



RECON WP 5 INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

Reconstituting Democracy from below: New Approaches to Civil Society and the Public Sphere

Venue:

Hanse Wissenschaftskolleg Delmenhorst

Date: 17–19 May 2007

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Overview and background

The Jean Monnet Centre for European Studies at the Universität Bremen¹ is one of nineteen partners² that constitute the European integrated research project *Reconstituting Democracy in Europe* (RECON), supported by the 6th EU Framework Programme.³ CeuS coordinates with ARENA/Oslo the research area ‘Civil Society and the Public Sphere in the reconstitution of democracy in Europe’, in cooperation with ELTE/University of Budapest, ASCR/Prague, JUK/Krakow, ULB/Brussels, and Cornell University/Ithaca, NY.

RECON seeks to clarify whether democracy is possible under conditions of pluralism, diversity and complex governance. It aims at understanding the prospects for reconstituting democracy within the multilevel configuration that makes up the EU, and, in particular, the options for citizens’ empowerment with special attention to gender equality within an enlarged Europe. RECON assesses which approach to democratic reconstitution is most viable – in empirical and normative terms – through analyzing the EU’s constitutionalisation process; the institutional complex at the EU, member state and regional/local levels; the role and status of gender within the enlarged Europe; the democratic quality and governing capacity of the Union within tax/fiscal and foreign/security policy; and the multilevel configuration of civil society/public sphere. The project enhances knowledge of the enlargement process: the transition and consolidation of democracy in the new Member States and of the overall challenges posed by globalization to established democracies. It identifies strategies through which democracy can be strengthened and participation of citizens increased, and provides a set of concrete policy recommendations in line with these. It enhances the state of the art by developing and testing a theory of deliberative democratic supranationalism.

The more specific goal of ‘Civil society and the public sphere’ is to identify the mechanisms that translate formal democratic principles and procedures into citizens’ practices. Accordingly, we analyse the changing roles of *civil society* in relation to the *public sphere* as the social and communicative infrastructure of an unfolding European polity. Depending on postnational constitutionalisation in the enlarged Europe and the political opportunity structures for social inclusion and political participation this process offers, different scenarios for reconstituting democracy can be expected to evolve.

The aim of the May 17-19 workshop at the HWK/Delmenhorst is to bring together 40 international researchers, among them leading experts from RECON partner universities in the EU and abroad, to discuss the state of the art of innovative theoretical and empirical approaches to researching European civil society and the public sphere. Mapping and assessing the research agenda in this field is also the first part of a special training program for junior PhD research fellows and associates (*Bremen summer school in qualitative-quantitative media analysis*, July/Aug 2007).

¹ More information on the Jean Monnet Centre for European Studies (CEuS) can be found at <http://www.monnet-centre.uni-bremen.de>.

² RECON partners: ARENA, University of Oslo; Center of Political and Constitutional Studies/Madrid; Eötvös Loránd University Budapest; European University Institute; Free University Berlin; Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences /Prague; Jagiellonian University Krakow; Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt; London School of Economics and Political Science; Peace Research Institute Frankfurt; Queen’s University Belfast; Riga Graduate School of Law; Sabanci University Istanbul; Université libre de Bruxelles; University of Bath; University of Bremen; University of León; University of Reading; Free University Amsterdam.

³ The Integrated Project *Reconstituting Democracy in Europe* (RECON) is coordinated by Prof. Erik Oddvar Eriksen, ARENA – Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo. It is scheduled for 5 years and started 1 January 2007. See www.reconproject.eu.

The workshop

The workshop will bring 40 Scholars to Delmenhorst, about half of them junior researchers, for two and a half days. Keynote speaker will be Prof. Sidney Tarrow from Cornell University, Ithaca, USA. The program comprises four panels:

Panel I. Reconstituting democracy from below: European experiences

The aim of this panel is to identify the mechanisms that translate formal democratic principles and procedures into citizens' practices and from there into processes of transnational institutionalisation and constitutionalisation. The changing roles of *civil society* in relation to the *public sphere* are conceptualised as the social and communicative infrastructure of an unfolding post- and transnational European democracy. Post Laeken constitutionalisation in the enlarged Europe is conceptualised as a more encompassing political opportunity structure for social inclusion and political participation. Different scenarios for reconstituting democracy are explored, depending on the forms of organised civil society's engagement with the public sphere in the framework of constitutional debates during the ratification, crisis and the reflection period.

