

Detailed presentation of the Intellectual Themes Initiative at Central European University

This document details a comprehensive proposal to develop University-wide intellectual themes at CEU. The proposal is a result of extensive faculty consultations, anchored around the work of the Strategic Development Committee of the Senate and four faculty working groups, and in consultation with the Academic Forum, the Senate, and the Board of Trustees.

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1. Background and context

The overarching mission of Central European University is to apply critical analysis to the study, definition and promotion of open society and democracy in a historical and contemporary context. This has been CEU's mission since the University was founded in 1991.

In response to changes in the external environment, as well as internal developments and challenges, in the fall of 2014 CEU embarked on a review of its mission, with a view to update its implementation through the University's academic programs and outreach activities. The Strategic Development Committee of the University, chaired by the President, is coordinating this process among faculty and staff.

An objective of the review process is to explore and develop new activities and modes of organization that would encourage cross-disciplinary teaching and research and new ways of civic engagement, enhance the academic profile of CEU and shape its future institutional direction. The University's overarching mission will not change, but the mission will be implemented through new activities and modes of organization.

2. Rationale for a new University-wide strategic approach

The mission review process has stimulated a sustained institutional self-reflection and an applied discussion about what kind of university CEU is today, what is its institutional profile, what education CEU students receive, and how they are being prepared to face today's world and its challenges.

A starting point in this process is the complexity and accelerating rate of change of the contemporary world and the overwhelming growth in available information about it. The University needs to educate students and conduct research on how to navigate this complexity. The current organization and academic structures of CEU are not sufficiently supportive of this increasingly central desideratum.

An example of a complex global issue is energy -- not an issue of physical or environmental sciences alone but a subject that cannot be understood, analyzed, researched or taught without combining perspectives from many other fields. In addition to the more obvious ones, such as economics, public policy, business, political science, legal studies and network science, these fields also include the humanities, given the important historical and ethical aspects involved.

Another example is the problems of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious societies in the constitution of large integrative political and economic frameworks on the one hand, and the emergence of virulent forces of disintegration, conflict, separatism and fundamentalism on the other hand. This is also an issue where no satisfactory knowledge is feasible without cross-fertilization and cooperation among all the social science and the humanities fields represented at CEU.

CEU is seeking to respond internally to this rapidly changing external environment in both a "bottom-up" and a "top-down" manner through its mission review process. This is demonstrated by a number of current interdepartmental initiatives. For example, recently established new degree programs, such as the doctoral programs in Cognitive Science and Network Science, are being designed to overcome traditional disciplinary barriers. The number of joint degrees and specializations and advanced interdisciplinary programs formally registered with CEU's chartering authority in the New York State has significantly increased.

These developments along with the mission review are intended to address the twin challenges of *academic quality and coherence* across the University and the *contemporary relevance* of CEU. They are also considering a different challenge having to do with the *sustainability* of CEU as an institution. An overarching goal of the mission review is to develop intellectual integration so that CEU can become more than just the sum of its parts, while sustaining and further improving the high level of quality already achieved. A second goal is to revisit the question of the University's social relevance. CEU's original mission of promoting open society in a post-communist transition is no longer responsive to the external environment. Our very understanding of the open society needs to be reconsidered. We need to *re-imagine open society* in a contemporary context.

Finally, it is necessary not only to sharpen CEU's intellectual profile but also to communicate it more effectively to external audiences. This is essential for our student recruitment and fundraising efforts, as well as other aspects of CEU's future sustainability. The underlying question of what is, or should be, distinctive about CEU is being addressed in the mission review process. Academic excellence alone, although crucially important, is not sufficient. We have to have a clear answer to the question why students, staff and prospective supporters should choose CEU rather than other attractive, academically excellent universities elsewhere in the world. Moreover, CEU was not established to be just another university. If CEU has already made a particular contribution, academically, professionally, and socially, this is because of its mission. Having a distinctive mission is part of the *raison d'être* of CEU, and contributes to making it relevant, competitive, and sustainable. Open society and democracy is part of the institutional DNA of CEU and will remain its overarching mission. The mission, however, needs to be updated and operationalized.

3. University-wide intellectual themes: rationales and objectives

CEU has excellent academic resources, knowledge and expertise in various departments and units. These resources are largely disconnected. Despite being a young university, CEU suffers to some extent from a traditional university malady: a too rigid disciplinary and departmental separation. The challenge is how best to integrate existing resources, how to use the wisdom of the disciplines and the strengths of separate units in an inspiring and productive academic enterprise.

