

Newsletter of the research network 'Political Sociology', European Sociological Association 1/ May 2010



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www.europeanpoliticalsociology.eu



Welcome by the network convener

With this newsletter I would like to welcome to our association scholars

with an interest in political sociology. Like for all social science disciplines, there is no universal agreement on the nature, methods and goals of political sociology. However, there are many sociologists who study political phenomena and do this with specific reference to methods, theoretical references and research agendas similar to other sociological fields. On the other hand, there are politically relevant research areas that attract academics from a range of disciplines. This is for instance the case of experts in public policy.

Thus, for instance in the US tenure-line faculty in the top public policy schools include economists and political scientists as well as sociologists and other social scientists. In Europe many sociologists work in departments that bring together sociologists and political scientists, often collaborating in integrated research groups. If the boundaries between political science and political sociology are difficult to define, as a 2008 symposium of the political sociology section of the American Sociological Association clearly illustrated, integration of the two disciplines can lead to innovative and valuable research. As a contributor to that debate noted, not to be anchored by a narrow research agenda and to a narrow identification with a specific type of department allow political sociologists to often ask the 'big questions' that other disciplines no longer often ask.

However, interdisciplinarity has its costs. It is often difficult to remain visible and relevant to current academic debate with-

in one discipline when one is working on the boundaries of other disciplines. It can be difficult to identify and connect with other scholars with similar interests. It can be difficult to stimulate convergence on new socially and politically relevant research topics without an institutional 'home'. The purpose of the political sociology section (ESASOCPOL) of the ESA is to provide this 'institutional housing'.

There are other fields within sociology and within political science which have strong relevance for political sociology. For instance colleagues working on social movements or on social policy approach social-political phenomena routinely and often have strong professional associations, but the field of political sociology aims to be broader. We aim to study the political implications of new social issues, such as the impact of migration and debates on citizenship in relation to European governance, the role of deliberative fora and the role of organized civil society at local, national and transnational level, issues of political communication and the changing political role of the media. For these and similar issues there are often no spaces within generalist professional associations in the social sciences. And often the European dimension is not sufficiently considered and left to European Studies specialists. A European political sociology association is then a first step to address these issues.

As a sociologist who has spent most of his working life on the boundaries between sociology and political science, I believe that our still-new association will provide a useful outlet for discussion and a space to share information on conferences and workshops. It will allow us to give structure to this discipline and work towards a thematic and methodological convergence of different national approaches, which are currently extremely diverse and possibly too fragmented even just within Europe.

Similar political sociology research net-

Inside this issue

Welcome by the network convener

Website has been set up

A New ESA Political Sociology Section

European Sociological Association (ESA) Ninth Conference in Lisbon, Portugal. 2- 5 September 2009 -09, Minutes of the RN32 Political Sociology Research Network of ESA

Interim Conference Lille, November 2010: Citizenship and Democracy: Membership, forms of participation, within and across European territories.

works have long been available; new ones are emerging or have recently emerged within other professional associations. For instance, in addition to the IPSA newsletter there is now a political sociology group within the ECPR. We would like to work in collaboration with these colleagues and maximise the opportunities to acquire relevant spaces within national and international scholarly associations. We aim to organize political sociology sections in all the ESA conferences, and to apply for biannual interim conferences. I hope all political sociologists will find this new initiative useful and will help by registering as members of our network, suggesting panels and contributing their papers to our conferences and workshop. This website is a first step in making this all possible.

Carlo Ruzza

Website has been set up

Welcome to the website of the Political Sociology section of the European Sociological Association

The ESA Political Sociology research network is a site for debate on the ongoing transformation of political order and authority in Europe and beyond.

- We organise conferences and workshops both in the context of the activities of the European Sociological Association (ESA) and independently. In the context of the ESA we are the Research Network 32 and we organize panels at the biannual general conference of ESA (the next conference will take place in Geneva in September 2011) and interim conferences (the next one will take place in Lille, and a call for papers is now being circulated)
- We seek to support the research and publishing activities of our members.
- We aim at providing a space for academic discussion and information on political sociology in Europe.
- We endeavour to link our association to other political sociology associations.

Having only recently been approved by the ESA executive, we are still a fairly new association. In the following months we aim to prepare a list of members and interested scholars. We would like to use this website as a resource tool to connect political sociologists active within national sociological and political science associations, particularly in Europe.