Panel II. Constituting a European public sphere: Innovative approaches to media, communication and discourse analysis

This panel focuses on media publics, asking **who** frames public opinion and attitudes, **how** and for **what** reasons:

- It presents methodologies for analysing political discourses and how they can be applied to the EU-constitutional process, ratification failures, the reflection period and the relaunching of constituent politics;
- It explores links between media framing and the formation of citizens' preferences, as expressed in referendum votes and public opinion surveys;
- It discusses specificities of how popular attitudes are shaped by different sectoral contexts and social differences, namely by gender, social class, and cultures of security;
- It assesses the role of EU sectoral policy studies for understanding the scope for and limitations of institutional designs of public relations and pro-active public communication strategies.

Panel III. Civil society and democracy in Europe: Theoretical frameworks and empirical approaches

This panel aims at analysing the conditions, forms and consequences of how civil society supports the reconstitution of Europe. The guiding question is whether democratic practices are conducive to a particular kind of European polity: Is civil society constrained to the preservation or reconstitution of national democracies; do civil society organisations take part in the construction of a federal polity through the emergence of representative structures and multi-level public spheres; or do they promote a novel, postnational and deliberative democracy embedded in global civil society and world discourses of justification? Adopting a cross-national and cross-sectoral comparative perspective, the contributions to this panel will explore the conditions and dynamics of *democratisation from below*:

- Theoretical conceptions and frameworks for analysing civil society and citizenship;
- Empirical approaches for exploring the citizens' support for and resistance to European governance.
- Comparisons of particular sectoral publics (public intellectuals; religious communities; youth; ethnic minorities; gender based groups).

Panel IV. Quantitative-qualitative methodology of media discourses analysis

A proper understanding of the mechanisms and power of the national media in moulding citizens' preferences and forming identities in European constitution-making is essential for evaluating the prospects of postnational democracy 'from below'. This research objective goes well beyond existing communication studies and survey data analyses. We combine these in the framework of transnational comparative research of political communication and media publics. This panel introduces junior researchers to:

- The theoretical framework of RECON, and the methodology for transnational media discourse analysis;
- Media political impact assessment, based on methodologies for public discourse, media and communication research (Atlas.ti software-based instruments);
- Cross-national databanks for attitudinal research that are relevant for evaluating the empirical legitimization of the EU-constitutional project in light of alternative models of democracy, analyzing linkages between media frames and citizens' preferences, with the aim to identify the need for follow up research.
- Overcoming the fragmented state of the art and developing synergies between subfields of comparative behavioural, attitudinal and communication research: European elections and referendums, European public opinion, European political communication and media publics in Europe.

Program

Thursday, May 17

- 12:15 Soup and getting acquainted
- 13:00 Welcome and introduction
Ulrike Liebert (CeUS), *Hans-Jörg Trenz* (ARENA), *Wolfgang Stenzel* (HWK)
- 13:15 **Keynote speech: "Polanyi in Brussels: Why a European Civil Society is Possible - And the Strange Way it May Happen"**
Prof. Sidney Tarrow (Cornell University/Ithaca)
- 14:00 Commentary: *Christopher Lord* (Reading)
- 14:10 General discussion

Panel I. Reconstituting democracy from below: European experiences

Chair: Christopher Lord, Reading

- 14:30 *Stijn Smismans*: "Reconstituting democracy through new modes of governance? Towards more active European citizenship, or the end of citizenship?"
- 14:50 *Hans-Jörg Trenz* (ESF, Oslo, Berlin): "The imaginary of a European civil society"
- 15:10 *Thorsten Hüller* (Mannheim): "Democratizing from above? Assessing the European Commission's strategy of civil society involvement"
- 15:30 Commentary: *Florian Rödl* (Bremen)
- 15:40 Discussion

