

Hungarian Project Leader's name

Béla Mester

Project title in Hungarian

Nyugatosítók és népiek. Egymást kizáró identitásképző elbeszélések a 19–20. századi lengyel és magyar eszmetörténetben (2020–2022)

Project title in English

Westernisers and “Narodniks”. Dichotomous Identity-Generating Narratives in the 19th–20th-century Polish and Hungarian Intellectual History (2020–2022)

Foreign project partner

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Science, Warsaw, Poland

Polish Project Leader's name:

Rafał Smoczyński

1. Give a brief description of the project proposal (100 words max.)

This project should be understood as a follow up of the previous research carried out by the Polish and Hungarian partners from the Polish Academy of Sciences and Hungarian Academy of Sciences entitled “The role of intelligentsia in shaping collective identities of Poles and Hungarians in 19th and 20th centuries” (2017–2019). The planned research, in turn, focuses on one of the central aspects of the modern intellectual history, citizenship patterns and power relations in Hungary and Poland, namely, on self-identification discourses which mirror Polish and Hungarian relationship with the Western countries, and the East. The research project focuses both on the description of the historical roots of the dichotomic discourses as expressed by the “Occidentalists” and Nationalist fractions of both countries’ elites within the interdisciplinary perspective of the history of ideas, political philosophy, post-colonial studies and historical sociology. Within three years we intend to hold at least three working meetings (in 2020 and 2021) and final conference in 2022.

2. Outline the scientific aims of the joint project; include details of how the project objectives are to be met and the timescales

The proposed interdisciplinary project is located in the field of humanities/social sciences that deepens the reflection on collective identity building in Central Europe, particularly through exploring its ideological and cultural evolution in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, but when relevant also in the 21st century. In other words, it aims to contribute to the development of the European identity studies enabling the understanding of the ideological/cultural narratives which formed the basis of modern Hungarian and Polish political and civic community. The part of the argument assumes that the modern Hungarian and Polish collective identity building has been significantly shaped by the discursive strategies of assessing Poland and Hungary’s actual or imaginary state of the maturity as compared with the self-reported European “values” or “standards”, what has been determined by the dependent position of peripheral Central and Eastern Europe towards the core Western European countries. The project will scrutinize two political discursive currents that have been taking part in this identity building process: local representatives of the Western culture

providing the local population with the expertise on how become a “genuine” European citizen or postulating a socio-cultural convergence of CEE peripheries with the core zone, and second fraction typically described as a nationalist or conservative which has advocated a substantial degree of regional protectionism over its resources (political, economic, cultural). The project will analyse prevalent cultural reductionism strategies of both camps, typically encountered in the underdeveloped economically CEE peripheries where the Bourgeoisie class historically has been poorly established, instead the post gentry intelligentsia stratum (the elite of cultural capital) has enjoyed a leading role in defining interpretative frameworks of civic responsibility.

The Hungarian partner will make a contribution to research on the following fields:

Roots of the backwardness-discourse in the Hungarian and Polish history of ideas. Its origins, position in the national and cultural self-identification; its appearance and its patterns in the historical studies within the humanities (methodology the political and cultural history of the nation, history of the national literature, philosophy and arts). Patterns, causes and sources of the political self-identification (over- and under-estimation of the values of the inland culture, institutions, and their role in the European civilisation; in the Hungarian case: Hungary as a poor and under-developed, but constitutional nation-state versus the rich and economically developed, but old-fashioned and absolutistic-tyrannical imperium). Case studies from the history of the 19th-century history of the Hungarian culture and politics. (Béla Mester.)

Political messianism as an answer to the dichotomous development in the CEE countries; Hungarian and Polish case studies. Turn of the century (Fin de siècle) and its radical economic changes, which results widely different social classes. The Astro-Hungarian Empire as melting pot of philosophical and sociological ideas; conflicting ideas, various philosophical trends. The new century as the beginning of a new era, through technological progress (Dawn of the Century) and its breakpoint: The Great War. The Great War reshaped the social classes and destroyed the old-world order. The consequences of the war: a tear, a break between the political, economic and social development of the Western and CEE countries. The recruitment of the radical leftish movements; their origin is the Jewish belief in the Messiah, which brings the “Eden” through destruction. Proletarian revolution in the CEE countries in 1919, which were strongly influenced by the messianism. Case studies from the Hungarian intelligentsia and their role in the Soviet Republic. (Bettina Szabados.)

