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Call for Papers

Workshop 26

Mainstream political parties and immigrants: discourses, politicization and participation

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Framework

The every time more frequent politicization and electoral use of immigration by political parties has raised the academic interest on political parties and immigration policies. Several case studies have concentrated on political parties' discourse on immigration (Garcés-Mascreñas, Franco and Sánchez, 2012; Rubio Carbonero, 2010; Triandafyllidou, 2000; Wodak & Van Dijk, 2000) and their contribution to the politicization of migration issues (Celis, et al, 2011; Garbaye, 2005; Odmalm, 2004). However, the consequences of these discourses on the management of diversity and related dynamics from multilevel and comparative perspectives have not been sufficiently explored. This becomes even more interesting if we consider that the political participation of immigrants in political parties has also been a matter of interest for scholars. Despite theoretical and practical advances in this field in Europe, immigrants' involvement in political parties remains underexplored (Morales and Giugni, 2011). These situations offer opportunities for further elaborations on the nexus between immigrants and political parties.

Political parties are crucial actors, not only as they provide major lenses on how to frame the issue of migration and shape public representations on the subject, but also as they are players in a competitive political space that is determinant for the formal and informal incorporation of immigrants in receiving societies. This is why mainstream political parties are at the core of this panel. Although their role is often neglected in favour of the study of anti-immigrant parties, mainstream parties are decisive players in the politicization of migration issues, in the formation of public opinion and in the enhancement of the political participation and representation of immigrants.

This workshop aims to fill existing gaps in the literature on immigrants and political parties. But it also aims to consider the current context of economic crisis and retrenchment that the welfare state is playing in redefining existing discourses and practices of political parties as well as their linkages with immigrants and immigrant organisations. This situation calls for revisiting the literature on political discourses, the role of parties in the politicization of migration and patterns of immigrants' participation.

Contributors are invited to provide answers to questions such as: How do mainstream political parties portray immigration and immigrant participation in their current discourses and organization? How does the political discourse of mainstream parties shape the politicization of immigration? How do conflicts and their politicization affect the relations between political parties and immigrant communities? How this politicization affect the participation of immigrants within political parties? How are immigrants included in party organisation and processes?

In order to advance these questions, we propose to explore the relation between political parties and immigrants from three perspectives. The first one focuses on mainstream parties and their discourses and stances on immigration. The second one concentrates on parties as players in the politicization of immigration-related conflicts. Finally, the third one proposes to explore the dynamics of participation of immigrants in political parties.

1) Mainstream political parties' discourse on immigration in times of crisis

For the first perspective, we welcome contributions that explore discourses and stances of mainstream parties in Western democracies about immigration issues within the current context of economic crisis. Recent studies have suggested that immigration is a topic that does not only belong to extreme right wing parties' discourse; moreover, the identification with left and right does not always explain party positions towards immigration (Oldmalm, 2011). Even plausible explanations such as the contagion effect seem to be also challenged by recent literature. To complete the picture, the current economic crisis can affect parties' stances towards immigration in a more exclusionary way as it has been proved when examining individual perceptions (see for example, Arzheimer, 2009). While most literature dealing with immigration and political parties has focused on extreme-right wing and anti-immigrant parties, there is an important need to explore the discourse of mainstream parties about immigration. In sum, this section seeks proposals dealing with discourse of mainstream political parties in Western democracies when they address the issue of immigration and whether the current economic crisis has any effect on party positions towards newcomers.

2) Multilevel perspectives on political parties and the politicization of migration.

For the second perspective, we welcome proposals exploring concrete immigration-related conflicts which have been politicized by mainstream political parties. The politicization of immigration-related conflicts occurs when political actors – such as mainstream political parties – frame them as problems based on ethnic and/or cultural grounds (Mouritsen, 2006: 3). This is partly due to “the move in Western political culture to present political solutions to cultural conflicts” which at the end marginalize and stigmatize even further immigrant communities (Mouritsen, 2006: 3). Moreover, the current economic crisis has made immigrants in some European countries be blamed by mainstream political parties of overburdening the welfare state. This situation has increased the salience of immigration-related conflicts and those related to the distribution of material resources in receiving societies (Koopmans, et al. 2005: 148). Contributors are encouraged to present analyses on how the politicization of immigration has affected on the one hand, the management of immigration and diversity and on the other, the relations between immigrants, civil society and political institutions in receiving societies. We welcome papers exploring this perspective from a European, national, regional and local levels, as well as cross-city and/or cross-national comparisons.

3) The diversification of political parties: challenges for the political inclusion of immigrants.

Among the wide range of possibilities for migrants to be politically active (Morales and Giugni, 2010), we propose to examine more in depth their involvement in political parties. Two directions, which still need more elaboration in our view, are privileged:

- *Political parties' attitudes and measures to involve immigrants:* The lack of political membership of a large share of the population on the one hand and the issue of representation of ethnic and cultural diversity in the society on the other, have raised questions for party politics. We seek to explore party strategies that address migrant political inclusion – such as affiliation policies and welcoming procedures aimed at immigrants – and diversification processes in the selection of party officials and candidates (Bird and al., 2010; Norris, 1995). It covers also new perspectives on the linkages between political parties and civic associations (Oldmalm, 2004; Fennema and Tillie, 1999). We want to explore different party attitudes on that matter and the channels for participation and obstacles that are at stake.

- *Immigrants' activity in political parties:* Several authors have stressed the necessity to widen our understanding of possibilities for immigrants to participate politically in the receiving countries. They have also stressed the existence of different patterns of inclusion depending on national institutional and legal opportunities (Hochschild and Mollenkopf, 2009). The involvement in (non-ethnic) political parties may be considered as part of a pattern of assimilation and conformity of immigrants to receiving country politics. We think that this idea needs to be challenged by empirical studies on immigrant activity in political parties. In this line, we welcome studies about the political careers of immigrants and the opportunities or obstacles they face; about transfers between political or civic engagements and party affiliation; and on immigrants' mobilisation aiming to put diversification issues on the party agenda. The interplay between mobilisations and party's ideology and norms referring to representation are of special concern.

Through these three main perspectives this workshop pretends to make an academic contribution to the literature by exploring political parties and their external and internal dynamics vis-à-vis the accommodation of immigrants in receiving societies. In this sense, the context of crisis can provide new elements for the analysis of these central actors in the policy-making of immigration and accommodation throughout Europe.

Application

Proposals have to address one of the three lines of research and should also ideally contribute to a general reflexion on the nexus between immigrants and political parties. Theoretical papers are welcome but empirically grounded, multilevel and comparative papers are strongly encouraged. We also support submissions from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, methods and theoretical perspectives.

A selection of papers will be taken into consideration for publication as theme or special issue in peer-review journal after the conference.

Proposals should be in English and include:

- Short CV (max. 200 words)
- Institution and area of research
- Title
- Abstract (max. 500 words)
- The line of research addressed by the paper (Perspective 1, 2 or 3)

Proposals should be sent to juancarlos.trivino@upf.edu by the **10th of June**.

Timeline

10 June 2013: Limit to send proposals

20 June 2013: Notification of acceptance

July 2013: Dissemination of final list and programme

15 August 2013: Complete draft papers sent by panellists

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