

WORKSHOP 13

13. Political Parties and Civil Society

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The prime aim of this workshop is to explore the character of political parties' relationships with civil society and its organizations in liberal democracies, both across time and space. By civil society, we refer to the public sphere and a wide range of organization types – from registered charities to business associations. We want to test the common wisdom that such relationships have atrophied and are withering away in established democracies. With the general development of political parties in the late 20th century towards more open and professionally driven structures, it is widely agreed that long-established links – like those between social democratic parties and trade unions – have declined in many cases. However, few have systematically studied the general party–interest group dyad empirically, either within or across countries. Moreover, we want to explore the conditions under which parties and interest groups choose to establish links, or opt for distance or separation, in liberal democracies. Primarily, we aim to attract empirical papers, whether single case (country) studies or comparative cross-national treatments, including both old and new democracies. We anticipate that the workshop will bring together scholars working in the areas of party organizations, on the one hand, and those specialising in various types of civil society groups and organizations on the other.