W11 / Regime transitions and public policies

Topic : Policy Process, Policy Making, Policy Implementation

Chair : Zoltan Adam (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary)

Second Chair : Zsolt Boda (ELTE Centre for Social Sciences)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The workshop invites empirical papers with both quantitative and qualitative methods that investigate the nexus between public policies and political regimes' transitions. Listed below are some questions to illustrate possible topics for papers. These questions are not exhaustive or comprehensive, and we welcome any other lines of investigations that address policy aspects of regimes' transitions. We particularly welcome papers that address such transitions from a comparative perspective.

- What are the consequences of regime transitions on the patterns of policy making, including policy formulation, decision making procedures, the involvement of policy actors or the features of policy implementation?

- Are there any specific public policy patterns enabling the maintenance of particular political regimes? Do, for instance, economic policies of democracies and autocracies substantially differ? If they do, how and why?

- What are the consequences of regime transitions on policy patterns and particular policy choices? Are there particular policy areas on which specific regimes tend to focus?

- Are there particular policies and policy failures that contribute to regime changes?

- What kind of policies are used in legitimizing either autocratic or democratizing tendencies? How do policy makers use these policies to enhance their political cause?

- Are there differences in usage of transformative policies across varying levels of economic development? Do democratization/autocratization tend to involve different sets of policies at different levels of development?

ABSTRACT

Abstract :

Traditionally public policy studies as a discipline was focusing on the governance of liberal democracies and began to investigate the policy practices of non-democratic regimes only relatively recently. The workshop seeks to contribute to the scholarship of comparative analysis of public policies in different regimes with a specific focus on the policy-related aspects of regime changes and transitions between political regimes. The endeavour is made timely by the observable trends of hybridization, democratic backsliding and autocratization in many polities around the globe. However, equally interesting are the policy aspects of democratic transitions: whether or not democratization tends to be associated with particular policy patterns, implemented while leaving behind regimes based on the rule of narrow political elites. The workshop seeks to address questions like: What are the consequences of regime transitions on the patterns of policy making and policy choices? Are there policies and policy failures that contribute to regime changes? And, conversely, what kind of policies are used in legitimizing autocratic or democratizing tendencies? The workshop welcomes empirical papers with both quantitative and qualitative methods that investigate the nexus between public policies and political regimes transitions.

W11 / Regime transitions and public policies

Chair : Zoltan Adam (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary)

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Session 1

Tuesday, June 28th 10:00 to 12:00 (C415)

Discussants

Attila Bartha (Centre for Social Sciences, ELKH and Corvinus University of Budapest)

The effects of democratic backsliding on cross-border regional policy-making in Central Europe: the cases of Hungary's border regions

Sara Svensson (Halmstad University College)

The paper engages with the concept of democratic backsliding (Backe and Sitter, 2020; Bermeo 2016; Greskovits 2015) with relation to policy-making in a specific territorial governance space, namely cross-border regions. As noted by Svensson (2021), many scholars have pointed to the lack of democratic legitimacy of regional policy-making processes, but usually this has been in the context of technical-bureacratic and/or neo-liberal modes of governing (Svensson and Keller, 2022). There has so far been no attention to what happens in borderlands draw into democratic backsliding processes, i.e. when the nation state on one side of the border (or both) initiates "deliberate, intended action designed to gradually undermine the fundamental formal and informal rules of the game with regard to political rights, free elections and the rule of law in an existing democracy, carried out by a democratically elected government" (Backe and Sitter, 2020, 2). The paper uses the seven national borders of Hungary to analyze policy-making processes in two steps. It first applies the democracy indexes of the V-Dem project and Freedom House to map macro-conditions for democratic policy-making in the seven borderlands. It then applies a basic policy cycle approach to discuss how policy-making in the respective borderland regions may be affected by deficiencies in democratic policy-making processes at the national level. The paper finishes with suggestions for how to advance research in this area.

References

Bakke, E., & Sitter, N. (2020) The EU's Enfants Terribles: Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe since 2010. Perspectives on Politics, 1-16.

