



Call for papers for an *ephemera* conference on:

Post/social/isms

Gólya Community House, Budapest, Hungary
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Organizers:

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The almost 30-year history of postsocialism has largely eluded organization theory, even though the unfettered expansion of neoliberalism has been seen as a vindication of the collapse of the former eastern bloc. This makes it timely to consider what has happened with (post)socialist organizations, not only in terms of the flow of 'Western' concepts of management and organizing into the postsocialist region but also the flow of Foreign Direct Investment and its accompanying waves of privatization. Building on the 2015 *ephemera* conference in Moscow around the theme of 'emergence', this year's conference asks participants to reflect on what has emerged during arguably the biggest socio-political change of the late-20th century. We invite papers that in addressing 'post/social/isms' explore and extend the links between postsocialism, the post-social, and theory and politics in organization.

The explicitly and symbolically violent breaks from the state-socialist regime often resulted in a warm welcoming of neoliberal thought and social policy in the 'Wild East' of the 1990s. Postsocialist transformation has brought with it often contradictory ways of translating former Party affiliation into new political and/or economic power (see Eyal et al., 1998). The adaptation of Western management ideas in newly appeared multinational corporations, shared services centres, and reformed public organizations has changed post socialist people's identities by transposing responsibility from the state onto the

(gendered) individual and the newly established market capitalist organizations (Dunn 2004, Kelemen and Hristov, 1998). Attempts at reforming identities through rewriting history and rebranding countries as well as individual efforts at upward mobility and its corresponding cultural distinctions abound in the region (Šliwa [2009]).

Contradicting the assumption of a teleological transition, some countries have clung onto social democratic ideas and social organizations that stem from the old regime. Earlier managerial practices have also mixed with and lived on in the newly established market economies (Kelemen, 1999; Kelemen and Kostera, 2002). These practices co-exist with an increasing 'ostalgia' (nostalgia for the former Eastern bloc) with its Trabant tours and revival of classic brands of the socialist period, a yearning for gendered welfare systems that reward the domestic contributions of working women now past, and a revived enthusiasm, especially amongst the youth, for organizing for a different socialist future. Reverse flows, that is socialist influences on capitalism, have always existed (Beverungen et al., 2013; Burawoy, 1985; Kelemen and Bunzel, 2008). For instance, events like the Hungarian revolution in 1956 (termed a 'counterrevolution' until 1989) or the Prague Spring of 1968 have greatly influenced thinkers all over the world, just like the current organization of higher education in the UK resembles that of the Stalinist command economy (Brandist, 2017).

The notion of 'postsocialist' can be shown to serve particular interests, both in terms of maintaining the constructions of Eastern Europe and the Balkans as orientaling categories and also in organizing the symbolism of an assumed cultural and religious similarity to Western Europe (Azarova, 2017; Bakic-Hayden, 1995; Melegh, 2006, Samaluk, 2016; Todorova, 1997; Wolff, 1994). The 'eastern' expansion of the European Union, its colonialist developmental mission, and talks of a 'two-speed Europe' all sustain the status of the postsocialist 'other' (see Böröcz, 2001). This questions the idea of 'transition' between two stable states altogether, with anthropologists arguing that it rather is the continual feeling of dwelling in the 'grey zones' of everyday uncertainty that defines the new period (Buyandelgeriyn, 2008; Knudsen and Frederiksen, 2015). Grey zones complicate the idea of centre and periphery whether through the forgotten concept of the 'Second-World' or from the perspective of postcolonial theory (Chari and Verdery, 2009; Owczarzak, 2009; Westwood et al., 2014). The adoption of these approaches to post-socialist thinking might also allow management scholars to counter the 'self-imposed coloniality' that the often uncritical adoption of neoliberal theories entailed (Ibarra-Colado, 2008: 933). The uncertainty of grey zones requires that we revisit and question dominant narratives of the early 1990s, for instance, that women were the main economic losers of the change of regimes (Ghodsee, 2005).

With this and other societal changes, we would have to think about how to imagine a different (post-)postsocial social organization. One that might overcome the political economic problem of shortage (Kornai, 1992), one that re-evaluates the organizational features of socialisms, e.g. the Yugoslav self-

management model (Robertson, 2017), one that is premised on a different relationship to ourselves and the objects around us (Kravets, 2013). We could also think about whether current and former thinkers from the former Eastern bloc or other (post)social(ist) geographical locations (e.g. Cuba, Venezuela) could help us theorize ‘post-social’ and ‘postsocialist’.

We therefore invite submissions that may include, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Theory and politics of postsocialist organizations, management, and leadership
- Theorizing and politicizing organization through the works of (post)socialist thinkers, scholars, and philosophers
- Translations of neoliberal management thought
- Challenges of postsocial/ist experiences to dominant theories of organization
- Connections between the post-social and postsocialism
- Connections between socialist and postsocialist ways of being and practices of organizing
- Physical and symbolic violence of transitions
- Problematization and meanings of the notion of ‘postsocialism’
- Grey zones and the post-postsocialist
- Organizing power of the notions of ‘postsocialist’, ‘communist’, ‘(counter)revolutionary’, ‘iron curtain’, ‘eastern bloc’, etc.
- Postsocialism, the post-social, and the EU

Deadlines and further information

ephemera encourages contributions in a variety of formats including articles, notes, photo essays and any experimental modes of representation.

The deadline for submitting abstracts is **1st February 2018**. Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted in a Pages/Word document, and any questions addressed, to Irina Cheresheva (ic76@le.ac.uk) or Márton Rácz (marton.racz@city.ac.uk). Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 15th February 2018.

The conference will be held at the Gólya Community House in Budapest (http://golyapresszo.hu/?lang=en_us).

The conference is free for participants without institutional support and £20 for whom funding is available. Please register here: <https://ephemera2018.eventbrite.com>

We might be able to arrange childcare at the venue for the afternoons, please

contact the organizers if you have such needs.

Selected papers from the conference will be published in a special issue of *ephemera*.

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