A core element of the approach adopted by the Strategic Development Committee is to identify a small number of University-wide intellectual themes. Such themes could serve as federative platforms encompassing a range of teaching and research activities across the University, as well as civic engagement and outreach initiatives. They would be formulated to address complex issues requiring new interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approaches to teaching and research. The goal would not be to force an intellectual straitjacket on the University, nor to impose a new immutable intellectual structure, but rather to help demonstrate CEU's distinctiveness, rejuvenate its mission, and reassert the University's key ambitions of intellectual and social relevance. Rather than specific outcomes or institutional structures, this initiative is intended to create or enhance an interdisciplinary culture at CEU.

The Committee identified three criteria for the selection of intellectual themes. First, a theme should represent an area in which CEU has academic strengths or plans for developing them. Second, a theme should reach across various units of the University. Third, it should have both broad academic appeal and societal relevance.

Four cross-cutting intellectual themes are proposed. These may be refined or changed, and other themes may emerge and be developed. The four initial themes are proposed for a period of up to four years. They encompass both new subjects and traditional areas of continuing relevance to societal problems: ***Social Mind, Inequalities and Social Justice, Energy and Society*** and ***Governance***. A fifth topic, ***Networks***, is proposed as a cross-disciplinary intellectual tool applicable to each of the four themes. The work on the development of the University-Wide Intellectual Themes initiative has been accompanied by efforts by a special task force appointed by the Rector to identify and propose ways to overcome ***administrative barriers*** to cross-unit cooperation at CEU. In addition, the University will continue to fund and institutionally enhance a separate ***Humanities Initiative***.

Social Mind

A. The understanding of the theme and its relevance to CEU

As part of a University-wide topic and theme for exploration and inquiry, Social Mind is not a unitary or unified concept that everyone understands in the same way. It is not a new concept created from scratch for the purpose of developing the theme, nor is it newly arising from existing understandings of Social Mind in particular disciplines. Rather, Social Mind is taken for a broad thematic canopy, in practical terms a cross-disciplinary platform, creating opportunities for cooperation, for exploring issues of common interest, allowing joint work of an innovative nature that would not have taken place otherwise, at CEU and possibly elsewhere. This initiative will build on CEU's existing academic strengths in cognitive science, humanities, social sciences, law and public policy. For present purposes, Social Mind is approached pragmatically and operationally rather than as a concept used with unbending rigor. In this way, it can be made to figure as one of the four signature themes around which work across the whole disciplinary range of the CEU system is encouraged, promoted, coordinated and synergized.

Many colleagues at CEU work in areas connected to Social Mind issues. These include how humans think; how culture is transmitted; multi-layered societal connections between knowledge, culture and values; the external constitutive elements of the individual mind; the problematic analogies made between individual and collective psychologies, including memories; social-psychological and cognitive mechanisms that permit humans to interact with one another in complex ways; collective memories, collective representations and the history of memory; the constitution and transmission of traditions and traditionalist claims for stability and homeostasis; economic "models of behavior"; production and use of information; political action; and many others. At present, however, work on these and related issues has most often been undertaken in isolation, along departmental and disciplinary boundaries. The Social Mind theme is likely to stimulate work across disciplinary borders, and result in the identification of new research questions, thematic and conceptual problematics, and concrete topical areas, or to shed light on existing topics and research areas in new ways. It is envisaged to add new elements to the education and training of specialists in several areas represented at CEU (from anthropology, economics and religious studies to public policy and law or nationalism studies), and to contribute to the production and elaboration of new knowledge and the fine tuning of skills needed to address social issues relevant to the mission of the University.

Although rooted in cognitive science, Social Mind is certainly not limited to this field, and has close connections with terms such as collective representations, mentalities, ideology, individual and collective consciousness, culture and related concepts in anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, political science, political thought, and other disciplines. It has in fact a unique potential for bringing people together from different disciplinary regimes and templates. Social Mind offers an "intellectual twist" with significant implications and potential for various disciplines to engage in novel ways with new or traditional issues in their own conceptual and thematic territories. The overarching theme of Social Mind is expected to create both topical and conceptual synergies, and tensions within CEU. This will be a welcome and productive challenge.