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Session 2

Tuesday, June 28th 14:00 to 17:00 (C415)

Discussants

Marta Jaworska (Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun)

Tamás Barczikay (ELKH)

Short Run versus Long Run Successes? Pandemic Policy Making in European Populist and Liberal Democracies

Attila Bartha (Centre for Social Sciences, ELKH and Corvinus University of Budapest)

Marianna Kopasz (Centre for Social Sciences / Institute for Political Science)

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused important policy challenges for governments of all stripes. In general, liberal democracies have tended to produce better policy outcomes than authoritarian and hybrid regimes in most public policy areas and issues. This supremacy of liberal democracies, however, cannot be taken for granted in the crisis context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis context is more familiar to populist governments that inherently build their policies on crisis frameworks. In addition, populist governments tend to be more effective in blocking potential veto-players that may counter epidemiological policy measures. At the same time, liberal democracies still tend to channel epidemiological policy expertise more regularly and involve different types of civic and professional actors more thoroughly in the policy making process.

This study attempts to investigate broader epidemiological policy-making patterns of liberal democracies versus populist governments. We compare COVID-19 policies in Austria, Hungary, and Portugal. Portugal has been selected as an example of a liberal democracy, Hungary represents a genuine case of a populist government in Europe while Austria was chosen as an in-between case, though much closer to the liberal democracy ideal type.

The study addresses two main research questions: (1) What are the main substantive, procedural and discursive patterns of epidemiological policies in populist versus liberal democracies? (2) What are the factors shaping the epidemiological policy outcome in short-run and long-run in populist versus liberal democracies? Our study first briefly reviews the scholarship of policy making and populism as well as previous studies of policy making since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We anchor the analytical framework and present the policy making ideal types in populist versus liberal democracies. The empirical part of the study is a qualitative congruence analysis to assess the conformity of COVID-19 pandemic policy making in Portugal, Hungary and Austria with the theoretically elaborated ideal types.

Our findings underline that epidemiological policy outcomes tend to differ in liberal democracies and under populist governments. While in the short run epidemiological policy outcome was relatively good in populist Hungary, long run policy outcomes are more favourable in Austria and Portugal. Concerning the policy content, we found that each of the three countries maintained a regular consultation with epidemiological policy experts, but while in the two liberal democracies governments tended to advocate more complex policy measures, the Hungarian government favoured a simplified one measure takes all approach. In the policy process, the most striking difference is the involvement of different social, civic and professional groups that was much less tangible in Hungary than in Austria and Portugal. Concerning the discursive patterns, a frequent use of the war metaphor as a strategic metaphor was present in each of the three countries, but was predominant only in Hungary and in the short run. Overall, our study contributes to better understanding of general policy making patterns in liberal democracies contrasted by populist policy making patterns. In addition, we provide some findings about populist government policies that can help to position populist governance between liberal democracies and autocracies. **On-site**

Reinforcing national sovereignty in context of emerging rightwing populism in Europe: The case of post-2015 Hungarian immigration policies

Zoltan Adam (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary)

József Golovics (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary)

Immigration policies constitute a major policy field for emerging rightwing populist parties and the governments that they dominate across Europe and worldwide. This should be no surprise for observers: as both theoretical and empirical investigations on new, emerging forms of populism suggest, identity politics play a fundamental role for these political movements. Boundaries of the national community and differences between ingroups and outgroups tend to be redefined and over-politicized, while the nation is portrayed as a community under external threat in these parties' discourse. Hence, immigration is a preferred policy terrain of rightwing populists, and restrictions in immigration policies are used to legitimize nationalistic policies that seek to regain national sovereignty and extend executive powers. Examples include political discourses around Brexit in the UK, as well as anti-refugee and anti-EU assertions in a number of EU member states. Against this background, our paper investigates the Hungarian case, in which particularly restrictive immigration policies had been introduced since the mid-2010s in response to the 2015 European refugee crisis that originated from the fleeing of predominantly Syrian refugees towards Europe. Interestingly, the Hungarian government less than two years earlier, in fall 2013, had adopted its Migration Strategy that was in line with EU standards and sought to claim funding from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Yet, in early 2015, following two by-election defeats that cost the ruling party its two-third parliamentary majority the first time since 2010, the government changed course. Prime Minister Orbán started opposing any joint EU solution to the crisis that involved the coordinated settlement of refugees, and Hungary explicitly rejected the EU settlement scheme adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in September 2015. Ever since then, a highly restrictive stance on immigration and the policy of no refugees being settled in Hungary as part of an EU scheme (along with occasionally harsh anti-EU rhetoric) remained constitutive elements of the Hungarian government's trademark policies. While documenting the most important stages and pieces of legislation in this policy turn, our paper focuses on the concomitant effects on the domestic public. We analyze trends in Hungarian public opinion on migration and refugees by using micro data from Eurobarometer surveys before and after 2015, comparing them to corresponding trends across the EU, including member states characterized by both 'liberal' (i.e., EU-conform) and restrictive immigration policies. Hence, we investigate how the highly restrictive stance of subsequent Hungarian governments on immigration resonated with the electorate, and what reactions among voters did it trigger in terms of trust in national and EU-level institutions.

