New DiSP Young Researchers' Seminar Series
A.Y. 2023-2024 | Semester II
The New DiSP Young Researchers' Seminars are held regularly in both semesters, and they provide a forum for presentation of work in progress, be it by members of the PhD community, Postdoctoral fellows, or invited speakers, as well as an opportunity to discuss academic and administrative matters of mutual concern.

Thursday 8 February 2024, 12:30 – 14:00 | Room S03A, basement of the Luiss Residence, Via Lisbona, 7

Mattia Gatti, PhD Candidate, XXXVIII cycle
"Managing the Grumbles: how intra-party dissent and leader domination affect salience strategies in Western Europe?"

Abstract: Rooted in the idea that parties strategically emphasize issues advantageous to them while silencing topics that could favor their competitors, saliency theory (Budge and Farlie 1983) has long represented a magnifying glass into party competition. Despite continuous refinements, however, a critical gap persists in understanding the rationale behind issue avoidance. By relaxing the party-as-unitary-actor assumption, this paper argues that intra-party dissent significantly affects a party's salience strategy. Specifically, leaders in divided parties, driven by the imperative to project unity and ensure survival, strategically eschew contentious issues from the party agenda. The success of this strategy, nonetheless, hinges on the level of control elites wield over policymaking within the party. These arguments are tested through a series of OLS linear regression analyses, employing the latest wave of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES 2019) (Jolly et al. 2022), and encompassing 15 Western European countries and 129 political parties. The findings suggest that higher levels of intra-party dissent are associated with lower emphasis awarded to an issue dimension. Moreover, evidence underscores the significant role of party organization in the effectiveness of parties' response to internal conflict, as well as the notable distinction that characterizes radical right parties with respect to other party families.

Costanza Marcellino, PhD Candidate, XXXVII cycle
"Partners in Times of Crisis: A Quantitative Analysis of Party Cohesion in the European Parliament before and after Brexit"

Abstract: Ever since the implementation of the Single European Act and the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties at the end of the 1990s, the impact and power of the European Parliament (EP) on decision-making have increased significantly. This has gradually enhanced the strength of transnational parties and has bridged the gap of "electoral connection" between EU legislators and public preferences. While numerous studies have explored the voting behaviour of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) along with trends of party cohesion, party competition and coalition formation among European party families (EPGs), little scholarly attention has been paid to test the robustness of these party consistencies during critical time points. The intense debate on Brexit can be considered as a stress test for the coherence of European political parties, and the impact of this crisis on their internal coherence still remains unknown. Thus, to address this research gap, this paper will address the questions "How did intra EP party cohesion change after the occurrence of Brexit?" and "To what extent did the UK's national party affiliation influence British MEPs' legislative behaviour before and after the Brexit referendum?". By relying on Simon Hix' Agreement Index (AI) design for measuring party cohesion and employing EP roll-call votes data from

2004-2022 by VoteWatch Europe, this study will provide a systematic overview of the trends of EU intra-party cohesion across time, countries and policy areas through descriptive and regression analyses. Given the significant challenge posed by UK's decision to leave the Union, this project contributes to the existing research on party cohesion and competition first by examining coherence within European parties before and after the Brexit crisis, secondly by offering a comparative analysis between EU member states' trends and the UK's across the relevant policy areas, and lastly by estimating the impact of the interplay between national and supranational party interests when determining parties' loyalty. The nature of the study will additionally shed light on the importance of Eurosceptic patterns at the European party level, thus determining in what countries European integration is most likely to occur as a wedge issue.

