Announcing the D:CE Final Conference

D:CE has entered its final year. To mark the completion of D:CE activities, an international conference called "Democracy: A Citizen Perspective" will be organized at Åbo Akademi University on May 27-28, 2015. A Call for Papers and a detailed conference program will be published later.

The program will include Keynote Addresses by Diana C. Mutz, Samuel A. Stouffer Professor of Political Science and Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, and David M. Farrell, Professor of Politics at University College Dublin. In addition, there will be five panels chaired by D:CE International Advisory Board members.

Prof. Lauri Karvonen

Visiting professor

Johan Skytte professor in eloquence and political science, Li Bennich Björkman from Uppsala University was a guest professor at the department of political science in Åbo Akademi University in April 2014.

Her current research concerns political developments in the former Communist part of Europe, including EU enlargement, party politics, communist diversity and legacies and civil society. In addition, she is conducting studies on integration, diaspora and exile communities, focusing on Estonians and Bosnians.

She found her visit very stimulating and valuable in getting to know the environment better and learning about interesting research going on.

Thoughts of closer collaboration between the institutions in Åbo and Uppsala were initiated in June 2013 at a seminar in Uppsala, which professor Kimmo Grönlund attended.

Bennich-Björkman will hold a keynote lecture in March at the Annual Conference of the Finnish Political Science Association to be held at Åbo Akademi.

Book prize

On October 8, 2013 the book Personalization of politics, published in 2010, received recognition as Professor Karvonen was awarded the Åbo Akademi Chancellor’s Prize 2013 for Best Monograph.

The book demonstrates clearly that there is no linear trend toward more personalization in politics. From the point of view of the general personalization thesis, the findings are mixed at best; in some important respects, they are negative.

Hence, Karvonen shows that the personalization thesis, while not completely erroneous, has been overestimated not just by the media but in some of the research literature as well.
The D:CE community has attracted much appreciated external interest during its existence, and we have had the pleasure of hosting several visiting scholars.

Olga Mashtaler has been at our institution for the whole semester of 2013-2014. Olga is a PhD student at the Department of Political Science of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Her thesis focuses on semi-presidentialism in the context of post-communist transformation with the attention drawn to three post-communist countries - Poland, Ukraine and Russia.

She applied for Åbo Akademi because comparative politics is one of the cornerstones in our department, with her mentor, Prof. Carsten Anckar having the expertise that is valuable for her PhD-work.

Olga has presented her research as well as shared her inside view on political processes in Ukraine in research seminars. She regards her stay at Åbo Akademi University as very productive and hopes for further collaboration.

Book presentations


The Nordic Voter is the first book-length comparative analysis of voting behaviour in the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland. Leading scholars from national election studies teams present a detailed account of voter turnout, party identification, satisfaction with democracy, preferential voting, government support and party choice. The five-nation study is based on a comparative data set prepared uniquely for this book.

The book counters the widespread tendency for comparative analyses to lump Nordic countries together. Its general claim, substantiated by a unique and extensive empirical analysis of voter behaviour, is that the differences between the Nordic countries are in fact so large – in terms of institutional settings and micro-level voting behaviour – that there is no justification for making general claims about a typical ‘Nordic Voter’.

New dissertations

Andreas Fagerholm presented his dissertation Socialdemokrati, nyliberalism och grön politik: En komparativ studie av den västeuropeiska socialdemokratins ideologiska vägval 1970-1999. The public defence took place at the Department of Political Science in Vasa on February 7, 2013. Professor Detlef Jahn from Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität acted as External Examiner. Fagerholm summarizes his dissertation as follows: “My study focused on the ideological development within West European social democratic parties during the cataclysmic decades at the end of the twentieth century. Two research questions were scrutinized. First, I studied to what extent the standpoints produced by social democratic parties have taken on (a) a more neoliberal and (b) a more post-materialist character, and, secondly, which factors have induced parties to reshape or alternatively – maintain their policies regarding (a) and (b), respectively. The results of the study brought forth new evidence on the ideological development of social democratic parties and, more generally, on how and under what circumstances party ideologies change. This new information is relevant for future research on social democracy, on parties and ideologies, and on party behavior, party competition and party change.”
The authors challenge presumptions about ‘remarkable similarities’ between Nordic voters, revealing numerous examples of remarkable dissimilarities between voters in the Nordic countries.

Many national and sub-national governments followed this route and implemented various kinds of participatory innovations, i.e. the inclusion of citizens into processes of political will-formation and decision-making.

The authors analyze and evaluate the various effects of these innovations in Europe, providing a bigger picture of the benefits and disadvantages different democratic innovations can result in.

Typically, they bring together a diverse group of people for informed and structured discussion on matters of public importance.

The book takes stock of practices of deliberative mini-publics as it presents and evaluates their design features, processes, and outcomes. Furthermore, it provides a critical assessment of the experience with mini-publics, for example, their lack of policy-impact.

The book also makes suggestions of how mini-publics can be used to enhance the quality of democracy. Bringing together leading scholars in the field, most notably James S. Fishkin and Mark E. Warren, the book speaks to students and scholars with an interest in democracy and democratic innovations.

Catharina Groop presented her dissertation Accountability and Corruption. A Study into Political Institutions as Referees between Principals and Agents. The public defence took place at the Department of Political Science in Åbo on June 14, 2013. Docent Daniel Silander from Linnéuniversitetet acted as External Examiner. Groop summarizes her dissertation as follows: “The dissertation analyzes accountability as a causal pathway between political institutions and levels of corruption. The analysis focuses on principal-agent relationships inherent to a number of political institutions in the Austrian and Botswana contexts, and the accountability mechanisms available to and used by principals to hold their agents to account. The extent to which principals have access to and make use of accountability mechanisms is then analyzed against data on corruption in the two countries.

The dissertation concludes that single political institutions, through the rules inherent to them, both hamper and enable accountability, which in turn means that they have reducing as well as increasing effects on levels of corruption. The dissertation therefore argues that a more nuanced picture of the relationship between political institutions and corruption, and accountability as a pathway between the two, is acquired if political institutions are approached as a multitude of sometimes contradictory accountability-related rules, with oftentimes diverging effects on the prevalence of corruption.”
Visiting addresses
ASA-huset, Fänriksgatan 3 A
FIN-20500 Åbo, Finland
Strandgatan 2,
FIN-65100 Vasa, Finland
Tel: + 358 2 215 31
E-mail: dce@abo.fi,
firstname.lastname@abo.fi
http://www.dce.abo.fi

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Lauri Karvonen
Professor of Political Science

Deputy director
Kimmo Grönlund
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Recent publications


