

Eastern European Political Cultures and the Need for Explanation: The Look from Inside

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Konferenzbeitrag / conference paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Voinea, C. F. (2013). Eastern European Political Cultures and the Need for Explanation: The Look from Inside. In C. F. Voinea, B. Todosijevic, & G. Boella (Eds.), *Political Attitudes and Mentalities: Eastern European Political Culture - Modeling Studies* (pp. 9-19). Bukarest: ArsDocendi-Bucharest Univ. Press. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-372516>

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Ars Docendi-Bucharest University Press ISBN 978-973-558-719-2, pp. 9-19.

Introduction

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Eastern European Political Cultures and the Need for Explanation. The Look from Inside.

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This volume presents several authors who are developing research projects in various European universities and research institutions. In spite of the *independent* character of the analyses and of the most of the empirical observations and results reported here, there is something which unites them all, namely a certain *similarity* in looking at things from a political culture perspective. Moreover, there is something else which unites their perspectives over the Eastern European political cultures: a certain *look from inside*. The true motivation for what joins them all in this volume could be described as a need for explanation, no matter the different political and culture heritages of the countries, regimes, institutions and people targeted by the researches reported in this volume.

It is this need for explanation which makes the true binding – either implicit or explicit – of this volume. What makes these few Eastern European political culture researches reported here prove the same need for explanation is the way they share the perception of the post-1989 Eastern European democracy experience, and certain stereotypes in relating variate political phenomenology to political culture.

The need for explanation should not surprise anybody, especially if we are to study the Eastern European politics. Nevertheless, it is more than just the necessity to explain (*what?*) and *how?* is going on in politics. It is also the need to understand *why?*, *when?*, or *what for?* The long transition processes from the communist to democratic regimes made almost all Eastern European people and their countries experience during the past two decades the need to explain their choices, values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and symbols. Their grievances or prejudices. Their institutions, regimes, and discourses. All these entail a deep understanding of both remote cultural roots and current political perceptions, steadiness and variability, contingency and necessity, change and resistance to change. They require not only to explain things. First and foremost, they require a concept, a paradigm, and a method. It often requires a *model*.

The modeling idea is as old as our philosophical thinking. It reminds us of Plato and makes us think about the city, world, society and politics as of imperfect shadows of one perfect idea. To understand them, we need first of all to overlap the “real” and the “ideal”, the “shadows” and the “model”. It is this overlapping which explains what the real construct – be it society or polity, tradition or institution, individual action or policy – actually needs in order to identify itself with the ideal construct.

Modeling is, as a matter of fact, a relevant component of Political Science: ideology, political regime, state, governance or voting – all of them have been modeled and analyzed by means of models.

Before anything else, a model “explains” the real world by capturing few but universal laws, principles. It thus makes both modeler and user develop expectations with respect to its explanative power. Whether these are finally fulfilled or not, this depends on the model. In the classical approach, models as explanative tools involve covering laws. For example, economic laws and ideas do explain the transformation processes in the Eastern European newly appeared democracies, but they cannot fully explain them, and obviously not them all.

After the first decade following the 1989- Eastern European political phenomena, students of democracy identified the main characteristics of the Eastern European transition to democratic regime processes and tried to explain their unfolding. It was probably the first time when many agreed that, beyond economical difficulties, there were some others which did not fit this model and resisted explanations based on covering economical laws. Explaining politics requires more than social, economical and financial methodologies altogether: it requires political methodology.

Moreover, it requires a political methodology able to reconsider such issues like variability, context-, path- and initial conditions dependence in order to explain one of the fundamental questions in the post-1989 political analysis and methodology (Tilly, 1995): how should we study the political change? – Long after the 1989 Eastern European political phenomena, people still argued on the nature of political change, on its real target and on its real means and ends. Invariable models of political change could not tackle anymore the complexity of the political history and failed to fulfill the need for explanation of both scholars, either old or young, and of the people, either ordinary people or elites.

Unavoidably, political culture came to the front. In spite of the hard critics and apparently never ending disputes, political culture theories have succeeded to find room for “impressive” coming-backs (Mishler and Pollack, 2003) and for managing ambiguity in definitions and terminology. It is not the first time when they do come back and, most probably, not the last. However, this time there is something missing in the room: explanative power requires explanative methodology. And a good explanation methodology cannot ignore or avoid modeling. Nevertheless, it is modeling which is actually missing in this room.

