

Introduction:

Politics, Social Class and Education

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This issue of *Praktiske Grunde* collects articles that are held together by a general analysis of the social aspects of the ‘political’, and attempts to understand the relationship between social class on the one hand and on the other hand political opinions, interest and practices.

Over the past decades we have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in citizens’ decline in political participation and a changing political agenda. In two of the articles of this issue distance and proximity in political opinions, interests and attitudes are mapped in purpose to analyze the relationship between different political orientations. In “Conservative Distinctions: Moral and Cultural conservatism” Jan-Magnus Enele unveil a multidimensionality in the political space, showing how socio-cultural political orientations are divided into moral and cultural distinctions and its correspondence to capital volume and composition. The analysis is carried out on data from Swedish elections studies in year of 2006. The case of young rural citizens political position-takings are in focus in Ylva Bergström and Tobias Dalberg’s article, revealing a space of political position-takings structured by oppositions regarding redistribution issues, environmental issues, cultural pluralism issues and trust in established institutions. By comparing this study with an equivalent study on young citizens in the city of Uppsala both similarities and differences, as regards to the spaces of position-takings, are uncovered suggesting that we are dealing with two somewhat different spaces: one space, the rural mining district, characterized by the working classes and one space, the city of Uppsala, characterized by the middle and upper middle classes, respectively.

The right that citizens have to formulate and propound political judgments is fundamental to the concept of democracy and democratic regimes. In theory democracy rests on citizens who are all equal, share equal rights to speak, act and judge politically. However, as Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates in a number of studies on political opinion the ability to produce a political opinion is unequally distributed, the propensity and ability to judge politically is rather a social competence beyond a mere technical competence. Using General Social Survey data from 2000-2006, the case of the United States is explored in Daniel Laurison’s article “Political Competence in the United States”. He shows that political competence—the sense of being a legitimate participant in politics—varies with social position. Those with lower volumes of capital are also less likely to give substantive answers to political questions, or to indicate that they feel politically efficacious. In “Educational and Social Dimensions of Political Participation: Producing a political opinion” Bergström focus on the social dimensions of political access, analyzing the so called “no-opinion” and “don’t know” response’s in a political questionnaire and the distribution of political practices. In conclusion political competence varies with educational qualifications, age, sex, social origin, and differs with place of residence and among other factors it also differs with character of the political issue. We can also conclude that the political landscape is structured by both volume and composition of capital. As such only parts of the population has the symbolic means to produce a political opinion, to access the political discourse and as such take part in the political culture.

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