

**DEMOCRACY: A CITIZEN
PERSPECTIVE
A CITIZEN PERSPECTIVE**

D:CE positively evaluated, continued funding for 2010-2014



The new D:CE steering group. Photo: Robert Seger

We are pleased to announce that D:CE has competed successfully for continued status as a Centre of Excellence at Åbo Akademi University. As a result it has been granted another four years of financing.

A very positive evaluation of the work done by D:CE and its researchers paved the way for re-election as one of the four Centres of Excellence at Åbo Akademi University for the period of 2010-2014. Jorma Mattinen, the Rector of Åbo Akademi made a decision on October

5th. The application by D:CE was described as exemplary.

All in all, 27 applications were submitted in March and a shortlist of 12 applications was evaluated by an international panel of distinguished professors from a variety of disciplines. The panel recommended four Centres to be funded, a recommendation which the Rector followed.

Among the four Centres are two current Centres of Excellence, D:CE being one of them. Two Centres are new. The level of additional funding will be around 250.000€ per year.

Lauri Karvonen, Director of the D:CE, What will be the main target for D:CE during the next four years?

The main target will be to expand the analytical foundations of our work in empirical and methodological terms, to refine some of our main conclusions and to finalize our work in the form of broad syntheses.

I am therefore looking forward to even more extensive experimental and comparative research as well as studies that use for instance focus groups. Several internationally published monographs will, along with numerous journal articles, synthesize our findings.

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The XVIII NORKOM Conference in Åbo

Public Administration at ÅAU, together with DC:E, successfully hosted the 18th yearly Nordic Local Government Studies Conference (NORKOM) 26-28 November 2009.

Some fifty doctoral students and senior scholars from departments of political science/local government

studies in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden attended the conference.



The themes of the 34 papers ranged from sustainable planning to political participation; from one-stop shops to constitutional reform – which illustrates the broad variety within the discipline.

The next NORKOM conference will be in Odense, Denmark, 25-27 November 2010.

Siv Sandberg

ECPR general conference in Potsdam

ECPR General Conference 2009 was arranged at the University of Potsdam on September 10-12. D:CE co-organized a section on the theme *Democratic Innovations and Innovative Democracy in Europe* at the conference.

The section chaired by prof. Brigitte Geissel (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt) and prof. Marko Joas (Åbo Akademi University) hosted a total of 7 panels and attracted many participants. 5 out of 7 panels were chaired by researchers from D:CE and many more from the D:CE research team presented their work at the conference.

As a result of the section, Brigitte Geissel and Marko Joas have decided to edit a book based on a selection of the best papers presented. The book will deal with different democratic innovations and follow a comparative framework on most central aspects of democracy, The estimated time of completion is early spring 2011.

Since many of the collaborators of D:CE participated in the conference, the steering board used the opportunity to invite the international advisory board for a dinner in Potsdam.



Kimmo Grönlund, Photo: Kim Strandberg



Åsa Bengtsson & Hanna Wass
Photo: Kimmo Grönlund



One of the panels in Potsdam
Photo: Kimmo Grönlund

New members of the international advisory board and steering group

We are very happy to welcome Prof. Brigitte Geissel as a new member of D:CE's international advisory board. The research of Prof. Geissel, who holds a professorship at Goethe Universität in Frankfurt, lies at the heart of D:CE.

New members in the D:CE steering group are Prof. Carsten Anckar and Adjoint Prof. Åsa Bengtsson, both political scientists working in Åbo.



Dinner in Potsdam, Photo: Kimmo Grönlund



Brigitte Geissel, Photo: Peter Sandström

Dissertation projects



Marina Lindell,
Photo: Private

Marina Lindell is the most recent to D:CE. In her thesis she will study opinion changes caused by participation in deliberative sessions.

More specifically she will explore whether it is access to information or the deliberative process as such that causes participants to change their opinion. She will also study how different individuals are affected by deliberative processes.



Henrik Serup Christensen,
Photo: Private

Henrik Serup Christensen's thesis deals with the interplay between political institutions and political participation in established democracies.

Significant differences have been found among these countries concerning the levels and the forms of participation citizens use to vent their preferences.

His study aims at contributing to a better understanding of how the structure of the political system shapes patterns of participation.

New Book on Electoral Systems Interview with Dr. Krister Lundell

The choice of electoral system is certainly important since it largely determines who gets what, when and how. In his new book, published by Routledge, Krister Lundell explores this important choice and how it is shaped by contextual factors.

Krister, please give us a brief introduction to your book.

- My study explores how contextual factors affect the choice of electoral systems for parliamentary elections in all countries that have held general elections during the postwar era. The frequency of the adoption of each electoral formula/system is presented and explanations are provided on the basis of three foundational theories – a rational, a cultural/historical and an institutional perspective.

A lot has been written on this topic, what makes your book stand out?