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European Political Sociology
Section of the European Sociological Association

Home Board Members About us Interim Conference News & Events Business Meetings Newsletter Forum
Publications Links Contact Us Guestbook

Home



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A new ESA political sociology section

The new ESA Political Sociology research network has been approved at the ESA Executive Committee meeting of 23- 24 October 2008.

The ESA political sociology network is intended as a site for enduring debate and exchange to measure the scale and scope of the ongoing transformation of political order and authority in Europe and beyond. The dynamics of structuring and restructuring of political authority are a classical research field for comparative sociology. Over the last decades, Europe has increasingly turned into an experimental field for the restructuring of political order. In particular, European integration and the consolidation of supranational authority have made it necessary to re-address these classical themes of sociology. A political sociology of Europe is needed to analyze not only how political authority is applied and power is distributed but also how it is re-defined and re-constituted. This implies a broad view on political institutions, which are analysed not simply as formal legal bodies with a particular mandate, but more fundamentally as structured, yet changing patterns of social relations. In this vein, political sociology sheds light on the social beliefs and practices that provide the basis for legitimating normative and political order. Hence, its central question is: What notions of the political and what kind of norms and ideas about the legitimacy of government are held valid in contemporary Europe, and how do they operate within and across European societies? This implies a research perspective on different legal and institutional arrangements, changing forms of government/governance, new forms of political allegiances and changing polity-society relations. Perspectives on citizenship, political identities, representation, participation, deliberation and political communication are part of this endeavour. The establishment of a political sociology section is therefore meant as an integrating effort for evaluating the

challenges to the Westphalian order of nation-states, but also for testing out the opportunities for the consolidation of a new type of political order and its legitimacy.

The new ESA political sociology research network will initially articulate the following set of topics with particular attention to the European dimension. They correspond to the main research interests of the list of signatories of this document. They believe to be representative of the concerns of a wider sociological community based in a variety of European countries and expressing a wide geographical distribution.

Levels of citizenship

The relationship between citizens and the legitimacy of political institutions is at the core of how the workings of modern state systems are understood. The historically developed nexus of citizens and political institutions has traditionally been held to entail membership in a bounded, territorial community. This paradigmatic understanding has been challenged by the idea and practice of transnational, multicultural, European, cosmopolitan or global citizenship. Within the political sociology section, contributions are welcome which challenge the notion of congruence between nation, state and citizenship, e.g. through studies on European citizenship or comparative studies of citizenship. Furthermore, scholars within the political sociology section will look at new forms of citizenship practices, often related to issues of gender, migration and poverty.

Political attitudes and values

Research on political attitudes and values has been at the core of comparative sociological studies analysing how ordinary people relate to politics and the democratic process. Research of this type is useful to establish, for example, how ideological or ethnic cleavages divide populations

within and across European societies. In particular, the European comparative dimension has been encouraged by making new datasets available for research and conducting regular surveys at a European scale. Over the last years, this has opened a new comparative dimension in research on political culture, voting behaviour, value orientations, and political identifications. This research cluster brings together the different efforts that have been made by scholars in this field, through both quantitative and qualitative methods. On the one hand, it encourages comparative surveys that map convergences and divergences in value attachments, allegiances with political parties, support of political regimes, welfare states, etc. On the other hand, it is open to multi-method research designs aspiring to seize public opinion as a transactional communication process that involves not only the general public, but also a number of individual and collective political, social, and media actors.

Political communication and the public spheres

More than in any other research field, the framework for political communication research has been the national public sphere backed by national media organisations and nationally fragmented audiences. The integrity of the national public sphere is however increasingly challenged by the impact of global communication flows and the embedding of local and national cultures in world culture, shaped by the global exchange of meaning. At the same time, many scholars have observed how mass political communication is more and more characterised by the growing personalisation of politics, the tabloidization of news outlets, and the media framing of election campaigning, as well as the more general political process, as 'game', spectacle, or show business. The political sociology section encourages comparative research that brings to light the contextual conditions and

constraints of political communication, i.e. on how given relations and interactions between political institutions and actors, media structures, public opinion, and organised social groups result in different models of political communication. Contributions can be both theoretically and empirically driven, dealing both with the methodological problems of comparative research in the field, but also with the growing concern about how to transcend the limits of 'methodological nationalism' in the study of contemporary multilevel (i.e. sub-national, European, global) public spheres.

