

Call for Papers

12th CEE Forum Conference – Vienna, 16-17 April 2020

“Populism, popular sovereignty and public reason”

In 2020, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business will host **the 12th Conference of the Central and Eastern European Forum of Young Legal, Political & Social Theorists**. With 25,000 students and 2,300 teachers, researchers and administrative staff, WU Vienna is the largest business university in the European Union. Founded in 1898, WU Vienna is a research-intensive public university with a keen awareness of its obligations to society. Austria’s second-largest university focuses on business and social studies as well as law and disposes of a large network of international partners. Its modern campus, right next door to Vienna’s expansive Prater Park, offers impressive, award-winning architecture and an excellent working environment. The conference venue at the Library & Learning Center, WU Vienna’s asymmetrical landmark building designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, offers an inspiring yet intimate atmosphere for an interdisciplinary event of young legal, political and social theorists.

The main theme of the 12th CEE Forum Conference will be **populism, popular sovereignty and public reason**. In the first two decades of the 21st century, and particularly in the aftermath of the Financial Crisis, populist politics have been on the rise and are challenging so-called liberal democratic conceptions relating to pluralism, the rule of law, or international cooperation. With the re-emergence of populism, popular sovereignty has resurfaced as a political category, calling into question previously widely accepted understandings of globalization and international cooperation. In what some have been calling an age of “post-truthism”, populism is not only impeding hitherto tolerated practices of governance such as technocratic rule, but also thwarting the democratic potential of deliberative discourse. Populism seems at odds with ideas of public reason. The popular will is not subject to/result of deliberation, but miraculously known to the populist regime. Populists do not want to engage in a reasoned moral or political argument with others. Dissidents and political opponents are perceived and depicted as “the enemy”. To this adds the recurrent populist “blame game” or hostility towards international organizations and international law, overshadowing legitimate concerns as regards global governance more broadly. While from a bird’s-eye view these phenomena seem to occur on a global level, it might be worth the effort to inquire into its regional idiosyncrasies in Central and Eastern Europe.

For the 12th CEE Forum Conference at WU Vienna we therefore invite contributions from the fields of legal, social or political theory relating to populism, popular sovereignty and public reason. We aim at stirring debates on democratic decay, rule-of-law backsliding, authoritarianism, anti-Europeanism and “populist constitutionalism”, but also on the role of globalization or economic inequality. In addition to diagnostics, we encourage papers on domestic or international institutional resilience or the role of constitutions vis-à-vis these developments. What international mechanisms, if any, may play an effective role in

democratic decay or rule-of-law backsliding? In that same vein, we would like to reinvigorate discussions on the “counter-majoritarian difficulty” of (constitutional) courts or the legitimacy of non-majoritarian institutions. Furthermore, we encourage papers revolving around public reason: How may any rational discourse be maintained in the populist echo chamber? Which role can the media and civil society play in this regard and how do populists try to mute any potential critical voices? In particular, which strategies can be used in a post-truth environment that discards inconvenient facts as ‘fake news’? In how far does the success of populist politics reflect a craving for (purportedly) simple answers to questions faced by an increasingly complex and diverse society? How can we avoid a populist capture of critical discourse on globalization and international cooperation?

We encourage you to **submit a paper** on these or other pertinent issues and questions relating to populism, popular sovereignty and popular reason. In addition, there will also be an open session. This call of papers addresses the community of young legal, political & social theorists either working in Central and Eastern Europe or studying topics with Central and Eastern European dimensions. The organizers also encourage the participation of young academics affiliated to the universities or research institutes outside the CEE region, with Central or Eastern European research interests.

The conference language is English. Please submit a 500-700 words **abstract** to 16042020-3955@wu.ac.at, using the application form which we will make available at www.cee-forum.org/2020, by **15 January 2020**. We will communicate acceptance of papers by 15 February 2020. If you would like to participate without submitting a paper, please also use the application form and send it to us until 31 March 2020.

The **conference fee** for all participants is 60 Euros and covers conference material, drinks and snacks during the breaks as well as lunch meals. We kindly ask participants to make arrangements and pay for their travel and accommodation individually. We will distribute information on lodging and directions as well as payment instructions through the conference website. After the conference, we will invite selected participants to submit their papers for publication in a volume of the **conference proceedings**, our Central and Eastern European Forum for Legal, Political, and Social Theory Yearbook.

For updated information, please regularly visit the conference website: www.cee-forum.org/2020. In case of questions, do not hesitate to contact the conveners of the 2020 CEE Forum Conference, **Stefan Mayr** (stefan.mayr@wu.ac.at) and **Andreas Orator** (andreas.orator@wu.ac.at).

We are looking forward to hosting you in Vienna in 2020!