

## [Conservative mobilizations in Central Eastern Europe in transnational perspective](#)

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### **Conservative mobilizations in Central Eastern Europe in transnational perspective International Conference 8-9 December 2022, CEFRES, Prague**

French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences - Prague (UAR 3138 CNRS), Prague  
Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague  
Groupement de recherche n° 3607 du CNRS, Connaissance de l'Europe médiane

Organizers: Anemona Constantin, Valentin Behr

From Viktor Orbán in Hungary to Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland, from Andrej Babiš and Miloš Zeman in the Czech Republic to Robert Fico in Slovakia, a wide range of political leaders and parties are questioning the "liberal consensus" at present. Since 2004 and the enlargement of the EU to the East, the disagreements of the newcomers with certain European policies and values regarding the situation of refugees, abortion, gay marriage, gender studies or global warming, have steadily mounted. Political scientists coined different concepts to describe and make sense of this intriguing phenomenon, including "illiberal turn" (Laruelle, 2022), "populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde, 2004), "authoritarian regression" (Heurtaux, 2022), "backsliding of democracy" (Bermeo, 2016), and "conservative revolution" (Zalewski, 2016).

Beyond the political realm, critiques of the "liberal consensus" aroused from the extrapartisan arena, carried out by collective actors such as associations for the defense of the "traditional family", pro-life movements, religious organizations (Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist or Pentecostal), opponents to gay marriage, intellectuals aiming to "rebuild a Europe of nations" and journalists who write against "sexo-Marxism", "progressivism" or "Islamism". Furthermore, far from being specific to few Central Eastern European countries, these discourses are also to be found in Western Europe as well as in Northern and Latin America.

Given the variety of these transnational mobilizations, one of the main questions this conference addresses, is to what extent the critique of the "liberal consensus" is to be taken for granted and considered as a consolidated ideology at the global level. Organizers welcome communications focusing on "conservative mobilizations" (Agrikoliansky & Collovald, 2014), and those who are going

beyond the traditional separation between social movements, political fields, and the history of political ideas. Papers reflecting upon the "intermediate" spaces of production, reception and circulation of conservative ideas at national and transnational levels, are particularly welcome.

### **Theme 1: Transnational circulations of conservative ideas and of repertoires of collective action**

Several factors have been put forward to explain the emergence of conservative mobilizations in CEE: the unfinished integration of these countries into the "two-speed Europe" (Mark, 2019), the effects of the 2008-9 economic crisis (Ghodsee, 2014), the deceptions following a long transition that often felt to be unachieved (Kalb & Halmai, 2011), and so forth. Some commentators have seen these phenomena as a return to authoritarianism in a part of Europe considered culturally unfit for democracy and exposed to "illiberal" drifts due to its communist

past (Rupnik, 2017). Without disregarding these analyses that tend sometimes to essentialize the cultural and historical specificities of the region, this conference wishes to broaden the reflection on the conservative mobilizations by favoring the sociological approaches that focus on the interactions between collective actors (e.g., groups of intellectuals, political parties, and civil society actors) from CEE countries and their counterparts from Western Europe, North America, or Latin America. Researchers looking at the transnational circulation of activist repertoires of action (Vaillant, 2021), or studying the "neutral sites" [lieux neutres] (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1976) of socialization and exchange, whether institutionalized or informal, such as the European Parliament, transnational civil society networks, conferences, and conservative platforms, are invited to apply.

### **Theme 2: Production and reception of conservative ideas and repertoires within intermediary spaces**

This conference aims also to reflect upon the intermediary spaces of production and reception of conservative ideas and repertoires of action at the national level. Papers questioning how these temporary or permanent arenas emerge and develop at the intersection of the political arena, the intellectual field and the space of social movements are eagerly awaited. Contributions could examine the intervention of conservative intellectuals in politics or collective action, through expertise, activism or informal or institutionalized consulting activities (think tanks, media), or study how the conservative ideologies and repertoires of action build their legitimacy within the public sphere. Papers focusing on the reception and uses of conservative ideas by the political parties or their leaders, or on the transposition of conservative ideologies into political programs, speeches, or legislative proposals, will fully find their place within this theme. Future participants are also invited to reflect on the phenomena of competition or rivalry between intellectuals and political parties or conservative social movements.

### **Theme 3: Circulations and uses of conservative ideas within political parties' milieux**

Several studies suggest that placing cultural issues on the political agenda in "illiberal" democracies was preceded by metapolitical mobilizations. In other words, conservatives conquered society before winning at the ballot box. For instance, after its electoral defeat in 2002, Fidesz founded several "civic committees" in order to develop a "conservative civil society" (Greskovits, 2017; Trencsényi, 2014). In Poland, the "Gazeta Polska Clubs" independent but close to

the PiS, played a similar role by organizing conferences and demonstrations (Ślarzyński, 2018). The literature on "culture wars" invites us to consider the role of social movements and the "conservative civil society" in the articulation between cultural and political battles (Barša et al., 2022). Contributions falling under this theme will question social movements, militant groups (partisans, associations), religious or "pro-life" organizations, but also memorial associations (veterans, re-enactment, and historical clubs), as spaces for mobilization, co-production, dissemination, and use of conservative ideas. What about the reception and uses of these ideas among voters of conservative parties (Collovald, 2004; Damhuis, 2020)? Does the supply (including media) create the demand? Do the economic, political, and social contexts increase the potential support for the conservative political supply? What factors influence the conservative votes? The aim here is to complete the study of the ideological "supply" with an analysis of the "demand" and its "audiences", but also to question the relevance of the distinction between the ideological "supply" and the "demand" of ideas on the political and cultural markets.

**Languages: English, French**

**Applications from PhD candidates are welcome.**

Paper proposals including a short CV and an abstract of max. 500 words shall be sent to Anemona Constantin ([anemona.constantin@hotmail.fr](mailto:anemona.constantin@hotmail.fr)) and Valentin Behr ([valentin.behr@gmail.com](mailto:valentin.behr@gmail.com)) by **Monday, 5 September 2022**. Abstracts should specify the topic of the presentation and the research methodology. Acceptance will be notified by mid-September 2022.

Funds are available to cover participants' travel and accommodation costs. Participants should inform the organizers if they need any funding for their trip to Prague. Participants will be asked to send a paper that will be circulated before the workshop to facilitate the discussion.

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