


# THE BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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## Table of Contents:

Scientific Committee .....	5
Polymaking and "Informal Rights": Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe .....	7
Political Capitalism as a Broad Social Context of Informality in Serbia .....	8
How NGOs Influence Government Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy Through Formal and Informal Linkage .....	9
Recourse Capturing: Middle Classes and Social and Political Reforms in Serbia .....	11
Social Capital and the Power of Informal Action .....	12
The Italian Way to Financial Accumulation. Personal Networks and Informal Practices of the Italian Economic Elite .....	14
Austerity, Tolerance and Symbolic Policies. Theorizing Informality from the Standpoint of a Mediterranean City .....	16
On the Inevitability of Political Clientelism in Contemporary Serbia	17
The Unwanted Heritage. In Search of the Historical Roots of Contemporary Corruption in Poland .....	19
From Shared Representations to Political Behavior: a Study of Clientelism in a Provincial Macedonian Context .....	20
Connections to Banks and Politics in Russia and Their Implications for Firm-Level Cost of Debt .....	22
Social Polymaking for War Veterans in Bosnia and Herzegovina ..	23
Informal Mechanisms and Local Power Sharing in Divided Societies -Multi-Ethnic Municipalities in Macedonia .....	25
The Informal Labor Sector in the Republic of Macedonia: Between Policies and Politics .....	27

Clientelism and the Institutional Change in Kosovo .....	28
A Brief Overview of the Environment and Circumstances Conducive to Clientelism and Its Effects on Developing Society.....	30
Living in the Afterlife of Informal Political Economies in Central and Eastern Europe: Social Trust, Neoliberalism and Informality from Below .....	33
The Main Characteristics and Mechanisms of Party Patronage in Serbia .....	35
Transformation of Serbian Political Elite as a Prerequisite for Accession of Serbia to the EU (1989-2015) .....	36
The Clandestine Political Economy of Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	37
Public Procurements Against Public Interest –Acquisitions of Private Security Services in Serbia.....	39
(In)formal Role of Religious Institutions in the Political Representation of Minority Groups: Case of Serbs in Kosovo and Bosnjaks in Serbia.....	41
About the Conference.....	43

## **The Main Characteristics and Mechanisms of Party Patronage in Serbia**

The aim of this paper is to examine the crucial actors, resources and informal mechanisms of the party patronage within Serbia's political field. Taking into account that important parts of political and economic reproduction are held beyond institutional channels, the goal is therefore to represent key informal power networks, channels and arrangements in Serbia between political and economic actors on the national level. A particular study had been conducted in Serbia over the past year, and consisted of 98 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with various experts, political and economic actors (i.e. people within high public administrative positions, politically influential people, appointed members in public enterprises, executives/managers/owners in private companies). The theoretical framework was based on concepts developed as an alternative to the institutional approach, such as clientelism, informality and party patronage (Kitschelt, Wilkinson, 2007; Kitschelt, 2000; Helmke, Levitsky, 2004, Ledeneva, 1998, 2013). The results indicated that political parties are the key actors in shaping informal relations inside the political arena. Political competition –and the necessity to provide funding for these organizations– represents a crucial factor for structuring informal, clientelistic relations and party patronage. Economic actors are, in most cases, adaptable to the rules and party requests which are –more or less– fixed. Furthermore, the results showed that the power networks consist of the party cadre and institutions, and are therefore representative of more exclusive and centralized systems. Although these systems are not monolithic, they do however have a parallel function with several interest groups which consequently, leads to competitions and conflicts inside (and among) political parties.

**Key words:** *party patronage, clientelism, power networks.*

## About the Conference

Informality represents important feature of post-socialist societies. Informal and personal networks that predate from socialist period are important legacy for development of democratic systems and market economy in former socialist countries. Particularly in the context of weak and blurred institutional and normative framework, individuals tend to rely more on informal institutions and practices. Because of that, patterns of clientelism and question of the 'culture of informality' are important for understanding of contemporary trajectories in political and economic subsystems of former socialist societies.

The aim of the Conference is to present current knowledge and further developments in the debate on informal relations, structures, practices and norms which are established between political and economic actors on central and/or local levels in the states of Central and South-East Europe. Informal practices such as personal and patron-client relations, clientelism, their roots and impacts on social, political and economic structures and behaviors will be in the focus of the conference. Careful attention to informal practices is critical for understanding the incentives that enable and constrain political behavior. Political actors respond to a mix of formal and informal incentives, and in some instances, informal incentives trump the formal ones. Scientific exploration of informal structures and institutions is especially demanding task which acquires 'a new set of research challenges'. Exchange of knowledge and experiences in employing different methods in investigation of informal linkages between political and economic elites will be as well important thematic area of the Conference.

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*More about the Conference at [www.secons.net](http://www.secons.net)*