B. Possible thematic and topical areas for investigation

- **ICT-mediated communication as a constitutive part of the contemporary Social Mind.**
- **Understanding the role of technology in social interactions and changing patterns of social interactions. Networks of interaction and virtual communities.**
- **Memory, collective memory and the uses of collective memory.** The theme of memory is of course an old one. However, a novel twist and a public relevance have been lent to it by recent developments allowing for particularly innovative work of a federative and integrative nature, bringing together colleagues and expertise from a number of disciplines. An example is the large-scale construction of virtual memories using modern technology (social media) and the creation of virtual diasporic communities. A sharp political angle is given to this development when such media, and the creation through them of virtual memories, animate political mobilization. This is the case with ISIS today, where such virtual communities are constructed and induced to engage in crowd-like behavior in the service of ISIS political purposes.

- **Religion, Religious Norms and Social and Political Behavior.** A new theoretical approach is made possible by the Social Mind mobilization of diverse intellectual perspectives. Many parts of the world are witnessing not only what is generally termed a ‘resurgence’ of religion in a variety of fields in which it had been notably absent for many decades and more, but also wholesale reconstitutions, by political means, paths of modernist political and social development that had been taken for granted. India and the Arab World are often indicated in this regard, but the resurgence of religious and cultural conservatism in the US and in Europe, not to speak of Africa, is part of the same process. The extreme forms of these developments manifest themselves in regressive social engineering, in traditionalisation of attitudes to both past and present as well as to values and norms of behaviors, and in appeal to institutional forms that had long lost their appeal.
- **Applied Ethics from a Social Mind perspective.** Many issues in applied ethics are formulated as moral choices facing individuals. A recently emerged approach in the theory of rationality and reasoning emphasizes the role of the collective in the choices we make. There are situations where individuals do not act to maximize their preferences, but rather to maximize the preferences of a community with which they identify. This approach may overthrow the traditional understanding of certain applied ethical problems.
- **Free Will and Moral Responsibility from a Social Mind perspective.** One question under this theme is the assumption made by legal scholars and legal systems that people possess free will and can be held legally responsible for their actions, while psychologists and neuroscientists approach the theme with a perspective akin to that of naturalistic determinism. A Social Mind approach could stimulate joint research in this area and the production of new insight and knowledge, which again would help to overcome disciplinary separations and intellectual and practical dead-ends.
 Much of the traditional free-will debate is based on a binary opposition between an organism subject to mechanistic determinism on the one hand, and an autonomous, transcendent individual on the other. Instead of deepening this opposition further, a social mind inspired perspective could focus on a notion of free agent that arises out of our normative social interactions, starting with basic interactions that presuppose cooperation and responsibility, and extending to the complex interactions presupposed by legal systems.
- **Self, Construction of Self. Stereotyping and Intergroup Relations.** This would involve investigations into the way in which individual and collective identities are mutually constitutive, and the way in which the former might be subsumed into the latter under determinate conditions of ideological and mass political mobilization and engagement. An integral part of this topical area is the construction of social boundaries by means of stereotyping. While this is by no means a new area of research, it has special public salience today and requires more adequate approaches and forms of understanding and of contextualization than has hitherto been the case.
- **Social Mind approach on Epistemology.** The Extended Cognition paradigm has been an innovative and exciting research program in philosophy and cognitive science for the last three decades. The focus of this strand of research has been mostly the role of the body and the physical and technological environment in supporting mental processes. More recent philosophical studies shifted from the philosophy of mind to epistemology, asking how knowledge is produced, sustained and transferred in an extended framework. A Social Mind perspective could further shift the emphasis from the role of the inanimate environment to the role of other cognitive agents in the production and sharing of knowledge.
- **Economics and the Social Mind.** Economics has long superseded homo oeconomicus - the isolated, selfish-rational decision maker with unchanging, well-defined preferences. In fact, this has always been a somewhat unfair caricature. Already classical economists have recognized that the private costs and consequences of individual actions do not necessarily coincide with their social costs and consequences, giving rise to externalities such as pollution. Changing social norms are now increasingly forcing individual actors such as firms to internalize the broader consequences of their choices even without government intervention. In addition, economics has long played a leading role in studying interactions between multiple decision makers by using and advancing game theory. More recently, economists have also recognized that individual and collective decisions, and their consequences, can depend on the precise structure of the social network agents are part of. This calls for integrating complex

social interaction into modeling economic behavior. Another relatively recent subfield, behavioral economics, studies how decision making interacts with human psychology and the cognitive process, part of which is no doubt socially and culturally determined. Even macroeconomics, where homo oeconomicus has survived the longest in the form of a representative agent, is increasingly mindful of heterogeneity, network effects and complexity in general.