Ylenia Maria Citino, Post-doctoral Research Fellow
"The Europeanisation of National Constitutions in Light of the Constitutionalisation of the European Union"
Abstract: The paper explores the relationship between national constitutions and the European Treaties, whose "constitutional" value is widely recognized. It will go beyond the analysis of the debated aspect of respecting the national and constitutional identities of Member States, considering, as part of it, national constitutions as the main source of legitimacy for the EU integration process. As known, this legitimacy is dual, as it can be observed from the perspectives of domestic law, where constitutional acknowledgement of membership is a key element, and international law, where legitimacy arises solely from the process of Treaty ratification. In a context where political and financial crises, along with conflicts dangerously close to the EU's territory, pose threats and test the stability of its order, understanding the effects of the "Europeanization" of national constitutions becomes crucial. This refers to the dynamics of constitutional amendments aimed at including more or less prescriptive references related to the recognition or strengthening of the country's integration into the supranational union. It's worth considering that some Member States have undergone no constitutional variations despite the act of ratification. Examples include Belgium, possibly joining unconstitutionally until the 1970 reform, and Portugal, which entered the EU without any constitutional provision until adopting Article 7.5 in the 1989 reform. Additionally, Italy, along with other founding states, ratified the Treaties through ordinary law, raising the issue of their formal status in the legal order and, until the present day, it gives prominence to the EU legislation through a consolidated interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution (which, however, does not explicitly mention the EU). This contribution examines the feasibility of constitutionalizing, albeit belatedly, a state's membership in the European Union and the potential impact of such "Europeanization" on strengthening participation in the EU. Through a comparative analysis of European clauses in Member States' constitutions, potential clauses in non-EU member states' constitutions will be identified. Using two specific cases – the recent Luxembourg Constitution reform and the persistent lack of reform in the Italian Constitution – the essay assesses whether and to what extent constitutionalizing membership is imperative for the development of a "Euro-national constitutional identity."

Thursday 29 February 2024, 12:30 – 14:00 | Room S03A, basement of the Luiss Residence, Via Lisbona, 7
Chiara Terranova, PhD Visiting Candidate, University of Flensburg

"The European Commission's role in EU budget politics"

Abstract: The EU budget is relatively small if compared to an average national budget. Yet, it has a considerable impact on public expenditure in EU member states. Since their introduction in 1988, a total of six long-term budgets have been established in the EU to determine the levels and purposes of European finances for at least five years. The Commission proposes the budgetary drafts, which are then negotiated and agreed by the two budgetary authorities, the Parliament and the Council, under the informal but increasingly relevant influence of the European Council. Studies of EU politics have well depicted the power struggles among these actors, while taking for granted the strive of the Commission for budget maximization. This research challenges such an interpretation. Building on new intergovernmentalism, it argues that supranational institutions are complacent with the emergence of an integration paradox in the post-Maastricht era of integration. Through a process-tracing analysis the research aims to demonstrate that the pressures of a more politicized environment prompted an adaptation of the Commission's preferences and strategies. First empirical evidence, resulting from elite interviews, archival research, and document analysis, is presented.

Andrea Capati, Post-doctoral Research Fellow
"The Framing of European Integration in EU-Wide Media: Actors, Narratives and Policies following the Russian invasion of Ukraine"

Abstract: This paper examines how EU-wide media framed European integration in terms of prevalent actors, narratives, and policy areas in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Based on the combination of theoretical insights from discursive institutionalism and the grand theories of European integration, it comes up with three distinct theoretical perspectives – i.e., discursive neo-functionalism, discursive new intergovernmentalism and discursive post-functionalism – to explain the salience of different types of actors and narratives following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. To this effect, the paper performs a qualitative analysis of textual content in six of the most influential EU media sources as of 2023, taking the form of a competitive theory testing. Challenging the established literature on EU-related national media coverage, the paper finds that, consistently with discursive neo-functionalism, the Russian military aggression of Ukraine has led to the discursive empowerment of EU supranational actors, most notably the European Commission, and to an increased salience of more European integration and transnational solidarity narratives. This has happened despite the conflict was mainly framed as falling within the realm of intergovernmental policy areas, such as energy policy, security and defence.

Thursday 21 March 2024, 12:30 – 14:00; Joint Departmental Seminar | Viale Romania, room 406ab

Professor Aleksandra Maatsch, University of Wroclaw
"Returning to the Rule of Law: doves' and hawks' transition path"
Abstract: With the victory of pro-democratic parties over the ruling populist party Law and Justice (PiS), Poland embarked on a new path: a return to the rule of law (RoL). Yet, the new path posed a substantial dilemma to domestic actors. While some seem to favour the option of re-establishing the rule of law with full procedural and constitutional correctness (doves), others advocate to re-install the rule of law with quick though procedurally not consistently

regular measures (hawks). Whereas for the first group the path toward re-installing the RoL is considered equally important as the status quo achieved after the transition, the other group seems to predominantly focus on the outcome of the transition, not the process. Against that background, the article poses the following research questions: which factors explain domestic actors' support towards these two options? What is the legitimacy basis of doves' and hawks' positions? The empirical inference of the article is based on comparative, qualitative and quantitative media (quality and social media) analysis in Poland covering the period from the election day (October 15th) until the end of the first 100 days' period in office. This article aims at contributing to the field of domestic politics of the RoL. So far, the literature has predominantly focused on the top-down EU institutional impact neglecting at the same time the bottom-up perspective. Beyond that, neither the EU-focused nor the domestic strand of the literature has studied the process of re-installing the RoL in the European Union. The Polish experience offers a unique opportunity to learn more about the process. In general, the empirical findings of this study aim at enriching our knowledge about bottom-up domestic processes oriented on re-installing the RoL in the EU and beyond.

