



FAKULTETA ZA  
UPORABNE DRUŽBENE ŠTUDIJE  
V NOVI GORICI  
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED SOCIAL STUDIES

Dear professors, colleagues, friends,

We are glad to inform you that **School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica** will organize second international Slovenian Social Sciences Conference between **30<sup>th</sup> of September and 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2010** in Piran titled

## **»Contemporary world between security and freedom«**

Scope of the conference

In contemporary world we are facing different arguments about development of modern society. Arguments are generally based on Western cultural perspective on best world order. Despite we can call it best world order; this order is raising more questions than offering answers. However, many of these questions are not answered or they are put aside as irrelevant, inappropriate or stupid. But still they are questions that should provoke critical thinking and theoretical or scientific answer. Crucial issues of the second Slovenian Social Sciences Conference are merged into following topics. Any other proposals will be also welcomed.

### **Redefinition of democracy**

Classical model of representative democracy is in last decades strong as it never was – on the first glance. However, when we think about classical ideal of (representative) democracy we can see many elements showing the need for reconsideration how democracy should be understood. On one hand we are trying to enhance all different possibilities for direct participation of citizens in political and policy processes. On the other hand, governments are trying to avoid any interference from below. Media have strong role in defining reality and they are highly influential concerning perception of citizens. Are media influential to or influenced by significant others and what is the role of (self)censorship. Do we still have representative democracy? Was potential of participative democracy over-estimated or it is only a way how to channelize citizens' ideas into dead end? Can we talk about media democracy, where creation of reality is

ruling reality itself or we are facing something like elitist democracy, where elite ignore electoral message of the citizens and runs state in their own interest?

### **Rights or privileges**

Human rights are next to the democracy one of key concepts of twentieth century. However their role is only rarely questioned in Western civilization. They are declaratively universal and officially spreading. However, today we are trapped in the system of rights that is in fact systematically violated on state or individual basis. Human rights seem to be purely ideological concept that enables those into power positions to reward or punish those in less privileged positions. Lists of state violation of individuals' rights with no questioning or even sanctions are systematically growing. Almost any legal regulation limiting people can be understood as limitation of recognised rights. In some cases this limitation is absolute limitation in other cases it is supported by rights of others or group. Here new question rises; in what cases and in what extend freedom of individuals can and should be limited in order to provide security for others (typical case is compulsory vaccination of children in connection to personal believes and right to decide) Limitation of given recognised rights (such as right to privacy) are violated in the name of enhancing security. Despite more and more present surveillance technologies security of individual survival and life is still declining. In combination with system of punishment it can even cause violation of citizens' rights. So, are rights really universal, or are they just privileges that cover private interests of elites.

### **Legitimacy of the European Union**

Idea of joint Europe is in fact old story that was always connected to the cultural supremacy. However, only after Second World War elites internalize that unification of Europe will demand peaceful and multicultural approach. They started project (despite different ideas) wisely as international organization that was slowly developing over decades. With more development of the European Union, more regulations, influencing the citizens of member states emerged. And at the same time, the European Union become club of elites ruling with in depth legitimate consent of ruled. Last case of ignorance, hidden behind ecological concerns is legal removal of classical bulbs. It is easy to see that there must be not only ecological but mainly economic interest. Energy saving bulbs is much more expensive than classical ones, and people find them inappropriate. However, EU legally regulated the free market relations in favour of more expensive lightning elements in order to increase profits of certain companies. Second thing is "constitutional document" of the European Union, that should be, according to the importance of its effects accepted on referendums. But only Ireland (due to constitutional obligation) tested citizens' support for constitution. In all other countries, possibility of referenda was turned down, usually with explanation that "subject is too important to be decided by those who do not know anything". Does such European Union only lacks of legitimacy or it is systematically violating political rights in order to protect interests of (economic) elites? Can we answer such second thoughts with democratic deficit of the European Union or we need more responsive answers?

## **Changing role of political institutions**

Political institutions are one of main focuses of political sciences. Curiosity about how institutions act, what are the reasons and consequences of their activities, etc. is present for long time. Despite there are many other things that should gain importance, we cannot underestimate the importance of institutional designs in different political/social systems. How relation between different levels of governance influences political/policy and polity outputs and outcomes? How relation between government and parliament influences on one hand decision-making process itself and how it influences the results of this process. And one of mayor questions, in the scope of our conference should be; how institutional component of political system at any level influence react to the contemporary social situation. Is current form of political system able to face all challenges of fast changes and all decisions are right/wrong only due to their very nature or institutional design should be subject of serious change in order to find better policy solutions.

