention the proposed name of the discussant. The organizing committee may suggest a discussant if needed and may change the panel composition, following a review of the number of accepted papers.

Deadline for sessions and abstracts proposals: February 25th, 2015

A proposal shall include title, name of researcher, affiliation, contacts and a short description of the subject / theme. Please do not exceed 250 words.

The scientific committee will inform participants of selected proposals by the 10th of March 2015.

Papers should be sent by April 25th and will be published early May as an e-book available for the Conference.

Selected papers and panels will be submitted for publication in collective volumes (Amsterdam University Press and SAGE Current Sociology Monographs) and in journal special Issues.

Proposals should be sent to Ionel N. Sava, Geoffrey Pleyers and the ISA RC 47, with the subject line "ISA47 Bucharest" insava@sas.unibuc.ro, Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be, rc47.isa@gmail.com

Following the ISA47 policies, every panel will have a discussant who will provide feedback on each paper, emphasize differences and commonalities among the analyses and case studies, and open the public discussion.

The official language of the conference is English. Two sessions for local scholars, PhD candidates and graduate students shall be organized in Romanian. A session may also be organized in French. Participants who will present a paper at the conference are invited to join the ISA Research Committee 47. (No affiliation is required to submit a proposal).

Members of the International Sociological Association: please join us on the [ISA website](#).

For non-members, please contact ISA treasurer Paolo Gerbaudo (Kings College London):
paolo.gerbaudo@kcl.ac.uk
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ISA47 global seminar and major events are broadcasted live on our [YouTube Channel](#)

Each session will consist of 4 paper presentations (15 minutes each), a discussant (15 minutes) and 2 tabled papers that may be briefly presented to the audience or serve as a replacement for a missing speaker.

The best papers will be selected for publication in journal special issues and a book on social movements in Central and Eastern Europe.