- **Social Mind, Justice and Legality.** Under this broad topic research could be designed and undertaken focusing, for example, on the study of cultural and social representations of legality, in which CEU already has some disciplinary expertise, and on their connections with individual or institutional behaviors. A specific proposal was put forward for the study of the cognitive and cultural biases in decision making in courts. This topic may also stimulate studies looking at aspects of the recent acceptance in many parts of the world of practices and actions which are illegal by both international and local standards, such as the patrimonial privatization of political authority or the prevalence of corrupt or mafia-like organization in business and investment, in a new way. By taking a more integrated socio-political-economic approach, supported by analytical tools from several disciplines, it might be possible to exceed the remit of the prevailing attitude in this area, which usually confines itself to moralizing discussions and strictures, without much potential for productive scholarly inquiry that might in turn feed effective policies.
- **New Perspectives on the History of Thought** (including possible connections with INET, which made History of Thought one of this particular area of interest).
- **Social Mind and Democratic (or Undemocratic) Developments.** What is the meaning of **e-Democracy** or **digital democracy in collective decision-making?**

C. Possible activities¹

- A “mobile think-tank” (“Social Mind Bus”), an outreach project to bring CEU work in this area to locations outside the University, to organize meetings between groups of researchers and practitioners from CEU and elsewhere at strategic locations.
- Faculty seminar series: members of the group or other colleagues from CEU to organize University-wide faculty seminars to discuss their research and relevant topics under the Social Mind theme. The role of the seminar series would be to share insight on selected topics, to refine existing projects and activities, and to identify and stimulate new possibilities of cross-unit cooperation. It has been proposed that the doctoral colloquium on “Religious Enthusiasm,” planned for the next academic year, might be adopted as one of the first concrete activities of the group, as it deals with topics arising under B above, and is jointly initiated by colleagues from Sociology and Anthropology, History, and Religious Studies.
- Social Mind lecture series and workshops to stimulate discussion and increase the visibility of CEU. Participants would be faculty from CEU and innovative international scholars.
- New research projects. For example, mapping of the Social Mind concept across disciplines to identify synergies (or tensions) across disciplinary borders, as well as possibilities for cooperation.
- A major conference on a selected topic within the Social Mind theme, with CEU and external participation, followed by a special publication.
- Editing a special issue of a major academic journal (such as *Science* or *Nature*) focusing on Social Mind.
- Interdisciplinary joint courses to be offered by two or more departments, involving co-teaching, including possibly a University-wide course on Social Mind.
- Joint specialization, leading to a certificate, on Social Mind.
- Involvement of PhD students in the themes and activities of this group and introduce a more interdisciplinary approach to doctoral training and research.

¹ These activities are presented here for illustration. They are not approved projects and may not even be developed into project applications.

Inequalities and Social Justice

A. The understanding of the theme and its relevance to CEU

In spite of some exemplary cross-cutting endeavors, the study of *inequalities* and *social justice* is typically divided along disciplinary boundaries. In fact, these two terms have different meanings in most related disciplines. For example, in sociology and anthropology social injustice is a descriptive concept. In public policy or gender studies, social justice is often seen as a normative concept and mobilizes interventionist approaches. Economics analyzes the trade-offs between reducing income inequality and other social goals, but does not typically analyze other forms of inequality. In gender studies, social justice involves critical attention to certain types of inequality as opposed to others. The terms equalities/inequalities usually capture a variety of issues concerning differences and cleavages in society, yet they can be too broad, overly complex, or neutral with respect to certain disciplinary traditions. Therefore, the *dual concept* of inequalities and social justice is proposed as an inclusive intellectual framework. This duality articulates an important intellectual tension which will invite productive theoretical debates and cross-disciplinary cooperation across various academic units of CEU.

This University-wide theme is meant to bring together the study of inequalities and social justice in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective, and through complementary approaches to the same issues. It is envisioned that scholars of human rights, social exclusion and inclusion, marginalization, welfare models, economic growth, human development, international security, just to name a few inquiries promoted at CEU, will feel inspired to contribute to this new cooperation. A variety of activities are proposed to create a platform for new theoretical and methodological experiments for those interested in overcoming categorical separations, while making use of the differing approaches of their respective disciplines.