The past two decades have been known as a time of intensive theoretical and empirical research in Eastern European political cultures. Remarkable works have been published by now famous authors: “*The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*” (Jan Kubik, 1994), “*Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 41 Societies*” (Ronald Inglehart, 1997), “*Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies*” (Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Christian Haerpfer 1998), “*Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia? Explorations in State-Society Relations*” (Harry Eckstein, Frederick J. Fleron, E. P. Hoffmann, and William M. Reisinger (Eds.), 1998), “*Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture, and Society Since 1939*” (S. Ramet (Ed.), 1998), “*Political Culture In Post-communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies*” (Detlef Pollack, Jorg Jacobs, Olaf Muller, Gert Pickel (Eds.), 2003), “*Political Culture and Post-Communism*”, Stephen Whitefield (Ed.), 2005), “*Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*” (Hans-Dieter Klingeman, Dieter Fuchs and Jan Zielonga (Eds.), 2006), to name but few of the most relevant ones. Many books and articles of these and other authors represent now the foundation of a difficult work of disentangling the complicated historical and political heritages of the Eastern European political cultures, aimed at understanding how people, cultures and polities endured altogether the hard experiences of the communist regimes. All these major

theoretical works have been published soon after 1989, when the Eastern Europeans were struggling and striving in the sophisticated transition processes toward democratization and economic stability. It was a time of high political contend. However, more than two decades have passed and, notwithstanding its weakness and scarcity, the democratic construction has provided a chance for reflection. As the time passed, the Eastern Europeans – citizens as well as elites – got enough distance from their personal experiences, sentiments and passions so as to be able to finally reflect as objectively as possible with respect to their communism and post-communism experiences. While much of the research works mentioned earlier were fundamentally about a *look from outside*, finally, a *look from inside* is now possible. How valuable it is right now or could be when compared with the above-mentioned high-level expertise works, depends on how much it succeeds to uncover its thick political culture roots. This volume is about this *look from inside*.

The volume is divided in four sections, ballancing the interest for theoretical modeling with that for computational modeling and simulation of political phenomena.

The 1st Section, “*Theoretical Models*”, concern theoretical modeling and introduces one research work which reviews major researches in the area of structure of political attitudes (structure of ideology) during the past 80 years in Europe. The author, Bojan Todosijević, explains how political attitude and structure of ideology studies would impact the modeling of political action, especially in the Eastern European new democracies.

The 2nd Section, “*Political Culture Computational and Simulation Modeling Studies*”, concern computational modeling and simulation of political action, policy, and polity. The three research works included here address the political action modeling (Bruce Edmonds), the polity simulation modeling (Camelia Florela Voinea), and the modeling of corruption, extortion and fiscal evasion phenomena (Martin Neumann).

The 3rd Section, “*Political Culture Analysis*”, provides empirical comparative results on political culture vs. rational choice models, and proves their implications on the mass support for democracy in the Eastern European post-communist countries (Zoran Pavlovic).

The 4th Section, “*EU Non-State Partnership Modeling*”, includes one research work on the political culture of EU partnership in the non-member states: the European Neighborhood Policy as a political culture model of partnership in the European politics (Sima Rakutiene).

The 5th Section, “*Welfare Culture Studies*”, presents one modeling approach on welfare culture in Greece, combining governance, welfare economics and social assistance studies with public policy

modeling (Dimitrios Kotroyannos, Stylianos Tzagkarakis, Apostolos Kamekis and Marinos Chourdakis).

The *Conclusions* (Camelia Florela Voinea) presents a general Eastern European picture of political culture studies, including several other authors and research works besides those contributing to the present volume. The Conclusions show that the Eastern European political culture research exhibits preferences for a particular relationship between (i) the political values, identity, behaviors and attitudes modeling, on the one hand, and for (ii) the generative simulation modeling of political phenomena, on the other hand. This relationship is described as a political methodological relationship between *political mechanisms* and *political cultures*.

