



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Boekbespreking van: Comparing democracies 2. New challenges in the study of elections and voting

Kolk, H. van der

Citation

Kolk, H. van der. (2002). Boekbespreking van: Comparing democracies 2. New challenges in the study of elections and voting. *Acta Politica*, 37: 2002(4), 438-440. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450919>

Version: Publisher's Version
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450919>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

because “the differentiation of institutions and networks is a feature of governance because local particularities and multilevel-problems become more evident than under government” (p. 133). The implication, then, is that – depending on the specific institutional constellation – governance may or may not change policy-making. But then John should conclude that the shifts have not been so dramatic after all! What is also problematic is that the reader is not given the tools to discover for himself whether the bottle is half full or half empty. This also hampers the final classification of the developments in the different countries, for which John once again makes use of Page and Goldsmith’s framework. It thus remains unclear to what extent their classification – which was characterized in chapter 2 as of ‘key importance’ (p. 37) – can be upheld.

In sum the book lacks the conceptual and theoretical rigour that is needed to convert John’s undoubtedly large knowledge of local government into meaningful knowledge of governance. However, it would be unfair to blame John exclusively. The concept of governance itself is very problematic, not only because it has strong normative connotations, but especially because it is simply too encompassing. Although it may be an ideal label for the heterogeneous world of institutions and research programmes, it is simply too vast to write a book about.

Herman Lelieveldt

Lawrence Leduc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris, *Comparing Democracies 2. New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*. London: Sage 2002, ISBN 0-7619-7223-4, £ 21.99.

Readers who enjoyed *Comparing Democracies. Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (1996) will no doubt be curious about its successor. The book was a landmark publication and is referred to quite often in research about different subjects related to the functioning of modern democracies. Its successor offers some updated chapters of the 1996 version as well as some entirely new chapters. However, most chapters of the 1996 version are neither updated nor included in this new volume, as, according to the editors, these ‘remain relevant’. Therefore, the successor does not replace the original *Comparing Democracies*; it expands and partially updates.

In chapter 1 the editors offer an introduction to the subject, describe the emergence of democratic regimes around the globe and present a large set of data on all major democracies. Chapter 2 and 3 mainly deal with the legal institutions regulating the elections. In chapter 2, Blais and Massicotte describe the variety of systems that exist around the world, updating their chapter of 1996 without substantially changing its contents. This chapter also discusses the political consequences of electoral systems and summarizes some arguments about the ‘best electoral system’. In an entirely new chapter, chapter 3, Leduc describes the growing appeal of referenda and the empirical studies that are trying to shed some light on this subject. Leduc mainly focuses on the

organization of referenda and on the volatility of the vote in a referendum. He concludes that attitudes towards issues are only one of the variables that affect voting in referenda.

Political parties are dealt with in chapters 4, 5 and 6. In a slightly changed, but still largely descriptive chapter, Mair classifies party systems and discusses the consequences of various party systems for governmental formation. Chapter 5 focuses on candidate selection. In this new chapter, Hazan presents an analytic framework that can be used to describe candidate selection within political parties. Of the elements of this analytic framework the size and content of the ‘selectorate’ (the body selecting candidates for office) seem to be the most important. Hazan discusses both the causes and the consequences of an increasing selectorate, which he presents as democratization. In a chapter on party campaign communications, Norris focuses on the changing organization of campaigns and the factors affecting this change.

Voters and elections are the main focus of chapters 7, 8 and 9. Franklin studies the individual and structural determinants of turnout, showing that we probably understand much more about differences between political systems than we understand about differences between voters. In the co-authored chapter 8, Miller and Niemi discuss comparative studies of voting behaviour. This subject was missing in the 1996 version, and is a welcome supplement indeed. The individual vote appears to be determined on the one hand by individual characteristics like party identification and on the other by constraints imposed upon voters by the political system like the number and nature of available options and the electoral system. This chapter mainly concerns the ‘static side’ of voting. In chapter 9, Dalton focuses on the dynamic side by discussing the declining relevance of the old social cleavages for the individual vote.

The book ends with a chapter written by Diamond on the emergence of democracies and democratic support, particularly in Eastern Europe and South America. This chapter takes up some of the themes introduced in the first chapter, suggesting some level of coherence in the book, although none of the themes discussed in the other chapters are used to build up the argument in this last chapter.

If the book is judged by the rather high standards set forth in the first chapter, the interested reader may be somewhat disappointed. In the introduction, the editors sketch the ‘third wave of democratization’ and the social and economic requisites for democracy and claim that “institutional accounts emphasise that political systems have the capacity to exert an autonomous effect that may foster or prevent the consolidation of democracy” (p. 5). This claim is used to explain and present the book’s purpose. However, most chapters do not pay any attention to the distinction between established and new democracies. Therefore, the chapters do not offer insights for emerging or new democracies at all.