Inequalities and social justice are elements of CEU's open society mission not only from a research and knowledge production perspective. The theme can also advise current and mobilize new efforts to pursue the University's civic commitments.

Future initiatives under this theme could create an intellectual laboratory, with direct attention to theoretical modeling, methodological experimentation, and empirical evidence.

A three-way approach is proposed to structure the content of the theme:

1. *Categories* along which inequalities are produced, experienced and addressed (such as gender, race, economic status, class, ability, locality-based inequality, etc.)
2. Analytical windows:
 - a. *Intersectional and integrative* approaches which will open new windows to the ways in which multiple grounds, categories, domains of human practices and thinking generate and address inequalities
 - b. *Scaling* approach looking at different levels: individuals, households, communities, national level, and global relations level. One can look at an individual from the point of view of gender position, class position and look at the global economy from the point of view of the same positions.
3. Topical inquiries (sub-themes)

B. Possible topics, relevant questions and problems under the theme

The list is indicative and open-ended. The collaborative nature of the platform will make the list a proposal for further deliberation.

- **Intersecting and competing manifestations of social inequalities.** How do the overall representations, frames, institutions, strategic alliances and clashes involved in addressing inequalities influence public understandings, models of participation, political and policy debates and actions?
- **Construction of categories of inequalities.** How do categories of inequalities get constructed? How do these relate to widely used and often contested indicators for inequality and critical review of ways of reporting inequalities?

- **Social exclusion, causes of inequality and injustice.** What are the social and economic forces that create inequality and injustice, and how are these forces affected by social and technological development? How do spatial and categorical divisions in society form enduring patterns of exclusion and what are the possible and actual mobilities to cross these divisions?
- **Inequality and democracy.** What is the relationship between forms, levels, and perceptions of inequalities and the opportunities to pursue and protect democracy in different parts of the world?
- **Inequalities and political institutions.** What are possible roles for political institutions (e.g. international, state, civil society) in alleviating inequality? How do global and regional norm-setting mechanisms shape these possibilities?
- **Forces for social equality.** What are the old and new socially relevant actors and actions that articulate and promote the objectives of social justice and equality in policy making, laws, social movements, civil society, etc. and what are the tensions and synergies among these forces?
- **Global inequalities and unequal development.** How have Central and Eastern European countries and other regions been involved in uneven patterns of global development? Does European integration draw/create new, and challenge inherent, patterns of inequalities? Is there an interplay between regional aspects (including regional integration) and global patterns of unequal development? What is the relationship between inequality within countries and global inequality? A point can be raised whether inequality between countries and regions is/has been increasing. There has arguably been a convergence in income levels (and some other material social-well-being measures) between countries and regions and a decrease in poverty in the last 35 years. How have international institutions addressed both of these dimensions? Which concepts have been used when studying and explaining unfavorable geographies and global development?
- **Humanities and social sciences collaboration.** How could these two domains of scholarship work together to explore and explain inequalities and their consequences in social affairs, in particular concerning hidden and intersecting forms of inequalities?
- **Epistemologies and methodologies for the study of inequalities and social justice.**
- **Situating “inequalities” research in the current historical conjuncture.** In what kind of a conceptual network is the current inequalities and social justice research embedded? What does this conceptual network veil and unveil in terms of the dynamics of disparities in the society? What kind of silences does it create in research and with what kind of political consequences?

Possible activities²

- One project could focus on the analytical tools for studying inequalities (how the problem is understood and analyzed across disciplines). This could lead to a major conference and publication.
- Call for proposals (in-house leadership and cross departmental cooperation) for new research projects (with seed funding offered).
- Academic and professional events, including an annual conference on inequalities and social justice.
- Faculty seminars, as an opportunity for intellectual dialogue but also an opportunity for others to engage with the theme.
- Teaching activities such as new courses, interdisciplinary courses, specializations; possibly a joint certificate based on existing courses that are cross-listed and in some cases joint courses.
- New joint courses/co-teaching, e.g. courses co-taught by two or three faculty members from different disciplines (with same teachers present in all class sessions). For example, a joint course on social inequality across disciplines together with case studies.
- University-wide courses within the four University themes for incoming students. This could be built into the curriculum. Those courses could be based on the four themes and all incoming students would be required to take at least one of the University-wide courses. It would be one of

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the electives. The large class size (about 150 students per course if all masters' students would be evenly distributed among the four thematic courses) would have to be addressed, although this might be a good challenge to have. It could be in the module format/seminar-oriented (less formal in style) rather than a semester long course. 1 or 2 credit University-wide courses required for all incoming students.

