

Consortium for European Research with Election Studies (CERES)



The Swedish National
Election Studies

INVITATION TO CERES Workshop:

Studying Representative Democracy at a Critical Juncture

5-6 December 2013

The Consortium for European Research with Election Studies (CERES), together with the Swedish National Election Study Program at University of Gothenburg, Sweden, invites you to a two-day workshop on the theme *Studying Representative Democracy at a Critical Juncture*. The aim of the workshop is to discuss a new research agenda for European election studies intended to capture present challenges for representative democracy in Europe, and to serve as a venue for the creation of a "Democracy at a critical juncture" module – a set of new questions concerning democracy to be implemented in the 2014 European Parliamentary election study as well as in the National election studies in European countries in the period 2014-2017. Under the auspices of CERES (the Consortium for European Research with Election Studies) the workshop will gather principal investigators and researchers engaged with National Election Studies as well as European Parliamentary Elections from all over Europe. For more about CERES see its interim website at www.eui.eu/Personal/Franklin/CERES.html

Background

The workshop is held under the auspices of the **Consortium for European Research with Election Studies (CERES)**, with the Swedish Election Study Program as organizer and host. CERES was founded at the time of the ECPR General Conference in Reykjavik, August 2011, at a meeting attended by scholars who study elections throughout Europe. The statutes set out that "The CERES Association provides technical and methodological support for research on electoral democracy and a platform for collaboration of national election studies with each other and with the European Election Studies (EES)". The planned workshop will build on the work of an earlier meeting held at the end of February 2013 at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), funded by that institution and by the Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute. The purpose of that NIAS workshop was the crafting of a research program that, over the course of forthcoming national and European elections, would assemble systematic evidence to support conjectures relating to the consequences of EP elections for national politics in the EU's member states, along with effects in the other direction – by-products of elections at each level that we refer to as "spillover". In practice the workshop went

further and planned a variety of activities that may ultimately be helpful to election studies throughout Europe.

Most importantly, the NIAS meeting set in motion the planning of a module of questions that could be fielded at the time of future national and European elections, i.e. survey instruments designed to study the evolution of representative processes at a “critical juncture” in European politics marked by the continuing economic crisis of the Euro Zone and its ultimate effects on national political and electoral processes in EU member countries. The aim of the Gothenburg workshop is to effectuate these plans.

European Representative Democracy at a Critical Junction

Europe is currently in deep economic and social crisis. Many European states struggle with huge deficits, low growth and high unemployment, whilst others might be somewhat more stable but still marked by insecurity, weak exports and political uncertainty. The point of departure for the proposed workshop is that the crisis is not only a "global fiscal crisis", but a more general crisis of democracy per se that was referred to at NIAS as presenting a “critical juncture”. Democracy has always been seen as a mechanism for de-commodification of the human lot and a tool for mitigating the effects of raw market forces with their non-egalitarian results. The current economic crisis has called for one of the largest macro-financial /economic restructurings ever tackled on our behalf by the representatives we elect. The resulting policies and redistributive outcomes will have an impact on the well-being of ourselves and future generations. There are, however, several serious challenges to the capacity of representative democracy to actually address this crisis and bring about these outcomes.

The first challenge is the actual “reach” of representative democracy in today’s globalized world: downward, upward and also outward. Many decisions that traditionally have been attached to the state, currently are delegated "downwards" to regional or local communities and other issues are allocated "upwards" to transnational authorities and organizations, such as EU, IMF or WTO as well as “outwards” to trans-national corporations and commercial organizations of various kinds. This gives rise to questions of representativeness and accountability, but also of legitimacy and perceptions of the capacity of representative democracy to actually steer the developments.

A second challenge is the increasing inequalities in European Societies – social and economic as well as deriving from ethnic background and migratory origins. With the economic crisis, tendencies towards increasing bifurcation into groups of “winners” and “losers” in contemporary economic and social life have become more pronounced. How this is reflected in relation to politics is of urgent interest. Not only could we believe the increased bifurcation to be reflected in political engagement and outlook, but also in the degree of trust in political bodies to be able to actually deliver solutions to these problems. Ultimately inequality in input to as well as output of the political system could lead to political fragmentation and concomitant loss of legitimacy for the representative democratic system.

