Declining Political Trust, Disenchantment with Politics, and Methods of Political Participation

Open Call for Papers
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Over the last two decades, disenchantment with politics has become more noticeable around the globe as people feel a growing distance between governments and governed. When asked, some voters state that politicians do not listen to what the people want, causing many to turn away from politics in frustration. Others voice their opinions in the streets, protesting against political decisions, thus demonstrating that they want to have their say in politics – not just on Election Day.

At the same time, public opinion surveys suggest that political trust is declining meaning that people are less and less confident in their governments and other political institutions. Is there a connection between trust in and disenchantment with politics as the public debate often suggests? If so, what are the reasons behind this development? The literature offers a variety of economic, social, cultural and political explanations for declining levels of trust; similar factors are usually mentioned when disenchantment with politics is concerned. Can we identify major driving factors from this potpourri of potential explanations? Are the same mechanisms at work in all affected countries? And if so, under which conditions might citizens re-invest trust into the political system?

Taking into account the theoretical and practical relevance of political trust for modern democracies and the open questions that still remain after about 50 years of research, further work on the topic seems in order. We encourage contributions addressing the questions raised above, or the meaning and transformation of the concept in different time periods or countries, or new ways of measuring trust. In particular we suggest using the existing comparative data bases (such as CSES, EVS, Eurobarometer, ESS, ISSP). Manuscripts should cover either one country for more than one period of time, or compare several countries, or both.

Contributions of no more than 8000 words should be sent as pdf-files to poltrust@gesis.org by September 30, 2011. Formal abstracts will not be required, but we recommend getting in contact with the editors as soon as possible to discuss the focus of your contribution. The intention is to publish the contributions after a peer-reviewed process. You may also consider using EUROLAB (www.gesis.org/eurolab) facilities for preparing your contribution.

Editors:
Christina Eder (GESIS, Head of Research Data Center Elections)
Ingvill C. Mochmann (GESIS, Head of EUROLAB)
Markus Quandt (GESIS, Head of Research Data Center International Survey Programs)