Thursday 18 April 2024, 12:30 – 14:00 | Room S03A, basement of the Luiss Residence, Via Lisbona, 7

Bosco Lebrun, PhD Candidate, XXXVIII cycle

"Democratizing the UN: Unraveling Ordinary Citizens' Sentiments via Grounded Theory"

Abstract: In the last century, influential personalities such as H. G. Wells (1902) or Albert Einstein (1946) have called for even greater centralization at the international level, going so far as to speak of a world government. Scholars have abundantly discussed the potential problems and benefits of such an evolution. Although this debate can now be clearly mapped, what ordinary citizens have in mind and value remains, by contrast, deeply opaque. Ghassim, Koenig-Archibugi, and Cabrera (2022) started to fill this gap with an international study examining the preferences of the public on this matter. They also identified the profile of proponents and opponents of reforms of the United Nations. However, they obtained surprising results which raised even more question as to the logic behind the approval or disapproval of the reforms. For instance, it was found that people who think homosexuality is justified are significantly more supportive of democratic reforms that would favor countries with restrictive laws against LGBTQ people. The article therefore seeks to understand according to which logic ordinary citizens support or oppose reforms further democratizing the United Nations. To this aim, in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with a diverse sampling of ordinary citizens. They revealed the most important rationales behind citizens' preferences regarding a hypothetical democratization of the United Nations. By uncovering the driving forces behind the citizens' argumentation, the discussion section develops a grounded theory which makes sense of the paradoxical results obtained in previous research on the topic.

Manfredi Valeriani, Post-doctoral Research Fellow

"Urban Food Systems between Innovation and Social Capital"

Abstract: The development of agricultural practices in urban contexts is a common feature across the globe. From community gardens to urban farms, spaces where people can engage

in farming and agricultural activities in cities have become a characteristic of many cities. Reasons for the implementations of these spaces can vary enormously (Clendenning, Dressler, and Richards 2016), from governmental led urban planning, to bottom-up processes initiated by citizens and to non-profit initiatives that use farming as tools to generate impact on vulnerable communities. While the scale of this initiatives in terms of land and scalability of the production is limited by the constraints provided by urban spaces, these practices often provide innovative solutions to farming, in addition to producing social capital beyond the profitability of the activities. Moreover, if we expand the radar a little beyond the urban borders, we can start seeing an increasing number of farming activities that in terms of scale and profit orientation might appear substantially different from the instances found in the city. However, when conceptualizing food and agriculture in a broader perspective, it is possible to find common features shared by the works of the land. Focusing on the case of the City of Cape Town, this paper investigates a series of different urban and non-urban farming initiatives, to build a typology that could show how innovation can be produced in small urban farming initiatives and how social capital can be produced in larger agricultural businesses.

Thursday 9 May 2024, 12:30 – 14:00 | Room S03A, basement of the Luiss Residence, Via Lisbona, 7

Guest Lecture: Giulia Sciorati, LSE Fellow, Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science

Crafting "Attractive" Silk Road Histories: (Visual) Narrative Contestation Between China and Kazakhstan

Abstract:

This chapter aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary subfield that includes International Relations (IR), Memory, and Heritage Studies, providing insights into the use of Silk Road narratives and their role in shaping China's diplomacy. Previous research has predominantly focused on the role of Silk Road histories in Chinese diplomacy, primarily through the lens of foreign policy narratives. These narratives are perceived as strategic tools that states employ to advance their diplomatic agendas, project soft power, and shape perceptions of self and others. By drawing on narrative theory, these studies have developed an interpretive approach, exploring how China utilizes Silk Road histories to shape its self-identity, present itself to foreign audiences, and negotiate contested narratives. My research adds to this discourse. The chapter investigates how these narratives interact with more extensive discussions about national identity and historical memory, contributing to shedding light on the issue of narrative contestation. The research seeks to advance knowledge of how narrative contestation functions at the micro-level and influences state perceptions in the international arena.