Getting back to the rationale of this volume, we should emphasize again the independent character of the researches presented in this volume. It is important to do this for three reasons. One relates their independent character to the reality that Eastern European political science research is guided from within the society, and this proves both the awareness of researchers and the social utility of their approaches. Another one relates the scarce appearances of political culture modeling research in Eastern Europe to the scarcity of its research funding, which seriously limits its development, but nevertheless cannot stop it. And finally, a third reason concerns the extension of political culture theories so as to include new elements provided by the interdisciplinary research in areas like European welfare culture or neighborhood culture, which emerged from latest political unfoldings in Eastern and Southern Europe following either 2008 economical crisis or EU partnership policies.

First, although *independently* developed, some of the Eastern European political analysis researches included in the volume share a major theoretical tendency towards modeling approaches of political issues, including political action and political attitude, voting behavior and electoral campaigns, political messages and political images on the Eastern European electoral market, post-communist institutional authority and legitimacy, ethnicity and nationalism, constitutionalism and authoritarianism, corruption and extortion, and many others. As political methodology, Eastern European political phenomena modeling research reported in this volume addresses fundamental issues concerning (1) the type of democracy constructs elaborated by the Eastern European countries, and (2) political identity, sovereignty and political action of the new Eastern European democracies inside EU or outside EU, but expecting for the EU intergration. As concerning the

type of democratic construct and democracy perception in each Eastern European country, these researches share the idea of political cultures as influence factors in the political change modeling.

From this perspective, two authors succeed to bring to the front old political culture research issues and to provide fresh answers.

Bojan Todosijević's research on the structure of political attitudes reports fundamental approaches during the past almost hundred years in the area of structure of ideology. Political attitudes made the subject of political analysis and political methodology from the beginning of the 20th century. Todosijević systematically reports research on attitudes in Social Psychology emphasizing the difference between the long tradition and huge number of theoretical and analytical works, on the one hand, and their low level of impact on the attitude methodological research and development, on the other hand. He is a promoter of the idea that ideological dimensions have a relevant impact on the political behavior. Such orientation of research would not only help understanding political action, but has a special relevance in the Eastern European political space, where the communist ideology's late impact has shaped "*atypical ideological configurations*" (p. 35 in this volume). This idea points to the particular ways in which citizens in the Eastern European post-communist regimes "*organize and express their basic political views*" (*ibid.*). The study of political attitudes (formation, stability, structure, expression) in Eastern Europe would thus help in modeling the type of Eastern European democratic construct and explaining the atypical political behavior – a major concern in the EU structures, where the Eastern European democratic consolidation processes raise difficult problems, even long after the political integration of the new Eastern European democracies.

Though from a slightly different perspective, but still in the same area of political attitude research like Bojan Todosijević, **Zoran Pavlovic** addresses the issue of mass democratic expression and support for democracy in the Eastern European ex-communist regimes by introducing a comparative analysis between two competing explanative models of political behavior: political culture vs. rational choice. His post-elections survey research allows for the definition, empirical observation and analysis of socio-demographic, institutional and cultural predictors of the mass support for democracy. His variance modeling approach re-iterates the disputes concerning the explanative power of the defined survey variables. His approach tries to show the role the political values play in the development of a democratic political culture in a transitional society by influencing the consolidation of the democratic institutions. Pavlovic's approach gives support to

the theories relating political values and institutions by arguing in favor of combining effects of cultural and institutional variables. His preference assumes actually an Eastern European stereotype model of “*creating the democratic political culture*” by “*creating ‘democrats’ as well as creating democracy*” (p. 136 in this volume). This position is often encountered in the current Eastern European literature on attitude, behavior and mentality in transition to democracy and consolidation of democratic institutions and proves once more the similarity in the preferences, understandings and expectation analysis of many Eastern European authors (Srblijinovic, 2012; Atanasov and Cvetanova, 2012; Petričušić, 2013; Ferić and Lamza-Posavec, 2013) .

