A Political Sociology of European Democracy

Jean Monnet Module

Syllabus 2012/13

Lecturer: Paul Blokker

Course Outline

The course has as its main objective the exploration of an emerging and distinctive approach in European Integration Studies, that of political sociology. The first aim is to explore and clarify the advantages and disadvantages of a critical, political-sociological analysis in comparison with existing political science approaches, in particular with regard to the study of European democracy, the democratic deficit, and an emerging European political society. A second aim is to enrich European Integration Studies with insights from democratic theory. A third aim is to exemplify the fruitfulness of a political-sociological approach by exploring processes of political interaction and conflict, political claims-making and justification, civic participation and contestation, and social integration and fragmentation in the European Union.

The course is divided in three parts. In the first part, it will be discussed to what extent democratic politics now transcends the contours of Westphalian, national democracies, and to what extent a European political society (including, but not confined to formal EU actors and institutions) can be said to (partially) replace and successfully fulfill some of the democratic, socially integrative, and symbolic functions of national democracy. In particular, it will be considered to what extent extra-EU democratic resources play a role in shaping EU institutions. A strong emphasis will be placed on the role of political conflict, critique, claims-making and justification in different political arenas that affect and shape the EU, ranging from formal institutions, to ‘comitology’, to civil society, to informal practices.

In the second part, different democratic theories of the EU will be discussed, as well as conflicting perceptions and public opinions of European democracy as held by significant (collective) actors, including political and legal elites, social movements, and civic actors. In particular, an emerging European political society (in terms of political party- and class-formation, socialization, cohesion, epistemic communities, and repertoires of legitimation) and different available understandings of the nature of a European political society will be scrutinized.

In the third part, distinct instances and events of European politics – in particular distinct moments of open political conflict and crisis - will be analysed from a political-sociological point of view, including processes of political elite socialization and decision-making ('from above') as well as cross-border mobilization, political action, and cohesion ('from below'). Distinct events and crisis moments include the European
Constitutional project, enduring conflict over agricultural policy, the debate on fundamental rights, and migration policy.

Weekly Programme

Part I. Europeanization and Democratization

Wednesday 27 – Thursday 28 February
1. Introduction: A Political-Sociological Approach to the EU
   - Introduction course (agenda, prerequisites, exam, readings main focal points)
   - Why a political sociology of the EU?

Literature

Wednesday 6 – Thursday 7 March
2. The Westphalian Nation-State and European Integration
   - Changing role and context of the state
   - European society
   - Political and constitutional pluralism

Literature

Background readings

Wednesday 13 – Thursday 14 March
3. Democracy on the European level
   - Democraticness of EU
   - European identity
   - European demos

Literature
Lord, C. and E. Harris (2006), Democracy in the New Europe, Palgrave, chapters 4 and 5.
Background readings

Wednesday 20 – Thursday 21 March
4. The Democratic Deficit: Formal and Informal Aspects
   - Input and output legitimacy
   - Civil society
   - Representation claims

Literature

Part II. Multiple European Democracies and Legitimation

Wednesday 27 March – Wednesday 3 April
5. The Construction of a European Political Society
   - Technocracy
   - Political Parties
   - Transnational Movements
   - Comitology
   - Civil Society

Literature

Thursday 4 April - Wednesday 10 April
6. Multiple Democracies I: Stakeholder Democracy
   - Output-oriented legitimacy
   - Economic integration

Literature
Thursday 11 April

7. Multiple Democracies II: Communitarian Democracy
   - Value-based solidarity
   - Cultural integration

_Literature_

_Background readings_

Wednesday 17 April

8. Multiple Democracies III: Post-National and Cosmopolitan Democracy
   - Procedural legitimacy
   - Socio-legal integration
   - Cosmopolitanism

_Literature_

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**Part III. The Political Sociological Study of European Democracy**

Thursday 18 April

9. Heuristic Devices of a Political-Sociological Approach
   - Actor-based focus
   - Interpretative analysis: cultural repertoires and democratic discourses
   - Class analysis
   - Socialization
   - Networks
   - Conflict, contestation, and critique

_Literature_
Wednesday 24 April

10. Focus I: Political Elites, Classes, Epistemic Communities
   - Case-study: Charter of Fundamental Rights
   - Case-study: Enlargement
   - Case-study: Lawyers and European integration

**Literature**

**Background readings**

Thursday 2 May

11. Focus II: Social Movements, Civic Actors, Contentious Politics
   - Case-study: European Social Forum
   - Case-study: EU Citizenship

**Literature**

Wednesday 8 – Thursday 9 May

12. Focus III: Perceptions of European Democracy
   - Case-study: Convention on the Future of Europe
   - Summary and review
   - Conclusions: A Political Sociology of European Democracy

**Literature**

**Background readings**
Prerequisites
Knowledge of EU institutions (preferable), European integration, and theories of politics and democracy.

Further relevant literature