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International Institute of Administrative Sciences Institut International des Sciences Administratives



International Conference

Public Administration in a Democratic Society: Thirty Years of Democratic Transition in Europe

Dubrovnik, Croatia, 3-6 October 2019
Centre for Advanced Academic Studies (CAAS)

Editor:

Ivan Koprić

Publisher:

Institute of Public Administration



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INTRODUCTION

The Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989. It had separated East and West Berlin for 28 years as a symbol of political and ideological division of Germany and Europe on the Eastern, socialist block, and the Western, democratic part. In 2019, it will be thirty years since the Wall fell and thirty years of democratic transition in central, east, and southeast Europe.

The transition of the former socialist (communist) countries can be compared with several other democratic, economic, and other transitions in the world, from post-colonial transition in Africa, to post-dictatorial transitions in Greece, Spain, and Portugal, to Arab Spring. European post-socialist transition may be defined as more than partial or sectoral transition, i.e. as a systemic transformation of affected countries. However, the outcomes of this particular transition process are not the same in all countries. The relations between public administration and politics are one of the core themes of theorising, researching, and evaluating transition.

The transition of the former socialist countries in Europe has been accompanied by several important historical events and developments that have marked it and influenced the course and outcomes of the transitional processes. They called for the adoption of new, appropriate types and instruments of public governance. The most prominent process has been Europeanization in terms of accession to the European Union and harmonisation with the EU *acquis communautaire* and other standards. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia were in the first and largest group of transition countries that joined the EU on 1st May 2004. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1st January 2007 and Croatia on 1st July 2013. Other transitional countries have different prospects of the EU accession.

Wars and instability crises especially affected the countries on the former Yugoslav territory, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, asking for fresh, specific governance solutions. Furthermore, transitional countries were also influenced by financial and economic crisis that started in 2007. It led to austerity policy based on implementation of various austerity measures in the governance systems. Finally, a part of transitional countries have been grasped by illiberal tendencies, which may easily endanger democratic values and governance standards. On top of domestic circumstances suitable for development of illiberal movements and politics, certain transitional countries were faced with the 2015-2016 wave of mass migration, the largest migration of people to and within Europe since World War II, mainly caused by the war in Syria which created more than 10 million internally displaced people and refugees.

It is time that political and other social scientists evaluate the results of this massive transition from socialist authoritarianism to political democracy, from command economy to free market economy, from socialist bureaucracy to the rule of law,

and from state administration to public service. Responding to serious challenges, people, politicians, public officials, and scientist can easily lose a clear view of democracy and direct their attention and efforts to more technical issues or to the options which deviate from democracy.

Therefore, the conference is to analyse the role of public administration in a democratic society and to reinforce democratic values as the core dimension of democratic public governance at all governmental levels – local, regional, and national.

The conference organizers particularly welcome evaluative, knowledge utilization, and interdisciplinary approaches based on the neoinstitutional, systemic, transformational, and other relevant theoretical orientations. Multi-dimensional learning (theory-theory, theory-practice, discipline-discipline), practice-relevant knowledge production, and foreseeing the future are desirable paper orientations for the conference.

The conference intends to gather scholars of administrative, political, social, and legal sciences and economics, PhD students, experts, and practitioners worldwide. Special attention will be given to ensuring gender and age representation, as well as good representation of participants from South Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and Croatia.

Without being exclusive, the conference organizers wish participants to discuss the following issues:

- What are the key public administration concepts that promote and preserve democratic values in public governance in transition countries?
- How do different types of relations between public administration and politics determine transition outcomes?
- What are the overall results of post-socialist transition in terms of public governance?
- How do people, political actors, and scientists assess and evaluate the results of public governance transition?
- What can be learned from other transition processes in the world?
- To what extent is the post-socialist transition specific, and, consequently, to what extent does it require specific conceptual and research tools in social sciences and particularly in political and administrative sciences?
- What are the public administration tasks and problems caused by transition and how should they be treated in science and in practice?
- How can the observed governance problems in the post-socialist transition countries be cured?
- What is the role of Europeanization in healing transitional “hereditary” and new administrative and governance illnesses?

- What are the prospects of post-socialist transition in terms of public administration and public governance?
- Is there anything good that we have learned from post-socialist transition that can be used (transplanted) to reinforce democratic governance in consolidated democracies?
- How contemporary populist movement and ideologies, spreading in certain transitional countries in CEE and SEE regions, influence transition and its prospects?

The best quality papers will be invited for publication in the edited volume with a well-known international publisher and in the international scholarly journal *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration* (<http://ccpa-journal.eu/index.php/ccpa/index>).

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE LUSTRATION PROCESSES ON THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITIONS IN EUROPE

The fall of the Berlin Wall opened the gate to democracy for the post-communist countries in Europe. However, the road towards democracy in all post-communist countries in Europe proved to be very difficult. One of the main questions concerning democracy was what to do with the problematic communist totalitarian past: to forgive and forget or to punish and remember. Most of the post-communist countries in Europe decided to punish and remember their communist past. That is why 14 countries in Europe decided to implement the process of lustration in order to confront with their communist past. There is a huge diversity in the way and the time lustration has been enforced. Some countries decided to implement this controversial mechanism immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, while others decided to do this many years after the beginning of transition. Some of them decided to ground the lustration processes on retributive justice while others decided to connect lustration with restorative justice. In addition to the diversity of manner and time lustration was enforced, there is a diversity of implementation effects. In some countries, lustration has improved democracy, but in others, it has split the county and had a negative impact on democracy. The paper deals with the manner and time of lustration in post-communist countries in Europe, and with the effects of implementation on democratic consolidation. The main methods used include analysis, historical, normative and political method. The conclusion is that although the process of lustration leaves plenty of space for manipulation, well-implemented and well-regulated lustration, following the recommendations of the Council of Europe, has had a positive impact on democratic consolidation of the post-communist countries.

Keywords: politics, political system, democracy, transition, lustration, post-communist countries