

Stein Rokkan Prize in Comparative Politics, 2018

Laudatio, *Dilemmas of Inclusion*, by Rafaela Dancygier, Princeton University Press, 2017.

The jury has unanimously decided to award the 2018 Stein Rokkan Prize for comparative social science research to Rafaela Dancygier for her book “Dilemmas of Inclusion: Muslims in European Politics”, published in 2017 by Princeton University Press.

This superbly engaging book provides a profoundly illuminating analysis of the causes and consequences of parties’ mobilization of Muslim groups for contemporary European politics. It shows that the growth of Muslim communities across Europe confronts political parties with a dilemma: If parties seek to broaden their electoral coalitions by catering to minority voters, the most effective way of doing so is to include conservative Muslim communities. The latter views on religion or gender roles however deviate strongly from those of the parties’ core voters. This dilemma is more consequential for left parties, whose cosmopolitan core voters are most open to minority inclusion, while at the same time being strongly opposed to traditional views on religion, gender or sexuality. Drawing on evidence from elections at the local level in four countries: Austria, Germany, Belgium and Britain, the book spells out under which condition European parties decide to include minority voters, and the consequences for party competition and electoral alignments. The focus on local election is warranted, because it is on the local – urban – level, where easily mobilizable vote-rich traditional minority enclaves co-exist with the most cosmopolitan communities in the same electoral districts.

“Dilemmas of Inclusion” is theoretically ambitious, methodologically innovative, and empirically rich. The book draws on large amounts of different types of data – from surveys, party manifestos, as well as new datasets on characteristics of local elections - to answer crucial questions on the dynamics of party competition under conditions of increasing diversity across Europe. It thus constitutes a “very substantial and original contribution in comparative social science research”, exemplifying the virtues that the Stein Rokkan Prize is intended to honour.

The role social democratic parties play in mobilizing Muslim communities is analysed with a new analytical framework which distinguishes between symbolic and vote-based inclusion. The former occurs when election outcomes do not hinge on the voting behaviour of minority voters, and parties simply wish to send a message that they support minority integration into socio-political life. Once minority electorates reach a threshold where they can significantly affect election outcomes, however, parties will opt for vote-based inclusion. This type of inclusion is directed at mobilizing the minority itself. Each type of inclusion is associated with different candidate types, which in turn have diverse consequences for changing voters’ profile, as well as the party’s identity.

The candidates chosen for symbolic inclusion are the ones whose values and preferences follow the party and its electorate at large. When on the contrary, the party is engaging in vote-based inclusion, the party will pick “authentic” candidates, which can “guarantee to deliver the co-ethnic vote” by representing their constituencies values’ and preferences. The author provides compelling evidence on both Muslim and non-Muslim voters values and preferences using individual-level data, to show that the former are markedly more religious, as well as socially conservative, namely regarding gender roles and attitudes towards homosexuals. In addition, Dancygier shows that

“polarisation is taking place. Living in municipalities that witness an increasing number of relatively more patriarchal Muslim residents induces more support for gender egalitarianism among non-Muslims.”

The ability of authentic candidates to effectively mobilize their voters will depend on the electoral context. This is the case especially in Britain (small uninominal circles) and Belgium (small circles and preference voting), compared to Austria and Germany. Indeed, Dancygier shows that the existence of electoral incentives is a better predictor of parties’ adoption of a vote-based inclusion strategy than the content of their party manifestos. As vote-inclusion has increased, however, Labour vote volatility has tended to increase too as class-based voting declines, and other parties, namely liberal-democrats compete for the Muslim vote at the local level.

Dancygier also shows convincingly that there is a trade-off between gender parity and religion parity across constituencies. Muslim women are relatively overrepresented in Austria and Germany where symbolic inclusion is the norm and religious parity is low, and relatively underrepresented in Britain and Belgium where vote-based inclusion is more frequent and religious parity is higher. This “prompts us to rethink the notion that political inclusion promotes or is at least correlated with integration in other realms; depending on partisan inclusion objectives, electoral incorporation may in fact slow down rather than facilitate the social acceptance and assimilation of minority groups”.

In turn, this has wide implications for party system dynamics: in Europe, where vote-based inclusion has taken place, “parties have become more diverse, male, religious and socially conservative. Which may distance socially liberal cosmopolitans from them, and explain why some far-right parties exploit this by presenting themselves as champions of liberalism, progressivism and feminism”, thus eroding the class cleavage and furthering a values driven one.

In her conclusions, the author defends more long-term societal involvement of parties and party gatekeepers in order to promote values among religious communities that are more congruent with majority mainstream views.

For all the reasons above, the Jury considers that Rafaela Dancygier’s “Dilemmas of Inclusion” fundamentally enhances our understanding of current European politics dynamics and will make a lasting contribution to the literature. It is also generalizable: As the author underlines, although this book is about European Muslims, the theoretical arguments developed therein can be applied elsewhere.

The members of the Stein Rokkan Prize Committee taking part in the final deliberations on the 2017 prize winner – Dorothee Bohle, Giliberto Capano, Hanspeter Kriesi, Marina Costa Lobo, and Per Selle – were unanimous in their decision.