The puzzle of political representation in the complex EU system

Thematic Area 1. *Modes of democratic representation in the EU* (Lecturer: Sabrina Cavatorto)

Presidio Mattioli – Siena
7 March 2016 h 13-15; 10 and 11 March 2016 h 10-12

Representation & Democracy *(historically)* interlinked

Political representation has been understood as a way of establishing *(through elections)* the **legitimacy** of democratic institutions and of creating institutional incentives for governments to be **responsive and accountable** to citizens.

THUS, **political representation** is "*a sine qua non* for the legitimacy of any democratic political system**"** (Kröger & Friedrich 2013: 156) even though it **can take different forms**.

ELECTIONS legitimate the authorization of political leaders and make them (theoretically) responsive and accountable to the electorate

The standard model

Representation traditionally relates to a complex **relationship** between a principal (the represented) and an agent (the representative), concerning an object (a claim), taking place before an audience.

– The relationship has traditionally been seen as consisting of **authorization and accountability** (Castiglione and Warren 2004).

The typical institutional translation of representation has been for the constituents periodically to elect representatives who are, in some way, accountable to the constituency.
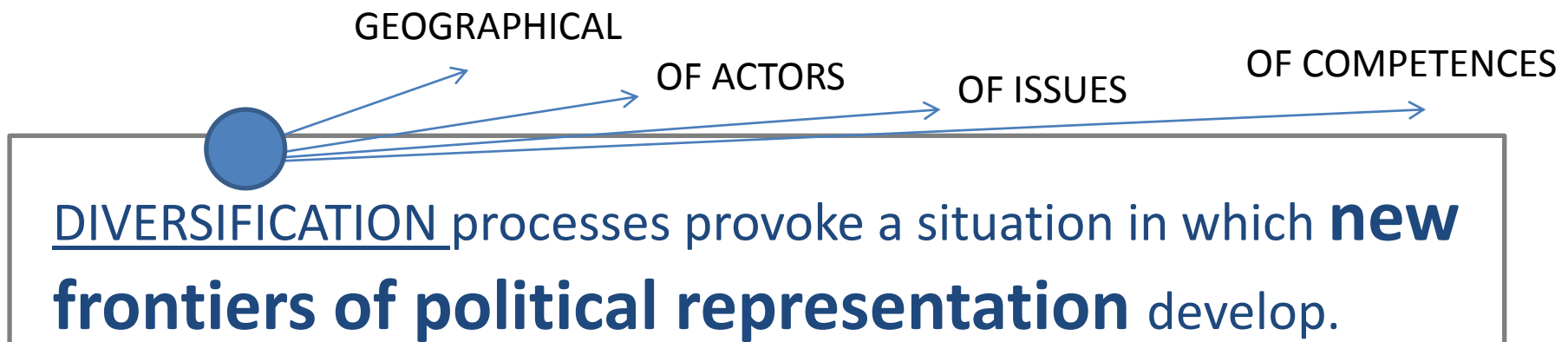
- **The conventional model of democratic representation was established in the context of sovereign nation-states.** There, democratic representation was used more or less synonymously with electoral representation (Pitkin 2004), as it could be reasonably argued that the constituency is composed of all those (adult) citizens who are living within the confines of a particular nation-state.

- **The transition from the national to the post-national constellation** (Habermas 1998) has profound consequences on the conceptualization and institutionalization of democracy in general, and of representative democracy in particular.

- The modern territorial state, and with it the link between democracy and representation, is challenged through a variety of **diversification processes,** including that of supranational (European) integration which contributes to **the dilution of traditional representative politics** (Warren and Castiglione 2004).

Beyond national territoriality...

Traditional theoretical accounts have described and justified democratic political representation in the context of **nation states**.

BUT given the transfer of competences to the EU, its fragmentation and its densely structured **multi-level politics**, *the **relationship** between representation, democracy and the nation-state in the EU is particularly challenged*.

GEOGRAPHICAL

OF ACTORS

OF ISSUES

OF COMPETENCES

DIVERSIFICATION processes provoke a situation in which **new frontiers of political representation** develop.