- A project to develop new ways to put faculty members in touch with each other. At present, faculty members do not know what the others are doing. The website profiles are not enough to stimulate the flow of information and exchange. Faculty seminars could contribute to this but other approaches should be considered as well.
- Research Lab – inspired by the IAS in Zurich, which develops a theme each year and invites applications to bring together four people to the Institute to work together for three years. Creating structures such as a Research Lab for interdisciplinary collaboration would be beneficial.
- Outreach activities will have to be developed. These might include initiating public debates linked to the results of the research undertaken at CEU under the auspices of the theme.

Energy and Society

A. The understanding of the theme and its relevance to CEU

The concept of energy was originally developed to explain fundamental natural processes and design industrial machines. Contemporary energy studies, however, are much broader and range from analysis of natural resources, climate and environmental issues, technological and economic systems, to the research of social institutions and structures, power relations, national and international politics, and historical social transformations. 'Energy' thus provides a remarkably effective perspective for understanding contemporary societies. It is a promising conceptual tool, a heuristic concept, a "generative" area that could help to develop research, teaching and learning at CEU, in keeping with our original institutional profile and mission.

Energy, however, is not only an effective angle and tool for advancing knowledge but also an important practical issue entangled with most of the key contemporary global challenges: from security and geopolitics to markets, poverty and economic development, and from climate and environmental degradation to innovation and social justice. It is widely recognized that these aspects of energy cannot be tackled by engineering and natural sciences alone, instead they require the engagement of social sciences and humanities in intellectually novel and practically relevant ways.

CEU is already making a significant contribution to various aspects of energy studies and could further pursue this fresh intellectual avenue, combining its existing strengths in the social sciences (political science, international relations, economics, sociology, etc.), humanities (history, philosophy, and cultural heritage), public policy, law, management and environmental studies. In the intellectual, professional, and institutional context of CEU, "Energy and Society" represents a potentially highly federative theme. Various CEU units (SPP, the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy, the Business School, the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology, International Relations, etc.) already work on or have an interest in various aspects of energy studies. The introduction of a cross-unit 'Energy and Society' theme would enable and stimulate their scholarly collaboration, expand their problematic horizons, methodological toolkits, theoretical approaches, teaching, and outreach.

In introducing the 'Energy and Society' theme, CEU does not intend to compete with other universities with strong energy centers often focused on engineering and natural sciences aspects or on specific energy technologies. Instead, CEU plans to mobilize, in a uniquely productive combination, its resources in the humanities, social sciences, environmental studies, management, law, and public policy. These could be brought together in research and education at the interaction between energy and societies with local, national, and global contexts. CEU already has strong expertise in global and EU energy governance, energy security (including in the recently prominent Eurasian energy geopolitics), energy and climate, access to energy and related equity issues, energy and innovation, long-term global energy scenarios and energy transitions. The name of the theme, 'Energy and Society', has been chosen to emphasize this unique focus.

B. Possible thematic and topical areas for investigation

The Energy and Society theme can initially include the following five topics:

- Energy, security and international relations;
- Energy, markets and regulation;
- Energy, climate and the environment;
- Energy transitions and innovation;
- Energy, poverty and justice.

These topics are naturally overlapping and interacting. For example, innovation affects both geopolitics and the impact of climate on energy systems, whereas political economy affects energy transitions. Examples of specific research problems that could be addressed within and across these topics include:

- energy as a tool of oligarchy;
- the role of the state in energy transitions (including historical perspectives);
- energy innovation systems and shale gas;
- the interaction between climate change and energy security policies;
- international governance of nuclear energy;
- political economy of clean energy;
- network science analysis of energy security;
- the role of transparency in energy governance.

C. Possible activities³

Cross-cutting

- Invite visiting faculty to cover the area of Energy Economics, Science and Technology to fill a major gap in this area at CEU.
- Announce ‘Energy and Society’ as a special topic for the CEU Institute of Advanced study.
- Expand the work of the CEU Energy Policy Research Group

Research

- Conference focusing on the inter-disciplinary understanding of social aspects of change and continuity in energy systems;
- Conference/events on any of the problems identified under section (B);
- Post-doc and PhD research projects in the field of energy and society.