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Session 3

Wednesday, June 29th 09:00 to 12:00 (C415)

Discussants

Marianna Kopasz (Centre for Social Sciences / Institute for Political Science)

Lidiia Voevodina (University of Brunei Darussalam/Georgetown University)

Higher education policy following a regime transition – an analysis of the reform trajectory in Poland

Marta Jaworska (Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun)

Davide Donina (Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun)

Central Eastern Europe (CEE) and former Soviet Bloc countries underwent political, economic and social changes as well as structural reforms subsequent to the collapse of the communist regime, which redefined the role of the state in all public policy domains, including the higher education (HE) sector. These comprise the liberation of HE from ideological control, restoration of academic self-administration, institutional autonomy and academic freedom, as well as massification and ensuing rapidly expanding private HE sector (Dobbins and Khachatryan 2015). Additionally, in the 2000s HE systems in CEE have been subject to external pressures related to Europeanization, the Bologna process and the principles of New Public Management, adapted by the national governments as a rationale for reforms.

Despite the fact that academic discourse on CEE consists of a number of papers that investigate several major topics of HE, these articles rarely elaborate on higher education systemic development in its entirety. Kwiek (2014a) highlights the lack of inclusion of CEE in any typology of higher education governance as a theoretical drawback.

This paper analyses how each HE reform in the last thirty years (1990, 2005, 2010 and 2018) has affected the power-sharing arrangement and coordination mechanisms in the HE system in Poland. We start with the ground-breaking reform of 1990, resulting from the political regime transition in CEE, which re-introduced institutional autonomy and withdrew the state from its regulative role. We then follow with the reform of 2005, driven by a political decision to join the European Union and the Bologna Process, which required various public policy changes, including adjustments in the HE system. With the reform of 2010 we concentrate on the public policy change which introduced the principles of New Public Management also to the HE system, including financial accountability and competition for scarce public funding. Lastly, we focus on the most recent reform of 2018, officially titled ‘Constitution for Science’ (also called Ustawa 2.0, namely Law 2.0) and presented by a right-wing government, which introduced liberalising solutions in the Polish HE system regarding institutional governance and the internal organisation of public HEIs, wherein the majority of Polish students are enrolled (about 75.1%, GUS 2018).

The aim of our paper is to answer whether since the regime transition there has been a change of a radical kind through the disruption of the old equilibrium and transition to a new equilibrium, or whether path dependency has prevailed and there has been limited change, or else whether there has been change through accumulation of small changes. Preliminary results show that the answer is mixed: there has been change, partly in the form of punctuated change occurring through disruption and partly through accumulation, in the more articulated way of certain mechanisms like layering and conversion (Streeck and Thelen, 2005) in combined ways at different levels and in different parts of the public sector.

I will present on-site.

Corruption and Democratic Decline: a Case Study of Hungary

Aron Hajnal (Corvinus University of Budapest)

Since roughly the second half of the 1990s, the global process of democratization has been reversed, and a third weave of autocratization has been unfolding (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). Corruption plays a key role in such episodes of democratic decline as the former may be both an effect and a cause of the latter. On the one hand, corruption is a tool that political elites may apply to redistribute wealth to loyalists and consolidate and increase their power, thus deteriorating democratic quality (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). On the other, the lower the democratic quality and the weaker the checks and balances are, the more the ruling elites can apply corruption to further manipulate the distribution of wealth and gain further control (Drapalova et al., 2019).

While it may seem a straightforward assumption that corruption and democratic decline go hand in hand, taking a closer look at regimes experiencing episodes of democratic decline, an intriguing picture unfolds. Indeed, some autocrats take significant measures to curb certain forms of corruption (Hollyer & Wantchekon, 2015).

The proposed research aims to address this gap by examining how democratic decline and corruption have affected one another in Hungary from the 2010s, focusing on policies implicitly or explicitly aimed at different types of corruption. The landslide victory of Viktor Orbán in 2010 marked the beginning of a shift from a Western-style liberal democratic polity towards the so-called illiberal model, characterized by weakening checks and balances and the deterioration of rule of law (Bogaards, 2018).

