



Postdoctoral contract on the ANR JCJC project UNEQUALCITIEN

Inequalities and conceptions of the political system in European democracies

Funding: French National Research Agency (ANR)

Remuneration: Remuneration according to the number of years' experience after the thesis (at least 2817.87€ gross/month)

Status: Postdoctoral researcher

Project manager: Camille Bedock, CNRS research fellow

Location: Centre Émile Durkheim, Sciences Po Bordeaux

Duration of contract: 12-month fixed-term contract, from 1 November 2023, full-time

Deadline for defence: September 2023

Reimbursement of home/work travel expenses: Yes

Summary of the research project

We have long known that citizens are not truly equal: the more affluent, the more educated and the more socially integrated participate more intensively and are more likely to see their preferences implemented in public policy. Despite the renewed interest in democracy in intellectual debate and institutional spheres, the socially situated nature of conceptions of democracy and desired institutional reforms has often been ignored. In a context of rising inequality, this amounts to legitimising the conceptions of democracy of dominant actors and ignoring the aspirations of the most vulnerable groups.

The UNEQUALCITIZEN project therefore examines the influence of social and political inequalities on conceptions of the political system in European democracies. To what extent do these inequalities help to explain the variety of citizens' conceptions of their political system and their positions on representative democracy and its alternatives?

Our main hypothesis is that the most socially disadvantaged and politically marginalised, although particularly dissatisfied with representative democracy, do not want the end of political representation or democracy, which remain unsurpassable horizons. However, they do support the introduction of mechanisms to control and sanction political representatives in order to implement the general interest, understood as the single will of the people. We also hypothesise that national institutions strongly shape citizens' conceptions of their political system. Rather than focusing on the usual questions of trust or distrust in institutions, this project is original in that it examines head-on the normative conceptions of what constitutes a 'good' political system among citizens of consolidated democracies in Europe. It aims first to identify citizens' ideal-typical conceptions of their political system. It then aims to reconstruct the discourses associated with these conceptions and to analyse their normative foundations, while paying particular attention to the national and individual characteristics of the different discourses and to the question of conflicts and ambivalences running through these contradictory aspirations.

Three scientific obstacles explain our still very patchy knowledge of these diverse conceptions. The first is the lack of comparability of existing research protocols, leading to often contradictory results. The second obstacle is the lack of approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, despite their complementarity. The third and last theoretical obstacle results from a certain lack of interest in the contributions of political theory, which nevertheless provides key concepts for understanding normative conflicts on democracy and political representation.

To overcome these obstacles, the project proposes a comparative approach and the use of mixed methods. It combines survey data collected in several European democracies with in-depth semi-structured interviews in France, Belgium and Italy with citizens and activists from movements questioning representative democracy (the Yellow Vests, citizens' movements in Belgium, and the Five Star Movement). The comparison aims to explore the role of specific contexts. Mixed methods will allow us to study normative conflicts and the articulation of national, social and political characteristics with ideal-typical discourses on the political system. Finally, the mobilisation of works of political theory on representation will allow us to analyse the normative conflicts structuring these contradictory aspirations.

Job description:

During the 12 months of his/her contract, the postdoctoral researcher will be attached to the Centre Emile Durkheim at Sciences po Bordeaux and will be part of the ANR JCJC UNEQUALCITIZEN project team coordinated by Camille Bedock (CR CNRS, Sciences po Bordeaux), made up of political scientists based in France, Italy and Belgium.

Trained in quantitative methods and in qualitative methods, the person recruited will take part in the **quantitative part of the project**, based on a comparative survey of citizens' views of their political system carried out by the ERC POLITICIZE directed by Jean-Benoit Pilet (Université Libre de Bruxelles), a project partner, as well as other surveys already collected. The person recruited will be involved in the production, analysis and exploitation of the data. A command of **inferential analysis techniques** (regression analysis) as well as **factorial analysis techniques** (multiple correspondence analysis, principal component analysis, classifications) is required to successfully complete this component.

She will also be involved in the valorization of the **qualitative part of the survey**. The data has already been collected and extensively transcribed and coded, and consists of a corpus of around 200 interviews conducted with Belgian, French and Italian citizens and activists in movements committed to democracy

(Gilets jaunes, Five Star Movement, as well as various citizens' movements based in French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Belgium).

As part of the valorisation of the project's data, the postdoc will appear as an author in all the publications and communications carried out as part of the postdoc.

The person recruited will also be responsible for assisting the project coordinator with the **scientific coordination** of the project. The personal activities of the person recruited (promotion of previous research, applications, participation in scientific networks) will be supported and valued, and included in the workload.

Tasks required:

- Leading the scientific project in cooperation with the project coordinator (10%)
 - Research and development work on the quantitative aspect (50%)
 - Development work on the qualitative aspect (20%)
 - Personal activities (applications, promotion of previous work) (20%)
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Resources

Office at the Centre Émile Durkheim at Sciences po Bordeaux (workstation with computer)

Financing of field missions

Software for data analysis (Stata or another statistical software, Nvivo)

Possibility for the person recruited to be a full member of the research laboratory

Data produced during the project

Skills

- PhD in political science or sociology.
 - Advanced knowledge of quantitative methods and database management (preferably Stata, R): inferential and factorial analyses.
 - Ability to analyse qualitative interviews
 - Fluency in spoken and written French and English. Fluency in Italian, although not required, could be useful for analysing Italian qualitative data.
 - Research experience in one of the following areas: political sociology, political theory, social movements, political institutions, public opinion analysis
 - Ability to work as part of a research team
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Host unit

Centre Émile Durkheim, UMR 5116

<https://www.centreemiledurkheim.fr/>

Selection procedure

Candidates must send an e-mail to c.bedock@sciencespobordeaux.fr before **September 28 2023** including:

- A CV,
- A 1 or 2 page document explaining how the candidate envisages his/her involvement in the project.

The candidates·e-s selected will be auditioned in person in Bordeaux (with the possibility of expenses) or on Zoom. The auditions will take place during from the week of **October 2 2023**.