how was it for you? the helsinki joint sessions, may 2007

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Helsinki 2007 simply saw far too many poor performers and poor performances from the so-called 'main stars'. Indeed, some of these performances were so truly wretched they had onlookers desperate to leave as soon as possible. By the end of the week, the disappointment in their representatives' performances among some of the member nations was palpable, well, all except for the Serbian contingent…!

For those of you who were not at this year's Joint Sessions, or who are not fans of Euro-pop at its best (or worst!) you won't be aware that there were two major European events taking place at the same time in Helsinki this May: the ECPR's Joint Sessions of Workshops and the Eurovision Song Contest!

In fact, while this coincidence made it difficult to obtain hotel rooms and book restaurants, it also gave the city a real buzz, and gave us all something (awful?) to look forward to at the end of the week. If your Workshop was lucky you had a bird's eye view down into the central square where the semi-finals (did you know there were semi-finals in the Eurovision?) were held during the week of the Joint Sessions. The paraphernalia on sale to advertise the Eurovision was extraordinary… and not matched by that offered by the ECPR this year. World famous for its conference bags until now, the Helsinki 'bag' failed to live up to all expectations: perhaps this is all about carbon-footprinting, but I cannot envisage meeting another Helsinki bag on my ECPR travels. Last year I spotted an '82 Aarhus – a good vintage, still maturing well, not yet past its best – and this year, of course, several from the 2005 Granada crop (a very fine example, probably the best for 20 years!). But a paper bag resembling something you might be given free in your local deli does little to excite the imagination – paper may be 'greener', but does it have the staying power? *Je suis desolée Helsinki, mais nul point!*

However, a full *'douze points'* could be awarded to Helsinki on other fronts. The receptions were magnificent (a few less dishes and surely we could have had a proper bag?), the tourism was first rate and the food a joy to experience (is it ethical to eat bear, elk and reindeer? Check with your waiter and then try it). And the weather was wonderful: clear, crisp days for the most part. Moreover, the days were long… and they got visibly longer as the week progressed. Indeed, by the time I flew back to my homeland the evenings seemed to be rather dark and dismal.

The days were also long, of course, because at this 'conference', unlike any other academic 'conference' held in the world, real, extended and detailed discussion takes place. Despite attending several 'Joint Sessions', nobody has told me why they are (or were) called 'sessions' and why they are 'joint': with whom

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do we 'join' when we meet? One for the ECPR web-site, surely, if not an article in *EPS?* But if 'joint sessions' was originally meant to convey something different to the average academic conference, then there is no doubt the description is apt. True, as everyone always tells you, the structure of the Joint Sessions means that you can have a really awful week or a brilliant week…depending on your Workshop. Workshops need not just a good mix of participants and papers, but a good workshop leader and a commitment on the part of all participants to read and discuss each other's work. I was blessed this year with a 'workshop to end workshops' – meaning that intellectually I really enjoyed it and something in published form might well come out of it. When the 'joint sessions' go like this, there is really no conference to compare with the experience. So if you haven't yet tried a 'Joint Sessions', do it soon!

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rennes, france joint sessions: 1–16 april 2008

The Department of Political Science, University of Rennes will be hosting the next Joint Sessions. Below is a list of accepted workshops. Full details of workshops and how to apply to participate will be available shortly on the ECPR website at www.ecprnet.org.

