Saturday, 18 February. 14:50 – 16:20. Room: IHC - Kadamba
REGULAR SESSION

Session: Political Trust and Citizen Participation

Session Convener(s): Jurate Imbrasaite, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

Chair: Jurate Imbrasaite, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

I) *Civil Society and Democracy*
Salvatore Rizza, Università Degli Studi Roma Tre

II) *Civic Participation and Civil Society: A Comparative Observation on Czech, Slovak and Taiwan's Cases*
Chia-Ming Chang, Soochow University, Taipei

III) *Political Trust and Citizen Participation in South African Local Government*
Jayanathan Govender, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth

ABSTRACTS

Session description
Political trust and citizen participation in the process of political governance is an essential condition for the functioning of democracy and ensuring the stability of society. Most scholars indicate that satisfaction with performance of political system during a particular period creates the reservoir of good will or high level diffuse support for democracy, which secure democratic regimes in case of a crisis. Citizens support legitimazes the govermental institutions and active participation in the process of democratic governance provides them with a possibility to voice their interests, preferences and needs. Citizens are free to choose a number of ways to influence the political process. However, not all modes of political participation are equal with respect to the consolidation democracy. Support for democracy, high levels of institutional trust and conventional modes of participation constitute a precondition for a stable democratic system. On the other hand, participation in legal protest actions may be considered as acts of self-expression and may be not dangerous for stability of democracy. However, individualization and globalization may cause the uncertainty in everyday life and the need of a strong leader as well as negative evaluations of government.

The session focuses on the relationship between political trust or attitudes to government and participation in political acts in contemporary societies.

Papers
I) *Civil Society and Democracy*
Salvatore Rizza, Università Degli Studi Roma Tre

The democracy lives and is based on a constant dialectic between the institutions and people, and between his civil society and the parties. The predominance of either of them exposes the democracy to the risk. Also the predominance of the parties debilitates the some democracy. When the civil society prevails, the democracy risks to fall to "caos" and requires a "strong man". It' ll have that two subjects work together: civil society and his movement promotes and support the democracy, like, for example, a "Spring" of civil society in North-Africa. The paper will show that the democracy needs of both.
Key words: democracy; civil society; parties.

II) *Civic Participation and Civil Society: A Comparative Observation on Czech, Slovak and Taiwan's Cases*
Chia-Ming Chang, Soochow University, Taipei

Most of the new democracies in the third wave have a history of overly two decades of democratic development; however, it appears to be too short a time for the new democracies to develop their democracy to the level of the older democracies, despite their level of modernization and globalization. Here the older democracies are taken as a reference group for the post communist countries and the post authoritarian countries. Civic participation is observed as two parts: membership in civic associations and civic actions.

In the era of democratization, if people would like to construct a stable democratic life, they need to participate in social and political concerns and actions. It is not practical to depend on politicians only, for people tend to not be

confident in politicians, in older democracies and new democracies alike. Low political trust seems to be a common factor. People believe in democratic value, but also have no trust in politicians; therefore, civil society plays a prominent role in countering the balance between the state and society. A robust civil society helps to protect the function and quality of democracy, so the construction of civil society is significant. If civil society can play an active role in democratic consolidation, the repeal of democracy is very unlikely.

This paper intends to discuss if the factor of political and economic development leads to higher levels of membership in civic associations and higher participation in political and social actions in the new democracies, especially in the Central European countries and East Asian countries. In the concrete, it would like to make a comparison or a dialogue among Taiwan, Czech and Slovakia regarding the citizens participation and civil society after democratization.

Data which this presentation is based on stem from the outcome of an international research on civic society having been conducted these two years.
Keywords: post-Communist society, post authoritarian countries, civic associations, civic participation, civil society

III) *Political Trust and Citizen Participation in South African Local Government*
Jayanathan Govender, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth

South Africa's public policy in general, and in particular local government policyapproach since 1994 has been compellingand forward-looking. Many policies have been translated into law, regulations and institutions which are aimed explicitly to serve the public good; improve service delivery of basic services; and redress backlogs inherited from the apartheid state. However, in spite of strong government interventions, a protracted crisis is evident in South African local government.

South Africa is experiencing heightened level of public dissatisfaction and community mass protests. Most community protests are accompanied by acts of violence. Communities argue that mass protest accompanied by acts of violence, and the appropriation of public space is an essential tactic of gaining the attention of the highest authorities.

While are communities are aware of public policy instruments and citizen participation available to them, they persist in disrespecting them as bona fide channels of engagement with the local state. Consequently, protest, usually lacking organization, strategic direction and leadership pervade the local government landscape.
The response of the authorities entering the contested space is usually reactionary and is hardly successful at addressing the core grievances of communities. Crucially, political representatives, i.e. ward and proportional representative councillors, are crowded out of resolution processes. Sometimes, the presence of policing services and the media exacerbates the crisis.

The concern is that communities are acting outside democratic processes as well as institutional arrangements meant to bridge gaps between local government and communities. Accordingly, the aim of the paper is to examine how and why public policy provisions fails the public. The focus will be on policy provisions in local government legislation and the recent (2007) local government policy review process, which were intended to address, among others, good governance and public participation approaches, thereby enhancing service delivery.