

CULTURE, PRACTICE & EUROPEANIZATION

Call for Papers

Knowledge, discourses and practices of EU critique

Special Issue of *Culture, Practice & Europeanization* (ed. by Marlon Barbehön and Wolf J. Schünemann)

Critique is a constitutive element of democracy. As a normative reference point, democracy is both inherently ambiguous and never entirely realisable. The procedural and institutional materialisation of democratic principles could thus never be satisfying, and the very possibility of articulating critique constitutes a major part of democracy itself. However, regarding European integration and the EU polity, critical voices have long been marginalised. Indeed, critical attitudes towards EU integration had been most prominently and intensely voiced by parties and movements on the margins of the political spectrum in most European countries. In contrast, “mainstream” actors in the “centre” of the political spectrum mostly took and defended an overall pro-European stance. Against this background, professional observers in politics and academia tended to label all sorts of EU critique rather blanketly “Euroscepticism”, thus inventing a specific name for a rather common phenomenon inherently linked to democratic politics. True, researchers of political attitudes active in this field differentiated between “hard” (exit from the EU) and “soft” Eurosceptics (yes to Europe, but not in its actual form), and this taxonomy served EU researchers well. However, it resulted in a depiction of EU critique as a sort of pathology, which corresponded to the progressive narrative frequently told and highly shared in EU integration research.

While so-called permissive consensus had long been lost, the EU had to face abounding critique particularly in the context of the multiple crises in the last decade, and so-called Euroscepticism finally entered the manifestos and practices of some mainstream actors across Europe. Thus, nowadays at the latest a more nuanced approach is needed in order to understand the orders of knowledge, discourses and practices that constitute EU critique as a complex and ambiguous social phenomenon. This is especially the case since criticising the EU is not the exclusive business of the “others” anymore, but deeply embedded in how societies talk about Europe and EU integration. At the same time, the ubiquity of anti-EU sentiment is not merely a reason for frustration but has a positive side as well, as public debate is exactly where EU critique belongs. From this perspective, the end of the so-called permissive consensus can be regarded as a necessary politicisation and normalisation of EU politics. Given the existential dangers for European integration, it seems a valuable endeavour to examine more closely the different threads and forms of EU critique instead of banning them into the isolation of Euroscepticism.

CULTURE, PRACTICE & EUROPEANIZATION

The papers we invite for this special issue should not adhere to the common Euroscepticism discourse by just identifying the known and the new suspects. Rather, we are looking for contributions which engage in more nuanced analyses of social movements, political initiatives, debates and practices which are typically not perceived and studied as places or instances of “Euroscepticism”, but which still build on a certain type of EU critique. This might help to heal own prejudices and to reflect about one’s own perspective as an observer of EU politics.

Papers for this special issue should cover one of the following (or related) questions:

- What is the relationship between EU critique and “classical” critique of democracy? Which are the commonalities (normative and empirical)? Which are the differences?
- How could we meaningfully distinguish between different variants of EU critique? What are suitable standards for differentiating e.g. between productive and destructive discourses and practices?
- What role does “EU critique” as a stock of knowledge play for the self-observation of societies?
- At which places and in which forms does EU critique appear? Which are the similarities and which are the differences between practices of critique in the mediated public, the political sphere and everyday life?
- Which normative value and which impact do different forms of EU critique have?
- In which ways does EU critique (not) serve democratic legitimacy?

The call is open to both theoretical and empirical contributions. In case of empirical analyses, whether choosing a quantitative or qualitative research design, empirical studies should allow for in-depth analyses of certain stocks of knowledge, discourses or practices in contrast to any kind of macro-comparative approach. We invite contributions from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives: political sociology, social movement studies, political science, political theory, European studies, international relations etc.

Abstracts (max. 250 words) should be sent to the guest editors of the special issue, Marlon Barbehön (marlon.barbehoen@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de) and Wolf J. Schünemann (wolf.schuenemann@uni-hildesheim.de) by August 31, 2018. Papers are selected by quality of submission and their matching with the special issue’s overall topic. Full papers will be due by December 31, 2018. Papers will be peer-reviewed before publication.