States, Communities, Governance Structures and Political Institutions

The institutional and constitutional dimensions of the re-ordering of the political spaces in Europe and beyond merit particular research attention. In response to global challenges and the transnationalisation of governance, many have projected a profound transformation of the state structure. Others

have emphasized the resilience of the nation state, which continues to be the main locus for the allocation of political authority and legitimacy. Changes in the structure and in the modes of operation of the state and of political institutions are also not necessarily followed by the redefinition of the borders of the political community. This research cluster articulates the research interests of scholars working on the macro and micro dimensions of the transformation of political power. This includes a broad understanding of the constitutional basis of political order as well as case studies on the functioning of political institutions at different levels of governance, their interactions and their modes of operation in specific public policy domains. This includes also theoretical and methodological issues concerning the mechanisms the policy process and of political change.

Forms of Political Participation

This cluster of themes articulates research on forms of participation and their change. The main focus is here

on institutional forms of participation that develop within and across existing state structures. This includes work on political parties, public interest associations and more generally on party systems and their change. It also includes work on party families such as parties of the extreme right and related issues of populism, racism and xenophobia. This cluster further relates to more informal and non-institutionalised structures of political participation, including the new media. It does however not focus specifically on social movements and protest but rather embeds changing patterns of political participation within civil society at large. This opens a new comparative perspective on the consolidation of organised civil society in relation to changing forms of government/governance.

Democracy and democratisation

This cluster invites for a theoretical interchange between normative political theory, theories of democracy and social theory. Instead of dividing the world of norms from the world of political facts, political sociology needs to explore the normative foundations of political order and legitimacy under condition of modern or postmodern societies. In descriptive terms, democratic theory need to make sense of new ways of how citizens relate to political order, contest political legitimacy and influence political decision-making. In normative terms, it needs to be spelled out how these new forms are coded in procedural terms (e.g. direct democracy, representative democracy or deliberative democracy) and what kind of particular value is attributed to them. In this latter sense, political sociologists are invited to deliver not so much a normative assessment of the present transformation of democracy, but an analytical account of the ongoing processes of (de)democratisation within and beyond the nation state framework. This includes an empirical perspective on the practices of justification and legitimation of democratic order and redesign.



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European Sociological association (ESA) Ninth Conference

Lisbon, Portugal, 2- 5 September 2009

Minutes of the RN32 Political Sociology Research Network of ESA

3 September 2009

The new ESA Political Sociology research network has been approved at the ESA Executive Committee meeting of 23- 24 October 2008 . The first business of the newly founded research network (RN) is chaired by Carlo Ruzza. He starts by explaining some of the background to the creation of the new RN before listing the agenda of the meeting and the tasks that lie ahead. In his view, although there are some networks that cover themes of political sociology (eg social movements, migration, social policy), ESA does not have a home for political sociologists as such and thus a place when one's work can be debated, recognized as such. Carlo Ruzza then states that the board should perform the following tasks:

- Organizing the panels of the biannual conference. The next one will take place in Geneva . Each board member will be expected to organize a panel/session.
- Organizing mid-term conference on a specific theme (ESA pitches in €1500)
- Setting up a web site with the space provided by ESA
- Editing a newsletter which will be a way of debating political sociology but also of constituting a network.

There are several criteria to be on the board. The board should represent the variety of approaches and themes of research in the field as well as respect gender and geographical balance. A doctoral student asks whether there could be a student member on the board to help socialize junior members into the profession. Carlo Ruzza answers that in fact someone has already brought up that issue before the meeting and volunteered.

The assembly then proceeds to vote for a convenor and co-convenor. Carlo Ruzza (Dept. of Sociology, Leicester University) and Virginie Guiraudon (CNRS, University of Lille 2), who have volunteered are unanimously elected.

The floor is open for suggestions and people intervene, mainly to ask questions and to volunteer for the board. Some points are clarified. Board members should be members of ESA. There will be exchanges with the new Political Sociology section of the ECPR. Issues that are brought include the issue of the perimeter of the RN. Carlo Ruzza states that this will be debated during a roundtable discussion the next day and is right now an open question.

The following volunteers are elected to the board:

- Carlo Ruzza (convenor)
- Virginie Guiraudon (co-convenor)
- Mauro Barisione (Department of Social and Political Studies, University of Milan)
- Hans-Jörg Trezn (ARENA, Oslo)
- Monika Kwiecinska (Institute of Sociology , Torun University PL)
- Dietmar Loch (Sociology Dept, University of Grenoble)
- Thomas Boje, (Department of Society and Globalisation Roskilde University , DK)
- Cristian Norocel (Dept. of Political Science, University of Helsinki) (Student rep)

For further inquiries please contact:

Carlo Ruzza (carlo.ruzza@le.ac.uk) and Cristian Norocel (cristian.norocel@helsinki.fi) for the content of the web site.

