

Section Number: S56

Call For Papers

Deadline: Monday, 15 February 2016

Reconfiguring Southern Europe

Moving beyond the immediate impact of the post-2008 global recession, Southern Europe, like Europe as a whole, is currently confronting new realities, challenges and opportunities. Although the region is entering a new phase, it is still very much defined by crisis dynamics, unresolved tensions and ongoing transformations. The outcomes of recent national elections provide ample evidence for this, with notable shifts in the electoral balance of power within and across South European countries. Equally salient are processes of reconfiguration in non-electoral arenas, with different societal actors seeking to adjust to and/or actively shape the emerging 'new normality'.

This Section aims to explore change and continuity in Southern Europe across all aspects of social and political life and from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. The theme of 'reconfiguration' provides a unifying perspective through which to analyse the role and influence of actors, structures, attitudes and ideas on the reshaping of the region and with which to highlight both common experiences and national differentiation. The Section is run on behalf of the ECPR Standing Group on Southern European Politics and welcomes proposals for comparative panels/papers or case studies focussing on Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta.

A non-exhaustive list of possible themes for panels includes the following:

ELECTORAL RE-ALIGNMENT AND PARTY POLITICS: Multiple South European elections in 2015 included parliamentary contests in Spain and Portugal, dual parliamentary polls in both Turkey and Greece, a Greek referendum and a regional election with national implications in Catalonia. These and previous recent elections have seen the emergence of new parties, new areas of electoral contestation and non-traditional governing coalitions. Papers could address a range of relevant themes including party politics and new electoral offers, radicalisation, populism, territorial tensions and the drivers of vote.

REWRITING POLICY AGENDAS: The economic downturn and the Southern Eurozone experience of 'Memorandum governance' have reordered policy priorities and imposed new constraints on national policy making. Of particular importance are questions about how the policy agenda is being shaped in Southern Europe, where and how decisions are made and by whom, and how parties/governments have reconciled responding to their voters' expectations with fulfilling their pledges, particularly to the EU.

RESHAPING CIVIL SOCIETY: Civil society and interest groups have also adjusted to changing circumstances. Contributions could investigate the strategies that such actors have pursued whilst engaging with a changing policy process, their impact on policy outcomes, and how pressing challenges have evoked societal responses ranging from volunteering to apathy and alienation.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: The apparent ubiquity of protest in recent years, the emergence of Occupy movements, the reverberations from Gezi Park and the observed links between social movements and specific parties (e.g. PODEMOS) offer opportunities to explore how social movements emerge, evolve and dissolve as well as to investigate their effectiveness in promoting their agendas. Papers are invited around this theme, analysing protest in both electoral and non-electoral arenas.

RECONFIGURING DEMOCRATIC IMAGINARIES: The quality of representation has been further questioned during the economic crisis. Among other themes, papers could explore elite-mass interaction, the tensions between electoral and non-electoral (dis)illusions and the ways through which countries seek to consolidate their democratic foundations.

CONTESTED FRAMES AND DISCOURSES: This panel focuses on the way in which the process of change plays out at the level of discourse. Competing narratives persist on the process leading to the adoption of unpopular reforms. Conflicting views of national communities under pressure are presented by actors including the extreme right. This panel will explore current discourses in Southern Europe, how different issues are framed in public debate and by whom, and how successfully these frames are then discursively challenged.

RECONFIGURING SOCIAL LIFE: This panel invites contributions relating to the lived experiences of groups and societies during a period of rapid social, economic, and political change. Papers may focus on how these changes affect people in their everyday lives, how their pre-established mentalities are changing in response, and how their subjective attitudes towards 'real' or 'perceived' threats are shaped on a range of issues, such as unemployment, social inequality, migration, crime, health, among others.

RETHINKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE EU: Contributions are invited exploring how national relationships with EU institutions and policies (e.g. the euro) have been redefined in recent years, particularly (but not only) under the impact of the Eurozone crisis or in the case of Turkey, the vicissitudes of the accession process. Topics to be addressed could also include changing narratives about the role of the EU in national political life, contested visions about the direction of European integration and the rise of Euroscepticism.