Second, although quite few and disparate, the researches included in this volume prove a high interest and a considerable potential for research development in the area of political culture-based computational modeling and simulation of political phenomena. The issue seems rather strange for many of the works on political methodology published lately in Eastern Europe. For many reasons, computational modeling and simulations appears to Eastern European Political Science researchers as a remote area of research and development. Without being some particular weakness of the Eastern European research only, computational and simulation modeling has puzzled political methodology experts from all over the world by introducing a different concept on how we should describe and explain political phenomena. Following the example of Social Simulation, computational modeling and simulation has been accepted in Political Science as well. This volume succeeds to aggregate some disparate approaches on this modeling area and issues. The three research works presented in the 2nd Section of the volume address both the ontology and epistemology of political culture modeling, with a special focus on political methodology.

In his chapter on cognitive modeling of political action, **Bruce Edmonds** introduces the problem of relating modeling methodology with political phenomenology. He highlights the issues of abstracting the types, levels and granularity of social and political phenomenology by means of computational cognitive modeling descriptions of social actions, norms, interactions and goal-driven behaviors. As one of the leading experts in both social complexity modeling and agent-based social simulation, Edmonds challenges the standard artificial society model by introducing elements of cognitive complexity in the individual agent descriptions. As a computational and simulation modeling approach, this endeavour brings to the front the now classical debate on the individual agency and the relationship between cognitive, social and political phenomena which might get computational and simulation expression in an artificial society model. The model he proposes

actually challenges the classical KISS style (Axelrode, 1995), and extends the representation issue to a methodological issue in political action modeling.

Camelia Florela Voinea challenges both political methodology and simulation modeling of political phenomena. In her chapter, she addresses several issues in political phenomena modeling, like political mechanisms, processes and pathways, reviewing and revisiting some of their definitions and terminology. In addressing the political mechanism issue, Voinea answers the Tilly's well-known claim (1995) for a change in political phenomena modeling methodology by introducing both emergence and downward causation modeling in the generative simulation architectures. Inspired by the artificial society models, she introduces an operational concept of the generative simulation architecture in the artificial polity model. Her research aims at advancing the political phenomena modeling theory by including cross-recurrence and cross-recursivity in generative process descriptions. Voinea's approach addresses the need for a methodological shift towards complexity-based models in political phenomena modeling. In a much similar way to Edmonds' approach, her work combines both philosophy of science and virtual experiments of simulation modeling.

Martin Neumann focuses more on computational modeling by generalizing ontologies of Mafia-type systems to an artificial society model able to simulate the emergence and growth of extortion systems. Neumann uses his previous social simulation experience to develop computational models of social and political corruption which could allow for public policy modeling aimed at controlling the phenomenology of political and bureaucratic corruption. What makes his approach interesting for the theme of this volume is the use of agent-based system simulation in the development of a political culture model of a mafia-type social configuration inside an artificial society. His ontology identifies elements of political culture which exist and could generate deviant behavior in any kind of society, especially in the weak new democracies situated at the margins of the Eastern Europe. Extortion ontologies is but one example of how can they be used to develop models of culture and explain the generation of subcultures.

Third, the researches on European political culture prove a tendency to extend their area by including new issues which emerged from the latest political developments in Eastern and Southern Europe. This explains the presence in this volume of two approaches on European welfare culture and EU non-state partnership culture.

Sima Rakutiene introduces a model of EU neighborhood culture which captures the non-state partnership experiences associated lately to the EU accession and integration pending

processes in non-member countries, like Lithuania, the Baltic states as well as some of the South-Eastern states. Rakutiene's model description might suggest that computational and simulation modeling of such political phenomena should take into consideration revisiting the agent definition in agent-based systems, in which agents are usually described as either individuals, organizations or (nation)-states. Non-state actors might involve a complexity approach to agent definition and agency concept in artificial society and polity models.

Dimitrios Kotroyannos and his doctoral students, **Stylios Tzagkarakis**, **Apostolos Kamekis** and **Marinos Chourdakis** introduce a model of welfare culture which is being developed in a Greek national education and social assistance research project. The welfare concept is usually related to the economic welfare theories. This approach suggests the extension of political culture area so as to include welfare issues. Welfare culture modeling points to the subculture emergence in societies under economical and political stress – an issue which has not been approached so far in the literature on social modeling.

As it is, this volume highlights the Eastern European political culture modeling research resources, tendencies and methodological contributions. It aims at introducing young Eastern European authors and their researches and provides a signal that political methodology research needs further consideration, funding and networking in Eastern Europe and not only.

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