The ECPAM’2013 Welcome Message

Welcome to the 2nd Edition of the European Conference on Political Attitudes and Mentalities, ECPAM’2013, organized this year by the European Research Group on Political Attitudes and Mentalities (EPAM Group)!

ECPAM’2013 continues the mission of the EPAM Conference Series initiated in 2012: to offer an integrated research and communication framework for the Eastern European experts and to build up a research community in the area of Political Culture. Eastern European history and cultures offer the proper themes for a better understanding of the present times and for a more comprehensive prediction over the future of the Europeans.

The ECPAM’2013 theme, “Political Attitudes and Political Culture: Theoretical and Computational Models”, has succeeded to join together faculty professors, researchers and doctoral students from seven European countries: Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Serbia, United Kingdom and Romania. The peer-reviewed papers accepted for the presentations prove a deep interest in how political culture shapes people's behavior, institutions, norms and actions. Moreover, papers' subjects cover a huge area of research in political culture, going from political attitudes to political action, and from mafia subcultures to new welfare models.

This makes us all think that political culture theories do not only make an “impressive comeback”, as Mishler and Pollack already felt ten years ago, but that they are rather underestimated with regard to their explanatory power, their impact on the modeling of the political phenomena in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and also during the long transition to democracy and democratic consolidation processes the Eastern European post-communist regimes are undergoing. Political culture theory do not just demands attention from the political analysts, but it also demands further consideration in political methodology, in computational modeling and in simulation research. Especially for Easter European political arena after 1989, political culture theory seems the only able to explain what no other political science theory succeeded so far: political attitudes and beliefs, clash of competing normative systems, socialization,
corruption and welfare, democratic consolidation and domestic politics authoritarian stepbacks.

The papers prove once more that both the political culture theory and its modeling are too distant as research approaches. New computational and simulation research methodology seem sometimes unknown or neglected by many authors from the Eastern European political analysis domain. Hence, the scarce participation to the ECPAM’2013. Notwithstanding its scarce appearance, this methodology might however provide the proper technological support to more interdisciplinarity in political culture research. This might reinforce our commitment to fostering interdisciplinary modeling research on political culture issues. This could help bring to the light so many Eastern European political culture researches which might remain anonymous due to their research underfunding and lack of networking.

Besides the considerable extent of the proposed research domains, the ECPAM’2013 papers show how deep is the dichotomy between theoretical and analytical research, on the one hand, and computational and simulation research, on the other hand. ECPAM’2013 conference aims at weakening this dichotomy by systematically opening its framework for interdisciplinary approaches, for joining experts of different academic backgrounds, from different schools of though, from different cultures, and from different parts of Europe. By joining the ECPAM conference space they have the chance to exchange ideas and experience and to start new research projects together.

In spite of the hard economical crisis times, and in spite of lacking proper funding and logistics support, ECPAM’2013 has found solutions which make all the other problems disappear, at least for the moment. Web space, computer communication and online conferencing technologies have helped us organize and meet in this virtual conference space. We are deeply grateful to Professor Bruce Edmonds from the Manchester Metropolitan University for making possible for ECPAM’2013 to be organized on the FM online conferencing platform! We could therefore achieve the main goals of this conference: to communicate our ideas, to share knowledge and expertise, to foster research collaboration, to increase academic solidarity and to start building up new networks of excellence across Europe.

We invite you all to watch the conference online and to visit the ECPAM’2013 webpage where the abstracts, presentations and video recordings of the conference sessions will be published.

We also invite everybody to read the ECPAM’2013 Proceedings, titled “Eastern European Political Cultures. Modeling Studies”, published by the ArsDocendi-Bucharest University Press and available for the interested readers, who can order it starting with the conference day.

Thank you!

Bucharest, November 8th, 2013

Camelia Florela Voinea
ECPAM’2013 Conference Chair