

**People and Parliament in the European Union: Participation, Democracy, Legitimacy.** By Jean Blondel, Richard Sinnott, and Palle Svensson. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998. 287p. \$70.00.

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This book seeks to explain why participation rates in elections to the European Parliament (EP) are low and declining. Turnout has fallen from 66% in 1979 to 59% in 1994—20–40% below levels in national elections. This is a critical issue, the authors insist, because low turnout confirms pervasive doubts that the European Union (EU) is “democratically legitimate.” Behind this lies the central question of this era in modern European history, namely, whether a transnational policy with a common discourse and shared institutions can form.

What exactly accounts for such low turnout? The authors approach this question by analyzing cross-regional variation in turnout in light of Eurobarometer data about public attitudes. Leaving aside generic concerns about Eurobarometer data, the careful analysis generates many details of interest to any student of European integration, international cooperation, and modern democratic politics in a globalizing world. I will focus on the major findings concerning the causes of low turnout.

In contrast to what one might suppose from the press, European citizens tend to view the European political process as legitimate. They clearly distinguish between international issues (e.g., drugs, trade, foreign policy, and currency policy) and domestic issues (e.g., health/safety, education, and culture), and they consider EU activity as legitimate in the former cases but less so in the latter.

The authors find similar disconfirmation for the “second-order” theory of turnout, namely, that electoral participation is low because potential voters perceive that “less is at stake” than in national elections. This appears to be untrue, at least in the very limited sense that Europeans do not perceive their votes to be inefficacious. More precisely, the EP is considered a less powerful body than national parliaments, but the strength of such opinions is uncorrelated with participation. Also, the party choices at the European level are not viewed as denying in any way an effective choice among policies. In sum, Europeans do not, according to the data, perceive a “democratic deficit.”

So what is at the heart of low turnout? The results of this study support only modest and somewhat speculative positive conclusions about the reasons. A portion of the abstention is explained by institutional factors: the legacy of compulsory voting, the timing of elections, and the generally higher level of participation in proportional representation systems. Low levels of information and knowledge are also related to low turnout.

Yet, the most important determinants of variation in participation appear to lie in attitudes toward Europe. The major impediment appears to be widespread apathy among European voters. Yet, this is offset in countries with a political culture generally favorable to European integration (e.g., Belgium, Greece, Italy, and Luxembourg), where turnout is high. Turnout is lowest, somewhat paradoxically, in countries (e.g., Britain, the Netherlands, and Portugal) with a legacy of intense controversy over European integration.

Even this set of considerations fails to explain either the bulk of the variation in or the overall low level of turnout. At the end of the book we are left with an even deeper puzzle: What influences general voter attitudes toward Europe? We do not know. Given the agnostic analysis, the policy implications can only be somewhat sketchy and pessimistic. The

authors recommend institutional changes to render voting less costly, such as Sunday elections, easier registration, and concurrent elections for national and European positions. These might somewhat increase turnout, but they would be unlikely either to increase it to levels prevailing in national elections or to resolve the underlying apathy of Europeans toward the EU.

How should we explain the paradoxical transformation wrought by the EU in Europe, whereby decision making seems to have been disconnected from direct democratic participation? One factor the authors overlook is the nature of the issues that the EU handles: trade policy, monetary policy, industrial standardization, competition policy, constitutional adjudication, human rights, and even some environmental policies and peacekeeping. These rarely influence individual voting behavior in any advanced industrial democracies. The issues left to the nation-states—social welfare provisions, public procurement, small business regulation, cultural policy, education, and most immigration issues—constitute the major political concerns of Europeans. Is it any surprise that voters, while conceding the importance of the EP, are apathetic about marginal shifts in EU policies? And is it surprising, therefore, that citizens do not perceive the European democratic deficit that scholars decry?

Much more needs to be done to understand the sources of public opinion and voting behavior in the emergent multi-level European polity. Future studies must pay close attention to the judicious yet paradoxical findings of this book. One step forward would be to measure more precisely the level of issue salience and concern among voters, as a baseline for their expected behavior in general elections.

**The Geography of Money.** By Benjamin J. Cohen. Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1998. 229p. \$37.50 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

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This new book by one of the most distinguished senior contributors to scholarship on the international political economy (IPE) of money is a fascinating and ambitious effort to remap our understandings of the geography of money. Cohen argues convincingly that the prevailing mental map based on one nation/one money is outmoded. Monies are primarily differentiated today not by territory but by their function in a hierarchical pyramid-like arrangement; the few currencies at the top are used widely internationally, whereas those at the bottom have been displaced even within their home borders and may now serve only trivial administrative functions. The great number of theoretical and empirical insights into an important process of global restructuring, and the engaging and straightforward style, should make this book of interest well beyond those who specialize in the sometimes dauntingly technical literature on global money and finance.

Perhaps most interesting is the way Cohen focuses on the social institutions that lie between the categories usually stressed by IPE scholars. This includes his emphasis on mapping and spaces as social constructions anchored in both the empirical world and the world of ideas. Similarly, money is seen as involving social networks that operate between and interact with the anonymous market forces and self-interested states on which much IPE scholarship focuses. Cohen's concept of money's authoritative domain, which blends elements of the market-based transactional domain and the state-centered territorial domain, is very useful in capturing relations between top currencies and subordinate ones that