16:00–16:30 *Coffee break*

- 16:30 *Ulrike Liebert* (CEUS, Bremen): "The future of democracy in Europe in the light of constituent practices"
- 17:00 *Hagen Schulz-Forberg* (Mannheim): "Democracy without politics? On the European crisis of legitimacy"
- 17:30 Commentary: *Florian Rödl* (Bremen)
- 17:40 Discussion
- 18:15 *Dinner at the HWK*

Friday, May 18

Panel II. Constituting a European public sphere: Innovative approaches to media, communication & discourse analysis

Chair: Ulrike Liebert, Bremen

- 09:00 *Claes de Vreese* (Amsterdam): "Framing Europe Revisited: How news frames affect citizen understanding of and support for European integration"
- 09:30 *Monika Mokre* (Wien): "Media discourses on the European Constitution. Results of a research project on media coverage of the ratification process"
- 10:00 *Hartmut Wessler* (Jacobs University Bremen, Sfb 597): "Moving towards explanation: Determinants and mechanisms of the Europeanization of political media discourse"
- 10:30 Commentary: *Cathleen Kantner* (EUI, Florence, FU Berlin)
- 10:40 Discussion

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

- 11:30 *Ann Zimmermann* (Karlsruhe): "Europeanisation and the potentials of online public spheres"
- 11:50 *Christoph Meyer* (Kings College, London): "Europeanisation of public spheres and mediatisation of European politics: Empirical and conceptual observations"
- 12:10 *Alexander Gattig* (CEuS, Bremen): "Europeanisation and transnationalisation of constitutional debates: quantitative comparative media analyses"
- 12:30 Commentary: *Cathleen Kantner* (EUI, Florence, FU Berlin)
- 12:40 Discussion

13:00–14:30 Lunch break

Panel III. Civil society and democracy in Europe: theoretical approaches and empirical methodologies

Chair: Hans-Jörg Trenz, Oslo

- 14:30 *Maria Heller* (ELTE Budapest): "Discourses about Enlargement and the Representation of the EU"
- 14:50 *Galina Michaleva* (RGGU, Moskau): "Civil Society, Trust and Democratization in Russia"
- 15:10 *Petra Rakusanova* (ConstEPS/UniHB & ASCR, Prague): "Civil society in Central Eastern Europe"
- 15:30 Discussion

16:00–16:30 Coffee break

- 16:30 *Jutta Joachim and Birgit Locher*: "International organizations and civil society: the role of NGOs in the UN and the EU"
- 16:50 *Emanuela Bozzini* (CIVGOV, Trento): "Organized civil society and European governance: Findings and contributions to the state of the art"
- 17:10 *Asimina Michailidou* (Bristol): "Emergent Partisanship? Political Claims-making by Parties over Europe"
- 17:30 Discussion
- 18:30 Meeting of the RECON WP 5 project (venue: HWK)

19:00 Dinner in Delmenhorst (Backenköhler)

Saturday, May 19

09:00 Meeting of the RECON WP 8 project (venue: HWK)

09:00–13.00

Panel IV. Quantitative-qualitative methodology of media discourse analysis – research training unit for national media analysts

Chair: Alexander Gattig, Bremen

- Consteps Research Group: Tatjana Evas, Kathrin Packham, Petra Rakusanova, Alexandra Wyrozumska, (Bremen)
- *Regina Vetters* (Berlin)
- *Jacek Kolodziej* (Krakow)
- PhDs

10:30–11:00 Coffee break

- *Sönke Maatsch* (CEuS, Bremen)
- *Brit Helle Aarskog* (Bergen)
- WRAP UP and work program

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Program discussion for the RECON Summer School in Bremen
Venue: HWK (Trenz, Liebert, Sifft, Vetters, Maatsch, Gattig)