While both anecdotal and scientific evidence (i.e. Fazekas & Tóth, 2016) underpins that some policies have sought to enable/facilitate exerting political corruption in Hungary, – in line with the arguments laid out above – the situation may be more complex than that. For instance, the government has recently criminalized gratuities in healthcare (a deeply rooted and widespread social norm in the country). Hungary may be regarded as an extreme-type case (in terms of length and lack of constraints) of countries experiencing democratic decline.

In case the abstract is proposal is accepted, I would like to present on-site.

Consequently, I formulate the following two (descriptive-comparative and explanatory, respectively) research questions:

-RQ1: What are the key features of policies aimed at curbing/enabling different types of corruption in Hungary in the 2010s?

-RQ2: What explains the difference between policies in terms of their expected constraining/enabling effect on corruption?

To address the above questions, an embedded case study approach will be applied. 4-6 policy initiatives will be selected, described, and compared based on a descriptive analytical framework. Qualitative data sources, such as interviews with experts, policymakers, NGOs, as well as secondary sources will be used.

It is expected that the findings of the proposed research will contribute to the Workshop by elaborating/partially testing hypotheses about factors that explain the difference between policies regarding their expected effects on corruption in Hungary. Given the fact that Hungary is arguably a “role model” of autocratization in Europe, the results may be highly relevant for other countries facing the threat of stepping on a similar path.

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Session 4

Wednesday, June 29th 14:00 to 17:00 (C415)

Discussants

Sara Svensson (Halmstad University College)

László Kiss (Centre of Social Sciences, Budapest)

Autocratic Tendencies and Transformative Policy Strategies to Mitigate Autocratization in Russia and Belarus

Lidiia Voevodina (University of Brunei Darussalam/Georgetown University)

Alluding to the Freedom House data for 2021, the democratic progress in Russia has remained stable and the National Democratic Governance in Belarus has declined during COVID-2019. The study examines authoritarianism in Eastern European countries, namely in Russia and Belarus by seeking similarities and differences in regimes and answering the following questions: What factors intensify authoritarianism? Why do these countries resist? What transformative policy strategies should be implemented to mitigate authoritarianism or to consolidate democratic features (at least standard minimum) in Russia and Belarus? The comparative case method will be used in this paper. The potential data will be examined through international and local research papers and articles, as well as speeches, videos, tweets, and other digital media.

I consider participating in the IWPP3 Budapest workshop online.

Transitional Constitutionalism in Hungary

Istvan Stumpf (University of Public Service and Széchenyi István University, Hungary)

During democratic transition in Hungary, the inherited grave economic difficulties, differences in party politics, the inherent tension of the governing coalition, the inexperience and unpreparedness of the new political elite, and the mutual distrust quickly eroded the people’s believe in the multiparty system. In this vacuum of politics and trust following the regime change, the Hungarian Constitutional Court became a key player with its chosen role of a rule-of-law-revolutionary and its activist attitude. Some of the most important decisions of the Court (abolition of death penalty, decisions on compensation and transitional justice acts, drawing the line between the competences of the president and the executive) often generated strong political reactions. According to the critics, the Court only chased the acknowledgement and legitimacy provided by the West in the early nineties, and did not show any empathy for everyday reality from its “ivory tower.” Other critics said that the activism overly transferred the weight of the most important decisions affecting society from the Parliament to the Constitutional Court; therefore, it eroded the fundamentals of the parliamentary system based on elections and the parliament. Later on, the 2010 elections in Hungary brought a landslide victory for the Fidesz–KDNP coalition. The governing forces, having the qualified majority, began preparing a new constitution as part of the second regime change. The adoption of the Fundamental Law of Hungary shows that the national–conservative majority seized the “constitutional moment” and carried out the largest scale reform after the system change as regards to the contents and the structure of the Hungarian legal system, in many points motivated by criticisms of the previous constitutional system. In my presentation, I will review the rule of law revolution took place with the democratic transition and the role of the Constitutional Court, closely connected to this concept, in the early period of the development of the rule of law. Later on, I will examine views that have criticised the Constitutional Court’s fundamental rights activism sharply and provided the foundations for the spread of

political constitutionalism after the 2010 elections, the “revolution of public law” based on parliamentary supremacy, and the dethronement of the “invisible constitution.”

