



Belgrade University Faculty of Law
Serbian Society for Legal and Social Philosophy

and

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Legal
Studies - Research Group for Interdisciplinary Legal Studies

Call for papers for the conference

**Citizens, Societies and Legal Systems:
Law and Society in Central and South Eastern Europe**

November 21st 2014, Belgrade, Serbia

The Belgrade Faculty of Law, Serbian Society for Legal and Social Philosophy and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Legal Studies invites papers for its conference focused on law and society in Central and South Eastern Europe. This conference is organized to start the critical discussion on the recent “state of art” of this region’s sociological understanding. This discussion may lead to the revisiting of classical theses or concepts and to the formulation of novel results and insights. The organizers welcomes papers for the following three panels.

Panel 1: Citizens and laws

The first panel aims to explore the relation of citizens and laws. For the beginning, knowledge of laws is one of the central and most “traditional” topics of legal sociology, as it is strongly interrelated with other issues of the functioning of the legal system. Unknown laws do not (cannot) have an impact on behavior and thus on the “law in action”, and the widespread lack of information on certain laws is typically an indicator of one or more anomalies of a legal system. Exploring the knowledge of laws and factors that determine it contributes to our understanding of the role of law in contemporary societies.

Citizens not only have knowledge of but also attitudes towards the law. Laws can be seen as neutral force that equally applies to all members of the political community or as the factor that reinforces inequalities. To a certain degree, this depends on the openness of the political and lawmaking processes to various social interests. Citizens, social groups and interests

influence lawmaking procedure, but the level and the form of this influence vary greatly. Some of these issues raise important theoretical and empirical questions: How are attitudes towards the laws shaped? What is the role of citizens and societies in lawmaking? What does it mean for a modern democracy to have outsourced and delegated lawmaking through working groups, civil society participation etc.? Is this participation legitimate and representative, or does it reinforce inequalities?

Panel 2: Citizens, societies and the rule of law

This panel deals with the relationships between citizens, societies and political structures, on one hand and the rule of law, on the other. Certain institutional arrangements are preconditions for the rule of law. However, in many parts of contemporary world and Europe, institutions cannot sustain or lead to the political accountability and the rule of law. Often, citizens' initiatives, social movements and civil society organizations put pressure on government to obey the law. These forms of social accountability are conceived as a bottom-up pressure for better governance, democracy and/or the rule of law. The civil society allegedly plays an important role in this field and there is a wide social and political support to this idea. However, some important empirical and theoretical questions emerge. What political structures enable the rule of law and the civil society activism? What is the conceptualization of civil society behind this idea? Does this kind of civil society we have in the region really contributes to the rule of law?

Furthermore, if there is to be the rule of law, a certain set of social preconditions needs to be met, says the famous argument. Analyzing socio-economic conditions for establishing and maintaining the rule of law in a cross-country perspective (though in a region with some common social and institutional features) will bring additional light to our understanding of social dynamics as well as to the understanding of the rule of law in consolidated and consolidating democracies of the region.

Panel 3: Open panel

Relationship between law and society is far more complex and multi-layered and requires further empirical and theoretical analysis. Therefore, the third open panel invites social, political and legal scientists to contribute to current scientific and policy discussions on the ability of law in the region to shape social and economic relations; the nature of legal education and the way it adjusts to the new socio-economic conditions.

We welcome empirical (qualitative as well as quantitative) and theoretical contributions covering Central and South Eastern Europe as well as other parts of the Europe. Applicants should prepare an abstract of no longer the 1000 words. Abstracts should be sent by June 2nd to the e-mail addresses of the conference organizers at the email: danilo.vukovic@ius.bg.ac.rs and fekete.balazs@tk.mta.hu. Selected participants will be informed by the end of June. A draft of the conference paper should be submitted by November 15th to the organizers. The working language of the conference in English. Selected papers from the conference will be published in a special English language issue of the review *Sociologija*. The organizers will provide refreshments and lunch for the participants of the conference. The participants will

organize travel and accommodation themselves. In case of any other queries please feel free to contact the organizers.

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Conference venue: Belgrade University, Faculty of Law, Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra street no. 67, Belgrade, Serbia

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