APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

This form should be used for applications to run a workshop at the Joint Sessions of Workshops. The deadline for applications is 15 February each year.

Title of proposed workshop

COMPARING TRANSFORMATIONS.THE INSTITUTIONAL PARADIGM

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Please note that the information above is VERY important as it will be used in all future correspondence and printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed using 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the guidelines (see over).

Please send this form, together with your workshop proposal, to both:

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Outline. COMPARING TRANSFORMATIONS.THE INSTITUTIONAL PARADIGM
The past decade witnessed the flourishing of comparative studies in economics and political science devoted to post-Communist Europe, what a scholar labelled as a ‘veritable cottage industry’. These studies either compared the region to other areas, which have been part of the third wave of democratization, such as Southern Europe, Latin America or Asia\(^1\) or tried to account for the variation within the region\(^2\). Indeed, post-Communist Europe has insidiously turned over the first decade of democratization into three distinct areas (Central Europe and the Baltics, former FSU and the Balkans) calling both for a consistent theory to explain this growing differentiation and a set of effective policies to address it. On one hand, it is obvious post-communist Europe has many shared characteristics, inherited from the Communist past; on the other, differences have emerged which have prompted scholars and journalists to invoke more remote legacies.

Regions are conventional constructs, made to fit scholars or diplomats’ needs. According to different criteria, one can build different ‘regions, and the exercise is legitimate only as long as borders from one set of criteria are not extended into another. The post-Communist world, European or non-European, is roughly one region, if we judge by the clusters of public opinion of Ronald Inglehart\(^3\), but post-Communist Europe divides into three, according to its treatment by the European Union or NATO, although their maps overlap only to some extent. The first group is made of the eight countries which are supposed to join EU by the end of 2004; the second group is made of Russia and most of the successor states of the Soviet Union, whose future is clearly distinct from Europe; and the third group consists in countries which from various reasons missed the first group but cannot, due to their geographical location, belong to the third, the grey zone known as ‘the Balkans’.

The post-1998 reforms did not work in South-Eastern Europe and many FSU countries as expected, because of the absence of the institutional environment required by market democracies. This was subsequently explained by a set of socio-historical and cultural factors. Despite many causal factors summoned to account for the difference in performance of post-Communist societies, two broad categories synthesize the main meta-theoretical question dominating transition studies: does the management of the change itself bring about the outcome, or is the outcome predetermined to a great extent by a deep, lasting structural legacy which makes particular paths predictable regardless the

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agency? In other words, what is the relative weight of agency versus structure in explaining the trajectories and contemporary forms of different regimes?

Over the last decade, especially due to flourishing of empirical papers on corruption, a new paradigm has started to be used more and more by scholars: the institutional paradigm. In order for a social arrangement to qualify as an 'institution', two conditions have to be met. First, institutions play a socializing role in that they prescribe and reward desirable and proscribe undesirable behaviour. Second, institutions should also perform, i.e. they should be able to solve problems they were created to cope with. Institutions matter because they can provide decision makers with formative incentives and disincentives that shape both the strategies pursued and the goals achieved. But institutions do not come out of a vacuum, they perform in certain environments, and the understanding of a specific environment is crucial for institutional transfer or change. As Douglas North put it, institutions are the 'rules of the game in a society'. We try to decipher the rules of the game operating in the various regions and countries of Eastern Europe, which reproduce certain outcomes on a more regular basis than others, rather than start from the ideal end of the transformation, say, EU integration, to go backwards for accounting for performance.

The approach to be adopted in the largest part of this research is original in its method: it will involve examining the chosen societies on their own terms and from a 'grassroots' perspective. Democratic theory distinguishes between substantive or procedural democracies, and consolidated or unconsolidated ones. Such classifications address only distinctions among the political processes and outcomes in a given society, however, and not distinctions within the society itself. In the case of many non-Western societies, however, it may be the nature of the society as a whole that might well be

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distinct from a modern society, not just the nature of the political society, and this bears importantly on the outcome of the transformation process. Instead of looking for things that do not work as they should in the chosen countries and explaining why, we encourage scholars to concentrate on what does work and how. For example, rather than focus on what is wrong with Russia or the Balkans struggling to rid themselves of corruption, one needs to look into the grassroots practices that reproduce and nourish the environment in which such a struggle is bound to continue. We believe that such an approach will produce a more effective framework and starting point for policy-making aimed at ensuring the success of transformation in difficult cases.

We seek to illustrate the complex links between formal institutions, informal institutions and political culture. In terms of legal culture, for instance, the formal institution is the organization and formal procedures of the justice system, from constitutional provisions to organization of Courts; the informal institution is people’s habit to bribe Court clerks to shorten the length of trial (usually between 3-4 years); the ‘political culture’ is made of attitudes towards formal and informal institutional arrangements. Do people like to bribe? Do they perceive this state of affairs as normal? Is their corruption as citizens what triggers corruption of the judiciary, or are there institutional constraints, which cause corruption, and the attitudes of the public will show disapproval and discontent?

We seek to organize under an unitary paradigm the growing number of studies on corruption, legal culture, unwritten rules, non-transparent political activity. One area of interest for us the interplay between formal and informal institutions. Unsuccessful transitions are more and more blamed on 'state weakness', and weak states are associated clearly with a prevalence of informal institutions over the formal ones. Does the institutional paradigm account well for state weakness, for differences in legal culture and corrupt practices across societies? And what is the importance of historical legacies in explaining why informality is so much stronger than transparency sin some East European societies, but not in others?

**Potential participants**

The core group is made by members of research group on informal politics in ECE (standing group on ECE politics) convened by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Alena Ledeneva. They are Vladimir Gelman (Skh Petersburg), Gabriel Badescu (UBB, Cluj, Romania), Ase Grodeland (ARENA, Norway), Donatella della Porta (EUI), Shalini Randeria (CEU), Heiko Pleines (Bremen), William Miller (Glasgow University), Joerg Faust (Mainz Univ.), Yongkok Choe (Stockholm).
We seek to attract, however, political economists, political scientists, political anthropologists working in the field of informal institutions, state weakness, corruption, democratization. We seek both case studies and comparative papers which use the institutional paradigm to account for variation across countries or illustrate the interplay between formal and informal institutions. Papers comparing Eastern Europe with the Third World are also welcome. The group itself will organize the first session of the panel on the theoretical importance of institutional paradigm. An application to fund empirical research and a meeting will be submitted to Volkswagen foundation.

Biographical note for workshop convenor:

Dr. Alina Mungiu Pippidi is currently Chair of Political Science Department at the Faculty of Political Science of the Romanian National School of Government and Administration (SNSPA) and Director of the Romanian Academic Society (SAR), a Bucharest based public policy institute. She is also the Coordinator of UNDP (United Nations Development Program) Early Warning Report for the Balkans, consultant for the World Bank Governance Division and a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute.. Among last works published are: ‘Europe’s ‘Desert of Tartars’ Challenge: the Borders of the Enlarged European Union’, chapter in Zielonka, J. Europe Unbound. Routledge, 2002; ‘Was Huntington right? Testing Cultural Legacies and the Civilization Border’, in International Politics, 39: 193-213, June 2002 (with Denisa Mandruta); ‘Corruption or state failure? A comparative survey of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia’, in Informal economies of Eastern Europe, World Bank, Governance Division, 2003; ‘Of Dark Sides and Twilight Zones. Enlarging to the Balkans, in East European Politics and Societies (EEPS), spring 2003 ‘Trends and Threads of East European Policy Science Research’ in European Political Science, ECPR, summer 2002