Education

- A new course on the History of Energy (or Energy and Society taking a long-term perspective) co-taught by the Departments of History and Medieval Studies together with Environmental Sciences, Public Policy, International Relations, or Political Science.
- A ‘Sustainable Energy’ or ‘Energy and Society’ stream/specialization/certificate initially offered jointly by several departments and the two professional schools.

Outreach

- Summer University and executive programs for non-CEU audiences.
- Other commissioned activities and open calls for proposals.
- Other activities to be considered are detailed in the common section below for all four themes.

Governance

A. The understanding of the theme and its relevance to CEU

Governance is a subject that permeates most of CEU’s activities. Its close link with open society and place in the history of our University, coupled with its inherently interdisciplinary nature, make the topic one of the most natural candidates for a CEU-wide intellectual theme.

A large number of CEU faculty members and graduate students focus on issues related to Governance in their research and teaching/learning, in basically all units of the University. The theme cuts directly across a wide range of areas and subjects in the fields of political science, public policy, philosophy,

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legal studies, economics, business and management studies, international relations, environmental science and gender studies. The understanding of its processes is based on contributions made by history, sociology and social anthropology, and nationalism studies. Today, the new frontier of governance research lies in the study of its cognitive and network-related dimensions, and CEU is well equipped to pursue this novel research and educational avenue. In fact, every CEU department and school engages in governance-related topics, or may meaningfully contribute to research and other innovative activities in the area.

Governance is well suited to play the role of a major federative intellectual theme, and creates unique opportunities for collaborative endeavors. By providing institutional support for joint research projects, teaching and outreach activities in the area, the theme will add a valuable new dimension to the presently fragmented work conducted at CEU, foster the development of underexplored, innovative approaches to the subject, and showcase more effectively CEU’s multi-layered engagement in the field to external stakeholders, emphasizing the key interface between governance and open society issues.

The breadth of the term “Governance” poses significant challenges. On the one hand, any attempt to provide an overarching definition may result in vagueness and lack of originality. On the other hand, selecting specific areas would restrict the scope of the theme *ex ante*, before exploring its potentials in practice. In light of these considerations, it is proposed to proceed with the identification of areas of particular academic and institutional interest (“hot topics”) to orient the work under this theme and to reflect its prismatic nature.

B. Possible thematic and topical areas for investigation

In order to frame the sub-topics in a coherent and structured manner, they are organized in three clusters: (a) Actors: People and Organizations, (b) Structures/Forms of Governance, and (c) Tools of/for Governance. Each sub-topic can be analyzed along a matrix of different spatial dimensions, spanning from the macro-, global level to the micro-, firm level.

↓ Clusters Levels →	Global	Regional (EU)	National	Sub-national	Firm
ACTORS					
STRUCTURES/FORMS					
TOOLS					

In the frame of the three clusters, particular topics could be identified:

➤ **ACTORS**

- **Change Makers.** Governance is usually studied at a macro level. However, sometimes there is a key individual emerging and changing history, for better or worse. In the last decades we have seen them both in this part of the world, with no apparent theory or model to explain, let alone to predict it. At present there is no way to model this reality in the social sciences. Such occurrences could be called (in severely negative and perhaps unexpected cases) “freak accidents”, or we could speak of “freak leaders” (as opposed, for example, to the former communist dissidents, or great leaders of the stature of Gandhi or Mandela) impacting on how politics and policies develop. “Freak leaders” even when they are very “atypical”, often emulate other leaders and generate similar policies in other countries, creating new trends, new political realities, sometimes with potentially long-lasting consequences. While the humanities (history) often study such cases, social sciences lag behind. It could be an interesting project to focus on key individuals in key historical circumstances from an interdisciplinary perspective, bringing together cognitive sciences, political science, history, and network science.

- **Civil Society (International/Global Civil Society).** The topic may give a practice-oriented angle to the theme, and integrate outreach aspects. It would focus on processes of empowerment (how are people encouraged to do things differently with regard to governance) and on the development of innovative approaches in the field. For example, in the case of authoritarian regimes, the goal would be to develop processes capable of bridging the gap between people active at various levels of civil society globally, and donors/sponsors, and various governance structures.
- **Governance and Sub-state Actors**
- **Self-Governance and Citizenship.** The topic focuses on the tension – embedded in citizenship - between being governed and participating in governance. By adding ethical, philosophical and historical aspects to more traditional research areas in the field, the topic brings potentially important contributions from humanities' perspective.

