



CEU Frontiers of Democracy Initiative
Signature Conference

Democracy and Its Discontents
October 9-10, 2015
Central European University, Budapest
In cooperation with

Stanford | **CDDRL** Center on Democracy,
Development, and the Rule of Law

Democracy faces challenges across the globe. Central European University, which has been at the vanguard of instituting and promoting the principles of democracy since its founding in the wake of the fall of communism, continues this role with its Frontiers of Democracy Initiative. The project, launched in September 2014, brings key academics, researchers, practitioners and leaders from around the world to Budapest to examine and debate the nature of, and the future of, democracy.

"Democracy and Its Discontents" will be followed by a conference entitled *"Illiberal Governance"* in February 2016, addressing the rise of contemporary autocracies in a global comparative perspective, exploring their origins and manifestations, which will be followed by the third and final Frontiers of Democracy signature conference *"Making Democracy Work,"* in June 2016, which will examine recent experiments in democracy around the globe, with special attention devoted to sharing successful experiences.

Democracy and Its Discontents

Across Europe and the United States, citizens today express concern for the quality of their democracies. Some go so far to ask whether democracy is up to the task of addressing key policy challenges of inclusive economic growth, rising economic inequality, and immigration. Political polarization has grown to unprecedented levels in the United States, while in Europe, anti-system extremist parties have grown in appeal and influence. Citizen confidence in democratic institutions has declined, as has trust in government.

Pressing problems challenge the quality, vigor, and legitimacy of liberal, representative government. These included the hollowing out of democratic institutions, as a result of declining popular involvement in elections and political parties (and the atrophy of parties' links to civil society); the tenacious, corrupting influence of money in campaign and party finance; the vulnerability of legislative and administrative deliberation to capture by wealthy interests as a result of lobbying; and underlying and exacerbating these, the nearly universal trend toward increasing concentration of wealth and income within countries.

What are the causes of this new democratic dissatisfaction? Will it be a permanent feature of political life in Europe and the United States? Will it erode democracy's efficacy?

"Democracy and Its Discontents" will explore these questions by focusing comparatively on European democracies and the United States. It will diagnose the causes of democratic discontent, but also consider possible policy and institutional responses to re-invigorate democracy and improve democratic government.

PLEASE NOTE: Registration for this event is now CLOSED. All seats have been allotted to those who registered via email. The entire conference will be livestreamed at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/central-european-university> so please join us online!

PROGRAM

Friday, October 9

10 - 11am, Auditorium – Opening remarks: *John Shattuck* (CEU President and Rector) / *Francis Fukuyama* (CDDRL)

11.00 am – 12.30 pm *"Hollowing"*

Hollowing refers to *diminishing popular involvement* in democratic institutions, manifested in citizens' declining participation in elections, parties, and the atrophy of parties' links to civil society. This panel will explore the ways in which this syndrome of democratic malaise combines to produce varied types of weakened/imperfect democracies and/or authoritarian reversals.

Chair and Introduction: *Bela Greskovits* (CEU)

Presentations: *Hans Keman* (Vrije), *Nathaniel Persily* (Stanford), *Diane Stone* (Warwick)

12.30 – 1.30 pm – Buffet lunch

1.30 – 3.00 pm – “Backsliding”

Backsliding refers to a reversal in the direction of development of democratic institutions, traced to political elites’ waning loyalty to democracy, and to their practices that sidestep or deliberately undermine its institutions. Backsliding implies and feeds on democratic destabilization and, at the extreme, paves the way to a turn to authoritarianism.

Chair and Introduction: *Larry Diamond* (CDDRL)

Presentations: *Zsolt Enyedi* (CEU), *Isabela Mares* (Columbia); *Vanessa Williamson* (Harvard)

3.00 – 3.30 pm – Coffee break

3:30 – 5:00 pm – “Money and Politics”

In the United States, campaign finance and professional political lobbying have increased dramatically in the last 40 years, stoking citizen perceptions of systemic corruption: a belief that political money buys political outcomes antithetical to the public good. This panel will compare developments in political finance, lobbying and corruption in the United States with those in Europe. What lessons might the United States take from the European experience? Will Europe be more like the United States in the future, with more political money and less capability to regulate it? How vulnerable is the EU and member governments to legislative capture by moneyed interests?

Chair and Introduction: *Stephen Stedman* (CDDRL)

Presentations: *Bruce Cain* (Stanford), *Agnes Batory* (CEU), *Sabine Saurugger* (Sciences Po)

5.00 – 5.30 pm – Reception

5:30-6:15 pm – Keynote speech: Saskia Sassen, the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology, Columbia University

Saturday, October 10

10 – 11:30 am – *“Democracy and Inequality”*

Around the world, people perceive and statistical data show that income and wealth within countries are becoming more concentrated. This panel will explore three aspects of the theme: a) trends across all democracies concerning inequality - to what extent is inequality causing systemic problems with democracy? b) What are the different national diagnoses of inequality policy in democracies and policy responses? c) What is the impact on democratic politics in fighting inequality?

Chair and Introduction: *Francis Fukuyama*

Presentations: *Carsten Schneider* and *Kristin Makszin* (CEU), *Nolan McCarty* (Princeton), *Ellen von den Driesch* (WZB), *Ben Ansell* (Oxford)

11:30 am – 12:30 pm – Brunch

12:30 – 1:45 – *Concluding panel*

Participants: *Bruce Cain, Isabela Mares, Larry Diamond, Diane Stone*

Moderator: *Carsten Schneider* (CEU)

1.45 – 1.50 pm – Concluding remarks by CEU President and Rector *John Shattuck*

2.20 – 3.20 pm Reception