WORKSHOPS

1. **The Nationalisation of Party Systems in Central and Eastern Europe**
   Ingrid van Biezen (University of Birmingham) and Daniele Caramani (University of St. Gallen)
2. **The European Union as a Global Conflict Manager: From Pragmatic Ad-hocism to Policy Coherence?**
   Stefan Wolff (University of Nottingham) and Richard Whitman (University of Bath)
3. **From Politics to Management? Public Services Performance, Accountability and Distributional Outcomes in Social Policies**
   Paola Mattei (Berlin, W26) and Koen Verhoest (Katholieke Universiteit)
4. **Metropolitan Governance and Social Inequality**
   Daniel Kübler (Universität Zurich) and Tomáš Kostelecký (Czech Academy of Sciences)
5. **Sustainable Public Finance. The Politics of Budget Consolidation, Tax Reform and Expenditure Control**
   Uwe Wagschal (University of Heidelberg) and Mark Hallerberg (Emory University)
6. **The Politics of Climate Change**
   Hugh Compston (Cardiff University)

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7. **The Long Arm of EU Law: Making States Comply with EU Policies inside and outside the European Union**
   Tanja A. Boerzel (Free University of Berlin) and Ulrich Sedelmeier (London School of Economics)
8. **The New Geopolitics and Changing Territorialities: Between International Studies and Political Geography**
   Mathias Albert (Bielefeld Unviersity) and David Newman (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)
9. **Does European Integration Theory Need Sociology? Towards a New Research Agenda**
   Sabine Saurugger (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Grenoble) and Frédéric Mérand (McGill University)
10. **Methodological Pluralism? Consolidating Political Science Methodology**
    Jonathon W. Moses (Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)) and Benoit *Rihoux (MeGill University)*
11. **Administrative Reform, Democratic Governance, and the Quality of Government**
    Jean-Michel Eymeri-Douzans (Institut d'études politiques de Toulouse) and Jon Pierre (University of Gothenburg)
12. **Gender, Politics, and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?**
    Fiona Mackay (University of Edinburgh) and Mona Lena Krook (Washington University in St. Louis)
13. **Parliamentary and Representatives Roles in Modern Legislatures**
    Magnus Blomgren (Umeå University) and Olivier Rozenberg (FNSP, CEVIPOF)
14. **Politics of Intellectual Property**
    Sebastian Haunss (University of Hamburg) and Kenneth C. Shadlen (London School of Economics)
15. **Contested Constitutionalisation: Towards a Theory of Democratic Constitutionalism**
    Antje Wiener (University of Bath) and Rainer Schmalz-Bruns (Universität Hannover)
16. **Regions as 'Spaces' for Politics: Analysing Change Through New Paradigms**
    Caitriona Carter (University of Edinburgh) and Romain Pasquier (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Rennes)
17. **The Numbers We Use, the World We See: Evaluating Cross-National Datasets in Comparative Politics**
    Cas Mudde (Universiteit Antwerpen) and Andreas Schedler (CIDE (Mexico City))
18. **National Identity and Constitutionalism in Europe**
    Bill Kissane (London School of Economics) and Nick Sitter (Norwegian School of Management)
19. **Intra- and Interinstitutional Relations in EU Decision-making**
    Anne Rasmussen (EUI/Copenhagen Business School) and Daniel Naurin (University of Göteborg)
20. **The Politics of Constitutional Change**
    Arthur Benz (Fern Universität, Hagen) and César Colino (UNED, Madrid)
21. **Environmental Capacity and Development in Transitional States and Emerging Democracies**
    Adam Fagan (Queen Mary, University of London) and JoAnn Carmin (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
22. **Religion in Europe, Religion and Europe**
    François Foret (Université Libre de Bruxelles)and Xabier Itçaina (Institut d'Etudes politiques de Bordeaux)
23. **The Politics of Evidence-based Policy-making**
    Fritz Sager (University of Bern) and Ray Pawson (University of Leeds)

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24. **Remittances, Public Policy, and the State**
Achim Kemmerling (Social Science Centre Berlin) and Covadonga Meseguer (CIDE, Mexico)
25. **Comparing Legislatures Worldwide: Roles, Functions and Performance in old and new democracies**
Natalia Ajenjo (University of Burgos) and Mariana Llanos (GIGA German Institute for Global and Area Studies)
26. **Is Populism a Side-Effect of the Europeanization of Political Competition?**
Laure Neumayer (Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne) and Michel QJ;Perottino (Institute of Political Science)

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