



Call for Paper

ESA2011-RN/RS-1131

RN32 - Political Sociology

C. Ruzza^{1,*}

¹Sociology, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER, Leicester, United Kingdom

Description of the Research network: The ESA Political Sociology research network is a site for debate on the ongoing transformation of political order and authority in Europe at all levels of governance.

General call for paper: The general theme this year “social relations in turbulent times” requires us to reflect critically on the political dynamics that generate this perception and the type of political solutions that are offered by various political actors and in various policy sectors. We associate troubled times with **inequality** and tense social relations and thus with social insecurity, and therefore political sociology would predict that **populism and nationalism** may prosper but also various forms of **political mobilization** although **anomie** is also possible. Crises can degenerate into “moral panic” in which **xenophobia and racism** are on the rise, with calls for a closed access to **citizenship** especially for poor urban neighbourhoods and **migrants**. The role of the media in heightening fears or assuaging the public must be taken into account in studying **political communication**. Economic downturns do not affect all social groups in a similar way and the **elite/mass opinion gap** and the **gender** gap may widen in “turbulent times”. This requires us to study the evolution of **public opinion**, and the ways in which **political parties** respond in turbulent times, and new forms of **political leadership** emerge. While some political actors may feel that turbulence is an opportunity; others may feel that some **policy** issues will be put on the back burner as non-essential. This might especially include policy agendas associated with post-materialist **values**. In other words, to understand turbulent times, we must revisit some of the key concepts and research agendas of political sociology and do so with a comparative and historical perspective to step back from the distorting mirror of the present times as portrayed by the media and the political actors we study

One feature of the recent financial crisis is that it has directly threatened solidarity among EU member states and brought about discussion on the viability of the Euro and of the integration process as a whole. Political sociologists should thus think of the recent period with a **comparative** perspective in mind but also study the ways in which there has been a European framing of the crisis or different debates in national **public spheres** and how **EU institutional and civil society** actors have positioned themselves. This does not mean neglecting other levels of political action, in particular **local policies** given that municipalities are often at the forefront when having to face **urban segregation** and increasing demands in social services during economic turbulences.

For the next ESA Conference, we thus welcome submissions of abstracts to the following streams (The organizer of each stream is the board member indicated next to the stream title):

- Political Representation (Carlo Ruzza - Network Co-Organizer)
- Active Citizenship, EU-level and International Civil Society (Carlo Ruzza)
- The state and the political impact of the recent economic crisis (Carlo Ruzza)
- Citizenship (Virginie Guiraudon - Network Co-Organizer)
- Emerging patterns of political leadership in Europe (Mauro Barisione)
- New vs. old forms of public opinion and political participation in Europe (Mauro Barisione)
- Populism, nationalism and the extreme right (Dietmar Loch)
- Citizenship and migrants (several board members will collaborate)
- Urban studies: urban segregation, local politics and urban governance (several board members will collaborate)
- Elite/citizens perceptions and relations (several board members will collaborate)
- Gender and politics stream (our contact Cristian Norocel)
- New media and political communication (Hans-Joerg Trenz)
- Democracy and political participation, citizenship and social movements in Europe (joint stream with the Social Movements section)

Nota bene: for the Gender and politics stream, our board member with liaison with the Gender Research group.