A third challenge arises from mediatization and the diversification of information sources. Several problems arise from the new developments in the media system. One, if not fundamental without a doubt an important phenomenon, is the "permanent noise", which allows numerous events that truly call for coverage to remain unnoticed. The other crucial media-related development is the emergence of the new social media, which create many problems, among which the growth of "echo chambers" is of utmost importance for the quality of democracy, as it threatens the “common ground” in news and democratic debate and accordingly tends to further increase fragmentation.

The European Parliamentary Election in May 2014 and upcoming national elections are taking place at this "critical juncture" for European democracy, which we believe is likely to change the nature of political contestation in elections at all levels in Europe. Challenges such as those listed put strain on the capacity and legitimacy of representative democracy at all levels. Furthermore, representative democracy and elections on different levels can no longer be studied in isolated, since the levels in fact are interrelated and nested. In order to understand the resulting changes, election studies (both national and European Parliament studies) will need to elaborate new research questions involving new instruments and perhaps new methods. Since all existing European election studies

will be facing the same need to address the critical juncture, this juncture provides an opportunity for collaboration between the election studies in Europe. One aim of the workshop is accordingly to advance the discussions of how the present challenges and shortcomings of our democratic systems – European as well as national - are perceived and interpreted by voters, and what consequences this has on political views, engagement and support. Ultimately this should result in the development of a new question module to be used in the European Election Study 2014, as well as in national election studies fielded in the coming years.

The workshop *European Representative Democracy at a Critical Junction* will take place on 5th – 6th December 2013 in Gothenburg, Sweden, with arrival on the 4th of December for long distance travellers. The Swedish National Election Study Program (SNES) at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg is host and organizer. The Center for European Research at Gothenburg University (CERGU) will act as co-host.

Details of workshop participants and programme follow on the next pages.

Preliminary list of Participants

Linda Berg (Sweden)

Mark Franklin (USA)

Bob Goodin (Britain)

Sören Holmberg (Sweden)

Herbert Kitschelt (USA)

Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Germany)

Hanspeter Kriesi (Switzerland)

Sylvia Kritzingner (Austria)

Henk van der Kolk (Netherlands)

Radek Markowski (Poland)

Klaus Offe (Germany)

Henrik Oscarsson (Sweden)

Maria Oskarson (Sweden)

Hermann Schmidt (European Parliament Election Study)

Mikhel Solvak (Estonia)

Jacques Thomassen (Netherlands)

Gabor Toka (Hungary)

Mark Warren (Canada)

European Representative Democracy at a Critical Juncture : Preliminary Program

4th December Arrival of long-distance participants

5th December

9.00-10.00 Coffee, informal updates

10.00-12.00 Presentation of the outline for the research program European representative Democracy at a Critical Junction (Radek Markowski)

12.00 – 13.30 Lunch (hosted by Cergu)

13.30- 15.00 General Discussion of European representative Democracy at a Critical Junction and it's consequences for election study design

15.00-15.30 Coffee

15.30-17.00 Discussion of proposal for new module on questions for studying European representative Democracy at a Critical Junction

17.00 – 19.00 Free time / Check-in at hotels

19.00 Dinner

6th December

8.30 – 10.00 Workshop on the new question module

10.00-10.30 Coffee

10.30-12.00 Continuance of workshop on the new question module

12.00-12.30 Summing up

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30 - Departure of participants

The workshop has received some (but limited) funding from the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Science (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond) permitting us to cover travel costs for a small number of participants who do not have other available funding. Because we were more likely to receive Riksbankens Jubileumsfond funding for a project with significant co-funding we felt it necessary (as with the NIAS workshop in February) to specify National Election Studies as co-sponsors of the event. The resulting Riksbankens Jubileumsfond funding will cover accommodation expenses (hotels, food) for all participants including those who will fund their own travel.

Please, confirm your participation to Mark Franklin, with a copy to our workshop administrator Anna Nilsson at Anna.Nilsson.3@gu.se. Anna is also responsible for travel arrangements for those of you who do not have other funding, as well as for other practicalities such as food requests. Please inform Anna upon confirmation whether you are able to arrange and cover your travel yourself, or if you want us to arrange it.

For academic questions regarding the workshop, please contact Mark Franklin, the current CERES chair, at Mark.Franklin@eui.eu, mfrankli@mit.edu or Maria Oskarson, CERES board member and local organizer of the workshop, at Maria.Oskarson@pol.gu.se

Well met in Gothenburg!