Hans-Jörg Trezn (h.j.trenz@arena.uio.no) and Mauro Barisione (mauro.barisione@unimi.it) for the newsletter.

Virginie Guiraudon (virginie.guiraudon@univ-lille2.fr) and Dietmar Loch (Dietmar.Loch@upmf-grenoble.fr) for all information regarding the mid-term conference.

Interim Conference Lille, November 2010

RN 32 POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY Call for Papers:

Citizenship and Democracy: Membership, forms of participation, within and across European territories

CALL FOR PAPERS

Research Network 32 – Political Sociology

Abstract submission deadline: **15 June 2010**

Please submit abstracts to: rn32mtc2010@gmail.com

The European Sociological Association's Research Network on Political Sociology announces its first **mid-term conference**, to be held at the University of Lille 2 in France, 4-5 November 2010. The Research Network is intended as a site for enduring debate and exchange to measure the scale and scope of the ongoing transformation of political order and authority in Europe and beyond. The dynamics of political ordering and re-ordering are a classical research field for comparative sociology. Over the last decades, Europe has increasingly turned into an experimental field for the re-structuring of political order. In particular European integration and the consolidation of supranational authority have made it necessary to re-address these classical themes of sociology. The establishment of a political sociology section is therefore meant as an integrating effort for evaluating the challenges to the Westphalian order of nation-states but also for testing out the opportunities for the consolidation of a new type of political order and its legitimacy. This entails an explicit focus on the advancement of institutional and organizational theory as well as on democratic theory that are detached from their implicit or explicit nation-state functions. Members include scholars working inter alia on **citizenship and governance structures, political institutions, states and communities, political attitudes and forms of political participation and political communication**.

The aim of this mid-term conference will be to establish the evolutions of the links between members of political communities, the territories of authority, the evolving forms of democracy, and the ways in which the political is embedded in social, economic, and cultural contexts.

In particular, we encourage submission of abstracts on the following themes:

1. *Territories and practiced citizenship from the local level to the transnational Euro-context*: local democracy, urban segregation and citizenship; citizenship and the nation-state; supranational and transnational forms of citizenship.
2. *New forms of participative democracy and transformations of representative democracy*: associations, interest groups, political networks, participation in the digital public sphere; political parties and the transformation of political cleavages in a European/global context, protest parties, electoral volatility and voting behavior, etc.
3. *Migrants and citizenship in Europe*: urban segregation and different spheres of citizenship for migrants; representation of migrants in national party systems; (dissociation of) citizenship and nationality, citizenship and the crisis of national integration models; transnational mobilization and citizenship.
4. *Populism in Europe*: populism, nationalism, euroscepticism, radical right parties in the new cleavage structure of national party systems, the electorate of radical right parties.

Abstracts of up to 250 words should be submitted to the organizers by **15 June 2010**. Please include information on the theoretical and methodological approach as well as the key argument and/or findings of the proposed paper. Abstracts with more than one author should indicate one contact for communication.

Presenters will be sent an email informing them whether their abstract has been accepted by 15 July 2010. Presenters whose papers have been accepted must confirm their attendance at the conference by 1 September 2010.

Conference venue and organization

The conference will be hosted by the CERAPS, Lille Center for Politics. The research center is located within the faculty of Law of the University of Lille 2, a convenient ten minute subway ride from the main train station. Lille is easily accessible by train (Eurostar and TGV). There is an airport but also direct high speed trains from the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport that only take 45 minutes. Participants are asked to make their own travel arrangements and book accommodation. We will suggest a range of hotels (prices range from €50 to €110 a night). Information on how to get to the Law School building of the University of Lille 2 by rail, bus, air and road can be found at: <http://ceraps.univ-lille2.fr/fr/plan-d-acces.html>. There will be a conference diner on Thursday evening and lunch provided on Friday on the premises.

To encourage participation by a broad range of early career researchers and experienced academics, there is no registration fee. To register, please write to rn32mtc2010@gmail.com with the following information: name, position, affiliation with postal address, country, email address and dietary preferences.

Abstract Submission: Please submit abstracts of 250 words to rn32mtc2010@gmail.com

Deadline: 15 June 2010

Further information: Contact Virginie Guiraudon and Dietmar Loch at rn32mtc2010@gmail.com