Graduate School for Social Research

Inauguration of the 2023-2024 Academic Year

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, IFiS PAN
Institute of Political Studies, ISP PAN
Institute of Psychology, IP PAN

October 11, 2023

Staszic Palace, Nowy Swiat 72, Warsaw

Mirror Room, 1st Floor

10:30 – 11:00	Opening	Irina Tomescu-Dubrow, Director GSSR
	Welcome Addresses	Andrzej Rychard, IFiS PAN Director
		Robert Balas, Director IP PAN
		Piotr Osęka, Deputy Director for Research, ISP PAN
		Emilia Sieczka, GSSR Student Representative

11:00 – 12:15	Keynote Lecture:	***The Abject of Transformation or on the Esthetics of Populophobia***
		Jan Sowa, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw

12:15 – 12:30   *Break*

12:30 – 13:00   Doctoral and Habilitation Diplomas Award Ceremony
Adam Lipszyc, Chairperson, IFiS PAN Scientific Council

13:00 – 13:30   *Coffee and refreshments*

13:30 – 14:30	Keynote Lecture:	***Studying Illiberal Democracy in Europe*** Renata Uitz, Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law, Royal Holloway, University of London
		Discussant: Edit Zgut-Przybylska, IFiS PAN, GSSR alumna

ABSTRACTS

The Abject of Transformation or on the Esthetics of Populophobia. Representations of the Systemic Change Losers in Gazeta Wyborcza *between 1989 and 1993*

Jan Sowa, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw

The recent eruption of populism has sparked numerous public debates in mainstream media. However, these discussions often center on denouncing the fallacies of populism and highlighting the threats it poses to democratic politics. Little attention is given to exploring the underlying reasons behind the populist upsurge. More frequently, populism is dismissed as irrational and nonsensical. In contrast to this perspective, using the Polish transformation of the early 1990s as a case study, I seek to investigate populism as a reactive formation fueled by the shortcomings and pitfalls of the liberal discourse. One significant issue examined is how individuals who were adversely affected by the systemic change in Poland were portrayed in the narratives of mainstream liberal media, notably in articles from the prominent Polish liberal newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, during the systemic transformation period (between 1989 and 1993). Employing critical discourse analysis, I identify four discourses that focused on the losers of the transformation during that period. Despite some attempting to accurately portray the situation of the popular classes at the time, the predominant result was a classist attitude that can be termed "populophobia" – a disdain for the popular classes, portraying them as an abject outcome of the transformation. I also underscore the blind spots in liberal narratives and the lack of an analytical approach in public debates aimed at understanding the situations and experiences of those adversely affected by systemic transformation in Poland. From this perspective, populism is construed as a return of the repressed and the foreclosed, challenging prevailing notions and demanding a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

Studying Illiberal Democracy in Europe

Renata Uitz, Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law, Royal Holloway, University of London

Illiberal democracy may be an oxymoron, yet it is a lived experience triggered by political practices of many aspiring and democratically elected leaders. As such, illiberal democracy remains a highly relevant - and intriguing -- subject for social science research. The lecture introduces the state of play and explores dilemmas for current and future research.

Keynote Speakers

Jan Sowa is a materialist dialectical social theorist and researcher, holding a PhD in sociology and a habilitation in cultural studies. He is recognized mainly for his contributions to the study of modernization in the peripheries of the capitalist world-system. His academic journey has led him to various institutions worldwide, including the University of São Paulo (2015-16), the Academy of the Arts of the World in Cologne (2017), and The Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (2020). Jan Sowa has served as a member of the Committee on Cultural Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and as the curator of the Discursive Programs of Biennale Warszawa (2018-2019). Currently, he holds the position of Associate Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Jan has both edited and authored several books, in addition to publishing numerous articles in Poland and internationally. Notably, the volume "Perverse Decolonization," which he co-edited with Ekaterina Degot and David Riff, was published in 2022 by Archive Books in Berlin.

Renata Uitz is a professor of law and government at Royal Holloway, University of London and a senior research fellow at Central European University's Democracy Institute. Previously, she taught comparative constitutional law at Central European University, Budapest and Vienna (September 2001 - August 2023) and served as the co-director of the newly established CEU Democracy Institute (February 2022 - August 2023). Her major research interests lie in comparative public law, in transition to and from constitutional democracy. Her current work focuses on illiberal constitutional practices and the normalization of illiberal constitutionalism around the world. Her most recent book publication on this subject is the Routledge Handbook of Illiberalism, co-edited with Andras Sajo and Stephen Holmes (Routledge 2021). As a co-PI in the multidisciplinary research network investigating the origins and iterations of illiberal constitutionalism in East Central Europe, funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung (2021-25), her work traces the emergence of illiberal Christian democracy.

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