A second disappointment will be the number of new and updated chapters. The introduction is rewritten, expanded and updated and Franklin adds some analyses to his original chapter on turnout. Despite the claim by the editors, however, the other three updated chapters are not ‘substantially revised’ (p. 8). This at least suggests that the book is the result of an aborted attempt to replace the original and

hardly justifies the new subtitle of the book (*new challenges* in the study of elections and voting).

A third disappointment is the claim that all chapters will try to study the micro- and macro relationship using data from 58 countries, unless "complete information is not available for the countries under comparison." This is a huge understatement. Blais and Mascotte present data for 58 countries, LeDuc for 39 and Franklin for 30 or 40. But most other chapters concern only a few countries (or parties within countries). Some chapters, for example the otherwise well-written chapter on voting behaviour, do not even present an analysis of data, but provide us with a survey of the existing literature. I do not claim that this is an omission that can be solved easily, but the standards set in the first chapter were far too high.

Setting aside the partly unfulfilled promises set forth in the first chapter, the book is still well written and highly informative. It also seems to reflect the state of the affairs in empirical studies of democracy and some of the chapters will remain or become a starting point for new studies on voting and elections. Given the book's broad scope on fundamental subjects, I hope the authors will present a fully updated version of the book in five years time, including all chapters and include some chapters on subjects like cultural change, legitimacy, participation (beyond turnout) and democratic stability. Maybe they can also stimulate the authors to end their chapters, not with a conclusion, but with a new set of questions, thus taking up a much-needed agenda-setting role. If they succeed in doing so, they could also change the subtitle into *A handbook for the study of democracy*.

Henk van der Kolk

Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, ISBN 0-7456-2094-9, £14.99, ISBN 0-7456-2093-0, £50.00

Among political scientists and political philosophers Philip Pettit is probably best known for his contemporary renewal of republican theory and his incisive plea for a contestatory model of democracy. His *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government* (1997) has been described by many as 'landmark work' on the republican model of political life. Even if he had only done this work Pettit's intellectual achievement would be considerable, but his research in fact covers far more topics than just republican political theory. His vast body of work includes such topics as phenomenology, philosophy of mind, rational choice, social philosophy, consequentialism and criminal justice. One of the more characteristic features of Pettit's work is that he uses a holistic methodology. Questions of human intentionality and thought, for instance, are not isolated from questions of social ontology and political institutions.

A Theory of Freedom has to be considered against this background. In the first few lines of the introduction Pettit claims that a comprehensive theory of freedom in the line of Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant will be developed. Unlike other standard treatments of freedom, his theory does not discuss issues of metaphysical and political freedom as belonging to two separate disciplines, but tries to provide a connected discussion of the two. But why do we need a comprehensive theory of freedom? Pettit gives a conceptual and a methodological answer to this question. The first argument builds on the conceptual observation that we normally use the word 'freedom' in the psychological and political contexts in a related fashion. In both domains someone is free to the extent that he can be held responsible for his actions. If someone lacks freedom of will or certain political liberties, we normally do not hold them responsible for what they do. The second, the methodological, argument deals with the observation that the intuitions that are relevant in the two domains together will give us more constraints on a satisfactory theory of freedom than if we take the intuitions in each of the domains separately. Domain-specific intuitions are consistent with many contrasting theories of freedom and may leave the choice of such a theory "severely underdetermined". But, if we combine both sets of intuitions we get more constraints on a satisfactory theory and thereby reduce the number of plausible candidates (p. 2). So, it is precisely because we face the risk of underdetermination that we have to choose for a holistic methodology. Pettit's claim that he will construct such a single, unified theory of freedom in the spirit of Kant and Hobbes may seem very admirable, and in some respect even groundbreaking, but at the same time the encompassing nature of his aspiration has to strike a note of caution, because Pettit only partially succeeds in his intention.

Pettit wants to avoid being tied to the compartmentalized language that is being used in psychology and political science to talk about freedom. He therefore prefers to speak about 'freedom in the agent' instead of 'free will' and of the ideal that this freedom in the agent would support as a target for political action instead of 'political liberty'. In the first chapter Pettit tries to analyse what this notion of freedom in the agent entails. Free agency has three different aspects. First of all, it covers freedom of the *action* performed by the agent. Secondly, it covers freedom of the *self*. The agent must be compelled to identify with the action as something he has done. If I have acted freely then that action must bear my signature: I cannot be detached from it. Finally, freedom in the agent involves freedom of the *person*. It refers to the social status we enjoy in freely choosing something. An action is only truly ours when the decision to act was not made under the pressure by others. According to Pettit there is a single concept of freedom at issue when we speak of these three different aspects or *domains of freedom* in the agent. But what kind of concept of freedom is able to unite our talk of freedom in the domains of free action, free self and free person?

Pettit tries to answer this question by making a distinction between three *connotations* that freedom normally has, that is: responsibility, ownership and underdetermination. To say that someone is free, normally implies: (a) that he can be rightly held responsible for his actions; (b) that he is able to identify with the action he