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Session 5

Thursday, June 30th 09:00 to 12:00 (C415)

Discussants

Aron Hajnal (Corvinus University of Budapest)

Istvan Stumpf (University of Public Service and Széchenyi István University, Hungary)

The media influence on policy agendas in Hungary: Studying the effect of regime hybridization

Tamás Barczikay (ELKH)

Zsolt Boda (ELTE Centre for Social Sciences)

The media influence on policy agendas in Hungary: Studying the effect of regime hybridization

The role of media in influencing policy agenda has been subject of several studies, mostly in the US and Western Europe. The general finding is that it is difficult to capture the influence of the media agenda on policy decisions, but it has an effect on the symbolic policy agenda. However, very few research has addressed the problem in the context of the newer democracies of East and Central Europe. Previous studies on Hungary, focusing on the illiberal Orbán government, suggest that the media have no role in setting the policy agenda, and even the latter may drive the former. Our paper is the first attempt to draw a general picture of this disputed relationship in a non-Western context. Using media and interpellation data from the Hungarian Policy Agendas Project we investigate their relationship for the years 1990-2018, that is, the almost entirety of the democratic period since the regime change. The concept of Granger Causality is applied. While controlling for government cycle effects, public policy major topics are analysed separately in order to find existing uni- or multidirectional causal relationships. The hypothesis is that the hybridization of Hungarian politics that started in 2010 weakens the role of the media in influencing policy agendas since illiberal governance is less responsive to the thematisation of the media. We also study the phenomenon of parallelism and its role in the media – policy agendas nexus. Parallelism means that the media system is polarized and divided along political lines. We assume that parallelism has increased since 2010 which is reflected in the media agendas meaning that the thematic overlap between media agendas of outlets associated with different political sides has been decreasing. Previous studies on the Spanish media agenda demonstrated that there might be a systemic difference between politically aligned media outlets in terms of the policy topics they thematise more under different governments. We will study the phenomenon on the Hungarian data. We argue that the increasing parallelism of the media system affects not only the public sphere, but also the role of the media in influencing policy agendas. Growing parallelism probably contribute to the weakening of the media effect on policy agendas, which is not only relevant from a policy point of view, but as a sign of decreasing accountability raises concerns about the quality of democracy as well.

Which public policy topics the opposition is talking about?

László Kiss (Centre of Social Sciences, Budapest)

In competitive multi-party politics, the governmental parties seek to enact into law a number of policies and programs, and opposition parties are free to criticize the ruling party’s policies, ideas and programs and offer alternatives. Parliament is the most important arena for political debate. This is different in autocratic regimes where parliament has only an apparent role and there are no competing parties.

In our research, we investigate the communication of the opposition before and after the regime transition in

Hungary (1989/1990). Our aim is to analyse the differences and similarities of puclic policy topics embraced by the opposition in an autocratic and a democratic system. In our research we will examine the policy topics of the parliamentary interpellation (1981-2022) and the parliamentary pre-agenda speeches (1998-2022) and the public policy topics of one of the most important samizdat papers entitled “Beszél?” (1981-1989).

Parliamentary questions are the instruments of the exercise of the supervisory role of Parliament. Among the various types of parliamentary questions, interpellations have played an important role in the operations of the Hungarian parliament over multiple political regimes from the end of the 18th century. Nominally, the tradition was retained in the emerging Socialist autocracy however restricted interpellation law.

Pre-agenda speeches may be heard in matters of national importance, urgent and extraordinary affairs. It may be told by the President of the Republic, by Member of the Government, by the Prime Minister or by a group leader or a member. We will use it to get a picture of the agenda of the government to better specify the agenda setting of the opposition.

Before 1989, due to the non-democratic/autocratic nature of the system, opposition issues could not arise in parliament, they were covered in samizdat newspapers. Because of this regime characteristic, we analyse not only parliamentary speeches but also the samizdat paper entitled “Beszél?” which was the only serious regularly published samizdat periodical in Hungary. To answer our research questions we will analyse the CAP coded databases of interpellation and speeches before agenda featuring 12239 items, and the 647 individual articles published in Beszél? between 1981-1989.

In our analysis, we apply the theoretical framework of punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) developed by Brian D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, 2009) and the comparative study of policy agendas that this theory inspired. Accoding to this theory the distribution of policy changes over time does not follow the normal distribution – instead it is characterised by punctuations which can be quantified by the deviation from the Gaussian distribution at the tails of the distribution of changes.

Our research questions are the follows:

Q1. Can we speak about a general opposition discourse, i.e. are there typical opposition policy topics?

Q2. Whether the topics of "Hungarian democratic opposition" was transferred to the topics of parliamentary opposition after the regime transitions?

Q3. After the regime transitions (1990-2022) had an impact on the opposition topics which parties join the government/opposition position?