## **Incrementalism in reform of Public Administration**

Since decline of welfare state, reform of public administration is one of key concepts in administrative and government science. How to organize government and public administration in order to reduce costs and increase the effectiveness and efficiency? Answer to this question was partly given by new concepts of government and public management. Different methods of performance management are established every few years, concepts as new, better, good governance, etc. However, real changes are only small and usually not very effective. Expenses for public administration are still increasing and all changes towards efficiency and effectiveness are rather incremental in any meaning of this word. One of most common answers to inability to seriously reform public administration is leading to administrative culture. And we can add also something else, human factor; Unpredictable part of any activity that can ruin institutional and normative approaches by facing them to the reality.

## **Responsible economy**

Economic instability of the world is not over yet (in fact we can doubt about the real economic stability at any given time in market economy), and we were strongly warned how interdependent we are in global society. Economic system in today world has for the majority of states (at least all those with market economy or with strong economic ties to market economies) crucial role in providing certain level of "quality of life" as well as certain part of welfare and also financing state. In context of this topic we want to see effects of socially responsible behaviour of economy. How economy handle sustainable development? What is and should be role of state in combining economic need for profit and maintaining normal levels of social security, available to anyone in need. As current case US healthcare system reform can be seen as failure of social responsibility of the state and the economy.

## **Does limitation of freedom enhance security?**

We already mentioned in one of previous topics doubt about direct relation between security and freedom. We will warmly welcome any significant contribution analyzing how limitation of different freedoms in reality influences security in international, national, group or personal perspective. Quasi war

on terror started strong debate on this topic but no critical thinking was widely present about the question. In general media never really loudly questioned political opinion that giving up freedom and privacy will increase our security. In fact, on the individual level, giving up freedom and privacy increased danger of state terror over population, excessive police brutality and never really lowered most common threats to individuals personal security form life threat or social exclusion and poverty.

### **Virtual reality as obstacle to freedom and security**

Despite this conference pays no significant attention to technological issues, we are not allowed to just skip our second environment that is strongly connected to the question of freedom and security. Virtual reality is fact we live in. In majority of the world it is hard to imagine work or fun without computers, internet, mobile devices or better, multifunctional machines that are technological Swiss knives. They can strongly enhance our freedom in anything we do, but they also set certain limitation or better dangers, which are not only virtual but absolutely real. From identity stealth to internet dating finished with raped and death victims, virtual reality brings many negative impacts on modern society. And in this manner such phenomena should be systematically present in social science research agendas. In order to support this statement, we will gladly accept theoretical or empirical papers dealing with all virtual issues influencing real life freedom and security of individuals or society. However, we discourage papers with prevailing technical perspective.

### **World classifications at service of dominance**

Not so long ago world was divided to first, second and third world, according to the distribution of wealth and productivity. Today we are not using this division anymore but we are talking about developed and developing countries, stabile democracies and democratizing countries (however we still keep the undemocratic countries). Within this conference topic we encourage all different papers concerning changes in world order connected to the political or economic classifications. Especially welcome are papers setting these discriminatory classifications in reverse positions on the base of comparative studies.

We are looking forward for your early expression of interest that can be done by sending us e-mail with the title of your paper and abstract, which should not exceed more than 150 words. E-mail address for all correspondence and further questions is [uros.pinteric@gmail.com](mailto:uros.pinteric@gmail.com) or [alenka.pandiloska@urs.si](mailto:alenka.pandiloska@urs.si)

Yours sincerely,

Uroš Pinterič

Due to the fact that organisation of this event is connected with different expenses we are introducing, hopefully reasonable, fees that can be paid prior the conference on the bank account specified below or

at the conference venue. Fees will cover expenses of publishing the papers, other conference materials and coffee breaks. Organizer will cover the expenses of accommodation for one author per paper.

Conference fees:

	Payment until 31. Aug. 2010	Payment after 1. Sept. 2010
Paper-giver - author	20 €	40 €
Paper-giver – co-author (if present at the conference)	20 €	40 €
Participant – student	20 €	40 €
Participant – individual	40 €	80 €
Participant – paid by institution	100 €	200 €

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