It has been argued that representation is:

- **much more diverse than elected legislatures**
- **realized by a great variety of actors**
- **more dynamic than the principal–agent model assumes**
- **in more spaces and instances than (only) through elections, in parliament and in the nation-state**

Representation cannot be restricted to **electoral representation** and to **representation in the nation-state** alone

Main theoretical developments:

- the representative relationship is not exclusively perceived as a static principal–agent relationship

- additional actors (in addition to national institutions) have entered the field of political representation

- the representation of weak interests has increasingly attracted scholarly attention

Contemporary political representation in the EU is characterized by **a simultaneity of different representative practices** of formal, semi-formal, and informal agents at different geographical and spatial levels…

consequently, in recent years, the academic focus has shifted **away from the parliamentary route**, towards the **participation and deliberation** of citizens&CSOs in (EU) policy-making processes

The erosion of the standard account of representation
(brief summary)

- Theoretical challenges
  - The participatory critique (Pateman 1970)
  - Representation = Participation (Plotke)
  - The deliberative turn (Mansbridge, Rehfeldt, Urbinati, etc.)
- Empirical challenges
  - The nature of the collective decision-making process
  - Non-territorial issues
  - The role of expertise
  - Changes in the constituencies

The expansion of representation

Mode of power	Sphere	
	Electoral politics	Non-electoral politics
State-based power	Elected representation	Corporatist, interest group, and CSO representation
Public Influence	Electorally-oriented political organizations and advocacy groups	Voice representation (media, social movements, advocacy groups, citizen panels)
Economic power	Public-private partnerships	Stakeholder representation, direct action representation, NGOs.

Domains of representation (Castiglione & Warren)

FAQ

- What new forms of representation, **outside of voting**, emerge beyond the state?

- Which actors claim to act as representatives of **what constituency**?

- Are representatives "representative"? How is the **relationship** between represented and representative organized?

- What role does the EU play in (re)shaping political representations? What can be said about the **democratic quality** of political representation in the EU?

On the one hand, there are **more opportunities** for representation than ever before: *individuals can increase their representative presence by joining advocacy groups, organizing expertise, or using the internet to enable direct action.*

On the other hand, the proliferation of representative opportunities **outside of the electoral** system may disproportionately advantage those who are educated and socially well-connected.

As points of access and opportunities for participation multiply, so do the resource requirements for participation — education, money, time, and social capital.

It is likely that those interests, identities, and values attached to **populations with organizational capacities** — particularly the educated or those with specific material interests at stake — will be **better represented** than those populations lacking sophistication.

(Castiglione and Warren 2006: 18)

Representation as DELEGATION...

is an insufficient basis for EU democracy (Piattoni 2013)

- Moravcsik: *the EU is not a state, hence it cannot be assessed as a (representative) democracy*
- Majone: *the EU is democratic only when it makes regulatory policies*
- Scharpf: *EU democracy is impossible as it gets inevitably trumped by either (national) 'politics' or (supranational) 'law'*

a *full* notion of representation must be embraced?

a *full* notion of representation should include:

- the duty for representatives to explain to their constituents **why** they acted for them in certain ways & **how** the conflicts between the representatives' and the constituents' understandings can be reconciled (Piattoni 2013)

a (two-way) deliberative accountability rather than simply a (one-way) narrative accountability... (Piattoni 2013)

- Representation as "common **deliberation** about public policy" (Pitkin)
  - "interests are discovered in Parliament, through debate" (Ibidem)
- Representation not only as delegation through elections but as "a mode of political participation that can activate a variety of forms of citizen **control and oversight**" (Urbinati)
  - **Representation & Participation** NOT alternative forms of democracy but related: *a continuum of political judgment & action* in modern democracy
- Representation as a creative act that constitutes the represented & legitimizes the representative (other than elections)…

M. Saward (2006)*, in particular, understands **representation as claims-making**, a constantly changing and dynamic social dialogue in which different actors make claims to audiences who discuss, reject, or amend them.

Conceiving of political **representation as a dynamic relationship** opens the door to reflect the political field in which it takes place as well as the power relationships that operate within it.

In recent years, the academic focus has shifted **away from the parliamentary route**, **towards the participation and deliberation** of citizens and CSOs in EU policy-making processes.

However, after some years of optimism, recent research has shown the **limits of participation and deliberation in democratizing the EU** via the civil society route

Representation of (too many?) constituencies

- **the national constituencies** remain of high importance for political representation in the multi-level structure of the EU

The EP, as a common channel for representing the European citizenry, potentially offers a European-wide perspective. Yet, European elections continue to be **second order** and dominated by domestic issues

- the European Party Federations are not capable of successfully encouraging their national members to establish coherent **trans-European party manifestos**
- it seems to be most important for the **national parties** to establish a party manifesto that talks to their respective national constituencies
- **European elections remain organized nationally**
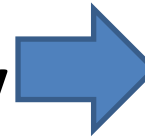
The politicization of the EP elections ?

Given the 2014 elections, the first since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the Commission intends **to boost citizens' interest in the European elections**.

In a Recommendation ([2013/142/EU](#)) and a Communication ([COM/2013/0126 final](#)) published at the end of March 2013, the Commission invited national and European political parties **to inform the electorate** of their affiliation links and to publish, before the elections, the name of **the candidate for President of the Commission** they are supporting.

see Ferreri, Ladini, Pedrazzani & Pinto, **Debating Europe. Effects of the Eurovision Debate on Young Voters**, Comunicazione politica, 3/2015, 343-364.