The debate of Westernisers and “Narodniks” as a lasting identity-generating narrative in Hungarian culture. Dichotomous, antithetical notion-pairs have been conspicuous phenomena of modernity from the beginnings. The opposition of Westernisers and “Narodniks” appears again and again in modern Hungarian history since the beginning of the 20th century. It emerged in the interwar period leaving its mark on the relation of rivalling intellectual group. It, practically, referred to different modernisation strategies: the Westernisers preferred the emulation of Western European institutional and social organizing models, while “Narodniks” attached to the idea of alternative modernisation based on ‘national character’. This opposition had been rooted in Hungarian contexts, albeit, to a some extend, it was similar to the well-known antagonism of the Russian intellectuals in the 19th century. It is telling that if we translate original Hungarian terms ‘népies’ (populist) ‘urbánus’ (urbanite) verbatim, because of the different connotations, will be misleading for foreigners. However this opposition proves stubbornly recurring identity-generating discourse for Hungarian intellectual groups; the post 1989 Hungarian cultural-political situation has been rooted in this old antagonism as well. (Gábor Kovács.)

The Polish partner will make a contribution to research on the explanation of the dominance of the elite of cultural capital from the late 19th century onwards. In doing this he

will examine the post-1989 orientalisating discourses when Polish political elites took efforts to recreate a moral civic sphere and identify models of good citizens and bad citizens. The project will aim to emphasize that the moralization of citizenship either in the interbellum (1918-1939) period or during the post-communist era has emphasized the same regulatory aspect – encouraging the public to participate in the civic sphere and comply with the ideals of the Republic informed by the doxic figure of the intelligentsia member, that is, an educated individual who takes responsibility for the national sake.

The project will be carried out in the following way: the participants will implement previously agreed sub-themes relevant to their high level of research competence. Obtaining an overall plan will therefore be achieved by combining and comparing the results of detailed research. Within three years we intend to hold at least two working meetings (in 2020 and 2021) and final conference in 2022, organized jointly coupled with the release of joint publication.

3. Outline the expected benefits of this collaboration to both sides

The possibility of carrying out the proposed project will bring the following benefits for both participants:

- advancing the state of the art in the proposed field
- enhancing the scientific network
- producing the high quality scientific publication that summons authors from Hungary and Poland
- organizing international seminars and conference
- mobility enhancing of the researchers involved in the proposed project

4. Summarize the length, nature and main effects of previous scientific contacts between the cooperating researchers

The cooperation between Hungarian and Polish partners from PAS and HAS has been flourishing for a number of years since 2011. Polish and Hungarian partners from Institute of Philosophy HAS and Institute of Philosophy and Sociology PAS have been engaged for example in joint project “Affectivity and Its Vicissitudes in Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences” funded by Visegrad Fund with results published in “The Archive of History of Philosophy and Social Thought”, 2012, 57. Publications that resulted of HAS–PAS joint projects were also published by LIT Verlag (2011, and 2013, 2014, 2015). Recently Polish and Hungarian partners have been engaged in the joint PAS–HAS projects entitled “The impact of noble legacy in shaping citizenship in Central Europe” (2014–2016); and “The role of intelligentsia in shaping collective identities of Poles and Hungarians in 19th and 20th centuries” (2017–2019) which ended up with the joint publication by Acta Universitatis, 2019 (nr. 9). The new proposed project is meant to expand this collaboration. This ongoing collaboration proved to be successful in attaining its scientific and applied goals, in broadening the understanding and the knowledge in social sciences, building academic networks and enhancing cooperation. The collaboration resulted also in several seminars, conferences and invited lectures for PhD students and publications that covered social problems and philosophical issues. The current proposal will allow us to benefit from and built on the already well-established connections and work routine.