- Well actually, up until now, there has been no systematic analysis of electoral system choice that includes the entire world during an extensive time period. The reason for writing the book was to fill a part of this gap in the field of electoral system research.

What do you consider to be the main contribution of your book?

- Cross-national variations in electoral systems can largely be explained by colonial legacy, regional imitation and temporal trends, that is, various kinds of diffusion. The impact of structural traits and sociopolitical circumstances is in contrast, surprisingly small. I also find that deliberate electoral system design has become much more prominent during the last two decades. Electoral system change is not that rare as the literature on electoral systems has frequently put forward.



Krister Lundell, Foto: Robert Seger

The Origin of Electoral
Systems in the Post-war
Era

A worldwide approach

Krister Lundell



Routledge Research in Comparative Politics

A new home for D:CE in Åbo

As of Christmas 2009, D:CE in Åbo have moved into new premises.

After months of preparations the charming, but rather unpractical Hus Lindman was abandoned for the newly renovated ASA-building, an old radio factory.

The new premises will constitute the new centre for social science at Åbo Akademi University.



The aula of the ASA-building
Photo: Joanna Lindén

Re-organisation facilitates the work of D:CE

Åbo Akademi University has acknowledged the research collaboration of D:CE.

A new institutional structure is enacted as of 2010 at the university, and the disciplines and institutes that form D:CE have finally joined forces under a common umbrella.

The newly established *Department of Politics and Government*, together with

the integrated Social Science Research Institute (Samforsk) will strengthen our endeavors, not only in research and teaching, but also in the management of large research projects, such as D:CE.

The new department, will continue its operations in Åbo and Vasa, and will ensure a more professional D:CE management.



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D:CE in Vasa: Academill

Steering Group

Director: Lauri Karvonen, Professor of Political Science

Associate director: Kimmo Grönlund, Director of Research
(Social Science Research Institute)

Members: Carsten Anckar, Professor of Comparative Politics,
Åsa Bengtsson, Adjoint Professor of Political Science, Göran
Djupsund, Professor of Political Science and Political Com-
munication, Marko Joas, Professor of Public Administration

Associated Institutions

- * BIDS, Bern Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies, Universität Bern
- * DCERN, Democracy, Citizens and Elections Research Network, University of Manchester
- * NED, Nordic Elections and Democracy Research Consortium

Recent Publications

Maria Ackrén (2009), *Conditions for Different Autonomy Regimes in the World - A Fuzzy-Set Application*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Åsa Bengtsson & Mikko Mattila (2009), Direct democracy and its critics: Support for direct democracy and "stealth" democracy in Finland. *West European Politics* 32(5), 1031-1048.

Åsa Bengtsson & Henrik Serup Christensen (2009), Politiskt deltagande i Finland - spridning och drivkrafter. *Politiikka* 51 (2), 77-95.

Thomas Denk (2009), *Politisk kultur*. Malmö: Liber.

Sam Grönholm (2009), Governing National Parks in Finland: the Illusion of Public Involvement, in Hovik, Harvolds & Joas (eds) (2009), *Nordic Environments. Local Environment, Special Issue, 14 (3)*, 233-243.

Kimmo Grönlund (2009), Poliittinen tietämys, in *Borg & Paloheimo (toim.) Vaalit yleisdemokratiassa. Eduskuntavaalitutkimus 2007*, pp. 175-205. Tampere University Press.

Kimmo Grönlund, Kim Strandberg & Staffan Himmelroos (2009), The challenge of deliberative democracy online - A comparison of face-to-face and virtual experiments in citizen deliberation. *Information Polity*. 14, 187-201.

Lauri Karvonen (2009), Poliitiikan henkilöityminen, in *Borg & Paloheimo (toim.) Vaalit yleisdemokratiassa. Eduskuntavaalitutkimus 2007*, pp 94-125. Tampere University Press.

Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen & Peter Söderlund (2009), Rejoinder: Response to Arzheimer and Carter. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(3), 359-366.

Krister Lundell (2009), *The Origin of Electoral Systems in the Post-war Era: A Worldwide Approach*. London: Routledge.

Sari Pikkala (2009), *Avhoppare och utslagna. Personomsättning i finländska kommunfullmäktige*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 241 pp.

Theo Schiller & Maija Setälä (2009), *Referendums and Representative*

Democracy. Responsiveness, Accountability and Deliberation, London: Routledge

Kim Strandberg (2009), On-line Campaigning - An Opening for the Outsiders? - An Analysis of the Finnish Parliamentary Candidates' Websites in the 2003 Election Campaign, *New Media & Society* 11(5), 835-854.

Peter Söderlund & Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen (2009), The Dark Side of Party identification? An Empirical Study of Political Trust among Radical Right-Wing Voters. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 19:2, 159-181.



Editor of this Issue: Åsa Bengtsson