Interparliamentary cooperation, a useful tool of democratic representation in the EU?

NPs do engage actively in a multiplicity of **interparliamentary cooperation** ➡️ the 'dialogue' both among NPs and between them and the EP without binding effects *(both for the NPs themselves and for national and EU institutions)*

HOWEVER

- it has not effectively evolved into venues in which the representatives of national constituencies (MPs) make claims to represent a transnational constituency
- MPs fail to communicate their transnational activities to their respective national electorate

- **NPs weaken the links to their own electorate**

the EU accentuates the general trend of parties and MPs towards **controlling the executive**, rather than towards representing the constituency more actively

in EU policy-making, MPs shift their focus away from electoral representation towards **governmental accountability**

- **CoR and regional representatives' attitudes**

Cor members' identify with their own regions first, next with other regions, their own party, and their home country: *a common European constituency finds no correlation in their self-perception*

• Civil society direct involvement: added-value for democracy?

New discourses have emerged on citizens' involvement and the establishment of new forms of civic participation beyond representative democracy.

New ideas have been explored on how citizens can become more active in decision-making as a means to revitalize democracy, and even to create a 'European civil society'.

Consequently, in recent years, the academic focus has shifted away from the parliamentary route, towards the **participation and deliberation** of citizens & CSOs in EU policy-making processes.

BUT not only do the representatives of classical electoral representation largely stick to a national concept of constituency, the people themselves also seem to conceptualize **multiple national constituencies** rather than to construct "a" European constituency.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) also point in this direction: not only are they more often than not **representing particularistic interests**, they are also **organized along national lines**.

The organization of representativeness

The issues of **constituency formation** and of the organization of representativeness are strongly linked to each other:

> ➢ **Representativeness can only be unambiguously organized if there is certainty about the constituency and its boundaries.**

- there is **NOT** one mode of organizing representativeness, but that several complementary or conflicting modes exist

- often remains unclear whether representativeness is actually being achieved or not
    - territorial and socio-economic representativeness within the CoR
    - the European Commission seeks to combine both functional and territorial representativeness
    - *Other?...*

Considering the diversity of existing forms and actors of representation, it is necessary to detach the concept of representation from one single form of institutionalization (through elections), and to consider **the dynamic practice of representation** (Taylor 2010: 170)

➢ the **"representative claims-making"** notion (Saward 2006, 2010)

> such a methodological approach is for instance capable of illustrating how the representativeness of CSOs is constructed through the discursive relationship of claims-making beyond the existing formalized representative practices

SEMINAR SESSION
Let's work & discuss together about…

- Forms of legitimacy in the EU **(FRIDAY 18/3 H 11-12)**
- Functional representation & CSOs; consultative bodies (EESC, CoR); the territorial dimension **(THURSDAY 17/3 H 11-12)**
- The role of NPs in EU policy making **(FRIDAY 18/3 H 10-11)**
- European parties & Electoral democracy **(THURSDAY 17/3 H 10-11)**

What people say:

"A European democratic deficit: truth or fiction?"

ENJOY THE DEBATE!

Very basic (and updated) bibliography, to start with…

- **BOOKS**

Kröger S. (2014) (Ed.) *Political Representation in the EU: Still Democratic in Times of Crisis?,* Routledge.

Wolff C. (2013) (Ed.) *Functional Representation in the EU: the European Commission and Social NGOs*, ECPR Press.

Cramme O. & Hobolt S. B. (Eds) 2015) *Democratic Politics in a EU under stress*, OUP.

- **ARTICLES/CHAPTERS**

Kröger S. & Friedrich D. (2013) "Introduction: the representative turn in EU studies", Journal of European Public Policy, 20:2, pp. 155-170.

Lord C. & Pollak C. (2010) "The EU's many representative modes: Colliding? Cohering?", Journal of European Public Policy, 17:1, pp. 117-136.

Mair P. & Thomassen J. (2010) "Political representation and government in the EU", Journal of European Public Policy, 17:1, pp. 20-35.

Piattoni S. (2013) "Representation as delegation: a basis for EU democracy?", Journal of European Public Policy, 20:2, pp. 224-242.

Pitkin H.F. (2004), "Representation and Democracy: Uneasy Alliance", Scandinavian Political Studies, 27, 335–342.

Warren M. & Castiglione D. (2004) "The Transformation of Democratic Representation", Democracy and Society, 2:1, pp. 5-22.

VV.AA. (2013) Special Issue: "Representation and Democracy in the EU: Does one come at the expense of the other?", Journal of European Integration, 35:5.