

***Institutional Transformations of Economy and Polity
in Post-Communist States, 1990-2020 –
Taking Stock, Looking Ahead***

International Workshop

Dates: *15-19 June 2020*
Location: *Tbilisi State University, Georgia*
Deadline for submission of abstracts: *15 March 2020*
Deadline for submission of papers: *1 June 2020*

Call for Papers

Three decades after the breakdown of Soviet communism, the historically unique challenge of transforming economy and polity has resulted in diverse patterns of institutional change. Post-communist system transformation appears as a long-term process of institution-building of political and economic systems. Taking stock after thirty years, the post-communist states exhibit substantial variations in the prevailing sets of formal and informal institutions, designating the wide domain of legal rules and regulations as well as social norms and cultural values that coordinate economy, polity and other fields of society. In this process, various types of political-economic regimes have evolved, combining patterns of authoritarianism and democratic populism with varieties of post-communist market economies characterized by the dominance of state capitalist and oligarchic actors and accompanied by persistent informality. Indeed, democracy and market economy are not mutually dependent. Indeed, empirical findings on the interdependence of democratization and market reforms in post-communist countries seem to show significant effects of democracy for the support of market reforms, but no reverse effect of market liberalization on the support of democratization. With reference to Karl Polanyi it may be pointed out that the implementation of market systems finds support in rather authoritarian political structures. Also, informal micro-mechanisms of the institutional order of markets are emerging that complement deficient frameworks of the rule of law and political regulation.

Accordingly, two context-specific and interdependent processes may be differentiated in the institutional transformation of economy and polity in post-communist states. On the one hand, the marketization of the economic field, involving not only the introduction of price-regulated markets but also the establishment of a moral order of competition and commodification that may conflict not only with the weak legal underpinnings of the market system but also with the prevalence of more traditional market-averse value orientations and worldviews. This tension impacts the efficiency of market structures both regarding their top-down design by government and their bottom-up spontaneous ordering by local actors. The high degree of informality in economic affairs underlines this aspect. On the other hand, the democratization of the political field is at hand. Underneath the formal introduction of liberal democratic institutions involving regular elections with multi-party competition, the actually existing political regimes that have emerged mostly exhibit varieties of democratic populism and authoritarianism, all of which have even gained in relevance all over the post-communist world – and beyond. Also, specific

patterns of informality characterize the political domain with its often problematic governance structures.

All of this underlines the importance of historical and evolutionary approaches to institutional change. Aspects such as systemic complementarities and path dependencies within institutional sets need to be acknowledged more explicitly in order to improve our understanding of the dynamics of the post-communist transformations of economy and polity.

In exploring these issues, the workshop “Institutional Transformations of Economy and Polity in Post-Communist States, 1990-2020: Taking Stock, Looking Ahead” puts a particular emphasis on experiences and challenges in the South Caucasus, yet of course also Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet states are to be discussed. The workshop is set to discuss both theoretical and empirical studies on the following topics:

- The institutional evolution of the varieties and types of post-communist economies and polities, involving their interdependent relationship.
- The marketization of post-communist economies, involving the role of rules, norms and values as well as social structures in the evolution of firms, industries, and markets.
- The democratization of post-communist polities, involving populist and authoritarian tendencies as well as the interplay of formal and informal governance mechanisms.

To explore these issues, the workshop draws on an interdisciplinary perspective on institutional analyses from all fields of the social sciences and beyond, involving sociology, political science, economics, business, history, anthropology, and geography, among others.

The workshop will take place from 15 to 19 June 2020 at Tbilisi State University in Tbilisi, Georgia. It is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which covers travel and accommodation costs for all invited participants.

Keynote lectures are going to be delivered by:

Prof. John Nye, George Mason University, Fairfax and Higher School of Economics, Moscow.
Prof. Péter Mihályi, Corvinus University and Central European University, Budapest.

The workshop is open to English-language paper proposals by academics based in Germany, the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) as well as Russia and other former Soviet states. Depending on the budget, academics from these countries who are currently working abroad may be eligible, too. Advanced doctoral students are also invited to apply.

Interested academics may send an abstract of circa 500 words to the head of the workshop organization team, Johanna Paquin (paquin@soz.uni-frankfurt.de). Abstracts should include the title of the paper, contact details of the author, the research question, a working hypothesis and an overview of the theoretical or empirical argument as well as preliminary conclusions. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is 15 March 2020. The deadline for the submission of preliminary drafts of workshop papers, which will be distributed to all participants is 1 June 2020. The revised proceedings of the workshop are going to be published in an edited volume with a renowned international publisher in early 2021.

Conveners:

Prof. Dr. Alexander Ebner, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Prof. Dr. Marina Muskhelishvili, Tbilisi State University, Georgia

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