➤ STRUCTURES/FORMS

- **“Good Governance”** is a topic that has to be considered with care, since it has already been exhaustively explored and frequently trivialized.
- **Governance and Leadership.** This topic may point to a more normative direction (what is good governance and good leadership from an open society perspective), or a more instrumental one (how to lead effectively, what makes for effective governance or leadership)
- **New Forms of Opposition and Protest**
- **New Trends with Regard to the Governance of Violence**
- **New Forms of Organizations** (using a networks approach)
- **Emerging Trends and Changes in Governance and Decision-making**

➤ TOOLS

- **Information and Governance**
 - **Big Data and Governance.** The focus of the topic could encompass control and access to information and their role in decision-making procedures, and political inequalities with regard to the production, access, and use of data. It would look at the substantive developments in technologies, and at the data produced and used through their implementation. The aim is not to use big data as a technical tool, but to study big data as used in governance contexts (e.g. in the NSA, Google, Amazon cases), and the underlying power relationships. It is a highly interdisciplinary topic.
 - **Ownership of Information and Privacy.** The heated debate on this issue, in the EU and beyond, denotes a crisis in terms of politics, regulations, and actual government practices. The sub-topic may use a cross-disciplinary perspective to analyze the transformation of personal data from objects of privacy rights to objects of property rights, traded for money and bought for power, and the impact of such developments at a macro-level (governance, individual empowerment vs. commodification, social control etc.).
- **Prospects for Governance** (considering networks, technology, global and local levels)
- **Regulation (decentralization of sources; new forms of regulation).** The topic would look at sources and mechanisms of regulations from a cross-disciplinary perspective, focusing on the recent phenomena of decentralization in the development of new regulatory forms, and on their overall impact on what governance is today. Democratic (national) institutions are no longer the place where regulations are created, and this is particularly true in the context of business regulations, where agreements between stakeholders in standardized, cross-border settings are becoming a common practice.
- **Accountability**
- **Governance and Social Mind Interactions/Cognitive science approach to decision-making,** for example with a focus on paternalistic liberalism, nudging and choice architecture, etc.

C. Possible activities⁴

- **Inventory of ongoing PhD projects related to Governance at CEU**
 - This will map current work on governance issues at CEU and identify pertinent issues to consider developing under the general theme.
- **Annual conference on governance failures** (or other governance-related topics).
 - Events, more generally, under this theme should engage not only academics, but also people who are practically involved with issues of governance (politicians, civil society activists, etc.). Such participants would create a bridge between CEU's academic work on Governance and outreach activities.
- **Cross-listed and joint courses**
 - Taught by 2-3 faculty members, or more, from different disciplines and departments. The possibility to offer a University-wide course on Governance as an elective to MA students from any department has to be explored.
- **Faculty seminars**
 - A possible approach is to select challenging, problematic issues and to organize faculty seminars around this topic, with the aim of mapping diverging views on the concept of governance from different disciplines.
- **Joint specializations**
 - Political Thought could provide some structures, as it already involves six departments.
- **Joint faculty appointments** in two or more departments
- **Interdisciplinary PhD panels at CEU**
 - Invite faculty members from different and apparently unrelated disciplinary perspectives, but sharing an interest in the Governance topic of the dissertation, to sit on the supervision panel. This would increase cross-disciplinary communication, with positive effects on the final research output and training of the PhD candidate.
- **Joint research projects.**
 - E.g. a cross-disciplinary research program on law and social change.
- **Open call for proposals and related grants**
- **Other commissioned activities**

5. An intellectual tool: networks and network science

Network science is not conceived at CEU as an intellectual theme or academic area. Rather, it is proposed as a tool for intellectual inquiry within the thematic areas, as illustrated in section 4 above. Network science brings together many departments at CEU and has the potential to be applied in new areas. CEU is at the forefront of developing network science as a cross-disciplinary basis for cutting-edge social, political and economic analysis. It has the capacity to stimulate interdisciplinary study and research, including original research that is expected to produce new knowledge and insight. The doctoral program in network science already engages with economics, mathematics, environmental science and political science, and could potentially bring together many groups of academic units with the University. Faculty groups working on the elaboration of the four themes include faculty who use the network science approach.

⁴ These activities are presented here only for illustration. They are not approved projects and may not even be developed into project applications.